

**Developing Communication Between MP Maustepalvelu Oy
and Barentz Group**



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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämän opinnäytetyön toimeksiantajana toimi MP Maustepalvelu Oy, Hämeenlinnasta. Yritys halusi selvittää kuinka se voi kehittää viestintää sen ja Barentz-yhtiön myyntipäälliköiden välillä. MP Maustepalvelu on osa Barentz-yhtiötä.

Tämän opinnäytetyön päätarkoituksena oli löytää mahdollisimman tehokkaita viestintäkanavia ja selvittää minkälaista materiaalia MP Maustepalvelu tarvitsee mainosmateriaaliksi. Opinnäytetyön tavoitteina oli 1) löytää sopivin viestintäkanava käytettäväksi Barentz-yhtiön myyntipäälliköiden kanssa, 2) selvittää minkälaista mainosmateriaalia Barentz-yhtiön myyntipäälliköt tarvitsevat myynnin tueksi, 3) toteuttaa kyselytutkimus Barentz-yhtiön myyntipäälliköille ja selvittää heidän tarpeensa ja näkemyksensä viestinnästä, materiaalista ja MP Maustepalvelun vahvuuksista.

Tutkimuksessa havaittiin, että viestintää tulisi kehittää MP Maustepalvelun ja Barentz-yhtiön välillä. MP Maustepalvelun tulisi antaa enemmän mainosmateriaalia Barentz-yhtiön myyntipäälliköille. Sähköpostin käyttö pääasiallisena viestintäkanavana huomattiin olevan tärkein, sillä välimatkat ovat pitkiä. Intranetin käyttöä pitäisi lisätä mainosmateriaalin jakamista varten. Mainosmateriaalille, kuten näytteille, tuote-esitteille ja tiedotteille on tarvetta. Koulutustilaisuuksia ja kokouksia suositeltiin järjestettäväksi. Myös jatkotutkimuksia esitettiin tehtäväksi, sillä projektit ovat erilaisia ja niiden tarpeet erilaisia, joten niiden tutkiminen yksilöllisellä tasolla on tärkeää.

Avainsanat Viestintä, myynnintuki, yhteisöviestintä, myynti

Sivut 37 sivua, joista liitteitä 16 sivua

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ABSTRACT

This thesis was commissioned by MP Maustepalvelu Oy, which is located in Hämeenlinna, Finland. As many other companies these days, MP Maustepalvelu wants to give attention on the sales support activities. That is the reason they wanted to find out how to develop communication between them and Barentz group, a company that they are part of and especially their sales managers. The main purpose of this thesis is to find effective communication channels as well as find out what type of material they need as promotion material. The objectives of this thesis are 1) Find the most suitable communication channel to use in communication with Barentz groups sales managers, 2) find out the material the Barentz group's sales managers need to support sales, 3) conduct a questionnaire for the Barentz group's sales managers to find their needs and views on communication, material need and the strengths MP Maustepalvelu has.

This research found out that there is a need to develop communication and MP Maustepalvelu should provide more promotion material for the Barentz sales managers. Through the research, the main communication channel utilized should remain email since the distances are quite long. Intranet should be used more to distribute promotion material. There was a clear need for promotion material such as samples and leaflets containing various information of the products and a newsletter that would have MP Maustepalvelu's success stories. Training sessions and meetings should be evaluated and organized to have better relationship. The possible future researches about the different projects they have together and evaluating the needs for them individually, were also mentioned to compliment this research more.

Keywords Communication, sales support, organizational communication, sales

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1 INTRODUCTION

The importance of selling is highlighted in a company. It is the only way a company gets revenue and it is the very lifeline for many companies. The whole company should support selling. Selling is a process that requires all sort of support to be successful. Today's customers are extremely demanding and professional. To be able to satisfy the needs and wishes of the customer the seller needs to be highly professional and have an extremely good knowledge of the company and its products and services. For that to be a reality sellers need support. Being able to satisfy demanding customers and provide them with the best available service and information is a tremendous job that requires communication and support. Having an effective communication flow in all directions gives the customer a sense that everything is going smoothly.

One perspective was taken into consideration, when doing the research in order to get exact view of the situation. That perspective takes into consideration what the Barentz sales managers have discovered that works and what needs to be developed and what kind of material they see as beneficial to promote sales.

There are three parts in this thesis: theory, research and conclusion. The first part of the theory deals with internal communication and various parts of it. It explores the importance of communication in an organization, different communication channels as well as problems in communication and what is effective communication. The other part of the theory explores the sales support and how it is connected to communication.

1.1 Research Question and the Objectives of the Thesis

The objectives of this thesis were to find out how to develop communication with the Barentz sales managers and MP Maustepalvelu and also how MP Maustepalvelu can support Barentz sales managers more effectively. Finding out the different methods of communicating and the need for promotion material is one of the issues this thesis is researching to support sales. The current situation is investigated and how to develop it so that the communication flow is smooth and barriers are reduced. How to utilize technology in communication and a need for meetings and material is researched as well. The whole research is about supporting sales.

The final goal is to find an answer to the question: "How can MP Maustepalvelu develop communication with Barentz sales managers and what can they provide to support sales?"

1.2 Research Methods

A questionnaire was sent to the Barentz sales managers and through the responses received, the research points out their views on the communication and material needed from MP Maustepalvelu. The purpose is to see what works and what needs to be developed and how important they see the sales support from MP Maustepalvelu.

The research part studies how the communication can be improved with Barentz sales managers and MP Maustepalvelu and what material they would need to promote sales and how important the sellers see sales support. The main focus is on, what MP Maustepalvelu can do to develop communication and promote sales in Europe. The research is done with a questionnaire which is opened and analyzed. In the conclusions part, the findings are introduced and the similarities to the theory part are mentioned and shown. In the recommendations part the suggestions on how to develop sales support is brought up for the MP Maustepalvelu. Other possible additional research topics are also mentioned in the recommendations.

1.3 Case company

MP Maustepalvelu is more than a 60 year old company and the leading expert and supplier for food components in Finland. It is located in Hämeenlinna, Finland. It started as a raw material supplier but over the years it has grown to be a versatile company providing customers with new ideas by following changing food trends, testing raw material, research and development, purchasing of components, storage and providing spice mixes according to customers' needs and extremely quick deliveries. (Maustepalvelu n.d.)

In the year 2016 their turnover was 23.3 million euros. The number of employees was in average 67 people. They had around 700 different raw materials in their storage and over a thousand different items manufactured. They have also a huge international network of raw material suppliers and an in-house research and development resources and testing facilities. All the work done in the testing facilities with research and development are based on the needs and requirements of the customers. They have a variety quality certificates: ISO 9001-2015, FSSC 22000 and ISO 14001-2015. They also have a strict policy for quality and food safety. (Maustepalvelu n.d.)

They have a broad and extremely versatile range of products for suit their customers' individual needs and requirements. The following product categories are: spice, binder and phosphate blends for meat products, surface spices, marinade blends, ready-made marinades for meat products, breaded products, solutions for ready meal industries, spices

and flavoring, various protein products, additives and customized applications for a variety of sectors in food industry. (Maustepalvelu n.d.)

MP Maustepalvelu was bought by Barentz group in 2014. Barentz is a leading provider of ingredients for food and nutrition, animal nutrition, pharmaceutical and personal care. It operates in 60 countries. They focus on European market and their headquarters are based in the Netherlands however, they are expanding to Asia Pacific region and North America. Barentz group had a turnover of 1 billion euros in 2016. Barentz groups' idea is based on partnerships and joint ventures. (Barentz n.d.)

2 COMMUNICATION AND SALES SUPPORT

Communication is passing on information and understanding the meaning of that information. For successful communication, the transferred information need to be understood by the recipient. Communication can be interpersonal, where there is two or more people in contact and organizational communication, which include all networks, patterns and systems of communication inside an organization. (Robbins & Coulter 2016, 436.)

Communication is everywhere, in home, in work environment, in hobbies, between governments and cultures. It is not only technical process but also relationships between people and the importance that comes from it. Communication also strengthens unity in a community and culture. Nowadays a virtual community has come up as a new kind of community, because of social media. The more traditional face-to-face encounters still hold up since people want to belong to a group and share ideas together. (Juholin 2013, 23)

2.1 Organizational Communication

Organizational communication happens in an open system that is effected by internal and external environments. The internal environment is usually referred as culture. Messages and the purpose of the message, direction and the flow are all involved inside organizational communications. Media belongs also in organizational communications, but it is used in external communication. The internal environment, called the culture, has all the people inside an organization involved in it. Their skills, relationships, attitudes and feelings play a huge role inside organizational culture and through that effects the organizations internal communication. Since an organization is open system and very dynamic, communication can be thought as a process. It is ongoing and changes constantly. Therefore, communication need to be developed and fine-tuned regularly so that everyone inside the organization can adapt to changes and tackle the challenges inside as well outside of the organization. (Goldhaber 1990, 15.)

Support from managers, peers and employees is highly important when it comes to communication and all the other aspects of an organization. Sharing information and wanting to know more and being involved and committed ensures the best results in communication. Organizations are communities where communication is considered as a process or flow. Working together as a community and reaching for the same goal is important and it ensures competitiveness among ever changing environment. If everyone has the same mind-set and collaboration is smooth, it helps in work satisfaction and it aids employees and organizations in performing better. Co-operation is vital for the success of

an organization and a good level of communication ensures and supports that. (Kokoaho 2011, 15).

There are other functions for communication as well. They include: making an organization visible, interactive and goal-oriented strategy work, figuring out and visualizing internal and external changes, to be able react to them efficiently and networking is also one key point for communication. Communication is needed in every aspect of an organization and insufficient communication skills or lack of communication brings challenges to the working environment. (Juholin 2013, 28)

When placed all the distinct functions of organizational communications in their own categories, the main functions can be illustrated in seven segments:

1. Informing among workplace and between stakeholders.
2. Building unity and supporting job-satisfaction.
3. Stakeholder dialogue.
4. Public actions.
5. Building a brand or reputation.
6. Reaching out for the community.
7. Influencing the attractiveness or interest of a good or a service.

Also, there are three other additional tasks:

1. Sounding, tracking and assessing.
 2. Developing and training communication competences.
 3. Developing communication channels and solutions.
- (Juholin 2013, 28)

2.2 Layers of organizational communication

The communication functions are taking place in the organization as well as its operating environment. The operating environment can be described in layers. First layer is the closest and called the micro level, it covers the whole organization and the immediate groups such as: personnel, regional players and those who are in close collaboration with the organization. Second layer is called the macro level, which is usually nationwide and it covers large organizations, governments and the media. The last two layers are called global level and universal level, they stretch beyond governments and are usually involved in general humane issues for example corporate responsibility issues and human rights issues. (Juholin 2013, 70)

2.3 Internal and external communication

Internal communication is used in several functions inside an organization: information, motivation, control and emotional expression. Transfer of information needs to be fluent in order for managers and employees do their job well and perform on a desired level.

Communication is used to control individual and group behaviour in many ways. Since there are certain hierarchies and guidelines that need to be followed by everyone inside an organization, effective internal communication is important to achieve control. It can be used as motivational tool to inform and clarify employees of their task and giving feedback for them to improve their performance. Communication can also be used to express emotions and feelings to fulfil social needs that are present in work groups that has a lot of social interaction. When all of those issues are working well it affects the overall work satisfaction level as well as the performance of individuals and teams and therefore promotes the overall performance of the organization. (Robbins 1996, 377.)

The main purpose is to transmit information between departments and divisions of an organization. There can be two types of internal communication, both vertical which means communication between managers or employees and horizontal that is mostly with your team or department. Even though the hierarchy of an organization is present in communication, the discussion needs to be open and easy in an organization, no matter who is communicating with who. It happens constantly and there should not be a distinct distance between the sender of the message and the receiver of the message. Most importantly it happens within the organization. (The Business Communication n.d.)

External communication means the flow of information between the organization and the organizations external environment including for example customers, potential customers, stakeholders, investors and suppliers. The main purpose is to maintain or develop relationship between the organization and the external parties. (The Business Communication n.d.)

How the public sees an organization should be as important measurement as the measure of sales is. External communication is an effective way to define organizations image to the public. Direct mailing, financial records newsletters and press releases are examples of external communication. Media is also an efficient communication channel to use when informing public or other entities or parties. (Chron n.d.)

2.4 Informal and formal communication

Inside an organization, the communication that takes place in it, is either formal or informal. Informal communication does not follow hierarchy as the formal communication does. It does not have to be work related necessarily. However, it serves two extremely important purposes inside a workplace. It is an effective way for employees to talk to one another and satisfy their social interaction need. Moreover, it can improve overall performance inside an organization by creating another, faster and efficient communication channel.

Informal communication can be faster than formal communication and therefore more efficient. There are however, some downsides to it. In every company and organization, there are rumours or gossip that can have negative effects on performance and job satisfaction. Rumours and gossip travel inside an informal communication network and is often referred as the grapevine. That is not a negative thing as such, unless negative rumours and gossip start to spread. The negative effects of rumours can be minimized by employees and managers having an open and honest discussions and communication. It is also important to notice that often employees receive valuable information and other important matters through the grapevine, so it is not to be understated. It is not easy or even possible to weed out the grapevine network out of any organization all together. Since it is a valuable asset in an organization as a communication channel, managers should try to have an open and honest communication so they can have the positive effects of grapevine remain. (Robbins & Coulter 2016, 448.)

Formal communication inside an organization uses norms within the company and it is heavily work related. It is so called official information. It is more controlled than informal communication. This eliminates consumption of time and is communicated through a proper channel. It can be written or oral depending on the nature of the message. Formal communication is heavily involved in hierarchy established within the company. Advantages that formal communication holds are for example holding an authority, extremely effective communication that is also clear, easy to trace the source of the information since it is systematic. Drawbacks in formal communication are excess information that can lead to time consumption and loss in productivity, the message can be distorted by the time it reaches the person who it was meant for. Formal communication is vertical both upwards and downwards meaning from top management to subordinates or vice versa. (Your article library 2016).

2.5 Communication Channels

Having an effective communication in an organization is one cornerstone in the efficiency of an organization. Developing communication is highly important for the managers to be able lead, plan, organize and control the organization and to reduce confusion. Since managers use a lot of their time communicating, they need to be able identify barriers in communication and try to avoid them. One way to that is to find an effective communication channel that serves the organization the best. Having multiple communication channels is the smartest decision since all communication channels have downsides that might create barriers in communication. (Management study guide n.d).

Communication channel is the instrument or the method how the information is sent to the recipient. They tend to be categorized in three main groups. One is the most personal one that requires face-to-face contact. Second is written communication channels such as memos, bulletins, info letters, newsletters etc. The third one is electronic, that covers all the means of communication done electronically. (Juholin 1999, 139).

Depending on the nature of the information, it depends should informal or formal communication be used to transmit the message containing information. Formal communication channel is companies own built method of sending job-related information. There are also informal communication channels inside organizations, however they are not necessarily used to send or receive job-related information. Company email for example should not be used to send informal information since it does not serve any purpose for the company and it can be highly time-consuming. (Robbins 1996, 379.)

2.5.1 Face-to-face

Face-to-face communication is by far the most appreciated way of communication. However, it is the one that has the most deficiency inside an organization. When the use of technology increases and distances grow, the face-to-face option for communication diminishes. Face-to-face communication can happen on the individual level, unit level or in the level of the whole community, in joint events such as meetings or get-togethers. (Juholin 1999, 141).

From the dawn of mankind people have been socializing in very close proximities and they need personal interaction. It is important for people to see the person they are in contact with. They need it for building relationships, no matter if it is a professional relationship or friendship or any other type of relationship. It is a lot easier to form a bond between people and personnel if they can practice face-to-face interaction and get to know each other. It is the most personal form of interaction there is. It

is important not to forget or belittle face-to-face interaction since it creates a more effective and trustworthy work relationship. Trust is one key issue when doing business with someone and without face-to-face interaction it is rather difficult to form a trusting relationship. (Ashtoncollege 2013)

Face-to-face communication has respectable amount of benefits. It reduces misunderstandings that might occur in other forms of communication. People can see what the other person's main message is, through their expressions. It is discussion between people and one key issue is that they receive and transmit feedback immediately. If there is something that needs to be asked or one needs more details regarding on the matter, it is easy to ask there and receive the best available explanation immediately. They can let other people know how they feel and what their main concerns are. Verbal communication plays a significant role as does non-verbal communication and both can be seen in face-to-face interaction. Non-verbal communication means expressions and gestures. Collaboration is also made easier since people have more understanding on exactly what the other person means or needs. (The Business Communication n.d.)

There are also disadvantages in face-to-face communication. The biggest difficulties come up when there are many participants. That means that in large organizations with many people involved, the face-to-face communication lacks the individuality aspect that is required for the effectiveness of face-to-face communication. The communication is not anymore, a discussion and it quickly transforms into a monologue that lacks interaction between people. Organizations nowadays do not favour huge meetings for example since it lacks this personal feel to it. The other disadvantage occurs when person is not listening. If the listener is not actually listening the communication becomes ineffective since the message is not received or understood properly. That is one of the reasons why smaller team meetings are favoured in an organization since there is more interaction. (The Business Communication n.d.)

2.5.2 Meetings

Meetings are an effective way to get together with personnel. Their size and the style can vary depending on how the meeting is implemented and what the purpose of the meeting is. Huge meetings that involve everyone inside a company are no more widely used. For the sheer complexity of organizing such sizable meetings and the amount of time it consumes from anyone involved, organizations favour smaller meetings. They might be only for managers, office workers or teams or groups etc. for which the meetings are for. Smaller meetings are favoured as better, primarily for the amount of time it consumes. One downside in bigger meetings is also the fact that there is a significant amount of non-important information given to everyone. That creates an image to a lot of people's minds that

the benefits received do not correlate the time spent. This means that people think that huge meetings are useless to them. If time is not used properly and people must listen to every nuance that has happened, is happening or will happen to the company people get bored and start to think that the time spent is just wasted on non-important matters. Therefore, companies nowadays favour smaller meetings. There is less time spent, not a lot of useless information is received since the meeting should only include information relevant for the participants. In the smaller meetings, the face-to-face interaction is also more present and the communication can be more open and discussion is free. Even though meetings are face-to-face interaction they are also becoming a downward trend even though it jeopardizes interaction between personnel. (Juholin 1999, 141)

In an international company, travelling to traditional meetings can increase stress over time and it consumes a lot of money and time. There are also videoconferences available due to the modern technology. Videoconferences are usually online meetings that are filmed with a web camera. Since it is filmed and the participants see each other there is also the face-to-face benefit involved to some extent. Since videoconferences do not require physical attendance it is also easier for international companies to organize them and still be able to see each other and have the best equivalent for face-to-face interaction. If a company invests in the equipment necessary to attend and organize videoconferences, they can easily have meetings with people all over the world. This investment in the equipment is usually still less than travelling costs are. Although the videoconferencing has the face-to-face aspect with it, research show that it doesn't bring the same benefits as face-to-face interaction. It also restricts creativity to some extent. For an international organization however, it is a worthy substitute for traditional face-to-face interaction. (Imex-frankfurt 2013)

2.5.3 Bulletin and stakeholder magazines and papers

Bulletin refers to a kind of magazine or an electronic paper that contains different relevant information. It depends on the nature of the information, to whom it is directed to. It can be for the individual company, stakeholders, alliance partners or customers. When utilizing this kind of communication channel, there are certain aspects that need to be taken into consideration:

1. To who is that information for?
2. What kind of information does it have?
3. What are the most important reasons for it? (Background, entertainment, engaging, creating team spirit, success stories)
4. What is the content discussed in it?
5. What is the purpose of it?

What kind of paper or magazine it is going to be, depends immensely what is the nature of it and who it is directed to. They can be sent out every few weeks, once a month or even twice a year depending on the issues mentioned before. These days organizations and companies favour electronic bulletins. They are easy to access, easy to read and are usually extremely compact without any useless information. (Juholin 1999, 150).

2.5.4 Email

Originally email was welcomed by companies as a chance to have real-time discussions and thoughts exchange, although it is meant to be an electronic letter.

Email is used widely nowadays to send and receive information. It can be used as formal and informal mean of communicating. Company employees, nowadays usually have their own email addresses that they use in their workplace. It is fast, reliable and extremely useful tool to communicate with the entire organizations as well as the clients and companies that are in co-operation with one another. It can be used to send attachments such as pictures, documents, commercial documents and a variety of other information. Email does have flaws as communication tool. It is not personal in that sense that face to face communication is not an option and there is a risk of sending too much information or information that is not important or useful. However, one can contact multiple people quickly and get feedback easily and fast. (Organisaatioviestintä 2011)

Emails can be divided into three categories. First one is so called bulletin board type of emails that are just a message sent and received that requires no answer and not even any actions, from the recipient. The second one is so called mailman-emails that deliver information and possible attachments. The third one is dialogue-emails that require answers from the recipient. The dialogue emails can have multiple exchanged emails, but they are more informal by nature. (Juholin 2013, 222)

Email has its own shortcomings since it is somewhat of a time consumer in a company. It can consume employees in a way that email could become the one and only channel that they use. Emails sent inside organizations reduces regular face to face and personal interaction among people working inside the organization. It is not only email that is used in this quick time messaging. There are different applications on peoples work or personal phones that are used for questions and fast information flow also. (Robbins & Coulter 2016, 550.)

However, the rapid growth of emails and so called junk mail have in some extent corrupted the main purpose of email. Hundreds of emails a day lower the efficiency of communication and is therefore regarded as one of

the reasons for declining productivity. This also brings challenges to the flow of communication. Scanning through vast amount of emails, trying to find the correct one from all the unnecessary emails is time-consuming and can be frustrating when a significant amount of emails is sent and received every day. Therefore, the productivity declines. (Juholin 2013, 257)

2.5.5 Intranet

Intranet is a private network for the whole staff of an organization. It is only accessible by the managers and employees of the organization. There personnel can find a variety of useful information, tools and areas of co-operation that are essential for the business. It is important to know that intranet is not a directory tree but rather a toolbox for the company. It can be described also as communication channel, virtual work environment, data warehouse and a real-time toolbox that is dynamic by nature. It is a rather new concept that when built, developed and used correctly is a highly valuable communication channel. In some companies and organizations, it has also begun to be a virtual work environment where personnel plan, share ideas, co-operate, study and work together. Primarily it includes vital and essential information of and for the company, but there can be sub categories that can be used to sell for example employees own things or the company's old technology for everyone inside the company that might be interested. (LinkedIn 2015)

For the management point of view, intranet is nowadays one of the most efficient and personal communication channels with, employees, managers, stakeholders and alliance partners. Only face-to-face meetings are regarded as more valuable than intranet. It is a direct channel from person to person and can help with peaceful working without interruptions with a dynamic and instant messaging and communication from anywhere in the world. Intranet should be designed to be as simple and easy to use as possible. It should serve the needs of single user as well as the needs of the company but most of all the ability to get fast changes and information through in an organization. When designed properly, the use of intranet inside a company can be enjoyable, reliable, fast and rewarding. Having all those issues in place, there is no need to motivate personnel to use it since it makes their job that much easier. (Juholin 2013, 324)

Intranet differs from email in way that it is corporates own private network that has different folders and other forums that contain certain information. Email is more of a mailbox, where every single message and attachment sent to a person, automatically goes to. Email can be exhausting and annoying, for example in a situation where someone's email address is linked to a certain group-email and that person receives several emails a day, a week or a month, that has little or nothing that concerns him or her. In the worst-case scenario that might lead to personnel missing important emails and information, having thought that

the email received does not contain important information that concerns him or her. In intranet messages and information is automatically in the place where it needs to be and the personnel should know where to find information that they need in their job. That way they check it or add something there themselves and do not receive any non-important information in vain. (Juholin 2013, 216, 257)

2.5.6 Mobile phone

As a tool for communication nowadays, the mobile phone has a strong position. A person has a mobile phone with him nearly all the time these days. It is the fastest way to contact a person. People can call one another, send instant messages, files, and pictures with each other or a whole group of people if necessary. It is tool to contact and stay in contact with people anywhere. Phone calls are also more personal than emails for example, even though it too lacks the traditional face-to-face interaction. Though it can create more trust between people just by hearing their voice and not being just anonymous person behind an email. (Chron n.d.)

Companies and organizations nowadays provide their personnel with a company phone that has the necessary applications to check company email and other possible work related applications such as emails, calendars. Managers and employees can get in touch with anyone by calling, sending a text message or sending some other instant message, using an application for instant messaging. Personnel can also check and send emails even if they are travelling anywhere in the world. They can schedule meetings with a mobile phone and send invitations to the people who need to attend to the meeting. Mobility is one huge advantage that a mobile phone provides. Simply for the diversity that mobile phones are capable of, they are a huge asset for a company's employees to have and as a communication tool there really is not one that compares with modern mobile phones. Information flows easily and extremely quickly. (Nibusinessinfo n.d.)

There are downsides with mobile phones since they can be difficult to use and can vary depending on the model. However nowadays mobile phones biggest downside is the fact that having a call or a message in a meeting or when having a discussion with colleague, can have negative impact on the face-to-face interaction that is happening. It creates distraction and can make the person who has to wait for the person with the mobile phone feel unimportant or unwanted for the situation. The distraction that the mobile phone can have is enormous and therefore some companies have actually started to leave their phones out of meetings. (Sinek 2016.)

2.5.7 Social media

Social media has risen as an important communication tool inside organizations. Though the name social media suggests more of personal feel to it, it is not the case. In essence, social media is many to many communication. It is internet services where everyone, who is a user of that website, can produce their own content. Social media favours more participation and conversations. It used to be more publishing and sharing. It can be referred as social media, social web, peer to peer media and inclusion media. The most commonly used social media platforms are Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Wikipedia, LinkedIn and different blogs. Each of those platforms differ to one another vastly. For networking the most useful platforms would be LinkedIn and Facebook. For sharing videos, the most useful one would be YouTube. For publishing content and sharing it, the most useful ones would be different blogs. If one would want to collaborate and publish content, Wikipedia would be a valuable tool for that. (Juholin 2013, 217, 474)

Advantages that social media has as a communication tool are many. For example, since it is an open for everyone means there are less barriers or that they are small. Everyone can contribute and give feedback which makes it easy to use and easy to participate in discussion. You can also use it in networking and finding similar interests. It links people together and gives resources and client candidates providing that the organization creates a platform to attract attention of clients or customers. It can also help in strengthening the corporate objectives and same mind-set. People are able to share information efficiently. It encourages people to communicate and create connections. However, the drawbacks are also quite considerable. There are the same cyber-attack possibilities as everywhere else online. A loss in productivity is also a big possibility if people are constantly online updating their social media. Perhaps the biggest drawback in social media is negative comments and through that a decreases motivation and can affect the overall mentality inside the organization. (Kanchwala 2015.)

2.6 Developing Corporate Communications

2.6.1 Problems in communication

Since communication is a process which involves many steps, depending on what communication channel is used, there can be problems and challenges that are called barriers. The problems can be language barriers or perception differences. Perception is how someone sees the world and the issues in it. There can also be too much information which basically means person is overwhelmed by details and information that might lead to forgetting or ignoring messages. Person can be indifferent and not interested in the information or message which can lead to the recipient not reacting to the message. Lack of time or hurry can lead to messages or information not been sent or received and the information can be insufficient. There can also be distractions that can distort the message or the understanding of the meaning of it can be inaccurate. Number of problems can also occur due to human errors, people make mistakes and forget things. (Management study guide n.d).

Modern technology does not always however, mean automatically blissful progress and significant increases in revenue. It has created new types of challenges when it comes to communication. The biggest problems, information technology has created are various legal and security challenges and the absence or decrease in personal interaction. (Robbins & Coulter 2016, 551.)

One problem with today's communication channels is that they are not personal. Understanding the message in face to face interaction is challenging enough, these social media applications are far more complex when it comes to people trying to understand each other. They are very fast and efficient but if personal interaction is taken away from people's lives it will create problems in understanding the meaning of information and it also reduces trust among managers and employees. Building a solid trust between people without face to face interaction is extremely challenging everywhere let alone in an organization. (Robbins & Coulter 2016, 550.)

The other problem are the issues regarding security and legal aspects. When someone uses information technology in an incorrect or inappropriate way, it may lead to problems with some legal issues. There are multiple examples of these kind of legal cases that has come up, such as sexual harassment cases or spreading false, damaging or highly personal information either inside a company or online in general. Managers need to be aware of the possibility of these legal issues when it comes to utilizing these kind of communication channels where there is a possibility of wrong-doing. (Robbins & Coulter 2016, 551.)

The security issues are not to be taken lightly. The information that flows through these communication channels inside organizations, usually contain messages, information, figures, trade secrets or other matters that are highly sensitive. Those types of matters are not to be shared with competition or anyone else that is not the person or group that the message or information was originally intended for. Confidential information is meant to be kept confidential and companies and organizations need to have the necessary tools and protection against for example hacking or corporate espionage. As an example, a simple spam email, when opened, can infect a computer with either a malware or a virus that could spread in all the other company's computers and exploit and steal confidential information. For that reason, organizations and companies need to invest in internet security. (Hyppönen 2016.)

2.6.2 Effective Communication

Using communication as a tool to transfer information is important in decision making. Individuals and groups need to have effective communication so that data can be transmitted and processed to make decisions based on the information. To achieve excellent communication and through that better decisions, blockages in communication need to be removed for the information to flow without problems. Therefore, it is good to think communication as a flow or process. (Robbins 1996, 378.)

Communication should not have any barriers for it to be the most effective. Having so many challenges the communication needs to be clear so that confusion, misinformation and the distortion of the message is minimized. The message cannot be incomplete, before sending the message planning it and controlling the message is key. That takes away wrong unnecessary assumptions the receiver might do. Short and complete messages should be favoured. Too long messages containing unnecessary details dilute the effect of the message. Having multiple communication channels for sending and receiving a message is important since it too clarifies the message and information, this also reduces the risk of the message being distorted. Having multiple communication channels helps, since everyone knows where to find certain information. It also important to customize messages according to the receivers needs, for example a factory worker does not benefit from the same message that the top management receives. (Management study guide n.d).

Leaders and managers need to be able to motivate personnel and also get them to be committed and communication is the right way to do it. Through motivation and commitment, it is easier to affect personnel's attitudes in a positive way. However, it is not enough to know that you have motivation and commitment on a good level. Organizations also need to communicate that to everyone, for the reason that it is significantly easier to maintain a good level in commitment and motivation inside an organization but also for the reason that if there is room for development,

personnel will bring up the possible shortcomings if they do not agree with the management's views on that issue. (Hjelt-Putilin 2005, 22.)

Effective communication ensures satisfaction among personnel. It helps with motivation and developing a pleasant atmosphere in an organization. Through those aspects, an organization is closer to success and it helps and boosts business. Productivity goes up as the motivation and atmosphere are on a good level. Those are, among other things, few of the reasons why effective communication is considered to be one of the cornerstones in an organization. (Lohtaja & Kaihoviirta-Rapo 2007, 14.)

One way for an organization to measure the effectiveness of communication is to find out:

Did attitudes and images improve?

Did the quality change?

Did co-operation improve?

Did the organization reach their set goals?

There are also ways to measure job satisfaction, motivation, attitudes and sales etc. All of those are different to one another and organizations need to know their own interests and goals, so they can focus on the aspects that are valuable for them to know. (Juholin 2001, 37)

Satisfactory level of communication between teams does not exist without meetings and get-togethers. They do not need to be overly long presentations or demonstrations but rather short bullet point kinds of information packages. There personnel can discuss and unravel the challenges they see and come up with some mutual solutions for any potential problems. Good sales personnel for example can get together and share their views on the material they have been provided for sales support and discuss the issues regarding on that. They can also brainstorm on what has been working and what has not been working and what could be good material as sales support. (Laine 2008, 33)

Effective communication has also four major areas: message, time, place, and target group. So, if the message has been clear and understandable that can be considered as an effective message. If the message has been sent out and received at the right time and everyone has received it well in advance that is also effective communication. In a nutshell, effective communication needs to be understandable, in the right place at right time and for the people it is meant for and who benefits from it. (Vierula 2009, 61)

2.7 Sales support

2.7.1 What is selling?

Selling in its purest form is trading something with someone. When the trade is completed, that can be considered as a completed sale. Selling is natural among humans, they have been doing it since the early ages of mankind. It is one of the reasons why mankind has risen to its present state and without it, we as humans would have a much more primitive way of life. Selling is present in everyone's day to day life. In its essence selling is simple and natural for people all over the world. When trading something, there needs to be two essential issues: a need for the good that you are trading something with and a willingness to be in business with the seller, organization or company. All honourable trade needs to have these issues involved. If those two issues do not exist during the trade it is most likely that a completed sale will not occur. Or if the completed sale has occurred but something comes up, like a hoax or fraud, that might bring up negative feelings towards the seller or the buyer. For example, if the good traded is not what promised, the buyer will most likely have negative feelings and loose trust with the seller, thus future interaction is compromised. This creates a not so good situation since any future trade or other business might be compromised and most likely that is the case, not only with that client but also any possible client in the future since bad word travels far and quickly. (Kokoaho 2011, 9-11)

Selling is more than just trade, it is also influencing people. Seller should influence the buyer to create a need for the good, if the need does not exist. That ensures a more likely success in the trade or sale. Selling is influencing people and the seller needs to have the necessary interaction skills and tools to be able to achieve positive results. A continual trade is the best situation that the seller can have. To achieve a good long relationship, there needs to be trust. Trust is a key factor in sales, trust is built over time but can be lost in one single bad sale. As long as everything goes well it is rather easy to trust people and organizations. However, the risk of losing a client is always there. Sales personnel need to have the traits or tools to cope with adversity or setbacks since they might occur when doing business for a lengthy period. (Laine 2008, 19-20)

To have the best possible situation, continuous sales, the seller needs to have an ongoing process to create a need and a willingness for the buyer to purchase products or services. Searching for new possible clients is also important and part of the sales process since organizations and companies should always try to thrive and get more clients and through that, increase their sales. Acquiring new customers and clients is expensive and it requires persistence. New possible clients need to be assessed with care so both parties get the most benefits from the relationship. (Laine 2008, 21)

2.7.2 Sales support

Since there are some growing expectations and demands towards companies and organizations, they have understood the importance of sales support. Leadership, co-operation and communication need to be developed to support sales so the sales personnel can focus on their main job which is selling. Sales support basically means many aspects inside an organization, processes for orders and offers, marketing material training sessions and enterprise resource planning systems. Understanding sales support and its functions helps in developing the actions and directions what to implement for supporting sales.

The people who sell products and services, need to have the necessary tools and support elements, provided by the company or organization they represent. Basically, everything a company or organization does, need to support sales. There is marketing process, lead process, sales process and customer relationship process that are all background processes that support the actual sales. Marketing process is meant to screen potential clients and customers, and then choose a strategy on which services, products and viable solutions an organization need to offer for them. If selling is going to one direction then marketing need to define or show which way is that direction. If a strategy does not exist the sales personnel work out the strategy with their actions. In essence, the marketing process is a strategy of how to approach the viable and most suitable clients and customers that the company has decided to acquire. Marketing also provides the necessary material for the sales personnel to use in their sales process. (Laine 2008, 28)

Lead process is the bridge between marketing and sales. That is the process of finding new possible client candidates and customers. They are actively searching leads on new customers and clients and communicate the findings to the sales department. They need data that helps identify viable leads and they can be extracted through webpage visitors, seminars, the grapevine, internet adds, other clients, retailers and other networking events. Majority of the leads do not proceed to being actual clients but it is an ongoing process that is screening new clients. This lead process requires a high-level of effective communication both internally and externally. Should there be a gap in the communication, the sales team might not receive the best possible information on the clients and their needs and that creates a risk of not interested clients and customers. That also increases a risk of losing a potential client enormously. (Luoma 2017.)

Sales process is the process of phasing a sales project to arouse interest, determine the needs and setting a common goal through negotiations in order to settle a contract. It is the sellers' task to find out, arrange meetings, propose and take the process onward. If the seller does not actively do that, most likely the client will not do that. The client, depending on the seller, becomes more interested and committed through

time. The seller is position to affect the clients or customer's views, objectives and opinions, in the early stages of the selling process. Getting the client from a non-active state to a more active and committed state determines will the sale be completed. The clients usually have, in the beginning, doubts and a lot of questions that the seller need to take care of and without proper support it is extremely difficult. Support and sellers' professionalism are the key to complete the sale. (Laine 2008, 47-50).

Customer relationship process is an operating model and a form of sales model, where there have been identified the possibility of additional sales for existing customer relationships. Every company and organization has key clients. Those key clients are the ones the company or organization work for quite a bit more than others. Usually the key client is a key client because they buy a significant amount of goods and services. To maintain a good relationship with those key clients requires a proficient level a knowledge on the customers' needs, views and the future direction and goals the customer or client has. Based on that knowledge the seller is able to draw a strategic plan to be able to help the customer. Those strategic plans the seller makes are called sales projects. Even though the client is important and considered a key client that does not affect the sellers' way of operating since clients should always be considered client no matter the relationship. It is worth knowing that everything is not to be put on the shoulders of the seller but the seller needs support and to add value for the customer, requires creativity from others in the organization or company. To add value for the customer is important but at least giving the illusion that, value has been added is important. However, if the process is not systematic or controlled, that will increase costs because of continuous customization or tailored solutions. (Laine 2008, 30-32).

2.7.3 The role of sales support

The importance of sales support is recognized in organizations and companies, they have begun to invest in the processes of sales support. Some companies and organizations might even have a department for sales support but the general idea is to have all the sales personnel and the organization as a whole, to support sales. It is important to note that the leading role of sales support is not to exactly do the job of the sales personnel but rather to alleviate their burden by providing the best available support they need in order to execute sales. The people working in sales support should have exactly and accurately divided roles and tasks, for a reason that when the seller runs into problems he or she knows where to find answers and support that he or she needs. For example, if the client needs more technical information of the products they know to ask the marketing department for support. There the communication comes into action for both sides. Marketing department should know that the seller is going to a certain company so that they can provide the most suitable material for the seller and the seller needs to communicate

possible clients and schedules they have for meetings with client candidates. (Kärnä 2010, 7; 44)

Sales support can also be known as a part of so called silent information. It is formed all over the organization and is mostly part of the organizational culture in a manner that everyone and everything done, is supporting sales one way or the other. Having that kind of attitude in an organization creates a more sufficient support system. Having that in mind, when developing the support processes that organizational culture should be taken into consideration. (Kärnä 2010, 13)

Even though the sales personnel are usually the main contact to the client, everyone in the organization needs to know their place inside the organization and take actions that follow the same guidelines with every client. It is important for the clients to have good relationships with the sellers as well as the whole organization so that everything functions in a way that is beneficial for both parties. The more growing demands from clients' perspective is the assumption that one seller or sales team knows every single good, service or solution that the company has to offer and that is rarely the case and for that the support elements and networks come into play. (Kärnä 2010, 19)

2.7.4 The importance of sales support in internal communications

Time and more specifically, timing is fundamental for the success of a company or an organization. Selling needs to be done at the right time for the right people with a right price. All the factors need to be right for the company to thrive. (Kokoaho 2011, 15)

Communication plays an enormous role in that everything is right. Messages sent or received too late might affect the future sales. The role of communication is big in all the activities supporting sales. Miscommunication inside an organization might have negative effects and could, if not corrected quickly, lead to unwanted results. (Intuit n.d.)

It is easy to build these processes for supporting sales if the basic mode of operation is in order and the interaction that takes place inside the organization as well as outside of the organization. Interaction needs to be free and open inside an organization that helps ease the communication flow and supporting co-workers and colleagues becomes easier. Developing the interaction can also have a positive effect on the provided services as well as customer satisfaction that ultimately reflects on the organizations internal and external atmosphere and image and through that increase sales. (Kärnä 2010, 30)

Having an honest and excellent communication inside the organization helps also the effectiveness and productivity of everyone especially when the communication supporting sales is in an appropriate level. That leads

to increase in sales which is one of the measurements how well the organization is doing. (Chron n.d.)

When communication is, clear everyone knows what to do and when to do it so it saves time. If confusion is minimized employees' productivity increases since they do not waste time in figuring out on their own what they need to be doing, or take someone else's time by asking them. It also effects the relationship between employees which in turn increases motivation and helps with the effectiveness of team work. (Chron n.d.)

In a case that a company or organization is divided to many locations such as other countries, the direct contact might be difficult to achieve in a moment's notice and that poses a problem in communication. Therefore, continuous reports or announcements need to take place regularly by the sales support. That kind of reporting could happen via managers or with the use some form of communication channel. For the communication to be swift and without delay there needs to be preconceived method how information flows in any situation so that communication is not interrupted or insufficient. The main issue is that correct information finds the person or team in question. (Kärnä 2010, 12)

Communication needs to go to every direction: between employees, managers, between teams and for clients also. It needs to be systematic, understandable and ongoing. The working environment need to be supportive and have the same values in every part of the organization. When everything is as it should be, it is much easier to provide and receive support. When sellers know, who to be in contact with it helps with time management and the seller can focus on his or her main task. This of course means that collaborative patterns are clear to everyone. (Kärnä 2010, 30)

If a company has sales personnel all over the Europe or the entire world, the communication becomes challenging. There might be problems in understanding due to not speaking the same language but also since face-to-face interaction is low. Therefore, the communication channels need to be efficient and available for all. Having regular visits or meetings help in increasing face-to-face meetings. If the sales personnel are in another country the support still need to be efficient and serve sales therefore an intranet could be utilized since it is relatively easy to use and everyone can easily have access to the material needed in sales. The sales personnel also need to give feedback regularly on what kind of material they need and the marketing side need to react to that quickly for a reason that sales can continue with excellent results. (LinkedIn 2015).

3 RESEARCH MP-SPICE SERVICE LTD.

3.1 Research Background

This study was commissioned by MP Maustepalvelu Oy that became part of the Barentz group in 2014, to find out how to improve communication between MP Maustepalvelu and Barentz sales managers in order to find how to support sales better. This was researched to find out what the current situation is in communication and to find out how to improve communication and what actions to take to promote sales. Since sales support is important for the people who are selling and for the potential customers, it is important to determine what can be developed and what can be provided as material to improve it. The purpose was also to find out what communication channels to use in communication and what material to provide for the sales managers.

The study was carried out by sending a questionnaire to all of the Barentz employees who are selling MP Maustepalvelu's products and services in Europe. The study was limited to these persons since it covers all of the Barentz sales managers. The people who are selling the products and services in MP Maustepalvelu's home country, Finland, was not taken into this study since the primary purpose is to develop the communication between Barentz and MP Maustepalvelu. The questionnaire was sent to people who were chosen by the CEO of Maustepalvelu and the customer relationship manager because their answers would bring the most value for MP Maustepalvelu.

The questionnaire was conducted for the sales managers. All together the questionnaire was sent to all of the nine people who are selling the products and services in Europe. The questionnaire was made to find out what the current situation in communication is, what communication channels they would prefer to use to communicate with MP Maustepalvelu and to find out what they want as material from MP Maustepalvelu that promotes their selling. The sales managers' point of view was taken into consideration to this study to find out what their opinions and perception on the current situation is and their view on what to develop and provide based on their answers. Their views were taken into consideration also, so that the research does not become bias in any way. The sellers are the people who know what kind of support they need.

3.2 Research methods

This study was conducted in two different parts using two different methods of research, a questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to the Barentz sales managers because of long distances to various parts in Europe using google forms.

The research was done as a qualitative research. Usually in a qualitative research, there are pre-selected individuals as was the case in this study. The individuals who were part of this research were picked carefully and pre-selected. Qualitative research can be conducted by using open-end questions or a theme. In this questionnaire half of the questions were open-end, the other half was multiple-choice or yes or no questions. The multiple-choice questions and yes or no questions were picked to serve and support the open-end questions. It does not matter whether the answers were answered truthfully, since they are considered to represent truthful opinions. In qualitative research the actual research and analysis are focused on that material that is currently existing for the research. Therefore, it cannot be compared with other already existing material. (Tilastokeskus).

Reliability and validity are always measured in research. Reliability means the reliability and repeatability of the results. In a qualitative research the reliability can be measured how accurately the researcher explains how the research is being conducted. Various stages of the research should be explained clearly and truthfully without hiding or changing anything in order to make the findings appear more appealing or worse than they actually are. Validity means that the research is measuring exactly what it is supposed to be measuring. To be able have a good research, there needs to be, right people, right questions and properly analyzed and interpreted findings. That shows the research is valid. Basically, in qualitative research, the validity forms when, findings, explanations and interpretations fit together. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009, 231-232; Inspirans n.d)

In this research, there was a questionnaire as research methods. Questionnaire was chosen since it is a one the methods in qualitative research (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 205). Due to the distances of the sales people compared to the researcher, the questionnaire was sent to them. The questionnaires questions were done individually from each other. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out what do the sales managers think the strengths of MP Maustepalvelu are and also what communication channels to use and the material the sales managers would want to have and also what they prefer as communication channel and also about possible training sessions or meetings.

Every method of research has its own pros and cons. The benefits of the questionnaire that was in this research is quick and relatively easy gathering of material. One problem could have been people not answering the questionnaire. That might occur in larger amount of people or when the respondents are not selected in advance. Usually in these smaller pre-selected groups of people who the questionnaire will be sent has a bigger percentage of respondents. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 196). The questionnaire was sent to all of the pre-selected people that the CEO of MP Maustepalvelu Oy had picked and it was expected to have a high answering percentage. Using a questionnaire to gather information can lead into, having to send reminders to answer the questionnaire. After sending a reminder the answering percentage usually goes higher (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 196). In this research, the respondents were reminded a few times.

The questionnaires purpose was to map what the current state of communication is, what material the sales managers would like to have from MP Maustepalvelu Oy as a support for their sales process. The purpose was to find out has the Barentz group's sales managers understood MP Maustepalvelus strengths and services correctly and do they both see the same issues. The point was to find means and methods on how MP Maustepalvelu could support the sales managers better. The questionnaire was done using Google Forms and the link of the questionnaire was sent via email to the designated people with a brief introduction and a few instructions. Email was chosen since the respondents were in another country and they were only a small group of nine people to whom the questionnaire was intended for. The answering percentage wanted to be high so there was given an incentive to answer by explaining the benefits the research would give them.

The questionnaire was sent to nine people. The CEO and Customer Relationship Manger from MP Maustepalvelu came up with the individuals since they were the only persons who sell MP Maustepalvelus products and services outside of Finland. Answers were wanted from everyone. Before the questionnaire was sent out the CEO of MP Maustepalvelu sent a message to the people telling them this research is being done and what the researchers name was so they knew that they are going to be contacted by the researcher and they would not dismiss the email or the questionnaire as spam email.

The questionnaire was sent out to the recipients 23.1.2017. A deadline was not given. After two weeks, only one response was received so a reminder email was sent. The reminder email had also the link rather than the whole questionnaire in it and that lead to getting six responses in just two days. On 20.3.2017 since no other responses were received other than the six, a new reminder was sent to the recipients and again in two weeks two more responses were received. Altogether eight responses out of nine were received.

4 ANALYSIS

4.1 Questionnaire

The first question was intended to find the primary communication channel what they prefer as the main method of contact. All the respondents wanted to be primarily in contact using email as the main communication channel. The other was using a phone for being in contact. Those two were also in the theory part, the most used communication channels. The long distances are the main reason why email would be the most suitable communication channel. The other reason is the amount of information email can include, such as attachments. One of the respondents also brought up a possible use of videoconferences to use as communication method. That could be used to get more people involved if necessary and everyone could give their opinions so it would be used more of a discussion than traditional email.

The second question related to the frequency of contacts from MP Maustepalvelu. The answers ranged from few times a day to once a month. Mostly they preferred few times a week or couple of times a month. That is due to the fact that some of the persons are not that frequently in contact with MP Maustepalvelu while others, depending on the project they have are more frequently in contact. There was an option for being in contact every few months but no one answered that. It became clear that in one month they wanted to be in contact once a week. There are other answers to other questions in the questionnaire that support the frequency of being in contact.

The third question was to find out the way how MP Maustepalvelu could bring more value to the sales managers by being either proactive or reactive. Proactive means in this situation that MP Maustepalvelu brings new ideas and novelties for the sales managers to use as marketing material or to provide sales support in advance. Reactive means that MP Maustepalvelu would give quick responses, either additional information on products or services or material such as samples or marketing material. This would mean that if the sales manager gets a request from their client to receive a sample from MP Maustepalvelu, they could provide samples in extremely short notice. The responses were both proactive and reactive. Neither one of them stood out and the answers were four for proactive and four for reactive. This can be explained with the relationship, the sales managers have with their clients and the fact that they have different projects going on with their clients, that depending on the nature of that project would mean either proactive or reactive actions from MP Maustepalvelu. One of the respondents gave an answer supporting that in the fourth question even though it was not intended for it. He said it depends from project to project.

Fourth question is an open-end question and the aim was to find out has MP Maustepalvelu communicated their strengths to the sales managers correctly. If the answers would differ from the perspective of the CEOs and customer relationship managers, the fact would be that the communication has not been effective and there is a misunderstood communication and the sales managers would be promoting MP Maustepalvelus products and services with wrong basis and would therefore the selling would not be efficient. One of the respondents did not answer to that question, but used it to explain the third question. Short reaction time, flexibility, knowledge in ingredients and mixing, innovativeness, new product development and a wide range of raw materials were all mentioned.

The fifth question was made to support the fourth question. It was intended to find out their current and future communication for the customers on what kind of image they would give about MP Maustepalvelu. The answers differed from each other. Supporting and understanding customers were the answers that came up in four answers. The others were mostly as the strengths in the fourth question such as flexible, competitive pricing and reactivity.

The sixth question was to find out what can MP Maustepalvelu provide them to support sales. That was also an open-end question, for they could write what they have discovered to be useful for them. Intranet was one communication channel they wanted to be used as a tool box where they could store and receive material for them to use easily. In the theory part that was also mentioned to be very user-friendly. Barentz has an intranet at their disposal and utilizing that came up. Company presentations also came up in several answers as did brochures and leaflets of the products and services. Seven responses were about the brochures and leaflets containing information about the company itself and products and services it has to offer for the clients. Presentations, samples of the products were also mentioned. Two respondents answered that the brochures should include the strengths of MP Maustepalvelu as well as the benefits of working with them, such as quick responses, competitive pricing, innovation, good research and development and how it would help to bring the customer to their launch.

The seventh question was to find out what kind of information the sales managers need when presenting MP Maustepalvelus products and services. The options were: technical information on the products, technical information of the services, commercial information on the products and commercial information of the services. In the answers the information of the products was viewed as more important the commercial information on the products and technical information on the products stood out. It makes sense that they would like to have more information on the products since the services are not the main issue what they are offering for the customers. The importance of the information

about the products also came up in other questions and it makes sense since what they are selling is spices and spice blends. The services belong in the making of the spice blends while developing them. If there are commercial information on the products the services can be included in there.

The eight question was to find out a need for visits from MP Maustepalvelu. The answers were mostly in favor of the visits. The reactive and proactive aspects came up also. The general opinion was that the visits also depends heavily on the projects that are going on. Four people answered, if needed and depending on the project. There was also one answer that was, for a tour with innovative proposals for the market. That would be a more proactive visit. And another answer was, yes definitely that can also be seen as a proactive visit. The answers that favored visits depending on the project can be viewed as more reactive way of organizing visits. One responded that visits are not that important yet since the volumes are not that big yet and one answered maybe twice a year is an appropriate number of visits. Building a good relationship also came up suggesting regular visits from MP Maustepalvelu and for building a relationship, regular visits would be better for the face-to-face interaction as well as building trust between MP Maustepalvelu and the customer.

The ninth and tenth questions were about the need for training for MP Maustepalvelus products and services. For the ninth question that was for the need for training, four people answered yes, three persons answered maybe and only one person answered no. A need for a training could be necessary since half of the respondents felt they need training and three people were not sure. The tenth question was about how often would they be available for training sessions from MP Maustepalvelu. The general tone was not very often. There were answers for if needed and once or twice a year. One answer was that a training session would be good when the training would have commercial benefit. Few answers were longer saying a larger meeting could be held among the Barentz group's sales managers so they could have a more of a discussion where they could share ideas and create innovative ideas. In these answers the need for training sessions are also quite heavily revolving around the ongoing projects. So again, here the projects that are going on determine the need for the training sessions. One person also informed about Germanys sales teams training sessions that take place in every second week nearly every month saying that, it would be possible to utilize those sessions to arrange a bigger training session.

The eleventh and twelfth questions are about the need and valuableness of meetings. The eleventh question is about online meetings and four people said yes, they are beneficial for them and three persons said maybe. Only one person said the online meetings are not beneficial. The twelfth question was about face-to-face meetings. No one responded no to the twelfth question, six persons answered yes and two persons maybe.

There seems to be a clear need for meetings and they are considered as valuable form of communication. As the theory also suggests the online meetings can be easier and more cost effective than face-to-face meetings but should be kept quite short. Due to the long distances MP Maustepalvelu and the sales managers have, it would make sense that online meetings are beneficial since they can be a good substitute for traditional face-to-face meetings. However, as the theory part also suggests, the face-to-face meetings are extremely valuable since there is the human interaction part more involved. A general tone is, that meetings are needed and considered valuable.

Thirteenth question was simply a question about the need of a newsletter to be delivered by MP Maustepalvelu. Four people said that there is a definite need for the newsletter to be delivered regularly for the customers, three people said maybe and only one said no. The newsletters content was not mentioned in the question or what kind of information it would contain. That might be a sign why people answered maybe, since they were not sure what information it would hold. The sixth question provides a supportive answer also to this question since there, some people responded that brochures and leaflets and newsletters could be beneficial. Also in the fourteenth question, someone wrote that sharing success stories and other information of the company's current situation would be beneficial since no one really knows what their partners or other companies are doing.

The fourteenth question was simply for comments, suggestions and ideas for improvement. It was added to the questionnaire because if the other questions arouse ideas or comments, respondents could add them to the last section. Also, if there is something that they have noticed, that did not come up in the questionnaire, they could add them there. Only two persons said there is not any comments at this stage. Six people answered with various comments. Regular innovative proposals that are linked to current trends in food industry, was one of the answers and there the need for MP Maustepalvelu to be more proactive can be seen. The newsletter was also mentioned a couple of times and sharing success stories and informing partners how MP Maustepalvelu is doing. Lack of promotion material was mentioned and the use of Barentz intranet. They would like that MP Maustepalvelu would use more of the intranet since all sales managers have access to it. Since it is easy and could reduce the amount of emails sent, the intranet could be used since there is a possibility of sharing files and give other promotion material for the sales managers to use. There was also a comment that MP Maustepalvelu should invest in marketing material since altogether they see that MP Maustepalvelu has some good strengths and that it should be made visible for customers also and by providing promotion material, newsletters and everything that supports sales is extremely beneficial for the sales people. One person also suggested to have a meeting because some of the yes or no questions are not that easy to answer with yes or no questions. That might be because

the projects they are working on, are not so similar with each other and therefore, each of the projects needs to be thought individually from each other and that also means that the communication needs to be flexible depending on the project.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter answers the question: “How can MP Maustepalvelu develop communication with Barentz sales personnel and what material can they provide to support the sales process. Recommendations are based on the theory examined in this thesis as well as the research and analysis. Recommendations deal with the possibilities that MP Maustepalvelu has at their disposal to develop communicating and providing sales support.

5.1 Recommendations for communication

Considering the long distances, between MP Maustepalvelu and Barentz sales personnel email should be considered as the main communication tool. The Barentz intranet and the Microsoft OneDrive for Business are both good options to use to send and receive information. The company should evaluate both of them thoroughly and think about using at least one or the other if not even both since it reduces the email messages that can lead to decrease in efficiency.

Barentz has an intranet but it has problems with it. It does not work all the time and it can be impossible to login there at times. Furthermore, at this moment it is not possible for MP Maustepalvelu to add any information on the Barentz intranet by themselves. The way they are now able to add material and other information there is, via Barentz own people. That poses a problem with it not being particularly convenient for MP Maustepalvelu. MP Maustepalvelu and Barentz have been talking about the possibility of MP Maustepalvelu being able to add their own material there but it has not yet become a reality. If the Barentz intranet is easy to use and it does not crash that often, it would be a viable option to share material and information. Then the material would always be secure there and always available and ready to use by whoever needs it. If however the reliability problems of the intranet continue, then it would not be convenient and user-friendly. Intranets whole idea is being user-friendly, therefore Barentz should fix the issues that are existing.

MP Maustepalvelu is at the moment thinking of using Microsoft OneDrive for Business to share material among their own company. One recommendation is also to utilize that to support sales. The way it can be done is to send a link for the sales personnel. When they receive a link,

they are able to access the OneDrive for Business. The link can be sent to one person, who then logs in to the OneDrive for Business with his or her own username and password, usually it is linked to their email. Then they are able to receive and add information and material there. One thing to keep on mind is the possibility of the link spreading to other people, when the link is sent to people that do not work directly for MP Maustepalvelu. There should be taken extra steps in making sure the link does not go to people it is not intended for, since it might lead to sensitive company information disclosure. That could be a viable alternative for the current intranet that is somewhat unreliable and since it does not yet contain any information of MP Maustepalvelu.

It became clear in the responses to the questionnaire that sales support depends on the nature of the project they have. Since they have a variety of different projects, it would be best to evaluate each project individually in order to determine the best communication channel to use in that project and also the material needed for each project.

Since there are so many different projects going on that require different information and different promotion material, the use of intranet or OneDrive for business would be a good option. There is a possibility also to have multiple folders in both Barentz intranet and OneDrive for Business. For example the sales personnel can have a fixed set of material that has the common information of MP Maustepalvelu in one folder and in that folder there can be sub folders each having for example the person's name as the folder name. In that personal folder there can be material they need but moreover they can have other folders in that folder which are for different projects. That way the information needed can be easily transmitted using the folders. MP Maustepalvelu does not even have to control the material in the sales personnel's folder, but just provide the material in the main folder where whoever needs it, can copy it to their own folder. This would get the sales personnel involved and decrease the amount of work that MP Maustepalvelu has to do, moreover it is way more convenient than traditional email.

The need and necessity for meetings should also be evaluated, since the Barentz sales personnel did value the face-to-face aspect in meetings. One respondent gave a contact information of a person responsible for organizing meetings in Germany. Since they have a meeting every second week, nearly every month that could be a good chance to organize a larger meeting with the sales managers to have a discussion on the current situation and future plans.

It could also be useful to think about investing to equipment needed to have online meetings and video conferences. That would be a relatively cheap way to have, for example monthly check-ins from the sales personnel and have discussions what they have noticed in their work. Also the check-ins via video conferences should be considered as a valuable tool

in receiving and giving feedback to both directions. The video conferences could also be used as a tool to provide trainings from MP Maustepalvelu. New material for promoting sales could be introduced as well as training on the services that MP Maustepalvelu is providing to its customers. This would allow more interactive discussion on the material introduced, rather than just sending an email with information on the material and the material as an attachment.

Regular visits to customers should be also taken into consideration for two reasons. One reason is to build and sustain relationship between MP Maustepalvelu and the customers. The other reason is that coming up with innovative solutions based on the food trends were mentioned in the responses to the questionnaire. That would show the MP Maustepalvelus' research and development department and also provide insight to the client and possible new ideas for products for both parties.

In order to cut travelling costs, the visits to customers and training sessions and meetings for the sales managers could be combined to reduce unnecessary traveling miles.

5.2 Recommendations for material

There were many answers regarding on material, needed for sales support and all in all the sales personnel had thought about the needs that they have. Different leaflets and brochures came up on the responses quite a lot. More developed portfolio should be done.

Since there is a need for leaflets containing information on the company and products and services, combination of them would be the best as a general data. If one single leaflet is done then there should be an evaluation done of the balance or the ratio of the products and services that MP Maustepalvelu wants to get through to its potential customers, since it would help in designing the leaflets. For example if MP Maustepalvelu wants to have a ratio of 50-50 in the leaflets, 50% information on the products and ingredients and 50% of the services they can provide for their customers. The sales managers pointed out that MP Maustepalvelu has good strengths and that should be inform to the customers. Even though the general responses to the question number seven, was to have more information on the products, the information about services should be added also, since there are so many different things to do with the products to suit the customers' needs.

However, there should be also a leaflet containing more information in detail on the products and services, so the company leaflet could be a separate general leaflet. Altogether, it would be best to have a few different leaflets, a general company leaflet, leaflet on more about products and leaflet on more about the services.

The company leaflet could contain information about MP Maustepalvelu at least in English but it should be considered to translate it in another language as well, for example German. It could contain information about the company and the products and services, listing the main products, ingredients and services and also some information on the company. That would be kind of a general leaflet, little information on everything.

The leaflet, for just the products could be a wide one listing the main, if not all of the spices and products since that came up a few times in the responses. An overview of the products could be useful with some picture attachments of some of the products, included to the leaflets.

The possibility for having a leaflet just for services could also have its benefits, since the clients can be demanding but moreover to explain, for example the process of mixing and research and development a little more precisely. Since, selling spices and supplying customers with different spices and ingredients is not the main business of MP Maustepalvelu, the leaflets should contain information on the services they provide and moreover what they can do with the spices and how they fulfill the customers' needs. Also the research and development and the quick responses should be more visible.

Newsletter also came up since it helps to inform people what is going on in the company. The newsletters should contain success stories as well as new wins. It could be done electronically, that way it is a lot cheaper than a paper version and it would reach people more quickly. The newsletter does not have to be sent on weekly or even a monthly bases. It can be sent every other month for example every second Monday. That way the information on what is going on with MP Maustepalvelu reaches people who want to know and it does not require too much work to be done if sent every other month.

6 CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this research summarize how the objectives were met and how the research question was answered. In the responses received from the Barentz group's sales personnel, there can be seen development issues both in communication and the material that is needed to support sales activities. Both of the objectives were reached by analyzing the responses received from Barentz sales managers, by comparing and finding viable solutions from the theory part. Using the theory as a guide to develop the communication and the theory of sales support, the objectives can be reached and, based on the conducted research, clear recommendations can be given to the commissioning company MP Maustepalvelu Oy.

In the theory part, effective communication methods and communication channels were introduced and both the effectiveness and challenging sectors were all mentioned. In the sales support theory, the role and importance of sales support were introduced.

First objective was to develop communication and find effective communication channels between MP Maustepalvelu and Barentz group. Through the research, the use of email was determined as the main communication channel due to long distances between people, but also the use of Barentz intranet should be utilized to distribute and receive information and promoting material.

The second objective was to find out different material for supporting sales. In the responses, there were clear need for promoting material such as samples, leaflets containing information on products and a newsletter that MP Maustepalvelu could publish every few months. The reactivity and proactivity of MP Maustepalvelu was considered as highly important in the responses, which is why meetings and training sessions provided by MP Maustepalvelu, were also recommended.

The future research possibilities were also mentioned in order to further compliment this research. Since the projects can be so different to one another, their investigation on an individual level were mentioned in order to specify the communication channels and the material needed to promote sales.

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Questionnaire for MP Maustepalvelu Oy

Questionnaire for MP Maustepalvelu Oy

This questionnaire is made to help both parties, when it comes to marketing MP Maustepalvelu Oy. The main purpose is to hear from you what kind of issues you see, or what has come up, that MP could do better and what can we do and what can we provide, to help you

1. Q: Which way do you want us to be primarily in contact with you?

Options:

- Phone
- Email
- Skype or other online application
- Face-to-face

2. How frequently would you want MP spice service to be in contact with you so it brings the most value?

Options:

- Few times a week
- Once a week
- Couple of times a month
- Once a month
- Every couple of months

3. In what way, does working with MP bring you the most value and why?

Options:

- Proactive (New ideas and novelties)
- Reactive (Quick response to you and your customers' needs)

4. What would you consider MP Spice services strengths are?**5. Is there a certain image of MP Spice service that you would want to get through to your customer and what would it be?****6. What can we provide to help you, when presenting MP to your customers?****7. When presenting MP Spice service, do you need:**

Options:

- Technical information of the products
- Technical information of the services

- Commercial information of the products
- Commercial information of the services

8. Would you like to have someone from MP visiting you and your customers?

9. Do you think you need training from MP regarding our products and services?

Options:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

10. How often are you available for training sessions from MP?

11. Are regular online meetings beneficial for you?

Options:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

12. Are regular face-to-face meetings beneficial for you?

Options:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

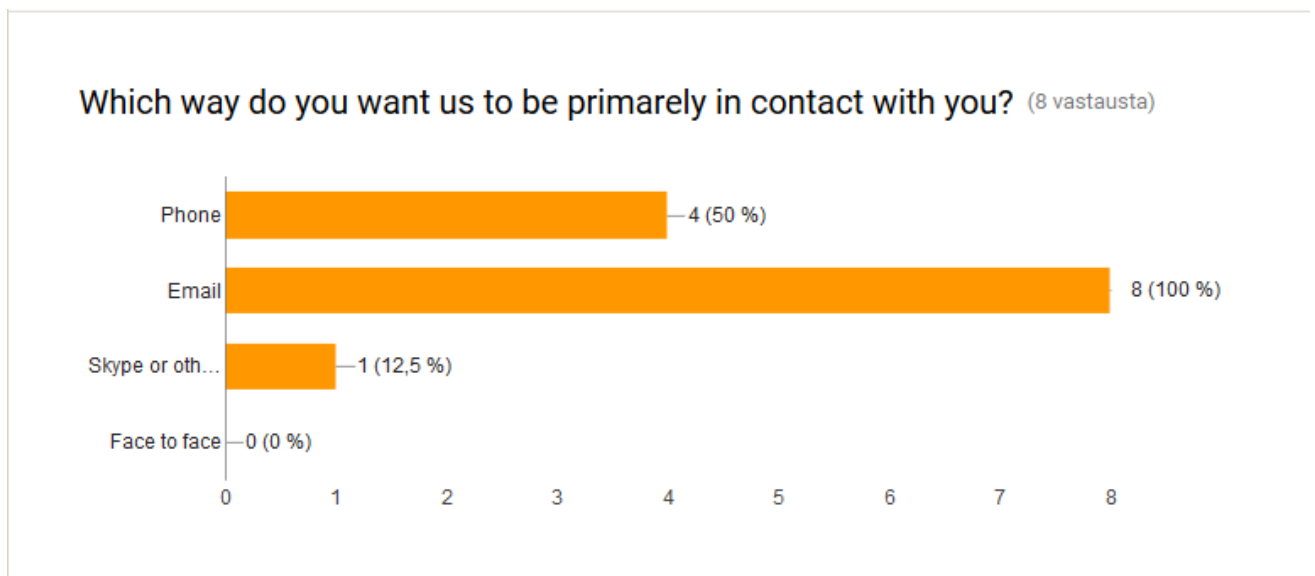
13. Is there a need for a newsletter for our customers that would be delivered regularly?

Options:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

14. Comments, suggestions and ideas for improvement?

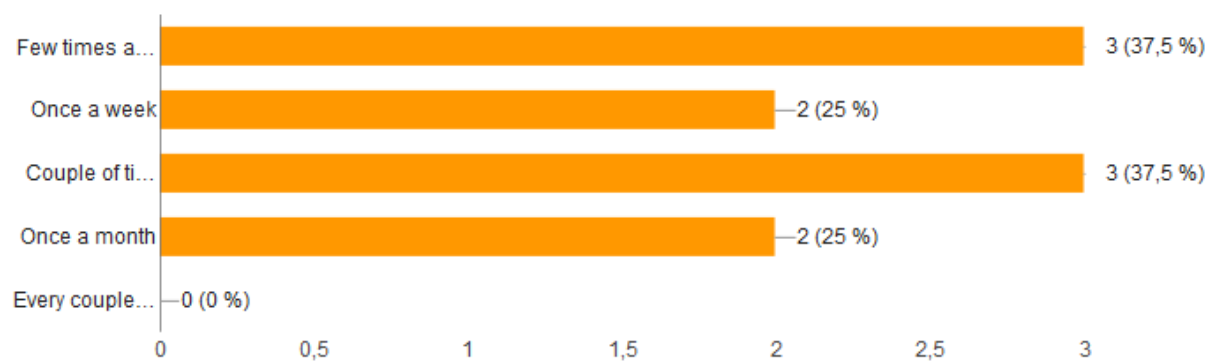
Summary for question 1.



Summary for question 2.

How frequently would you want MP spice service to be in contact with you so it brings the most value?

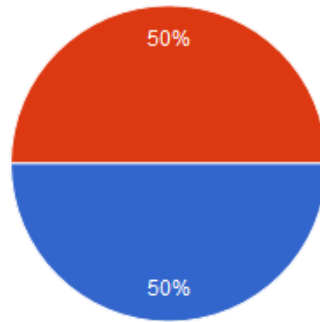
(8 vastausta)



Summary for question 3.

In what way, does working with MP bring you the most value and why?

(8 vastausta)



- Proactive (New ideas and novelties)
- Reactive (Quick response to you and your customers needs)

Summary for question 5.

Is there a certain image of MP Spice service that you would want to get through to your customer and what would it be?

(8 vastausta)

Understanding customer needs leading to (semi-) tailor made products

Nordic producer, long experience in blending, know how in mixing ingredients. Good and competitive pricing.

Solution provider

reactivity +++

reliable, flexibility

cleanlabel blends

reliable good quality within short lead times / innovative functional blends

Fully support with a high knowledge of the market and ingredients

Summary for question 6.

What can we provide to help you, when presenting MP to your customers?

(8 vastausta)

Tool box / Folder of MP high runners apt for Western Europe

Company presentation, proactive new ideas, quick response to requests and competitive pricing.

Company and product leaflets

price/ractivity/innovation/new idea/bring the customer in their launch

good brochures and leaflets showing the competences of MP, like flexibility , quick deliveries, cost effective, good R&D

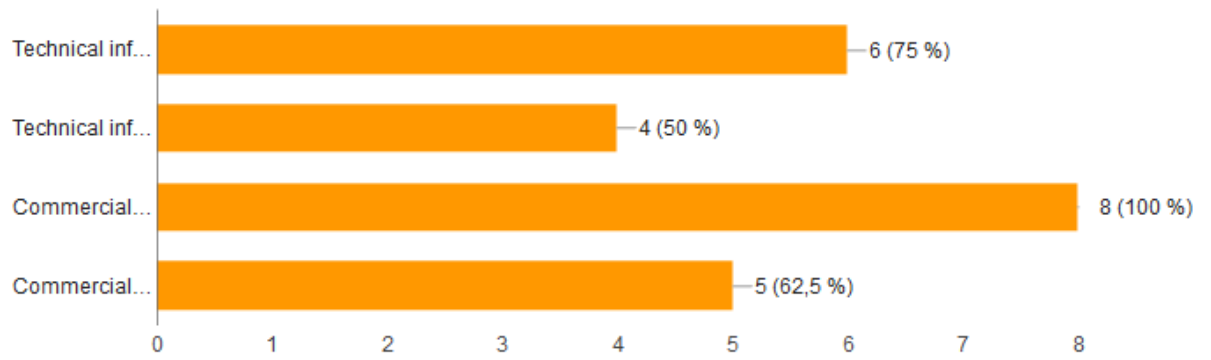
leaflets with productnames and unique sales proposal (USP)

I would appreciate to show some examples out of MP assortment as overview (list) as well as photo and some of them as product sample. Helpful would be some application recipes.

Brochures, presentations, application sheets, samples

Summary for question 7.

When presenting MP Spice service, do you need: (8 vastausta)



Summary for question 8.

Would you like to have someone from MP visiting you and your customers?

(8 vastausta)

For a tour with innovative proposals for the market

If needed.

Yes, definitely.

later in the year (already done) think about twice a year.

A regular visit is for some customers key to create more business as you need to build a relationship.

not yet, volumes aren't that important actually

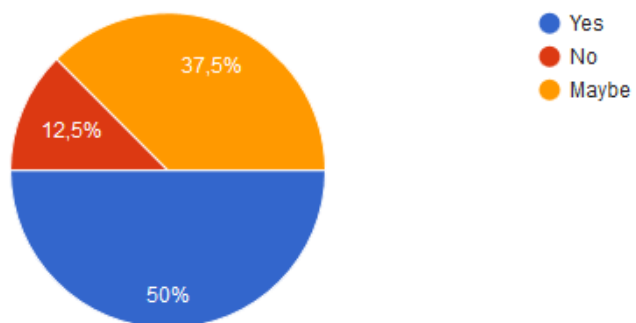
only necessary and appreciated when it comes to complex systems and context

Deepened on the project

Summary for question 9.

Do you think you need training from MP regarding our products and services?

(8 vastausta)



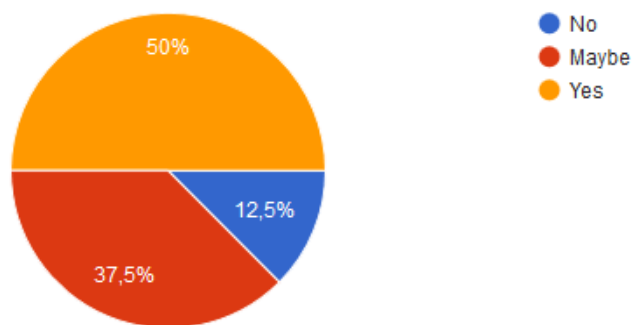
Summary for question 10.

How often are you available for training sessions from MP? (8 vastausta)

Training sessions should be organized about once every two years
As often as needed.
I already had training from MP but depending on new projects/potentials we can always arrange another one. Rather than "How often"; "how necessary" is important for me. If it is necessary, worthwhile having the discussion, we arrange ourselves accordingly. A global meeting for whole Barentz group meat sales managers could be given; we can share ideas from different markets and get new ideas.
every 2 years
when even needed and if it fits in my agenda
Once a year
Sales team Germany is coming together to Oberhausen every 2nd week of nearly every month. There would be a good chance to have a mutual training. Please call <input type="text"/>
When its a commercial benefit

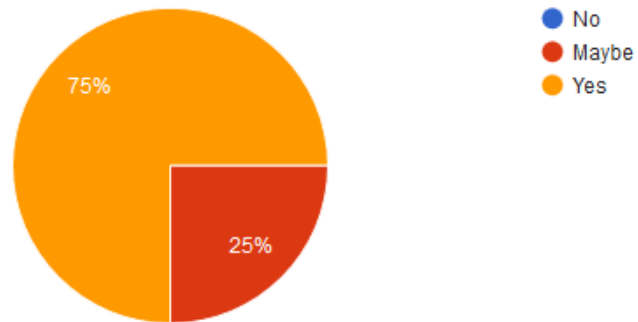
Summary for question 11.

Are regular online meetings beneficial for you? (8 vastausta)



Summary for question 12.

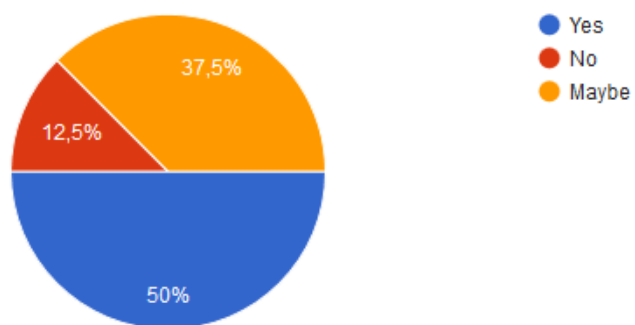
Are regular face-to-face meetings beneficial for you? (8 vastausta)



Summary for question 13.

Is there a need for a newsletter for our customers that would be delivered regularly?

(8 vastausta)



Summary for question 14.

Comments, suggestions and ideas for improvement? (8 vastausta)

Do regular innovative proposals linked to current trends

Not at this stage.

Anything that supports marketing is more than welcome... Newsletter is a good idea, cause we don't generally know what the others are doing or what you are doing.. New wins/success stories should be shared in the group more effectively.

not at that time.

MP has some good strengths that should be made more visible to the customers. There is not a lot of promotion material. Also MP should use the SharePoint tool on the Barentz Web more. All Sales Managers have access to this.

Share success stories and a more developed productportfolio

In Germany we have to be a bit careful to offer "simple" seasoning blends to end consumer product manufacturers, because we are serving the bigger spice blenders with commodities. So they might see this as a sort of competition. But I think we may offer your opportunities and skills also to them if they would like to outsource the one or the other blend due to capacity (or allergen) problems...
But due to these circumstance we will have to concentrate on functional blends which give a yield benefit to the end product manufacturers while reducing E-Nos. In Germany I would like to concentrate on binding compounds for the meat analogues at present. Also heat stable red colors (without E-No) would meet higher interest. So these NPDs would be proactive.

For these questions its better to have a meeting together because there is more between yes and no.