What is customer value in business-to-business professional services?

A case study on which factors that leads to customer value in business-to-business professional services.

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Executive summary.

This thesis has suggested a framework, ProServVal, for identifying of factors that leads to perceived customer value among business-to-business professional services. The framework was applied to a case of a Norwegian engineering consultancy, and the collected data material suggested six overall dimensions of value adding factors: Core service, peripheral service, relationship, trust, understanding and adaptation, and commitment.

The findings are largely in line with earlier findings described in relevant literature, and confirm the core service dimension to encompass some of the more important value-adding factors, as ‘reliable deliveries’ and the ‘competence’. Peripheral service is largely supported through ‘responsiveness’, but also including a value adding factor of ‘physical meetings’.

Findings also indicates that the dimension of relationship is determining customer value clearly through ‘cooperation’ and ‘communication’, but a strong undefinable psychological factor of ‘chemistry’ points out a important value adding factor within the dimension of relationship. Trust is confirmed by the empirical findings as an independent dimension, indicate that trust goes beyond the actual delivery and is a general value-adding factor for the interviewees.

Understanding and adaptation is representing a broad two-sided dimension that is encompass value adding factors as the service providers ability to understand the customer, and also the value adding factor of the customer’s understanding of the service provider. The dimension of commitment was found to contain value-adding elements as ‘engagement’ and ‘extra mile’.

The results of this study provides a framework that may have implications for engineering consultancies in Norway, but might also provide an insight of customer value adding factors in other business-to-business professional services.

Keywords: Business-to-business professional service, Customer value, ProServVal, Customer satisfaction, Engineering consultancies, IMP.
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1 What is customer value in business-to-business professional services?

The value delivered by business-to-business professional service can be many times the investment in resources, where well-delivered professional service can help their customers in meeting different objectives, operate efficiently and ethically, and have the potential return of ten or hundred times the cost (Czerniawska & Smith, 2010). This can be a management consultancy, which delivers an innovation strategy to speed up the product development, so the company can become a first mover in the industry. It can be a recruitment firm identifying and hiring the correct employee, who may serve a lifetime in the company. Or an engineering consultant, delivering advices that lead to an energy efficient and environmental friendly building, which annually reduces the energy costs significant and gives a good reputation for responsibility.

There exists clear findings of that perceived value leads to satisfied customers in a business-to-business professional service environment, and that customers are re-purchasing services if they are satisfied (e.g. Lapierre, 1997; La, Patterson & Styles, 2008; Patterson, Lester & Spreng, 1997). But in the state of business-to-business professional services the effects of the service often are delayed and unclear, and it is difficult for the customer to evaluate different service providers (e.g. Czerniawska & Smith, 2010). In the state of business-to-business professional services the customer, the individual that actually takes part in the service exchange delivery process, often is an experienced senior employee in the purchasing organisation, that is likely to have a significant saying on the selection of service provider (Czerniawska & Smith, 2010).

This points in the direction of customer perceived value to be an important factor, but what is the customer’s value in business-to-business professional services? This question opens up for a service strategy with a focus on which elements that add value to the customer that are in contact with the consultant as a central element. How can service providers ensure that they add value to the customer in the service exchange process and retain and win new market shares, and survive in a competitive market? This focus can contribute to improve the level of value perceived by the customer.
Business-to-business professional service sector is increasingly gaining more importance in the post-modern economy, because operations tend to become increasingly complex and knowledge intensive, with a view on technologies, regulations, and internationalisation. It exists considerable evidence of the relation between elements leading to *constructs of satisfaction* and different positive effects, as customer retention and positive word-of-mouth (e.g. Patterson & Spreng, 1997; La *et al.*, 2008; Ojasalo, 2001).

Simultaneously the cost of attracting new customers exceeds the cost of retaining them. And in an environment where competitors quickly copy competitive advantages, a focus on *customer value* is essential to sustain in the business (Lapierre, 2001). Meanwhile corporations are increasingly concentrating at their core product, and outsourcing other parts of their processes (Hirvonen & Helander, 2001).

This leads to greater competition where firms are competing on the delivering superior value to the customers to retain the competitive advantage (La *et al.*, 2008). The professional service sector had a 14 % increase in man-years from 2006 to 2008 only in Denmark (Bøgelund, 2011). Under these circumstances it is crucial for the sustainability for a business-to-business service provider, not only to know what adds value on the organisational level, but also identify what adds value to the customer.

This thesis will focus on what *perceived customer value* is and how it can be identified. This will be done through a theoretical review and construction of a framework for identifying factors that leads to customer value. This framework will be applied to a case study of a Norwegian engineering consultancy. The framework will later be revised according to findings, and recommendations for improving value will be given on the basis of the theoretic framework and the empirical data.

A brief introduction of the characteristics and importance of professional services and of business-to-business services will follow in the two next sub-chapters. This will be followed by a presentation of the case company and the problem formulation, before the chapter will be ended by a brief overview of the rest of the thesis.

### 1.1 Professional services.

While there has been a lot of research on factors leading to satisfied customers in services as travel, hospitality and trade since the mid-eighties, the focus on professional services has been less notable. A considerable part of the research made on *customer satisfaction constructs* has
been conducted in non-professional services, which is not necessarily valid in the professional business-to-business sector (Ojasalo, 2001).

Professional services are purchased in order to get competence and resources they do not have inside the organisation (Czerniawska & Smith, 2010). This is typically a wide range of different service exchange processes, including different plans, reports, advises, or suggestions. This can stretch from external, IT-departments, to the use of external account departments, recruiting firms, engineering consultants and so on.

Professional services are differentiated from other services in many aspects. The production and consumption of the service is usually happening simultaneously in the service exchange. In the often highly complex, heterogeneous and specialised environment the customer usually is lacking the competences or resources to evaluate the performance of the service provider. Also professional services often have unclear both starting points and goals, often containing different credence services (Ojasalo, 2001; Lapierre, 1997; Sonne, 1999).

This can be exemplified by a case where a customer buys an air ticket, the customer immediately knows that the service exchange will lead him from airport A to airport B. Maybe the customer will perceive added value during the service exchange, due to arrival before scheduled time, nice and smiling food serving stewards, wireless internet on board or other credence services. But the customer knew before departure how and where the service exchange would take him. In the case of a customer of engineering consultants purchasing advices the customer not necessarily knows either the starting destination, nor the final destination, often including not knowing how to get from A to B.

1.2 Business-to-business services.

Service delivery in business-to-business professional services are often characterised by being longer and with a higher intensity then traditional services (Ojasalo, 2001). Also in a professional service the purchaser is likely to represent an organisation not an individual (e.g. Sonne, 1999; Woo & Ennew, 2005). The service exchange process is usually carried out by an experienced person in the organisation, which often has a significant saying on the purchasing or re-buying situation (Czerniawska & Smith, 2010). A construction site leader from the conducted case study can serve as an example of this, as he represents the constructor organisation, but is the person from the constructor with the most direct contact with the specific engineering consultant. This person single handily decided which company and consultant to choose. Further on many business-to-business professional service providers
and receivers spend a huge part of their working life in service exchanges which is likely to make the service exchange process and which leads to value in the exchange, important.

The features of business-to-business professional services contribute to making the result and outcome of the services even more intangible than regular services, and in combination with the characteristics of professional services this makes it difficult to measure and evaluate, for both customer and provider (Czerniawska & Smith, 2010). The same characteristics also raise difficulties regarding how a service provider can add value and satisfy the customer.

1.3 Case study.

In order to provide empirical data about value adding factors in a business-to-business professional service this thesis will take the use of a case of an engineering consultancy. The data collected from the case will be applied to the theoretical framework, in order to test the framework and to identify the most important value adding factors.

Engineering consultancies are classic business-to-business professional services, and by example Woo and Ennew (2005) and Lapierre (1997) have investigated this sector respectively in Hong Kong and Canada. The selected case company is a Norwegian sub-division of an international engineering consultancy being one of the market leaders in the Nordic region. Creating value through the delivery of professional consulting services is their business model. They have over 5000 employees and operations in over 10 countries. The Norwegian division has got operations in over 20 locations nationwide. Their business model is largely focusing on creating value through delivery of professional consulting services, to society, clients and shareholders (Case company’s Annual report 2010). They are among the top ten rated employers for engineers in Norway in both 2011 and 2010, indicating that they have got a well-known and good reputation (www.universumglobal.com, 14.06.2011). The case study was originated from the engineering consultancy’s headquarters in the Oslo-region, where five consultants and thirteen of their customers were interviewed.
1.4 Problem formulation.

In order to deliver customer value in business-to-business professional service environment, the service providers need to identify what value for the customer is. As mentioned over, there has been less research on satisfaction professional services than other services, despite the increasingly importance of professional services. The existing literature clearly points out the actual service deliveries, also named technical or core service, to be of large importance for satisfaction and value creation (Lapierre, 1997; La et al., 2008; Patterson et al., 1997, Caceres 2005). But in a professional service setting the importance of the service delivery is likely to already be known by the service providers (Lapierre, 1997), as well as service deliveries in business-to-business professional service environments are facing several measurement and evaluation challenges due to the characteristic’s of the services. So in order for business-to-business service providers to provide value for customers also outside the scope of the actual deliveries, they need to find the determinants for customer value. This leads to an explanatory study with the following research questions:

**Figure 1:** Overall research question and sub questions.
The main focus in this thesis is to investigate which determinants customer value has in a business-to-business professional service environment. In order to do that, there will be constructed a theoretical framework that can be used to identify which factors lead to customer value in a business-to-business professional service, based on a broad perspective of the existing literature.

The framework will be applied to a case study of an engineering consultancy, where the customer’s value adding factors will be investigated and analysed with the framework. Research question a) will be answered through a theoretical presentation of the construct of value and review of the relevant literature in the field of service research. Based on the reviewed literature, a framework to identify value will be presented. The dimensions of this framework will be discussed on basis of the empirical findings from the case study used in this thesis. The answer of research question a) will take the form as a reviewed framework for identification of customer value.

Research question b) will be answered through the application of the framework’s dimensions and structure in order to group the case study’s reported parameters of value creation. The final answer of research question b) will take form as a table where the main determinants of customer value is listed up.

Research question c) will be answered with the case company as a starting point, through an analysis of the findings of customer value, the reviewed literature and knowledge of the company. The final answer of research question c) will take form as management recommendations on what the case company should emphasize in order to improve customer value.

1.5 Structure of the thesis.

In order to answer the research questions chapter 2 will present the methodology chapter where the general research approach of the assignment will be presented in chapter 2.1. Chapter 2.2 will briefly go through the thesis’ research design, including choice of methods and the data collection and use of theory. The generalizability of this case study will be discussed in chapter 2.3.

The next chapter to follow is a review of the theoretical development of constructs of customer satisfaction in business-to-business professional services. This review will start with a general discussion of the constructs of customer satisfaction in chapter 3.1 and continue with literature from the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm, organisational buying
behaviour and value approaches in chapter 3.2 – 3.4. This will lead to a presentation of a theoretical framework, based on the reviewed literature, which can be used to identify customer value in chapter 3.5.

In chapter 4 the analysis will start with a brief presentation and discussion of the overall empirical findings from the case in chapter 4.1. Chapter 4.2 comprises a discussion of the different factors from the case and the dimension from the framework. This will be structured with one sub chapter for each dimension including a discussion on elements that does not fit into the framework. After this a theoretical discussion of the framework and an empirical discussion of the case, will follow respectively in chapter 4.3 and 4.4.

This will lead to a shared conclusion where the framework’s applicableness on the data material is stated, and where recommendations for which value adding factors that should be emphasised are presented in chapter 5. The reference list will be found in chapter 6, followed by relevant appendixes.
2 Methodology.

This chapter will present the overall research approach, followed by a presentation of the research design, which contains the choice of methods, the case study, data collection, and theoretical framework. The chapter will be finished by a discussion of generalizability of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodological standpoint and choices that have been done in the research process.

2.1 Research approach.

A lot of the existing research tries to measure or model the different constructs and dimensions of customer satisfaction. This research is purely focusing on determinants of the customers perceived service value, and will not address directions or further relationships between the different dimensions and constructs of customer satisfaction.

The aim for this research is to be operational and provide relevant and important information to professional service providers on which factors they should emphasise in order to succeed in the business-to-business market.

2.1.1 Good service as the overall goal.

A significant part of the research in the service field is grounded upon different marketing perspectives. This leads to an understanding that the overall goal is to sell more services. Selling services is a key factor for a company’s sustainability. Customer satisfaction and its related constructs lead to increased sales, but also several other beneficial targets. For instance examples exist on interrelation between customer satisfaction and high level of quality of working life (Strand, 2011). This relationship might be stronger in professional services where the relation between provider and customer is more long term.

This thesis seeks a standpoint where the overall customer satisfaction, with all its potential benefits, is the overall goal, and not increased sales. The marketing perspective is not necessarily opposing the service as such-perspective, but customer satisfaction is likely to have benefits, which is not included in the pure marketing perspective.
2.2 Research design.

This assignment will offer a single case study where the literature is reviewed in order to construct a framework for determination of customer value. The data is collected through interviews with considerable prior instrumentation, whereas the main measures and frameworks are used in the data collection (Silverman, 2005). The theoretical framework is further used to sort the different findings from the data collection in factors that fit within the dimensions of this framework. Then the framework is adjusted in accordance to empirical data.

2.2.1 Choose of methods.

Several of the earlier studies regarding the constructs of customer satisfaction and their determinants have been conducted with quantitative enquiries (e.g. Patterson & Spreng, 1997; Woo & Ennew, 2005; Lapierre, Filiatrault & Chebat, 1999; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985). The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to a further understanding of the complex area of satisfaction constructs and their antecedent dimensions and factors in business-to-business professional services, and not to confirm or disconfirm earlier findings. To this perspective a qualitative research approach is well suited (Lincoln, 2002). The researcher has chosen to use qualitative research methods in order to investigate what are the determinants of customer value, which should be emphasised, in a business-to-business professional service in order to increase customer value. This will be supported by quantitative second hand data from the case organisation.

2.2.1.1 Qualitative methods.

Qualitative data represents a deeper level of investigation than the customer survey the case organisation conducted. Whereas the latter data differentiates factors as level of commitment, level of responsibility, level of knowledge etc., the quantitative interviews seek to provide a deeper insight of more concrete factors that are leading to value. Qualitative studies can choose from a wide variety of research methods as interviews, observations, focus groups, text analysis or recordings. Interviews are likely to provide access to more relevant data of capturing perceptions of value, quality or satisfaction from a service exchange
process, than observations, text and data analysis. And make it possible with a larger selection than focus groups (Silverman, 2005).

2.2.2 The case study.
As written above the empirical data of value adding factors for this thesis will be gathered from a case of an engineering consultancy house, where the customers and consultants are under subject for investigation. This will be conducted as an instrumental case study one single case is examined in order to provide a wider insight of the topic (Stake, 2000 in Silverman, 2005).

A case study is a detailed investigation based on a study of one specific unit. Case studies can offer a depth and offers detailed knowledge of many different variables, and a can offer holistic understanding of the investigated unit. Case studies can take the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods, and this investigation will combine the qualitative interviews with a quantitative survey (Hellevik, 2006).

Generalizing findings can be seen as a goal for research (Hellevik, 2006), but a single case study based on cannot easily be made valid for a larger population (Silverman, 2005). On the other hand Yin (2002 in Andersen 2008) points out that case studies can be generalized out from an inductive perspective. A discussion of this case study’s generalizability will follow in chapter 2.3.

2.2.2.1 The unit of analysis.
Perceived value is a construct that is individual and situational depended (Holbrook & Corfman 1985), and therefore the unit of analysis is the customer itself, with the customer’s perception of value. In this specific case study the unit of analysis is the customer of the specific engineering consultancy.

2.2.2.2 International theories.
This thesis is based on theories and research from different parts of the world, including USA, Canada, Nordic Countries, Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia. This lays a foundation for the framework to be valid across different cultures.
2.2.2.3 Ethical considerations.
In this research there is few ethical considerations to take where the overall topic and the concrete questions in the interviews were a futuristic character focusing on an ideal state of service delivery. Still the long lasting service delivery and high degree of re-purchases, combined with the importance of the relationship, might make the evaluation of professional service providers in to a sensitive case for the customers, especially if there eventually is negative feedback and there is a connection to the customer. But since the focus on value adding effects, this should not cause any particular withholding or shaping of information given in the interviews.

2.2.3 Data collection.
The primary data for the research is collected through open-ended semi structured qualitative interviews with both the engineering consultants and their customers. In these interviews the bearing questions were open questions regarding which factors add the customer perceived value. The primary data will be supported by secondary customer studies from the case organisations marketing department.

2.2.3.1 Customer and consultant data.
The empirical data will mainly consist of data collected from the customers, but it will be supported by data from the actual service providers, due to the importance of the interaction between the customer and service provider in the service exchange process. Customer data is usually appropriate in service research (Ojasalo, 2001), but in professional service encounters there is a typically high level of personal interaction between the customer and the service provider, so it is fruitful to investigate both (Brown & Swartz, 1989; Holmlund & Kock, 1995).

2.2.3.2 Selection.
Because this study concentrates on value adding factors in a business-to-business professional service exchange, it is essential that the research objects have customer experiences from such service exchange processes. This was secured by using a selection chosen from five participating consultants’ existing and previous customers. The qualitative main data used in this assignment comes from 13 interviews with customers of the case company, and five
consultants in the case company. All the interviewed consultants had their office at the headquarters in the Oslo region, and in total 16 of the 18 interviewees were based in the Extended Oslo Region.

The customers and consultants represented a broad spectre within sectors from construction of buildings, different types of infrastructure to different impact analysis. Two of the customers are internal customers. In total eight of the customers are representing private companies, while six are representing different public organisations. One of the customers in the selection is female, while the others are male. The private/public-distribution and gender distribution is in thread with the findings from the customer survey from 2009.

The average number of years of experience form the business is 26 for the customers and 20 for the consultant, and most of them reported that they had a saying in the selection of consultant in their projects. All 13 of the interviewees also confirmed that they also had experiences with other engineering consultants from other companies.

2.2.3.3 Interviews.

The data collection was conducted as semi structured interviews where the theoretical framework, which will be described in chapter 3, served to set the overall focus on the questioning. Specific questions was asked about peripheral service, relationship, customer satisfaction, and fairness, in order to enlighten dimensions that were showed particular interest in the literature, and in the latter case to make sure that the interviewees mentioned the factor. The question frame can be found in the appendixes.

Every interview was digitally recorded on acceptance, and the interviewees were told they would be anonymized and only used by the researcher for this thesis. All of the interviews were conducted Norwegian and not English, because they were likely to speak more freely and to provide more accurate and reliable in their native tongue. The value adding factors that got mentioned was sorted in the frameworks categories.

2.2.3.4 Quantitative second hand data.

The research is also supported by larger customer enquiry conducted with 1079 responses on a Nordic base in 2009 by the case company. The data used in this thesis is an extract of the 25 % Norwegian share of this data, unless other is stated.

The wording of the questions in the customer survey, focusing on concrete element and factors is asking “how important” and what is “most important”. Due to the following
discussion about constructs of customer satisfaction and the empirical findings from the interviews, these data are included in the analysis.

2.2.4 Theoretical framework.
A theoretical framework has been constructed on the basis relevant of existing literature from the service field, providing an overall frame for the conducted interviews and the following analysis. The framework searched to encompass the different dimensions and factors that the literature pointed out as determinants for customer value or another construct of customer satisfaction. A discussion of the use of value and the different constructs of customer satisfaction will follow in chapter 3.1.

The empirical findings of value adding factors were then sorted in factors headlines connected to the different dimensions. These headlines were either defined by the actual reported factors, or by factors mentioned in the literature. Finally the dimensions of the framework were discussed and adjusted on the basis of the empirical findings. After this there will also be presented some recommendations based on the analysis, relating to the specific case study.

2.3 Generalizability of the case study.
This thesis is based mainly upon qualitative methods, in order to obtain depth information of the determinants of customer value. With the relatively small selection and a single company approach it is possible that meanings from private individuals are affecting the data to a large extend, and it can be difficult to generalize, within business-to-business professional services, the business and even the case organisation.

Even with a single case focus on this case study, there might possible to generalize the findings due to several different aspects. All the customers had previous experiences also with other engineering consultancies than the case company, and customers was asked to take their overall experiences with engineering consultants in to consideration when their answered. On the other hand several of the interviewees did exemplify their answers with examples from the case company, but also concrete experiences from other consultancies were emphasised.

The qualitative data from the customer survey is representing a broader and larger selection of customers, which to a large extent got the same characteristics as the selection for the case study. This is from level of experience, gender distribution and branch distribution. This indicates that the selection of the case study is representative to the Norwegian
customers on these characteristics, which increase the probability for the findings to have validity outside of the selection (Hellevik, 2006).

Customer value is a subjective perception and in the heterogeneous environment of professional services, the potential value adding factors are likely to change from situation to situation. But the overall impression is that the interviewees are largely agreeing of the big lines of value creation, leaving the situational differences to less clear factors.

Engineering consultancies does contain a large range of different sub-branches and the collected data material indicates the three interviewees that is not that included in different construction might emphasise slightly other determinants of customer value.

The qualitative interviews were conducted at a single point of time, and the findings from these interviews will not necessarily be sufficiently valid for a future state. But due to the interview’s largely futuristic questioning and due to the selection’s interviewees’ high average experience in the business, and due to their level of experience it is likely to believe that most of them have a somewhat static perception of which factors that lead value, which are shaped over their years of experience.

This study will only have a limited generalizability because the analysis is based on a single case within a specific organisation in a business-to-business professional service environment. But due to the experience of the interviewees and the open question, the reported data are likely to also encompass information of other engineering consultancies. This leads to a point where the data collected is likely to represent customers of engineering consultants in Norway, with a small exception of the non-construction related parts, but cannot at an overall level be proven valid outside the scope of the selection.
3 From the paradigm of expectancy disconfirmation to business-to-business professional service value.

This chapter will present some theoretical discussions and review parts of the relevant literature with the overall purpose of leading to a framework for identifying customer value that will be presented at the end of this chapter.

Firstly this chapter will bring a discussion about the three main constructs of customer satisfaction; service quality, service value and customer satisfaction. Followed by a literature review that includes theories from the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm, organisational buying behaviour perspectives and value perspectives. This leads to a presentation of a framework, which the researcher has named ProServVal, which is based upon the reviewed frameworks.

The discussion of the constructs of satisfaction have got the purpose of introducing and linking these constructs together, and explain why frameworks of other constructs than value are included in this value-centred thesis.

Secondly in this chapter the literature review will present a few of the seminal and relevant frameworks and models of service literature, with the purpose of theoretically enlightening the business-to-business professional service environment. This will include the expectancy disconfirmation-paradigms of the American and Nordic Schools, and the organisational perspectives from a focus on relationships and fairness, followed by four frameworks that use value as a bearing construct.

Thirdly the purpose is to present a framework, named ProServVal. This can be used for identifying what factors that lead to value for the customer and should be emphasised by providers of business-to-business professional service providers.

3.1 Constructs of Customer Satisfaction.

Many professional service providers are claiming that they differentiate and make the customer satisfied, through high quality services or by adding value, or a combination of the mentioned. What is the difference between these constructs of satisfaction? Most research within the area of services and professional services are using the constructs of service
quality, service value or customer satisfaction, or a combination of these constructs. Several different authors proof these constructs have got a significant impact on customers’ service evaluation. (E.g. La et al., 2008; Lapierre, 1997).

The mixed use of the different constructs with the relatively strong interrelation among them indicates that these dimensions are measuring the same, or a part of the same phenomena (Cronin, Brady & Hult, 2000). A customer’s expectations for the satisfaction constructs seem to be shaped at the same point of time. This might indicate that customers understand the construct of service quality and satisfaction in similar ways. (Sonne, 1999; Sureshchandar, Rajendran & Anantharaman, 2002). While service quality serves the logic of disconfirmation of expectations, service value serves the logic of benefit compared with total cost.

Service quality can per definition be an objective construct, whereas service value is likely a subjective state (Patterson et al., 1997). Further on there is no consensus among researchers upon a definition of customer satisfaction, service value or service quality, which makes it difficult for customers to evaluate and for researchers to operate (Chumpitaz & Paparoidamis, 2004; Lapierre et al., 1999). This can lead to confusions with the constructs, where for instance Holbrook and Corfman (1985) noted that consumers perceived the term of quality differently than the conceptually definition from researchers.

Several authors have tried to differentiate the three constructs of customer satisfaction, but the constructs seem to be interrelated. Some of the researchers are emphasising that customer satisfaction and service quality are measuring the same, while others are suggesting customer satisfaction to be antecedent to service quality (Sonne, 1999). While a third group use customer satisfaction as a construct subsequent for several dimensions, including quality (Rust & Oliver 1994).

Bolton and Drew (1991) pointed out that perceived value seemed to be a more comprehensive dimension of overall service evaluation than service quality. Still the interrelation between the different constructs of service needs to be further investigated (Brady & Cronin, 2001). A few of the models that incorporate value as a dimension in their frameworks are using it as a subsequent of service quality, and finds positive relationships from service quality to value (Lapierre et al., 1999; Cronin et al., 2000; Sonne, 1999). Patterson et al. (1997) find the same pattern in their review of value models from consumer and retailing contexts.
The repetitively strong interrelations found among the three constructs of customer satisfaction, may indicate that a customer largely includes the conceptual service quality and customer satisfaction into the concept of service value. Figure 2 is drawing this thesis’ understanding of the interrelation with the three different constructs of satisfaction. The customer satisfaction work is a proxy and covers the complete value construction, while service value is encompassing service quality the same way.

Figure 2: Conceptual Interrelation between the three main constructs of customer satisfaction.

3.1.1 Value as the bearing construct of customer satisfaction.
The researchers who use customer satisfaction as subsequent to other dimensions are represented both by service quality and perceived value, either in a combination or as a single construct. As mentioned over, this thesis will draw up a framework for identifying which factors lead to satisfied customers and will take the use of the costumer’s perceived value as the bearing construct. This is due to several known characteristics of business-to-business professional services that cause evaluating difficulties, as intangibility, delayed results, complex and unclear causality, heterogeneous and often tailored service delivery, customer’s lack of technical knowledge and resources to evaluate.
Value has been found to be a valid determinant for customer satisfaction in business-to-business settings (e.g. Freeman & Dart, 1993; Patterson et al., 1997; Lapierre, 1997; La et al., 2008). In their study of consulting engineers Lapierre et al. (1999) finds a stronger relationship between total cost for the customer and value, than perceived quality and value. Cronin and Taylor (1992) points out that customers not necessarily buy the best quality service, but purchase a service with the best value of the service. Several authors from the international marketing and purchasing-project also support value as a key dimension (Hirvonen & Helander, 2001). Authors also suggest that customers are focusing on the value received, relative to the money spent when evaluating a service (Freeman & Dart, 1993; Patterson et al., 1997).

Customers that are not highly experienced in using a service are less likely to evaluate quality attributes of a complex service, and value will therefore have a stronger effect on customer satisfaction in these cases (Patterson, 2000; Andreassen & Lindestad 1998).

The concept of value seems to be intuitively understandable both for customers and consultants. The customers have got a subjective perception of what is value adding for them (Patterson et al., 1997). And for consultants it is easy to think of what gives value for the customers. Value is also a well-known concept for business consumers from the concept of value adding tax. To exemplify one of the customers from the interviews stated that:

- In order to be completely satisfied, I need to be left with something that makes me feel added value (K13(5).

Due to the characteristics of business-to-business professional services, this subjective state may make it easier to evaluate perceived value from the service exchange process, than objective service quality.

Out of the three constructs, value seems to fit the professional business-to-business environment better than the other constructs. When choosing value as the bearing dimension, it is not said that the constructs of customer satisfaction and service quality are not leading to positive effects, but as a premise of the value construct to incorporate a most of the elements of this and being easier to handle in a professional service business-to-business environment. Under these circumstances the literature focusing on of service quality and customer satisfaction will be seen as fruitful and relevant for this thesis.

In a business-to-business environment the later literature from International Marketing and Purchasing Group identifies value as an antecedent of the key dimension of relationship.
(Ford & Håkansson, 2006). The focus of value is supported by Lapierre (1997), which suggests that an evaluation of the overall value creation process should be emphasised, instead of using only service quality assessments as a measure. The latest years several authors have used the value construct as an important construct when treating aspects of customer satisfaction (E.g. La et al., 2008; Lapierre, 1997; Lapierre et al., 1999; Sureshchandar et al., 2002).

This thesis will lean on an understanding of which service quality, service value and customer satisfaction are so interrelated that it is more fruitful to treat them as one. In this case value also will work as a proxy for service quality. The use of the value construct of customer satisfaction can also make it easier for the professional service firms to identify value-adding factors, and put into practice efforts that are likely to increase the value and with that also increase the overall customer satisfaction. The ProServVal framework presented in chapter 3.5 will support the concept of that customer satisfaction is subsequent to value, as supported by Lapierre et al. (1999), La et al. (2008) among others.

3.2 The expectancy disconfirmation paradigm.
The early seminal attempts of research in the service field from e.g. Grönroos (1984) and Parasuraman et al. (1985) were based upon a model which different dimensions adjust the expectations and perceived service, and lead to a level of perceived service quality, which again leads to customer satisfaction. These models were focusing on traditional non-professional services and as today this stands as the most generally used model explaining customer satisfaction. In this paradigm the customer satisfaction or the service quality is a result of the size and direction of disconfirmation of pre-delivery expectations and post-delivery perceptions of performance of the service (Brady & Cronin, 2001; La et al., 2008; Patterson & Spreng, 1997). It is agreed that the perception of service quality is based on several dimensions, but there is no general consensus of the content or nature of these dimensions (Brady & Cronin, 2001).

Grönroos’ (1984) Nordic School is using overall categorical terms to describe service quality, whereas Parasuraman et al.’s (1985) American School is using descriptive terms. These frameworks do not provide an ideal state for these dimensions of service quality, and with that which factors to fulfil in order to meet service excellence (Brady & Cronin, 2001).

The SERVQUAL-framework was originally with ten dimensions in 1985, but revised in 1988 to encompass five dimensions of ‘reliability’, ‘assurance’, ‘tangibles’, ‘empathy’ and
‘responsiveness’, that all can be described as images of gaps between customer’s expectations and perceptions. Woo and Ennew (2005) states that the SERVQUAL framework might be so generic that it is valid only for a certain service context, and several researchers have tried, and failed to integrate the conceptualization of SERVQUAL to new industries and to replicate the conceptional structure (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Lapierre et al., 1999).

Whereas The American School is focusing on five different dimensions, The Nordic School treats service quality upon the dimensions of technical and functional quality. The technical dimension refers to the technical outcome of the service delivery, or in other words an instrumental performance of the service. According to Grönroos this can be post evaluated by the consumer in a rather objective matter. The know-how of the service provider is included in this dimension.

With the functional dimension of quality, Grönroos emphasises that the consumer is interested in the process of service delivery and not only what they receive as an outcome. The functional dimension represents ‘how’ the technical service is received, and will be evaluated in a less objective matter than the technical dimension. The logic of this framework is that the perceived service quality is a result of a bundle of different factors from either the technical or the functional dimension (Grönroos, 1984). The functional dimension is relatively more important than the technical (Seth, 2005).

### 3.2.1 Professional perspective.

Both the Nordic and American school of service was developed with a focus on consumer services as a reference frame. In professional business-to-business perspective Woo and Ennew (2005) argue that SERVQUAL as a measure for service quality is inappropriate, due to the lack of pinpointing professionalism as a technical dimension. It is also argued that the disconfirmation paradigm is not applicable in high-involvement purchase situations as professional services, because of expectations are pushed behind by the perceived performance (Cronin and Taylor, 1992)

Woo and Ennew (2005) are naming further criticism from Mangold and Babakus (1991) and Richard and Allaway (1993), which claims that the SERVQUAL framework neglects the professionalism and the outcome quality, or what equals the technical quality from the Nordic School. Woo and Ennew (2005) also includes Buttle’s (1996) claim of the technical quality to be shared between the ‘reliability’ and ‘assurance’ dimensions, which makes it difficult to identify. Further on a significant part of this research is focusing upon business to consumer
services, and it has been a lack of research on industrial and business-to-business services (Patterson et al., 1997; Woo & Ennew, 2005; Sonne, 1999; Gounaris, 2005).

Even though the functional dimension of Grönroos is emphasising the service delivery process, The Nordic and American Schools mostly reflect the service quality from a single point service encounter, while professional services tend to have long lasting service exchanges shared among multiply encounters and in close relation with the customer. Brown and Swartz (1989) are questioning whether process quality is having a larger effect than outcome quality for service evaluation. Szmigin (1993) answers this question and adjusts her framework, by dividing her model into two phases. Where one phase is representing the service production process, and the other is representing the outcome of the service (Szmigin, 1993; Sonne, 1999).

3.3 Organisational Buying Behaviour.

Where the American and Nordic Schools mainly focus on the customers, organisational buying behaviour is a label of research traditions built up under the logic of that organisational purchase is different from private purchase due to structural differences. For example because organisations often get several different constituents that directly or indirectly are in contact with the provider and evaluate the service. These individuals will evaluate through a combination of their own motives and the organisations motives. This leads to a state where customer satisfaction is likely to be depended upon how organisational buying is structured within the buyer organisation. This is likely to affect how the purchase is evaluated in the organisation, and which factors are relevant for a re-purchase. On top of emphasising these different buying centres, organisational buying behaviour put focus on relationships and how they evolve over time (Chumpitaz & Paparoidamis, 2004).

Hirvonen and Helander (2001) state that every customer has their own value creation process, and emphasises that it is important for the service provider to identify and understand the overall value creation process including the customer’s goals and concerns. Another factor emphasised in this tradition is that professional service providers often have a project-to-project focus, and will provide services for each project, and not for the overall organisation (Czerniawska & Smith, 2010).
3.3.1 **International Marketing and Purchasing Group.**

One tradition of research that has made significance in this field is the researchers connected to the International Marketing and Purchasing Group (IMP), which have emphasised the importance of relationship between customer and provider, where they see transactions and exchanges as continuously episodes in a relationship (Ford & Håkansson, 2006).

They stress the importance of relationship at the same time as they put forward criticism towards the concept of managing relationships. IMP sees relationships as based on interaction, and not something one of the parts can do themselves. In these relationships trust is seen as a critical element in order to facilitate the interaction and exchange (e.g. Jiang, Henneberg & Naudé, 2009; Blomqvist & Ståhle, 2000). Within the frame of the relationship IMP has identified four dimensions of exchange. This is *product/service exchange*, *financial exchange*, *information exchange* and *social exchange*. Further there is added two longer-term aspects of the relationship as *institutionalisation or cooperation* and *adaptation* (e.g. Ford, 1997; Håkansson & Snehota, 2000).

3.3.2 **Measuring business-to-business professional service quality.**

Woo and Ennew (2005) try to meet the criticism for the Nordic and American school in their attempt to conceptualise professional service quality dimensions, by adapting the six dimensions from interaction model from IMP. The conceptual logic of this model is that these six determinants of relationship lead to *business-to-business professional service quality*, which leads on to *customer satisfaction* and to *behavioural intentions*.

The main principle in this framework is that *service quality* is based upon the nature of interaction, and what the process of interaction is doing for the customer. These authors justify the use of these six dimensions largely due to the extensive empirical and theoretical work over a broad range of business-to-business industries, that have been applied in many different contexts, including business-to-business professional services (Woo & Ennew, 2005). The four first dimensions can be seen as core factors for the relationship.

*Product/service exchange* is the core of the interaction process between customer and service provider, where *information exchange* consists mainly of contact pattern and contents. This dimension of *financial exchange* is purely the process of exchange, and does not include price. *Social exchange* is including factors as trust between partners, social contacts, and understanding of problems and more. The dimension of *institutionalisation/cooperation* includes the adjusting of standard operating procedures, various rules and customs in the
relation, where the *adaptation* dimension focuses on the adjustments the provider or the customer may do in the process of exchange or the elements exchanged (Woo & Ennew, 2005).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 3:** Woo and Ennew’s (2005) conceptual model of business-to-business professional service quality.

The results from their sample from the engineering industry in Hong Kong support the six dimensions, where the dimensions of *social exchange* and *cooperation* are found to be relatively more important than the other. The six dimensions explain about half the variance in *customer satisfaction* and *behaviour intentions*, and with that also suggest that there is an higher order factor that includes overall professional service quality (Woo & Ennew, 2005).
### 3.3.3 Customer satisfaction determinants.

One of the efforts influenced by the thoughts of organisational buying behaviour is Patterson et al.’s (1997) modelling of customer satisfaction determinants. In their two-stage longitudinal study, they seek to meet the criticism of single point research and research where the selection is asked to recall constructs from before purchase. They put up ‘novelty’, ‘importance’ and ‘decision complexity’ as three purchase situation variables, and ‘stakeholding’ and ‘uncertainty’ as to individual variables. These five dimensions are put in the expectation and disconfirmation approach, where they also add fairness as an antecedent factor of customer satisfaction. With the fairness factor in this framework the outcome for both buyer and supplier is conceptualised in an equity-theory framework, and Patterson et al. (1997) emphasise this with the importance of an on-going relationship in the business-to-business sector. The fairness factor is also found to be positive related to satisfaction.

![Diagram](image.png)

**Figure 4:** Patterson et al.’s (1997) conceptual model of satisfaction for business-to-business professional services.

Patterson et al.’s (1997) findings confirm that the logic of disconfirmation can be applicable for forming satisfaction judgements in industrial buying situations, although the direct effect of performance in this particular study was found to be weaker than in previous studies of consumer studies.
3.4 Value approaches.

As with service quality there has been more research among the value of consumer services than professional business-to-business services (Lapierre, 1997), and the managerial and research interest for consumer value as a key dimension did not emerge until the late nineties (Patterson & Spreng, 1997). It have been constructed several frameworks with service value or perceived value as the bearing construct. The underlying logic is that value is what the customer appraises the service to, adjusted to the sacrifice or investment of resources in the service (Lapierre, 1997; Lapierre et al., 1999; Sonne, 1999; Patterson & Spreng, 1997). From this it follows that the service value will vary depending on a huge range of situational variables (Sonne, 1999).

Lapierre (1997) states that professional services need to be evaluated on broader terms than only service quality, and that it needs to be evaluated throughout the whole value creation process. The value approach will here be presented through the works of Patterson et al. (1997), Lapierre (1997), and La et al. (2005).

3.4.1 Relationship between perceived value, satisfaction and repurchase intentions.

Patterson and Spreng (1997) are among with Lapierre (1997) the first researchers to show interest towards perceived value in a professional service. In their work they are modelling the relationship between perceived value, satisfaction and repurchase intentions in a context of business-to-business professional services. Their results show a model, which uses the dimensions of satisfaction, and value as an antecedent to intentions. In this work value was used as a narrow measure, including only monetary costs compared to the service delivered.

For management consulting services they identified five sub-dimensions, which are to capture performance: The ability to ‘problem identification’, the creativity, innovative and up-to-date ‘methodology used’ and the ‘relationship with the consultancy firm’. The reliability, responsiveness and general professionalism displayed as the ‘service, and a ‘global’ dimension representing available international network and information. These five factors are to reflect Grönroos’ functional quality. The dimensions were weighed in the data collection in order to compare the customer’s perceived importance of the specific elements. All these factors had a significant positive relationship to value. They also find support for an outcome dimension, a technical or core dimension that equals The Nordic School’s technical quality (Patterson & Spreng, 1997).
3.4.2 What value in business-to-business really means.

In his work of 1997 Lapierre developed a framework for showing what value in business-to-business really means, and discovers that a set of relational and quality criteria lead to value in an exchange process. The logic of this conceptual model is that the customers’ definition of value changes through the process of before, during and after the service exchange. The model is using two different value definitions for the different points in the process; a first level ‘value exchange’ and a second level ‘value in use’. This division meets the criticism that Szmigin (1993) proposed with service exchange to be a process.

The analysis of the data from telecommunications R&D and consulting engineering services find that the linkage between the first and the second level is not that clear, and is emphasised only by executives and middle managers on the customer side. Lapierre (1997) also finds that out of the three hierarchical levels of customers and providers, all are recognizing the second level of value.

The first level ‘value exchange’ is evaluated through a set of first level dimensions of quality and relational variables and contains the dimensions of technical quality, functional quality, relationship variables and image, while the second level ‘value in use’ contains the dimensions of financial, social, operational and strategic.

Figure 5: Conceptualization of Patterson and Spreng (1997)
Both the technical and functional dimensions equal Grönroos’ dimensions. The relational variables consist of elements of partnership, involvement and confidence, while the image dimension is consisting of Reputation and Credibility. The elements that are to add value in use are the dimensions of Financial that consist of the elements cost reductions, revenues, profitability and rentability. The Social dimension represents a reduction of accident rates, save lives, improve standard of living, while the Operational dimension is productivity, product development and deployment and facilitate operations. The final value-adding dimension in this framework is Strategic that consists of better decisions and more enlightened decisions.

3.4.3 Contingency approach.
La et al. (2008 p 275-276) find an emerging agreement that superior value leads to competitive advantage, but put forward the antecedents of value and what value means in a business-to-business professional service context is still an unsolved issue. In their theoretical focus of client perceived performance and value in professional business-to-business services, these authors suggest a contingency approach to value, where situational differences in the service delivery affect the relationship between the different factors and variables.

In their conceptual model La et al. (2008) are leading different antecedent factors directly to perceived performance, and to client perceived value, which again lead to
customer satisfaction. La et al. (2008) divides perceived performance into core and supplementary services, where they respectively are equal to Grönroos technical and functional performance. They find significant strong positive relationships from performance that completely mediates the relationship to satisfaction through value to satisfaction. They further find significant relationships from the factors ‘technical skills’ and ‘customer orientation’ to perceived performance. These findings may indicate that the determinants of perceived performance could be addressed to be determinants for client perceived value.

La et al. (2008) are emphasising the importance of the service components, and not elements that are covered by the Nordic schools technical dimension service that work as a key differentiators. This supports Lapierre et al.’s (1999) suggestion of quality as a minimum norm. In the same study they also support the idea of the value creation process, where the main focus is which condition the different drivers of customer satisfaction are in.
3.5 Framework for customer value in a professional service.

This part of the thesis will draw up a theoretical framework, on the basis of the wide range of service literature in order to identify which factors that leads to value for their customers. Literature has used several different dimensions and sub-dimensions in order to conceptualize the antecedent customer satisfaction constructs. The purpose of the ProServVal framework will be in order to investigate which concrete factors are leading to value for the customer of professional services, and which the consultants should focus upon in order to create value for the customers. This chapter will at first provide an argument for value as the bearing dimension and then a brief presentation of the framework. This will be followed by a separate discussion for each dimension. In the end, a discussion of the framework will follow.

3.5.1 The ProServVal Framework.

This framework will offer a broad and easy framework for analysing factors that lead to value for the customers, based on different approaches from the expectancy and disconfirmation paradigm, organisational buying behaviour and different value focused service approaches. The overall logic in the ProServVal-framework is that every service exchange process comprises components from core service, peripheral service, relationship, trust, adaptation, fairness and muda, where elements can add value to the customer before, during or after service exchange process.

Due to the above discussion this conceptual framework is based upon the use of value for the customer as the bearing dimension, for identifying which factors that would add value to the customer, where value leads to a range of desired positive effects, which will give positive returns to the service provider. The framework is based on the conceptual ideas and dimensions from the work of Grönroos (1984), La et al. (2008), Woo and Ennew (2005), Lapierre (1997) and Patterson et al. (1997) as well as several other authors. Professional services are often delivered to an individual in the organisation that has a significant saying to the purchase or re-purchase of these services. Many of the customers are also senior workers with a fair experience from the business. Under these circumstances the customer perception of the service value becomes crucial for re-purchasing and other positive effects (Czerniawska & Smith, 2010).
The measures in this customer value centred framework do not include the logic of expectation matching as in the disconfirmation approach and is focusing on the customer’s instant perception of value, without taking expectations to a specific consideration. This is due to findings of perception scores to have larger impact on service evaluation than the disconfirmation between perceptions and expectations (Cronin and Taylor, 1992).

### 3.5.1.1 Value for the customer.

Value is the bearing construction of this framework, as earlier described. The understanding of value is what the customer perceives as value adding. The logic is that the customer constantly is assessing value propositions, unconscious and conscious, from which it receives and from which he gives in the service exchange process.

There does not exist any consensus in the literature for a single definition of value (Lapierre, 2001). The inclusion of both monetary and non-monetary costs seem to be accepted in the literature (Lapierre, 1997; Lapierre et al., 1999; Sonne, 1999; Czerniawska & Smith, 2010), although a few authors isolate value to be cost over benefit (Patterson et al., 1997; La et al., 2008). Perceived sacrifice is included as an own main dimension in Lapierre et al.'s (1999) work, but will be incorporated in the customer’s constant value assessment, in order to simplify the framework.

This constant value evaluating follows the full service exchange process, at multiply or constant service encounters, from pre-purchase-stats through the exchange to positive effects, leading back to a pre-purchase state again. The returning process is in thread with the works of e.g. the International Marketing and Purchasing Group (Ford & Håkansson, 2006), Lapierre (1997) and the Service Profit Chain (Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser & Schlesinger 1994).

Findings from previous research point in the direction of the definition of value depending upon professional experience of the customer, hierarchical level of the person questioned, type of project and industrial sector (E.g. Czerniawska & Smith, 2010; Lapierre, 1997) who supports La et al.’s (2008) contingency approach where they identify several significant mediating variables on perceived performance and value.

### 3.5.1.2 The constant circular service exchange process.

The longitudinal nature of professional service exchange is an on-going process, taking place over several potential values adding service encounters, often over a long period.
of time (Szmigin, 1993). Lapierre (1997) states that it is important to evaluate the service also after the service exchange phase. This framework is built on an assumption that the customer perceives value instantly during a constant service exchange process, with the same factors affecting value assessments before, during and after service exchange.

This can be exemplified by a situation where an engineering consultant suggests a specific solution for cost reduction and sustainability to the customer on a certain part of a project. In a state of service delivery the customer is likely to conscious or unconscious perceive whether the service exchange process will add value in terms of cost reduction and increased sustainability or not.

But due to the intangibility and measurement problems of professional services, it is hard for the customer to evaluate whether the exchanged service actually caused a ‘cost reductions’ in the project or not. Nevertheless the customer will still have a value perception for the specific solution after the service exchange has been done, and this is based on the instant perceptions of the value at the being point.

This leads to a framework where the value creation process is continuous and where the same dimensions, factors and variables are affecting costumer’s value perceptions throughout the service exchange process. This conceptualising also shares the idea of a circular exchange process where the positive outcome of value adding factors, lead to re-purchase, among other benefits, and will then lead to re-purchase and repeated service delivery.

### 3.5.1.3 Positive effects.

It seems to be an overall agreement in the literature fields of service that behaviour intentions are subsequent of *customer satisfaction*, whether this is conceptualized as re-purchase, word-of-mouth or behaviour intentions in general (E.g. Patterson *et al.*, 1997; Woo & Ennew, 2005). Woo and Ennew (2005) place behaviour intentions and *customer satisfaction* subsequent to their construct of *business-to-business service quality*. The service profit chain (Hesket *et al* 1994) emphasises the recirculation of the different positive effects as well as putting *customer satisfaction* before *customer loyalty* leading to *revenue growth* and *profitability*.

In this conceptualization *behaviour intentions* among other beneficial effects of *customer satisfaction* are conceptualized under the dimension of *positive effects*. This is due
to the viewpoint of this thesis; the ultimate goal for any service is *satisfied customers* as such, and not various marketing effects.

### 3.5.1.4 ProServVal.

The overall logic of this framework is that the customer derives value from the service exchange process, perceived at seven different dimensions. The framework is leaning on an approach of the customers constant evaluate value, as perceived benefits compared perceived sacrifices. The framework uses seven different dimensions that include different factors of potential value adding factors for the customer in a business-to-business professional service. These dimensions all lead to *customer value and* is the value the customer perceives from the service exchange, which works as a subsequent to the seven dimensions in the model.

*Figure 8:* The seven different dimensions that affect the perceived value in the ProServVal-framework.

- *Core service* can be described as a dimension encompassing many different factors all related to the actual service that is purchased. This dimension is inspired by and fairly similar to Grönroos’ technical dimension.
Peripheral service is largely including a wide range of different elements of how the service exchange process is conducted. This dimension is inspired by Grönroos’ functional dimension.

- **Relationship** is representing many different kind of factors, which the customer can perceive value adding within the relationship. This is inspired by the relationship’s importance due to work from organisational buying behaviour-research.

- **Trust** is representing a central part of service exchange processes with the willingness to trust the business partner. This dimension has also been pointed out in organisational buying behaviour.

- **Adaptation** can be described as the ability the service provider has got in order to understand and adjust the service delivery to deliver what the customer actually needs. This dimension has also been emphasised by the organisational buying behaviour literature.

- **Fairness** is representing the customer’s perception of justice towards a service exchange process perceived fair or not, based on what the customer gives compared to what he receives in return. Patterson *et al.* (1997) and equity theories inspired this dimension.

- **Commitment** is a dimension that represents elements of engagement, enthusiasm and supplier involvement. A high degree of consultant commitment are likely to lead to value for the customer in terms of extra service.

### 3.5.2 Core service.

The core dimension of this thesis is inspired by La *et al.* (2008) definition of core, which leads back to the seminal work of Grönroos (1984). Whereas the technical dimension from Grönroos’ (1984) is defined as technical outcome or technical quality of the service, La *et al.* (2008, p 278) provides the following definition for core:

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“The core service in the present context (professional B2B services) refers to the capability of utilizing technical or intellectual know-how to provide a business solution to a client’s problem.”

With this definition the core service is represented by the precise service elements, which the customer initially needs in order to meet the lack of competence and resources, which originally led to the purchase. The customer can perceive core dimension factors to be value adding, before, during or after the service exchange.

Lapierre’s (1997) first level-dimension ‘technical quality’, and his second level-dimensions of ‘financial’, ‘social’, ‘operational’ and ‘strategic’ would all encompass elements that are sorted in to the core dimension. From the American school the core dimension may encompass the elements of SERVQUAL 5 reliability and tangibles, and also the SERVQUAL 10 element of ‘competence’ (Sonne, 1999).

Also factors regarding ‘innovation’ and ‘creativity’ are included in the core dimension, as inspired by La et al. (2008) and Patterson et al. (1997). As with Grönroos technical dimension the core service and the elements it holds may often be evaluated from a relatively objective point of view (Cacares & Paparoidamis, 2007).

Core service is incorporated in the ProServVal-framework because it is heavily supported in the existing literature and empirical findings. Literally each one of the reviewed frameworks is including at least some factors represented by the core dimension (e.g. Woo & Ennew, 2005; Patterson et al., 1997; La et al., 2008; Grönroos, 1984). According to Ferguson et al. (1999) the firm creates value through their basic competency represented by their core service. And in a professional setting the core dimension is encompassing the technical know-how the SERVQUAL 10 and 5 ((Parasuraman et al. 1985; Parasuraman et al. 1988) is criticised for not including.

Findings in the literature on core and technical dimensions point out that they are less important than other variables in their relation to value. This could imply that the core service is seen as a premise and minimum norm in the branch (Lapierre et al., 1999). The preliminary interviews, which were conducted in early work on this thesis, clearly confirmed the logic of core service being as premise for existence in the market. Although the core service is seen as a premise in professional services, it is difficult to evaluate professional services due to intangibility, heterogeneity, complexity and often delayed and unclear results (e.g. La et al., 2008; Parasuraman et al., 1985). This among other factors might lead to customers of professional services emphasise other factors than the exact core service in their constant
evaluation process. Separate consideration of the elements of core and peripheral service dimension is supported by several authors in professional services (e.g. Lapierre et al., 1999).

The core service can encompass a wide range of different potential value adding factors. Examples of the slightly more tangible services under the core dimension could be from an annual report from the auditor, a recommendation for a new employee from the recruitment office, to a calculation of how much weight the suggested material could hold from an engineering consultant.

On the other side, the core service is also encompassing potential value adding elements as the level of relevant competence and knowledge the service provider has got or has got access to. Thirdly, core service can encompass elements as cost reductions on a construction site due to the engineering consultant’s advices. It can also be the tools and technology the service providers are using in the service exchange, as the software used by the recruitment agent for receiving applications.

The core dimension can be described as a dimension encompassing many different factors all related to the actual service that is purchased and delivered. The core service can be said to, in a large extent, portray the content of the service (Sureschchandar et al., 2002).

3.5.3 Peripheral services.
Where the core service is the exact ‘what’ that delivers in the service exchange, the peripheral service is how the service is delivered including eventually credence services which the service provider deliver in order to exchange the core service. This is closely related to the Nordic Schools functional dimension. The peripheral service includes a wide range of different supplementary service exchange process variables, and often a variety of credence services that usually are connected to how the core service is delivered (La et al., 2008). This could be elements as how something is presented, communication, timeliness of delivering, extraordinary effort, etc. Many of the elements and factors from the original SERVQUAL-framework could work as value adding under the non-core-dimension.

The logic of the peripheral service dimension is that which is evaluated less objective than the core service, but due to the characteristics of professional services the customer often has better prerequisites for evaluating the peripheral service. With the customer perspective taken in this thesis, a non-core service would be value adding if the customer perceives non-core factors positively before, during or after the service exchange.
Peripheral service is incorporated into the framework as it is heavily supported in the literature functional elements (Sonne, 1999; La et al., 2008; Grönroos, 1984). This is important due to the complexity and evaluating challenges of professional services, which make the customer evaluate the peripheral factors instead of the core service (La et al., 2008).

The peripheral service dimension is differentiated from Grönroos’ (1984) functional dimension from not including any relational, trust, adaptation or fairness factors. This is due to the strong importance these dimensions have on a business-to-business professional service exchange from the organisational buying behaviour (e.g. Woo & Ennew, 2005). Also these dimensions seem to influence the service exchange process itself, and not only elements within the peripheral service. As an example trust is likely to be important for the drawings and calculations for the bridge, the visit at the construction site and for the relationship between an engineering consultant and its customers.

The dimension of peripheral service can encompass a wide range of elements representing both how the core service is delivered and also credence services which are connected to the core, but not a part of the core service. Examples of this can be the engineering consultant’s actual visit at the construction site after the construction is ended, or the actual meeting where the recruitment consultant is presenting the different candidates for a job. It can also be the notable extra effort which an accountant does in order to include the late incoming invoices in the quarterly reports, or the perception of general professionalism of a management consultant. The peripheral service dimension is largely including a wide range of different elements of how the service exchange process is conducted.

### 3.5.4 Relationship

Contrary to lots of the literature from the International Marketing and Purchasing Group, relationship does not work as the unit of analysis in this framework. But the thesis will emphasise the importance of the relation between customer and service provider, and including the relational factors to the dimension of relationship.

The relationship dimension will contain a large field of potential value adding factors. Many of these are included in Woo and Ennew’s (2005) framework as presented over, which use six sub-dimensions of prerequisites for relationship quality in their framework based on the previous research of the IMP. These factors include the ‘information’ and ‘social exchange’ and ‘cooperation’. The part of Woo and Ennew’s (2005) ‘social exchange’ dimension considering trust, has been taken out as an own dimension in this framework.
The relationship factors from Woo and Ennew are further extended with factors that have been pointed out as interesting in terms of value adding factors in a business-to-business relationship. These factors are e.g. ‘partnership’, ‘involvement’, and ‘dependence’ (Chumpitaz & Paparoidamis, 2004; Lapierre, 1997) and ‘interpersonal skills’ (La et al., 2008).

Relationship as a dimension is included in the framework because relationships are believed to be an important part of professional business-to-business services. Service providers and customers in business-to-business professional services spend most of their working life with service exchange. Several authors have emphasized that relationships can add value to a service, and need to be taken into consideration in the evaluation of services (e.g. Lapierre, 1997; Chumpitaz & Paparoidamis, 2004; Ravald and Grönroos, 1996). Grönroos (1984) points out which customers may be willing to overlook some mistakes in the service exchange, if the cooperation is working well.

As an example on value adding relationship factors fulfilling of basic social needs, or creating friendships that go beyond the borders of regular professional relations. A more concrete example could be the possibility to call the consultant from the service provider, asking for some quick answers, not necessarily related to the project they are working on together. In this broad dimension it can also be exemplified by how the talk and other communication is working between them.

The relationship dimension is representing all different kinds of factors that the customer can perceive value adding within the relationship. This can be at any point in the exchange process, from before service delivery start to after delivery has stopped.

3.5.5 Trust
Trust is a dimension representing an essential in a business-to-business service exchange (Morgan & Hunt 1994). Trust can be defined as “a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence” (Moorman et al. 1993 in Cacares & Paparoidamis, 2007, p. 845). The logic follows that in any exchange process, there is a degree of trust which needs to be fulfilled in order to allow the service provider delivering on time, and within the agreed standards. Due to the characteristics of professional services where the evaluation of the service product is difficult, trust is believed to be central to every process in the service exchange process.

The dimension of trust is inspired from the broad organisational buying behaviour
literature, with a broad focus on relational aspects. In relationships and cooperation trust is seen as an antecedent (Axelrod, The Evolution of Cooperation, 1984 in Blomqvist & Ståhle, 2000). Cacares & Paparoidamis (2007) find a positive relationship between trust, and the satisfaction and value subsequent dimension of loyalty. Trust is a central part in Woo and Ennew’s (2005) work, where trust is represented in the social exchange dimension. Further on the elements of trust also are included by the value framework of Lapierre (1997), in the value exchange process with the factors integrity and confidence. The elements of trust are represented in the works of The American School as the ‘trust’ and ‘confidence’ elements from the SERVQUAL 5 dimension assurance, and the dimensions of credibility and security of SERVQUAL 10 (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1988).

In a business-to-business professional service the customer needs to trust that the service provider will deliver the promised services. As an example it is needed to trust that the engineering consultant will be delivering drawings and calculations for a bridge before the agreed deadline. On top of that, the customer needs to trust that the actual quality of the delivered service meets the demands, so the bridge will withstand the agreed pressure. The same would be applicable on choice of methods, choice of technology etc.

The dimension of trust represents a central part of every service exchange process, regardless if it is represented by core or peripheral services etc. Due to the characteristics of professional services and the customer’s lack of competence or resources, it is believed that a minimum of trust is necessary in order to do most service exchange.¹

3.5.6 Adaptation.

As business-to-business professional service exchange is taking place in a heterogeneous environment, the service provider’s adaptation is important. The dimension of adaptation is featuring the changes or adjustments the provider or receiver does either in the exchange process or in the exchanged elements (Håkansson, 1982). This thesis will use a broad logic of the adaptation dimension, which covers both the ability to see and understand the customer’s organisation and needs, and the changes and customisations in service delivery which are done in order to fit the customer’s needs better.

The dimension of adaptation is inspired by the use of the Adaptation dimension in

¹ Relationships and service exchanges can occur in circumstances lacking trust, due to mutual interests (e.g. Lambe et al., 2000 & Sebenius, 1992 in Jiang et al., 2009). But this will not be taken into consideration in this assignment.
Woo and Ennew’s work and found significant to professional service quality. The importance of adaptation is emphasised by the broad work from International Marketing and Purchasing group (Håkansson, 1982), and earlier case investigations of Norwegian consultant services have concluded that the service provider’s ability to understand the customer’s changing requirement throughout the service exchange process is important to be successful in the long run (Sonne, 1999).

**Adaptation** includes the ‘understanding of the customer’s organisation’-sub-factor from Woo and Ennew’s (2005) dimension of social exchange, due to an understanding of which understanding is an absolute prerequisite to making successful adaptations. The adaptation will also meet a part of the criticism raised towards the Nordic and American school in not fitting the business-to-business professional service, although adaptation can be said to be limited included in the original SERVQUAL 10 dimension ‘understanding / knowing the customer’.

**Adaptation** is a dimension, which can be exemplified with an accountant that adjusts the main post structure in an account to fit the customer’s organisation income and cost structure better. It can also be an entrepreneur requesting a report on a certain solution, where the engineering consultant is recommending another kind of solution, better fitted to the actual case.

The dimension of adaptation is representing the ability the service deliver has got in order to understand and adjust the service delivery to deliver what the customer actually needs. This can be different from what the customer is requesting, due to the characteristics of professional services.

### 3.5.7 Fairness.

**Fairness** as a dimension is largely inspired by the works of Patterson *et al.* (1997), and is based on equity theories. This dimension originally represented the customer’s evaluation of perceived input and output compared to the service deliver’s assumed input and output. Adjusted to the value perspective, the fairness will be the ratio between the customer’s perception of the service provider’s value and their own value perception. As with the other dimensions, this value assessment can occur at all points of the service exchange. The logic of the fairness dimension is that the perceived fairness of the overall or parts of the exchange process, can add value to the customer. In the case of a bad perception of fairness, the dimension will contribute to a lower value assessment.
Patterson et al. (1997) emphasise the importance of equity and fairness in the establishment of relationships with the client base in the professional service business-to-business context, and they find it positive related to satisfaction. The dimension of fairness is included in the framework in order to widen the perspective of the framework, with enlightening of factors, which go beyond the relationship-dimension, since a feeling of fairness or unfairness also can be perceived on other factors in the service delivery process.

The fairness dimension can encompass a wide variety of factors which all have in common that they affect the customer’s perception of being treated fairly. To exemplify, a positive factor can be if the customer perceive he receives something more valuable than he gives. Other examples can be customer’s perception of unfairness if it feels that an engineering consultant is putting in less effort than he should in calculation different solutions and alternatives for a railroad intersection, or if the customer does not understand or agree the number of hours work billed on a certain project or task. In general the fairness dimension is representing the customer’s perception of justice towards which the customer gives compared to what he receives in return.

### 3.5.8 Commitment.

The dimension of commitment is encompassing several different factors that all have in common that they represent an engagement and commitment from the consultant. In his work of 2007 Caceres is pointing out several efforts from the literature, which has been including commitment and relationship commitment as factors. He includes the following factors in the dimensions of commitment, after the work of Morgan and Hunt (1994): Involvement with the supplier, defending of supplier in front of other colleagues and external partners and proudness of having the company as a supplier.

Commitment is also represented in Woo and Ennew’s (2005) work where the ‘enthusiasm’ in the service exchange form social exchange dimension, is included in the dimension of commitment. The customer can perceive value adding from commitment, before, during and after the service exchange process.

Even though it is not emphasised as an own dimension in the earlier works Patterson et al. (1997) use ‘extra mile’ as a factor for perceived performance. It is pointed out that a commitment from the parties in a service exchange can add value (Ravald and Grönroos, 1996). This is built on the assumption that a committed service provider would do a better effort than a non-committed service provider.
Within the scope of commitment concrete elements as the consultant ‘going the extra mile’ for the customer, or a management consultant that shows engagement and ownership to the customer’s goals. Another example can be a consultant working overtime in order to give an answer the next morning to the late incoming task in the project. Commitment is a dimension representing elements of engagement, enthusiasm and supplier involvement. A high degree of consultant commitment is likely to lead to value for the customer in terms of extra service.
4 Analysis.

This chapter will serve the purpose of presenting and analysing the empirical findings with the theoretical framework, and will lead to partly conclusions of the thesis. Firstly chapter 4 will introduce the overall findings from the empirical case study in part 4.1, and follow up with a discussion and presentation of the findings from each factor in part 4.2. Chapter 4.3 serves as a overall theoretic discussion of the different ProServVal-dimensions, and chapter 4.4 will provide an discussion of the main empirical findings in terms of the case organisation.

4.1 Overall empirical findings.

The collected data from the 18 interviews reveal that the interviewees largely agree on the scope of value adding factors. The customer focuses on the delivered service deliveries, competence and relations. The majority of factors distributes out in the dimensions of core service, peripheral service, relationship and commitment, while the dimensions of trust, adaptation and fairness are receiving less attention.

As written above the interviews used somewhat overlapping questions in order to reveal the most possible factors. On the other hand the questions asked also covered several concrete elements, as value for the organisation, perceived fairness, relationship, peripheral services and customer satisfaction. The data material shows that the interviewees emphasised elements and factors relatively disconnected from the interview structure, and many of the interviewees emphasised the same elements several times on different questions.

This can be exemplified with the answers that denotes to value from ‘psychical meetings’, which were given by 5 of the interviewees (R4, K2, K8, K10, K12), on four different questions (1b, 2a, 3a, 5b), where one of the customers (K12) emphasised this in two different questions (1b, 3a). This pattern in mind, the data therefore is categorized directly in the dimensions, and the different answers on different questions will not be scene for an analysis.

The large number of customers also had a directly saying in order to decide which consultant that were to be hired for their projects, and that supports the importance of
relations for re-purchases that are pointed out by several authors (Czerniawska & Smith, 2010; Woo & Ennew, 2005).

The interviewees reported substantial number of value adding factors that fitted within core service, peripheral service, and relationship, compared to the other four dimensions. As well as during the interviews it was reported a large variety of different elements and factors. Many of those seemed to be on the border between two or more dimensions and some factors that did not seem to fit within the seven dimensions. The placing of the factors will be discussed in the following sub-chapter.

4.1.1 Consultants’ answers and internal customers.
The five interviewed consultants have in the big picture answered in line with the customers without any major differences. The two internal customers from the selection, seemed to incorporate themself as consultants and not customers in the way they answered the researchers questions. Their answers were in line with the external customers.

4.1.2 Constructs of customer satisfaction.
The question formulations were focusing on value and which elements and factors that would add value, but the answers received did in many cases encompass both value and customer satisfaction, but also service quality. Also the answers from the last open question-5a), which regarded customer satisfaction, all the interviewed persons answered with elements in line with which they already had been answering to be value adding. Some also gave the following answers: “This might be a bit of the same of what I have been saying earlier” (K6) and “If we are going to sum that up (…)”(K7).

This seems to support the general idea of the strong inter-correlation among the constructs of customer satisfaction, that neither customers nor service providers in this particular data material are differentiating these constructs to any large extent.

4.2 Value adding factors of the seven dimensions on ProServVal.
This sub-chapter will present the main findings form the case data material, divided in to each of the ProServVal-framework’s seven dimensions. Within the same structure the findings will broadly be sorted and discussed within the dimensions, each followed by a discussion on
which elements that should be emphasized by the case company to create customer value. In the end a part will also include those elements and factors that did not fit into the dimensions.

4.2.1 Core service.

When sorting the data it was revealed several different factors that could be sorted into Core service, which can be described as a dimension encompassing many different factors all related to the actual service that is purchased. The most substantial reported factors represent the actual service ‘deliveries’ that the consumer has bought, and the consultant’s ‘competence’. ‘Creativity’, ‘sustainability’, and ‘costs’ are other factors reported in relation with the core dimension.

4.2.1.1 Factors of core service

Reliable deliveries and solutions.

More than half of the interviewees mentioned several value adding factors regarding the actual deliveries from the service exchange process. This can be exemplified through these three examples:

– If you know that the consulting engineer are good at coming up with good solutions that actually benefits the contractor, the developer and the environment. Then we might choose him, because we know that he will deliver better solutions. Cheaper solutions, so it might be that those 30 – 40 thousand in honorarium in the one direction or another does not matter (K2-3a).

– That the consultants are delivering according to a high professional level. That is absolutely the most valuable (K3-1d).

– Receive a good product, to the right time. Where you don’t need to take several rounds in order to get it approved (K9-5a).

There were five customers reporting elements that can be described as non value-adding in terms of potential negative overproduction and sales efforts of services and deliveries the customer might see as an obvious and do not feel is necessarily. All these elements was
reported on the question 1c), asking specifically of factors that were non-value adding. This element can be exemplified by:

– Not more drawings and projecting then necessarily. Sometimes it may be drawn and project engineered more than necessarily. It is seldom, but we have experienced getting drawings, as the consultants believe we need, which there is no need for. Things that just are getting solved at the construction site. Things that is obvious for us, as a contractor. But the consultant thinks we are in the need of the drawings, without having asked us. It is quite a few things the contractor can tell, know and solves best, at the site without any need of drawings from the consultant (K1-1c).

Creativity.
Factors representing the ‘creativity’ were reported by seven of the interviewees, one time each, and can be exemplified by the following two examples, where the first is indicating added value in terms of creative solutions, and the other as an interest to work with new things:

– (...) Creative solutions that can give added value, by giving me a cheaper execution (K1-1b).

– It is always exciting with projects that are a bit new, and not the same as you had the last 20 years. More challenging, and more satisfactory (K4i-5a).

Sustainability.
One of the consultants and one of the customers drew attention to the sustainability of the solutions as value adding factors:

– Feel that it is quality in the solution, and that a change will give at least one footprint benefit (K13-2).
**Competence.**

The factor headline of competence was reported several times by eleven of the interviewees, can largely be divided in to encompassing elements of regarding the consultant’s experience or the consultant’s competence or the consultant’s access to knowledge. Examples on these three groups are exemplified respectively here:

- **Use the broad experience, and the experience from the company (R1-5).**

- **We need consultants with a high core competence, because we are generalists (K6-1a).**

- **A broad interdisciplinary spectre. So we can use one provider for all the services (K13-1d).**

Three of the interviewed customers enlighten an issue they perceive as negatively value adding, in terms of the use of less experienced, often newly hired consultants. Leading to a situation where the customer perceive he receives a product during the service exchange process that is on a lower level of what they would expect from the expected consultant. This can be further explained through the following two examples:

- **When really good things are presented at the offering, and with all kind of respect, we might receive one of the newly hired, there is nothing wrong with that. In situations where the consultant is young and promising, how much help and support is he receiving throughout the process, of the overall competence in the company? The question is how much follow-up they get in order to deliver a good product to us. That varies from company to company (K3-5a).**
– We are contacting the consultant we know from before, and it have happened that he is accepting projects even when he actually have got no time for it. (...) It is the same consultant that is our contact, but we can see that someone else does the work. And sometimes I’ve got the impression that it can be used younger, less experienced consultants. Where we don’t get delivered exactly the material we expected. That has happened, a few times (K1-3b).

Cost.
The different elements on a project’s price and cost efficiency fitted neat and clearly in to the factor, and were reported as value adding factors by seven customers and seven consultants.

– Identification of the best economic solutions, as well as the correct technical solution (K1-1a).

– Accomplish things according to budgets and time. That is the success criteria (K11-1d).

But there was also findings in this material indicating that price of a project and the consultant’s services is less important than the actual delivered project and its progress, as these two examples serve to explain:

– A good project at the description we have given. Not necessarily at the price asked, the price does not matter so much. The most important is that the project becomes what we imagined (K8-3a).

– (And quality and progress.) Progress more than price actually (K9-1d).

4.2.1.2 Discussion of core service.
The findings on the core factors of ‘deliveries’ and ‘competence’ are in line with the earlier literature’s strong focus on core and technical parts of the business-to-business professional service exchange process. The interview’s support of ‘deliveries’ are heavily supported by the
2009 customer survey pointing out ‘reliable deliveries’ as a main evaluation criterion. Also the assumption of the core service being a premise, was confirmed in the data material:

– *Top quality, is most likely a premise. And I believe we should deliver that (R5-1a).*

In terms of the service delivery there was also a few reports on consumers perceiving overproduction of deliveries, which could lead to a negative perception of value, but as all of these relatively few reports came from the same question, it is likely not to be a central part of the ‘delivery’. A few of the customers reported negatively value coming from the use of inexperienced consultants. This further proofs the importance of value adding the ‘competence’-factor.

There were five customers reporting elements that can be described as non value-adding in terms of potential negative overproduction and sales efforts of services and deliveries the customer might see as an obvious and do not feel is necessarily. All these elements was reported on the question 1c), asking specifically of factors that were non-value adding. This factor can be exemplified by:

The findings on factors of ‘competence’ are indicating the same importance as the factors on ‘deliveries’. ‘Competence’ including ‘experience’ can be a way to for customers to differentiate service providers since it is a relatively tangible factor that the customer is likely to notice. On the other hand experience are found to have no moderating effect on perceived performance (La et al., 2008). But still the selection seems to place ‘experience’ as a value-adding factor. The importance of ‘competence’ is also supported by the reports form the customer survey from 2009 where level of knowledge is pointed out as one of the most important evaluation factors.

Innovation and creativity have been emphasised in the literature by La et al. (2008) and Patterson and Spreng (1997), and about 65 % of the customers in the 2009 survey, did state that creativity was an important factor. On the other hand the relatively weak findings from the interviews with the few factors fitted into ‘creativity’, might indicate that the selection include elements of creativity and innovation as a part of the delivered solution, and not as an independent factor.

Costs and economical efficiency in the projects is pointed out by many of the interviewees, where they would perceive an added value if the projects met or under met the budget. But the overall findings indicate that price and costs of the projects are of less importance than the delivered service, which is supporting the implication from the literature
that the value delivered from professional services can give much more value than the cost of the service exchange (Lapierre, 1997).

The dimensions of core service, with a highlight on the factors of ‘deliveries’ and ‘competence’ points out to be clearly value adding for the selection, and these factors may also be perceived as necessities, in the way that they work as requisites in the branch. Creativity in the creating good solutions seem to be vale adding, but are likely to be interrelated to the delivery. Also a less importance of the actual costs are reported, at the same time, as meeting budgets seem to be perceived as value adding. In total the dimension of core service is clearly supported by findings from the selection.

4.2.2 Peripheral service.

The peripheral service dimension is largely including a wide range of different elements of how the service exchange process is conducted. The dimension of peripheral services comprehends a large variety of different value adding factors that revolves how the service is delivered. All the interviewees reported several factors within the scope of peripheral service, and the reported factors allocates over six headlines as ‘responsiveness’, ‘accessibility’, ‘physical meetings’, ‘structure’, ‘reasoning’, and ‘presentation’. ‘Responsiveness’ and ‘reasoning’ points out as the most reported headlines, while ‘structure’ and ‘accessibility’ and ‘presentation’ are the least reported factors.

4.2.2.1 Factors of peripheral service.

Responsiveness.

The factors of ‘responsiveness’ are clearly of importance to determine value for the interviewees, due to multiple answers from eleven of the customers and consultants. Most of the factors were relatively short and precise regarding timeliness or speed on deliveries and progress as these three examples show:

– Delivering things as promised according to the scheduled plan. Important that deadlines are obeyed (K11-5).

– Progress on the deliverables. And the time limit (R5-1a).

– That is quick feedback, (…) (K1-1a).
Also the consultant’s working capacity, regarding if the consultant are having too many other projects simultaneously was emphasised as:

– That the consultants have got capacity to deliver (...) (K10-1a).

Accessibility.
Four of the reported value-adding factors from four customers fitted in to a factor-group of ‘accessibility’, that encompasses if the consultants are available and easy to get hold of in case the customer tries to establish contact. It can be exemplified by the following two examples:

– The consultants need to be accessible, which they often are (K8-2a).

- The consultants are available. Literally (Egentlig), all the time. Even though it is difficult, and since they only are humans. Availability is important for a good cooperation. That they return your call, and answer as fast possible when you’re requesting (K10-3a).

Physical meetings.
Six out of the total interviewees mentioned ‘physical meetings’ as an important value adding factors. These were physical meeting points both in the general, and on specific points in the service exchange process, where two examples on the latter is:

– I believe inspections at the site are important (K8-2a).

– And he is out and looking. And I like that. Dig a bit and put on the rain boots, and raincoat and. That is important. Because then he know a little bit on what it is all about. And then he is willing to take it a bit further for the calculations, for the estimates. And listen to others. That is incredible important (K2-5b).
Structure.
‘Structure’ is a relatively small factor headline, consistent of reports from two consultants, following on the orderliness and structure the consultant holds throughout the service delivery, and can be exemplified by these quotes:

– Orderliness from the consultants, with easy access to minutes and relevant documents (K8-1b).

– One consultant we got now, and we are very satisfied with her. She makes very clear project plans and is clear and neat in her communication (K9-1b).

Presentation.
‘Presentation’ is another factor headline with relatively few reports of value adding factors, which encompass how elements in the service exchange process are presented in an easy way, both in form and use of language. Two consultants and two customers from the selection mentioned this factor, which can be exemplified through these examples:

– That the reports and findings are presented in a good way, which are prepared for decision-making processes (K7-1c).

– Short precise answers, where you rapidly are led to the conclusion. Do not use more time then necessarily. (Overproduction) (In some consultancies, as answer on one single question, “I may receive a long two-pager where they write a lot in the introduction part. Things I know from before, which lead to a conclusion. And it is only the conclusion I am interested in” (K1-1b).

Reasoning.
The factors that fit under the headline of ‘reasoning’ are reported by six of the interviewees, and contain a wide range of elements that are stretching from explaining, discussions, asking of critical questions, to selling in the suggested solutions. The ‘reasoning’-elements have in common that they altogether emphasize the potential value adding factors of the consultant to have a dialogue around the solutions which are to be chosen. ‘Explaining’ can be exemplified like:
– And gives the customers different options, and make them understand the consequences for each choice (R4-1a).

An example of ‘discussions’ with the customer is:

– Listen to things, ideas and thoughts, because I have got a lot of ideas and thoughts. But it not always my thoughts are realisable. But to put the thoughts together with consultants, that actually can calculate and consider it, that is incredibly useful (K2-1b).

An example of asking of critical questions can be:

– Important that the consultants ask critical questions on why we did, what we have done (K8-1b).

And finally an illustration of the potential value-adding factor of selling in the suggested solution:

– The consultant need to sell something to me, which I can believe in. Why shall we choose this solution? Come up with solutions he believes in, and stories of why we should choose them (K2-2).

4.2.2.2 Discussion of peripheral service.

The findings from the case study reveal a large portion of different elements which fit into the value adding dimension of peripheral service. This sub-chapter will contain a discussion of the different factors within the scope of peripheral service.

Responsiveness and accessibility.

The large importance showed towards ‘responsiveness’, is largely in line with the existing focus ‘responsiveness’ has had in the service literature since SERVQUAL 10 and in the literature and the characteristics of business-to-business professional services.

‘Responsiveness’ might also be seen as a requisite within, due to the extra emphasis, several
of the customers placed on it. A further support to this factor is that most of the reported factors fitted relatively neat and easy into the headline of ‘responsiveness’.

Accessibility is a factor headline that might relate to elements of both ‘responsiveness’ and the commitment-dimension’s ‘extra mile’. The findings are not particular many, but emphasises the importance relatively much, as well as ‘accessibility’ in earlier literature has been pointed out as a separate factor or dimension (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Sonne, 1999; Woo & Ennew, 2005), it is kept a small, but yet relevant factor headline in order to identify determinants of value.

Physical meetings.
Physical meetings is a factor which has not been emphasized in particular in the literature fields, but seems to encompass value adding capacity due the strong findings of reported factors. This points in the direction of which ‘physical meetings’ can be seen as a credence service that are of importance for the customer.

It might be related to ‘communication’ under relationship, because of the stressing of better communication:

– Personal contact at the construction site is important. It is easier to make them responsible/interested. E-mail and telephone will not give sufficient closeness (K12-3a).

On the other hand it represents to see how it is at site, and meet the people there, and not necessarily something within the relationship:

– The importance of attendance. To come to the construction site, and see what things look like (K2-1b).

Structure and Presentation.
Neither of the factors of ‘structure’ and ‘presentation’ gain much interest in the findings, as independent variables. Both ‘structure’ and ‘presentation’ could be argued to fit together with ‘communication’ in the relationship dimension, but both ‘structure’ and ‘presentation’ represents possible credence service elements that can be argued to be more tangible than
‘communication’. This can be exemplified by both well structured minutes and well presented documentation, which may occur despite of the ‘communication’ in the relationship.

**Reasoning.**

Reasoning is reported to be an important value-adding factor, and is largely encompassing elements of how the consultant can make the customer to understand what he will do in the service exchange process. This understanding can be important, due to the different competence of the consultant and the customer, in a case where the customer perceives a certain thing as unnecessarily, improved understanding of why this is needed may change the perception. This factor can be said to mirror the adaptation-dimension, which encompass how consultants adapt to the customer.

As with ‘physical meetings’ the previews reviewed literature does not put any particular interest in this.² But due to the long-term service exchange it is likely to be of importance that the customer understands the consultant.

The dimension of peripheral service seems to cover several factors and sub-factors reported by the selection. There are three main elements from the ‘Responsiveness’ and as expected from the literature ‘responsiveness’ is one of them. And both ‘reasoning’ and ‘physical meetings’ are pointed out by the empirical findings to be of huge importance for the selection. The dimension also contains three less emphasized factors, ‘accessibility’, ‘structure’ and ‘presentation’.

### 4.2.3 Relationship.

The ProServVal-dimension of relationship is representing a spectre of different kind of factors, which the customer can perceive value adding within the relationship. This is inspired by the relationship’s importance due to work from organisational buying behaviour-research.

The different factors and elements encompassed on the dimension of relationship was emphasised by all the interviewees in this investigation, and also all but three of the interviewees mentioned relationship factors before the question asking about value adding factors from the relationship between customer and consultant. This is in thread with the

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² The service litterature does discuss this, but within theories of customer co-creation, this element is included. But that is outside the scope of this thesis.
importance of relationships pointed out by several authors within the field (e.g. Woo & Ennew, 2005; Lapierre, 1997).

Relationship factors seem to be of heavily importance for the customers, which may be explained due to long lasting projects, often characterised by a large extent of interrelation in the service exchange. The findings of relationship seem to encompass a wide range of different elements, and have been sorted in the following factor headlines; ‘chemistry’, ‘cooperation’, communication’, ‘professional relations’, ‘professionalism’ and, ‘social relations’.

4.2.3.1 Factors of Relationship.

Chemistry.
As written above, one of the most distinctive empirical findings from the interviews seem to be the importance of ‘chemistry’. Over 90% of the customers from the 2009 survey are emphasising a factor named “easy to work with” as important-5-7 on a 7-point scale) in terms of overall evaluation of the consultancy. The Norwegian word ‘kjemi’ translates to ‘chemistry’ and has got the exact meaning as “(Undefinable) psychological factors which determinants how well some humans go together.” (www.nob-ordbok.uio.no, 13.09.2011). This definition can be argued to encompass the “easy to work with”-factor from the survey.

In total 11 out of 18 of the interviewees emphasised chemistry as an important element in order to add value in the service exchange process. Several of the customers mentioned ‘chemistry’ several times on different questions. Examples of reports within the ‘chemistry’-factor are:

- The chemistry between the persons in the project. It might be challenging if your chemistry is not matching (K8-3a).

- The chemistry is really important (K3-3a).

- And the interaction. I’m likely to return to this a hundred times. It has to do with the chemistry. The humans (K2-1b).
Cooperation.

Cooperation encompasses a widespread variety of elements, reported by seven interviewees, all focusing on value adding elements within the scope of working together, either between the consultant and customer as the three first examples of ‘internal cooperation’, or ‘external cooperation’ between the consultant and subcontractors of the consultant as the fourth example.

- *It is comfortable and pleasant if the cooperation is going on in a good way (K3-1d).*

- *The cooperation is everything (alfa omega) in order to get a good project. If you've got trouble with the cooperation, it will be hard/heavy, and I believe this will affect the deliveries in the project negatively (K8-1d).*

- *And again it is this about the cooperation. We are kind of; us from XX (contractor) are quite dull (trauste) and have, to build relations. That is nice and safe really. You know what you get (K2-0h).*

External cooperation:

- *In situations where the consultants are getting other consultants to the project, outside their own company, they might not be as coordinated as usually, in terms of professional competences. Need to straighten things out before they present it to us (K8-1b).*

Communication.

11 of the interviewees reported ‘communication’, ‘dialogue’ and ‘having a good way of speaking (ha en god tone)’ as value adding elements. Illustrating examples of this is:

- *A good way of speaking (Ha en god tone) (K6-4a; K10-3b).*

- *We need to understand each other. Have a good communication, and understand the same language. How is the other person to speak with. (K3-3a)*

- *A good consultant does not only answer every time you ask, but also asks back (K3-1d).*
– An open and constructive dialogue throughout the process (K8-1d).

**Professional relations.**

A few relatively concrete factors are put under the headline of ‘professional relations’. The interviewees reported elements as, the value of knowing where to find the needed competence was emphasised:

- The customer knows were to find the competence he need (R5-4).

Several of the interviewees reported the possibility to contact the consultant with brief technical questions outside of the specific project, as a value-adding element:

- It is that I can take one telephone. I am often in projecting meetings. A lot of pre-projecting in relation to projects getting realised or not. In these meetings solutions often are discussed. If we are back at foundation work (Grunnundersøkelser). If it is rock, clay or just something third? It is millions of Kroner in differences. If I can call a consultant I have confident in. And he can tell me something about it, without any bindings of course, that is a huge value. Because then I can say: I don’t now, but most likely we don’t have to stake. All right, that equals savings of 3 millions, well then we continue. But opposite, if it had been said: No, we need to stake. So can the developer assess it will not hold. So, just being able to take that phone call to someone for some tips and advices. Running tips and guidance gives me a good relation to a consultant (K2-4).

Also situations where a relation could to a faster service delivery and prioritising was reported a value-adding factor:

– But in the cases when you know a consultant, and that makes you able to receive a delivery faster, that is ok (K7-3).

And finally the value of technical discussions was emphasised:
That the person is on professional (faglig) level that is matching, and you can discuss problems and get a clever (vettug) dialogue (K5i-3).

Social relations.
The factor headline of ‘social relations’ encompasses elements and factors that have been reported as value adding within the personal scope of a relationship, but outside the scope of a professional relationship. Example of the reported value adding factors can be:

- Create a kind of social setting/environment. On a project it can be a group, which as a whole wants to get good results (K6-1b).

- Manage to, maybe not become buddies, but be a bit social as well. Make sure that it is not only technical (fag) technical (fag) technical (fag). Talk a bit about informal things as well (K10-3b).

- In some projects you will work together for a long time, and then a good personal relation is important. In other shorter projects it is not that necessary. It is sometimes a waste of time to grab a beer or a coffee with a consultant, but other times it should be done (K13-3b).

On the other hand, one of the customers, dealing with impact analysis, also emphasised the importance of keeping a relationship on a professional level several times during the interview.

- The final report shall not bear traits of the good relationship (K7-3).

- When working with persons you share a good chemistry with; you might get too well known. Shared responsibility to keep the relationship on a professional level. Not to take advantage of the relationship (K7-3).
Professionalism.

It was reported seven elements that would equal the ‘courtesy’ in SERVQUAL 10 (Parasuraman et al. 1985) regarding the consultant’s behaviour. These reported elements are ‘politeness’ and ‘respect’, which also can be described as behaving in a professional matter. Also the ability to ‘separate the case from the person’ lay within the scope of professionalism. Examples of this factor are:

- The consultant’s professionalism. That the consultant is acting professional (K12-1a).

– Persons that we talk with, and the behaviour of the consultant are clearly contributing to add value. And makes it nice to work with this (profession) (K7-1b).

– (...) and differentiate person and case (sak). Do not take things personally (K8-1d).

– That we are taken serious, and perceived serious, when we are the one to pay and order (the services) (K3-2a).

– (...) We too have got a few years of experience. And it is us who knows what is happening at the construction site. But sometimes we do experience that the consulting engineer is trying to rise himself a bit above the contractor. That makes a bad relation (K1-2b).

4.2.3.2 Discussion of Relationship.

The ‘elements of communication’ and ‘cooperation’ have largely been discussed in the existing literature, and findings reveal only small differences from that. The high number of reported factors that easily fitted in to the headlines confirms the importance of these two factors, also for the investigated selection.

The one most significant and concrete finding from the relationship dimension was the reported importance of good (personal) ‘chemistry’ in order to have a good relation, which was reported directly by over half of the interviewees. Chemistry has not gained particular interest in the reviewed literature, where it is only briefly mentioned as an element
of interest in some of the literature on the field (Wilson, 2000; Day & Barksdale, 1992; Blomqvist & Ståhle, 2000). It can be argued that this factor might be overlapping with other elements emphasised in the literature. This can be ‘cooperation’, ‘easiness to make friends’ (Woo & Ennew, 2005) or it can also be partially covered by the ‘empathy’ dimension from SERVQUAL 5 (Parasuraman et al., 1988). This overlapping can also be supported in findings from the interviews, where chemistry is mentioned together as cooperation and other relationship factors:

– *It is this about people, the chemistry between persons. It is a really important element. There are some persons you find it more comfortable to cooperate with than others. The personal plan, feeling of being at the same level. Speaking good with each other (K4i-1b).*

One possible explanation for the lack of ‘chemistry’ in the literature is that the Norwegian expression of ‘chemistry’ might go beyond the English counterpart. On the other hand it might also be covered by a combination of ‘cooperation’ and ‘communication’, but due to the definition ‘chemistry’ will be more intangible than ‘communication’ and ‘coordination’.

The interviewees clearly pointed out the value adding elements of being able to call and ask the consultants of concrete questions. The concrete importance of a ‘professional relationship’, could be included in Lapierre’s (1997) factor of ‘partnership’, but otherwise it is not pointed out in particular in the literature, but in this data material it stands out as one of the most concrete findings of value-adding factors.

The *social part of the relationship* did not get an especially strong support from the collected data, but are likely to be a factor of importance for some customers due to the long-term nature, and repeated cooperation that is characterising the branch.

*Professionalism* is also a factor that seems to be of importance for the customers, representing a general courtesy and appropriate behaviour. The relatively few reports on professionalism may indicate that the consultants mostly are treating the customers in a professional matter, which is supported by the general impression the researcher got from the customer interviews. But still this is emphasised as an important element in the interviews, it is important for the consultants to act in line with.

The factors derived from the collected data seem to fit the theoretical dimension neat and clear, and reported findings on six factors, which clearly can be argued to fit under the dimension of *relationship*. The overall importance of *relationship* in a business-to-business
professional service exchange seems to be significant. Reports from the research indicate that relationship factors are more important the longer the project lasts (K13-3b). And within the long-term projects in the case study, where the typical project lasted for a year or two, relationship is likely to be of importance for the customer’s value perception.

4.2.4 Trust.

Trust is representing a central part of service exchange processes with the willingness to trust the business partner. This dimension has also been pointed out in organisational buying behaviour. Within the dimension of trust, seven customers and four consultants named many different factors representing the trust, confidence, openness, honesty and mutual trust. These factors were largely focusing at trust in general terms, or focusing on the reliability through the trust in the content and competence of the service and consultant. On an overall basis the four of the consultants and seven of the consumers did report factors within the dimension of trust.

4.2.4.1 Factors of trust.

Trust in general.

On the general side most of the reported elements were relatively general as:

– Honesty and trustworthiness. That goes everywhere, but it is there. It has to work both ways. That you feel you can talk things out. And that you can trust each other (K4i-2; K4i-3).

It was also reported more concrete value adding factors like:

– Honesty and openness. The openness is important when you have to give out everything you know about a case problem, and not to hold information back. Not business secrets, that is honesty (R1-4).

– We trust them, don’t have to double check every invoice they send (K7-4).
Trust in content and competence
In terms of the reliability of the delivered content and the consultant’s competence there was presented elements as:

- *This means confident in that the product is precise and correct, and something that can be built on. That the consultant produces reports that I dare to take a decision from* (K7-1a).

- *Trust each other is important – Have not got the time or possibility to control all the delivery in detail* (K6-3a).

4.2.4.2 Discussion of trust.
As written in the framework description the dimension of trust and elements of trust have been pointed out as important by several authors. As there was no specific question regarding the level of trust, 11 of 18 of the interviewees emphasised value-adding factors to this, the empirical findings can seem to support the importance of value as a value-adding dimension.

Based on the reported value adding factors from the case study, the dimension of trust seems to be a relatively consistent and clean dimension. The researcher did not find any doubt in placement of the reported elements that concur with trust, honesty, confidence or openness. Whereas trust was encompassed by relationship in some of the literature (e.g. Woo & Ennew, 2005), this framework chose to use trust as an isolated dimension. The split in many findings in competence-specific factors, indicates that trust is of importance also outside of the scope of relationship.

The theoretical dimension of trust seems to be applicable to the case study, due to a combination of findings of relatively many and consistent potential value adding elements. The elements reported were basically within trust in general or trust in content and competence.

4.2.5 Adaptation.
The dimension of adaptation can be described as the ability the service provider has got in order to understand and adjust the service delivery to deliver what the customer actually needs.
The data on the adaptation dimension represents most of the interviewees, where the main findings are factors emphasising the importance of understanding the customer’s business, and an understanding of the overall surroundings, and thirdly factors that emphasise the ability to adjust to the customers needs. The understanding factor contains reported elements of understanding what the customer wants, but does not know or request. The understanding of the overall surroundings, is reported by seven interviewees, and encompasses a larger range of elements that represents an understanding of the overall branch or reality the customer is in.

4.2.5.1 Factors of adaptation.
The adaptation factors can be exemplified by:

– A consultant that can adjust to our organisation, so everyone are working towards the same goal (K6-1d).

– Different customers have different demands. Luckily. Have plans, and follow the plans, and deliver at time have become very important. In order to answer on technical measurable parameters (R1-5).

The value-adding factors of understanding what the customer want, which the customer does not know, can be exemplified by:

– Consultants see the needs that I am not able to ask for. If I knew everything, I would not use them. We use consultants on fields outside of our core competences (K13-4).

– It is important that the consultant understands the assignments, and makes a good and neat description of it. We have a broad subject specter and many employees, and we don’t have the knowledge about everything, so the consultant shall know what we ask for, and not ask for. In other words, understand what lies underneath and define a bit of the task him self, and then answer it (K3-1a).
Where the overall understanding of surroundings the customer sub-factor can be exemplified by one of the consultants:

– *The ability to understand the customers overall business. And take the little part as the project represents, in to the overall surroundings. Understand the overall value chain. This is more important the longer lasting the project is. I was chosen by this specific customer, because I knew the company and their purpose from earlier experiences (R1-4).*

– *A consultant’s competence outside his core area, in order to see the project as a whole (K6-4a).*

– *Check and be aware of the construction sites borders. Secure the site for vulnerable road users, and adapt to constant traffic. See all the construction phases, and adapt the plans in order to allow the traffic to run as normal as possible. Relatively often a challenge from the consultant. Especially in urban areas (K8-5b).*

### 4.2.5.2 Discussion of adaptation.

The findings that fit into the dimension of adaptation seem to confirm that adaptation and its factors are important for the selection. The heterogeneous rapidly changing characteristics in business-to-business professional services (Ojasalo, 2001), might offer an explanation for this reported importance.

Most of the reported elements where focusing on the ability to ‘understand’ rather then to ‘adapt’. The factors reported as ‘understanding the customer’s overall surroundings’ and ‘understanding what the customer wants’ was relatively neat and clear, and fitted easily into the dimension. These factors are in thread with previous conclusion on works of a Norwegian consultancy (Sonne, 1999).

The few factors on adaptation might indicate that the selection might see adaptation as a requisite, or they may include adaptation in to the understanding factors, where adaptation can be seen as a sign of understanding the customer. The low attention to the adaptation might also reveal a chance for overlapping to the *core service* dimension, where adaptation might be mirrored in the solutions or the actual delivery.
Adaptation as a dimension seems to be of large importance in the heterogeneous changing environments of business-to-business professional services, and mostly encompasses elements of ‘understanding the overall surroundings’ and ‘understanding what the customer wants’, as well as a few elements on ‘adaptation to the customer’s surroundings’.

4.2.6 Commitment

Commitment is a dimension that represents elements of engagement, enthusiasm and supplier involvement. A high degree of consultant commitment is likely to lead to value for the customer in terms of extra service. The dimensions of commitment seem to comprehend factors that can be described as ‘engagement’, ‘initiative’, ‘extra mile’ and ‘positive attitude’, where ‘engagement’ clearly stood out as the most emphasised determinant for value. There were several findings from 13 of the interviewees that fell under the scope of commitment.

4.2.6.1 Factors of commitment.

Examples of reported elements from the broad ‘engagement’ factor are showing a spectre form engagement, interest of the project and interest of the result:

– And it is engagement. I don’t want a consultant that isn’t engaged. In that case, he can just stay at home. He must be engaged in what he is doing, he should chat away so I almost need to ask him to be quiet (K2-5b).

– The feeling of that the consultants are genuinely interested in the project I am working on (K6-5).

– She cares about the result (Talking about a good consultant) (K9-1b).

‘Initiative’, ‘extra mile’ and ‘positive attitude’ can be exemplified respectively by the following three examples:

– That they are self-going, and we don’t have to repeat the questions and problem formulation too many times (K3-1a).
– Willingness to give a bit extra. Things are happening constantly, need to trust that the consultant can help out (K6-5).

– And that they are positive, and that they do not say no. In stead yes, but we do not have the resources right now. Contribute in the cooperation (K10-3a).

4.2.6.2 Discussion of commitment.

The many findings on the dimension of commitment clearly shows it importance in terms of value adding factors for the selection. The consultants seem to be more focused on the ‘extra mile’ than the customers, where only three customers reported specially about ‘extra mile’, compared to four of the consultants.

Despite the relatively precise examples of the different categories, the pattern seems to be that many of the reported factors are relatively fluent inside of the dimension, where the concrete factors have elements that could suit in several of the dimensions. This can be exemplified from this element from ‘extra mile’ where both ‘positive attitude’ and ‘extra mile’ factors are included:

– Be flexible. Don’t say no, say yes instead. Give the little extra. The positive attitude. Help with small things, extra tasks, without talking about the contract (R2-5).

The same pattern is shown in this element from ‘initiative’, which also includes ‘engagement’:

– If I am to use other persons then my self, they need to take ownership and show engagement, and deliver without having to ask twice. I might have very high demands, but as a manager I’m not interesting in following people around (K13-1a).

This indicates that the dimension of commitment is encompassing several relatively interrelated factors, which also can take form as depended elements.

The dimension of commitment with the elements of ‘engagement’, ‘initiative’, ‘extra mile’ and ‘positive attitude’ seem to be of interest for the selection, where findings indicates that many of these elements are interrelated within the overall commitment-dimension.
4.2.7 Fairness.

Fairness is representing the customer’s perception of justice towards a service exchange process perceived fair or not, based on what the customer gives compared to what he receives in return.

The findings from the dimension of fairness seem to differentiate from the other dimensions in this research. While the other dimensions encompassed factors from different parts in the interview factors regarding fairness were only mentioned on the very question of fairness, expect for one of the consultants. In total nine of the 18 interviewees reported elements within the scope of fairness. Some of the customers answered the question, while some did report elements that were sorted in other dimensions, while some answered on issues regarding fairness, but not directly to value adding or similar. In total 16 factors were extracted from the question of fairness and placed in other dimensions.

4.2.7.1 Factors of fairness.

In the dimension of fairness the interviewees reported elements on the pricing models as in these three examples:

– Fairness is depended on the agreed price, and which contracts form (that is used). I believe that fixed low prices gives less perceived fairness, because it gives us less freedom to act. But projects were we get paid by time spent, we can have a dialogue, and the project can easier be adjusted to things we find out in the process. This is the same as my experience (R2-2).

– Fixed prices are often including a tight budget, which may interfere the fairness (R2-2).

– Examples where the internal hourly billing rate is higher from some consultants than others. Those from specific subject areas may be 20 % higher. And it is usually not a problem, as long as the hours from these consultants is limited (K5i-2).

By one of the customers the factor of priority from the consultant was mentioned:
In the case where we do not get the priority from the consultancy, due to a larger customer, we believe that they are not the consultancy that we should work with (K7-2).

As well as the dimension that shows connection to the trust-dimension with this element of ownership or proprietary rights:

One issue can be that the consultancy might have other customers in the same branch. The ownership and knowledge they gather by working with us, it is important that you don’t experience that this is used and sold to others. So loyalty and confidentiality is appreciated (K7-2).

4.2.7.2 Discussion of fairness.

Fairness was one of the few dimensions the interviewer asked the interviewees about in particular, but still it gained relatively few and spread reports. The many elements placed in different categories, may indicate that the interviewees were led by the fairness-question in a direction that made them identify other value adding factors. In that case the question served a role in identifying determinants for customer value.

Fairness represents a handful of factors that are differentiating different factors from the other dimensions in the way they mainly were generated from this one question regarding fairness. It contains fairness in pricing models, priority and billing.

4.2.8 Factors which not fit in the ProServVal

The ProServVal-framework put up seven dimensions based on previews literature, where most of the value adding factors reported by the interviewees could be fitted in. But still there were factors that did not fit into any of these dimensions.

These factors were stretching from ‘learning’, ‘sustainability’, and ‘evaluation’ to the use of ‘less experienced consultants’ as well as a few independent factors that not will get mentioned here.
4.2.8.1 Factors which did not fit.

Learning and teaching.
Five of the interviewees pushed forward the knowledge they acquire during the service exchange process as value adding. This can be exemplified by:

- *I am left with more knowledge then when I started (K13-3a).*

- *Consultants with good competences, and that wants to share that competence with you, in order to learn from each other (K6-1a).*

Image.
Factors within the consultancy’s image and reputation was reported as important by one customer and one consultant:

- We are depended on that the consultancy we are using have got a good name and reputation that makes it trustworthy for the surroundings (K7-5b).

Proudness of result.
The satisfaction and pride when a project is accomplished, or the satisfaction when building something you can be proud of was reported by two of the consumers:

- *If we are building a large road construction project, it is to meet the demands and solutions that are agreed, but also to go a little bit further in order to get a project we can stand for and be proud of. Not always that easy, due to time and money (K10-1d).*
Evaluation.
Two of the interviewees reported that they were likely to perceive an evaluation process after the service exchange process as value adding:

– The delivery or ending phases tend not to be as good as they should be. Maybe an evaluation or something, or time to sum up when we have reached the point of delivery. We receive what is delivered, and when we receive it we kind of approves it. And than the dialogue is over. Until next time and the same time pressure (K3-0i).

4.2.8.2 Discussion of the factors that does not fit.
The factors ‘learning’ is to some extent related to the ‘competence’ factor, because it is to some extent derive from the consultant’s competence. On the other hand it does not fit in to the core service or peripheral service, as it is not a part of ‘what’ is purchased or ‘how’ it is delivered, but more as a result of the service exchange.

The answers on relating to the ‘image’ factors seemed more like selection criteria, rather than value adding factors, in the way they were formulated. The customer’s ‘Proudness of result’ is another factor reported as value adding, that does not fit into the seven dimension framework, and with the small focus and small theoretic support, it can not be argued to get a own dimension. ‘Evaluation’ was also emphasised by a small part of the selection, indicating some importance, but not enough to make probable an increased focus on post project ‘evaluation’ as a central value-adding factor.

4.3 The dimensions of ProServVal.
This sub-chapter will present a revision of the ProServVal-framework based on the findings from the case study, in order to adjust the theoretical framework to be closer to the reality. First a table will present the findings from the case study with the dimensions and their respective factors. Then a discussion for each dimension will follow, and in the end an adjusted table of dimensions and factors will be presented.

The case study done in this thesis has identified a range of different value-adding factors and fitted them into seven different dimensions by using the suggested ProServVal-framework. The findings largely confirm the use of six of the suggested dimensions, which all enhances several value-adding factors and elements. The findings also identify some factors that are not fitted into any of the seven dimensions.
The factors that seemed not to fit between, or outside of the seven dimensions, might suggest that the framework does not answer to the reality that is described by the study. This might indicate that the framework does not include the value adding factors to a large enough extent, to be used for identifying determinants of value for business-to-business professional service customers. Other authors have solved this with the use of larger dimensions, which include more factors and with that solve the issue of factors outside of the dimensions. On the other hand the intention behind this framework is to identify value-adding factors, and with the multiple variables it is easier to enlighten a broader set of factors.

As also mentioned over and in the presentation of the value adding factors some of the dimensions and factors are interrelated. This can be exemplified by an example taken from this quote relating relationship’s ‘cooperation’ and core service’ ‘competence’ to commitment:

– The cooperation with the consultants that have got competence within this specific subject area often have got a good cooperation due to their interest and often ideological approach to the assignment (K10-1b).

With this interrelation in mind applicableness of each dimension will be discussed.

4.3.1 Core service.

As expected, due to the remarkable attention in the excising literature, the core dimension gained particular interest from all the interviewees, and thus seems to confirm the impression from the preliminary interviews of that core service works a premise in the branch, and is perceived as value adding. The five factor groups of core service are clearly dominated by the actual ‘reliable deliveries’ and the ‘competence’, and as well as the other three factors they fit clearly in the dimension. The findings from the core service dimension again confirm that the actual service exchange delivery and the competence of the consultant is important to the selection of engineering consultant’s customers, and that the dimension of core service is highly relevant for determination of customer value.
4.3.2 Peripheral service.

The dimension of peripheral services was founded upon a variety of frameworks, and with the strong findings of peripheral service without the elements that was extracted to own dimensions; relational, trust, adaptation, commitment or fairness factors that are included in e.g. Grönroos’ (1984) ‘functional dimension’, the dimension of peripheral service seems to work as a independent dimension. The dimensions consist largely of the strong findings on ‘responsiveness’, which are in accordance with the existing literature, and seem to be the selection’s most important factor of ‘how’ the service delivery is done.

The factor of ‘physical meetings’ does not seem to have gained any particular importance in the existing literature, but findings from the selection pointed out physical meetings to be of relatively large importance. It is notable that the factor of ‘physical meetings’ was not mentioned by any of the non-constructing related interviewees. This might be a factor which is in particular important in services as engineering consultancy, where frequent deliveries many times actually regard the relatively tangible and objective final product as a construction. Under these assumptions the physical meetings and inspections on site are likely to be more important in a engineering consultancy, than many other branches. But also the regular physical meetings, where solutions can be discussed over the table was emphasized. Combined with the ease of measure the number and perceived quality of a meeting, this points physical meetings out as an important potential value-adding factor for the customers. ‘Physical meetings’ might be seen as a part or an arena for relationship, but physical meetings can be argued to be a credence good, where the actual physical meeting works as an extra service in ‘how’ the service are delivered.

4.3.3 Relationship.

Relationship is also a dimension that was clearly pointed out by the literature, and the findings from the interviews confirm the value-adding potential of factors belonging to this dimension. The findings of ‘cooperation’ and ‘communication’, and ‘social relations’ and ‘professionalism’ are all supported by the existing literature.

Chemistry was clearly pointed out by the selection to be of high importance in the service exchange process. Chemistry shares aspects with both ‘communication’ and ‘cooperation’, but is too a much larger extent a determinant of how well people act together. With this understanding the factor of ‘chemistry’ can contribute to the literature by including a more undefinable sub-conscious factor determining the value of the relationship, pointing
out that a *relationship* between customer and service provider includes a lot more or less diffuse elements. Whereas both ‘cooperation’ and ‘communication’ can be improved by different efforts, ‘chemistry’ is per definition difficult to change or improve from a management perspective.

Under the factor of ‘professional relations’ many of the interviewees emphasized the value adding opportunity to contact the consultant in order to get a quick, but brief, often general answer on a certain problem, to be of great value for them. This can prove as an example on which the value of a certain service is perceived higher when the investment is low. The findings of the opportunity to contact the consultant outside of a project, combined with ‘chemistry’, ‘cooperation’ and ‘communication’, confirms the application of the *relationship* dimension.

### 4.3.4 Trust.

The dimension of *trust* contains several findings in the data material which are reported to be value adding for the customer. The factors separated largely in to two different parts, where the first is about *trust* in the service exchange process in general, and the other is closely related to the actual service delivery, where the content of a delivery or solution can be trusted. The latter can be argued to be related to the reliability of the delivery, but the reported factors seemed to fit better inside an overall trust dimension, since *trust* is believed to be of importance not only in the *core service*, but also in *peripheral services* and the other dimensions. Findings indicate that the *trust* in the content of the delivery is closely related to *trust* in general as this example indicates:

> – *For the first we need to trust the consultant. This starts with that we need to be able to trust the competence he is suppose to have. If not it will be revealed after some time, but that might be too late (K6-3a).*

Leaving the two slightly different trust factors in the same dimension, opens up for an overall perspective, where the literature can emphasis *trust*-factors as a whole in order to affect the overall *trust* directly.
4.3.5 Adaptation.
The dimension of adaptation did gain an overall focus from the interviewees, but with a larger emphasise on the ‘understanding’ part of the dimension than the ‘adaptations’ part. This is in line with the framework of e.g. Patterson et al. (1997) that emphasises the importance of problem understanding. In general the customer’s value of being understood and receive adjusted service deliveries seem to match the empirical findings and the theoretic background of the adaptation-dimension.

In the reviewed literature adaptation and understanding are focusing on the service providers ability to understand and adapt to the customer and its surroundings. On the other hand, the data analysis reveals a few factors that do not fit all to well in their respective dimensions. The peripheral service-dimension of ‘reasoning’ and ‘presentation’ and the factor of ‘learning’, all have a common focus on the customer’s understanding of the service exchange process.

This can be exemplified by the ‘reasoning’ factor, which:

– And gives the customers different options, and make them understand the consequences for each choice. And then we need to do it, unless it is beyond our professional standards (R4-1a).

– Consultants that are good at explaining why things are done. Those who are working with the demanding cases take the time necessarily to understand how the different parts are thought through (K8-1b).

And from the ‘presentation’ factor:

– Try to communicate the answer in a way which, easily can be understood by the customer (R2-5).

And from the ‘learning and teaching’ factor:

– Consultants with good competences, who wants to share that competence with you, in order to learn from each other (K6-1a).
On the basis of the findings from the interviews the thesis will suggest an extended focus on the adaptation-dimension, including both the consultant’s and the customer’s understanding and adaptation. In other words it will focus not only the consultant’s ability to understand the customer, but as important is the consultant’s ability to get the customer to understand what is going on in the service exchange. This will from now be named the understanding and adaptation dimension.

A broadened two-sided view on understanding and adaptation can make it possible to incorporate both the consultant and the customer in the dimension of adaptation that is not incorporated in e.g. Woo, and Ennew’s (2005) adaptation dimension or Patterson et al.’s (1997) problem identification dimension. This side may proof valuable in a business-to-business professional service environment that is characterised by the long lasting relatively intensive service exchange processes, and it might comprehend a better part of the service exchange reality described in the interviews.

4.3.6 Commitment.
Commitment as an independent factor for customers has not been emphasised much in the earlier reviewed work, but later works emphasise the factors of enthusiasm and commitment. The commitment-dimension had several findings with most emphasis on ‘engagement’-factors from the collected data material, but factors indicating going the ‘extra mile’ also reported strong findings. In an overall perspective the dimension of commitment seems to be a neat and well separated independent dimension, which encompass factors that can add value in the service exchange process.

4.3.7 Fairness.
The dimension of fairness was emphasised by Patterson et al. (1997), and included in this framework on the background as enlighten an important factor that the other models did not seem to enclose. But the empirical findings from this case indicate that it is not seen as very important for the customers in the selection.

This may be explained by that fairness as a dimension with the ratio between the customer’s perceived value, compared to the perceived service providers’ value, is close to this thesis’ understanding of value, as the customer’s assessment between the value he receives and invests. This may lead to a situation where the perception of fairness, to a large extent will follow the perception of value. And with that, a factor that decreases the value also
is likely to decrease the fairness and vice versa. Another element might be that fairness is perceived as a hygiene factor, meaning that if a service exchange is perceived fair, it will not add value, but contribute to a state that neither increases or decreases value. On the other hand, if a service exchange is perceived unfair, it can cause a decrease in perceived value.

The ProServVal-framework has as a goal to identify value-adding factors and on the basis of this discussion the framework will not include a fairness dimension.

4.3.8 Adjusted framework.

The ProServVal-framework revised on basis of the empirical case that data contains six theoretical dimensions that can be used to determining customer value. This analysis largely confirms the dimensions of core service, peripheral service, relationship, trust and commitment as theoretical independent dimensions for determination of customer value.

Fairness was taken out from the framework, because it did not get any reported value adding factors, despite that the dimension was asked directly for. Further, on the discussion of adaptation leads to a widening of the dimension, including both the consultant’s ability to understand the customer, and also the consultant’s ability to make the customer understand what the consultant is doing. This two-sided adaptation-dimension is representing a component of originality from the existing literature, which may provide a wider perspective of the important factors of understanding the customer needs.

The analysis confirmed that the selection did not seem to differentiate between factors leading to customer satisfaction and factors leading to customer value, which can be seen as a positive confirmation of the theoretical approach of focusing only on one of the constructs of customer satisfaction.

With the exclusion of fairness and widening of understanding and adaptation, the framework seems to be applicable for describing and identifying value adding factors in the state of the case investigation. The adjusted framework will comprehend the factors and sub factors as described in figure 9 and table number 1.
Table 1: ProServVal – after adjustment to findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core service factors</th>
<th>Sub-factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliable deliveries and solutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Creative solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Price of service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost effectiveness of project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting the budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral service factors</td>
<td>Sub-factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>Timeliness of delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speed of delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progress in project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical meetings</td>
<td>Meetings of different sort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visiting on sites (at all points of service exchange)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Orderliness and structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship service factors</th>
<th>Sub-factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Internal cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A “good way” of speaking (God tone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional relations</td>
<td>Know where to find competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possibility to ask off-project questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritising in delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>Politeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separate the case from the person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust factors</th>
<th>Sub factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust in general</td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mutually trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in content and competence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation factors</td>
<td>Sub factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation to the customer</td>
<td>Adjust to the customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjust to the customer’s surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the customer</td>
<td>Understand the customers needs and goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand the customer’s overall surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer’s understanding of the consultant</td>
<td>Presentation of deliveries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking critical questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selling in suggested solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer’s learning</td>
<td>Acquiring of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment factors</td>
<td>Sub factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extra mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other factors</td>
<td>Sub factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image of service provider</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proudness of result</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Pricing models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ownership or proprietary rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Empirical findings from application of ProServVal.

This empirical study reveals a large number of different findings of potential value-adding elements and factors for the engineering consultancy used in this case study. Many of the findings of value adding factors reported in the interviews, are represented by elements that the case company, and most other professional service deliveries are likely already aware of.

This can be exemplified by the reported value adding factors fitting in the core service factors of ‘reliable deliveries and solutions’ and ‘competence’, which every consultant in this business likely is to be highly aware of from before. In total 22 different headline factors from the six final dimensions identifies as factors that the engineering consultancy should emphasize in order to improve their customer’s value.

This sub-chapter will present the findings of the factors that are identified by the case analysis as the most interesting from an empirical perspective, and lead out to recommendations of what the case company should emphasise in order to improve the customer value.

4.4.1 Physical meetings.

Many of the customers and one of the consultants focused attention towards the potential value adding factors of physical meetings, and especially visits at the construction site. These visits where suggested to be done during or after the construction phase, in order to see how the theoretical advises and solutions work in practice. This is a relatively concrete effort, which is relatively easy to accomplish from a management perspective. On the other side it might take up a relatively large part of resources, and might be working hours that cannot be billed to the customer.

Due to the multiply clear precisions in the data material it is recommended that the consultants are visiting at the construction site several times during a project if the customer finds it relevant. The factor of ‘physical meetings’ was not mentioned by any of the three interviewees that did not work mainly with different types of construction. Visiting of finished constructions together with the customer is likely to add customer value, and it might also benefit the professional relation and serve as a natural arena for seeking information of potential new assignments and projects.
4.4.2 Chemistry.

With no doubt the empirical findings reveal that ‘chemistry’ is important for the selection. ‘Chemistry’ as a factor is per definition relatively unclear, but it received heavily and precise importance from the interviewees. Due to the psychological part of the factor, and its abstraction level it is difficult to control and manage the factor. But some of the customers indicate that the ‘chemistry’ can improve over time, and some of the consultants are emphasising that they try to adapt to the customer’s personality when interacting. The interviews showed two kinds of approaches to ‘chemistry’, where the most reported was that ‘chemistry’ was a static state. The other indicated that the persons could adjust their behavior in order to meet the other persons ‘chemistry’. This can be exemplified by:

– Find the chemistry with the person you are working with. Sometimes I am saying that you need to be a chameleon (R5-3a).

Other suggestions for improving the ‘chemistry’, which were mentioned in the interviews:

- What creates the good chemistry? The good chemistry comes if the team concentrates on the same goal in the project, with this the chemistry will come by itself unless there is something special with them. Then the chemistry will come, with the feeling of community (K6-3a).

And finally, putting together the right team was mentioned as a possible effort for improving the chemistry.

– The importance of putting together the right team of competence leads to good chemistry (K6-4).

These findings taken into consideration, combined with the strong importance of ‘chemistry’, the consultants of the case company should try to adjust to the customer and emphasise a good ‘chemistry’ in their relations or in the teams, in order to improve customer value.
4.4.3 Professional relation.
One of the more concrete factors that were mentioned was the value adding possibility to contact the consultants in need of rapid but often short answers and information. On this background the recommendations for improving customer value would be for the consultants, at a relatively early phase of a professional relationship, to specify to the customer that such contact is welcomed. This could lower the customer’s threshold for contacting, and potentially improve perceived customer value, and by that increase the chance of re-purchase and other beneficial effects.

4.4.4 Understanding the customer.
The understanding and adaptation dimension provides a broad theoretical approach focusing on both the customer’s and the consultant’s understanding. Within the reported factors and elements both the ‘understanding the customer’, ‘customer’s understanding of the consultant’ and the ‘customer’s learning’ are revealing recommendations for improving the customer value.

It was strong findings reporting the ‘understanding of customers’ and the ‘understanding of customer’s surroundings’ to be determinants for value. Due to the heavy attention these factors got, a general recommendation in order to increase customer value the consultants should put extra effort in understanding what the customer actually is in need of, often without actually saying it. And with that also focus understanding the customer’s surroundings in order to identify the customer’s needs.

4.4.5 Customer’s understanding of the consultant.
The factor of getting the customer to understand the consultant is pointed out by the data material as a central part of increasing potential value adding factors. The factor encompass a wide range of different elements all focusing on the customer’s understanding of the service exchange process.

The recommendation on the overall factor is that the consultancy should seek to increase the ‘customer’s understanding’ of what is going on, through the whole specter of sub-factors that are revealed from this research, due to several reports of value determinants as this example:

– Consultants who are good at explaining why things are done (K8-1b).
In cases where this is done, it can have positive effects on the customer value, as well as other factors. For instance, in terms of the potential negative value factor such 'overproduction of documentation’ as reported in the interviews in the core service-dimension. A focus of explaining the customer what and why it is done, might lead to what the customer originally perceived as non-value adding, transforms to value adding, together with the customer’s understanding of its importance.

4.4.6 Learning.
Another interesting aspect in the relation of the broad understanding and adaptation-dimension was the several reports on the value adding effect of learning in the service exchange process. An example of a value-adding factor can be:

- They are willing to learn, and willing to teach (K8-4a).

Based on these reports the recommendation is to encourage the consultants to increase the focus on knowledge sharing. And as the interviews pointed out, especially knowledge sharing within the similar technical fields are emphasized as value adding factors.
5 Conclusion.

This thesis had in mind investigating what customer value is in a business-to-business professional service environment, and has conducted a case investigation of a Norwegian engineering consultancy.

There has been presented a framework of originally seven dimensions, named ProServVal, based on elements from the existing service literature. This has been used in order to collect the empirical data through interviews. The empirical findings have been sorted in under the ProServVal-dimensions in a wide range of different factors and sub-factors, which further have been used to adjust the framework so it is more applicable of identifying value-adding factors in the case organisation. After this adjustment the ProServVal-framework comprises six dimensions that all comprehend noteworthy findings of different value adding factors: core service, peripheral service, relationship, trust, understanding and adaptation, and commitment.

Fairness has been excluded from the framework due to low response from the selection and the lack of ability to determinate value, as it seems to serve more as a hygiene factor. The dimension of core service is as expected clearly supported, mainly through ‘reliable deliveries’ and the ‘competence’. Peripheral service is also largely supported both through ‘responsiveness’, but also including a factor of ‘physical meetings’ that gains attention from the selection.

The dimension of relationship is determining customer value clearly through ‘cooperation’ and ‘communication’, but the dimension also clearly encompass the strong factor of ‘chemistry’, which contributes to the literature pointing out that it is a strong undefinable factor that affects the dimension of relationship. Trust is also confirmed as an independent dimension, despite to some interrelations with the ‘reliability of delivery and solutions’, the findings clearly indicate that trust goes beyond the actual delivery and is a general factor.

The broad two-sided dimension that is presented in understanding and adaptation introduces an interesting perspective where the customer’s understanding of the consultant is a determinant for value, as well as the consultant’s understanding of the customer. The dimension of commitment also showed to be distinctive from the other dimensions in
including elements of ‘engagement’, but also confirming the importance of elements as ‘extra mile’.

Customer value in the investigated selection seems to a large extent to be encased by the six dimensions of the ProServVal-framework, which also serves as an applicable framework for identifying the customer value. With reservations of that the findings of this study is based on a single case study where a limited number of customers and consultants from different technical areas connected to one consultancy, and are likely not to be generalizable to any larger extent. But the theoretical findings regarding the dimensions, and the dimensions sub factors, may still serve to add a perspective to the service literature with the findings regarding the broad two-sided understanding and adaptation dimension and the strong undefinable factor of ‘chemistry’ as a important factor of relationship.

5.1 Managerial implications of the empirical findings.

The empirical study and following use of framework has identified multiply factors, which the case company can focus on, in order to improve the customer’s perceived value. Many of these are already factors the organisation is aware of, as the interviewed consultants confirmed to a large extent.

The analysis reveals six different factors that should gain emphasise in order for the consultant to improve customer’s value. Firstly this is to take the time for ‘physical meetings’, preferably at the construction site during or after the construction process.

The undefinable psychological factor ‘chemistry’ was showed particular interest by the interviewees, and due to the difficulties in managing a such factor, it was suggested that the consultants could adjust their behaviour to try to meet the customers ‘chemistry’, which leads to a recommendation of focusing on the ‘chemistry’ in customer relations.

The ability to call for quick professional advices clearly stood out as an important value adding element from the factor of ‘professional relation’, and is recommended that the consultants at a appropriate early state in a professional relation welcomes the customer to this kind of contact.

Also of strong importance in the empirical material was the ability to understand the customer, and to face this the consultants should try to understand both the overall surroundings of the customer, and focus on what the customer actually wants, and not deliver exactly what he is asking for. The broad two-sided focus in the understanding and adaptation dimension was inspired by the strong importance the customer’s understanding was shown in...
the empirical material. The recommendations in this case is an overall focus on presenting
material in easy understandable matters and reasoning and discussions around what the
consultant is doing, at a technical competence level that matches the customer’s.

As a part of the understanding and adaptation dimension, empirical findings also
revealed that the selection seems to appreciate and gain value from learning new knowledge,
and with this the consultants should focus on knowledge sharing with the customer.

With the same general reservations for generalisation as described over, in the
concrete case of the case company it was a strong representation in the selection of
interviewees working with different types of construction. Therefore the findings are likely to
be somewhat more representative for this group of customers. These efforts are not sorted in
relevance, due to the little data basis, and they are also likely to be of different importance in
different situations, in the heterogeneous environment of business-to-business professional
services.
6 References.


Case company’s Annual report 2010. (2011) [Annual report]


7 Appendixes.

7.1 Second hand data.

The following graphs are from a customers survey conducted in 2009 by the case organisation. The Norwegian numbers are represented by the yellow graph.

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**How important are the following factors when evaluating an engineering consultancy in general? (6-7)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of knowledge</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reliable deliveries</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy to work with</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of creativity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovative problem solving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of competencies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous cooperation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient project administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to efficient tools</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about sustainable development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General reputation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>International experience</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**Which three of the following do you generally consider the MOST important evaluation criteria?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Finland</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reliable deliveries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy to work with</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of creativity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovative problem solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scope of competencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficient project administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge about sustainable development</td>
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<td>General reputation</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>International experience</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2 Question frame from the interviews.

0. Helt korte innledende spørsmål.
0a) - Hvor lenge har du jobbet i bransjen?
0b) - Når avsluttet du fôrige prosjekt med Sweco?
0c) - Hva handlet prosjektet om [Helt kort – eg. Vei/bygg]
0d) - Hvor lang tid pågikk prosjektet? [Ca]
0e) - Har du hatt mange prosjekter, også med andre rådgivere?
0f) - Hvordan / hvem bestemmer innkjøpene av tjenestene? (Beslutningstagere)
0g) - Hva slags prosjekter er det du har? (Korte, Mellomlange, Lange)
0h) - Kontraktsform [medgått tid, fast ramme osv]

1. Perceived Value:
[I et prosjekt er det mange elementer/faktorer som kan gi en opplevd verdi]
1a) - Hva gir deg verdi i et prosjekt?
1b) - Er det noe som vil gi deg mer verdi, som du ikke nødvendigvis pleier å få?

1c) - Er det noe du får av rådgiveren, eller noen rådgiveren gjør som ikke gir deg verdi?
1d) - Hva er det som vil gi verdi for din organisasjon?

(Spørsmål til rådgivere)
1aR) - I samarbeidet mellom rådgivende ingeniør hva mener du er mest verdiskapende for kunden?
1bR) – Er det noe du føler vil kunne gi kunden mer verdi, som han ikke nødvendigvis pleier å få?

2. Perceived sacrifice / Fairness:
[I et prosjekt er det mye som kan påvirke hvor ”fair” prosjektet oppleves med tanke på hva man får, og hva man gir.]  
2) - Hvilke faktorer kan være med å påvirke hvor ”fair” et prosjekt oppleves?
3. Relationship.
[I et prosjekt kan relasjonen med rådgiver påvirke opplevelsen av prosjektet]
3a) 1 - Hvilke faktorer i forholdet/relasjonen med rådgiver vil gi deg verdi?
3b) 2 - Hvilke faktorer i forholdet/relasjonen vil ikke bidra til verdi?

4. CoreX
[Om vi tegner opp leveransen fra rådgivende ingeniør, til et slags kjerneområde så kan vi se på hva som ligger utenfor kjernen]
4a) - Hva gir deg verdi?

5. Kundetilfredshet (Customer satisfaction):
5a) - Hva gjør deg fornøyd i et prosjekt med rådgivende ingeniør?
5b) - Er det noe som vil gjøre deg mer fornøyd, som du ikke nødvendigvis pleier å få?

5R (Spørsmål til rådgiverne)
5aR) - Hvordan vil du skape ”customer satisfaction”?
0i) - Hvor i prosjektet/samarbeidet er disse faktorene mest viktige?
7.3 List over reported value-adding factors.

This list provides an extract of value adding factors and elements from the conducted interviews translated from Norwegian to English. The findings are sorted under the original seven categories of the ProServVal-framework. K represents customers, and R represents consultants. K4 and K5 are internal customers and marked with K4i / K5i. XX is used in order to represent names or companies. XC is used in order to represent the case organisation.

Short introduction questions.

0a) - Hvor lenge har du jobbet i bransjen?

K1 – 34 years
K2 – 29 years
K3 – 31 years
K4i – 35 years
K5i – 41 years
K6 – 48 years
K7 – 17 years in this field. Before that was consultant himself.
K8 – 18 years
K9 – 11 years
K10 – 4 years
K11 – 35 years
K12 – 15-16 years
K13 – 15 years + 11 years academically

Average for customers: 26 years

R1 – 9 years
R2 – 13 years
R3 – 26 years
R4 – 33 years
R5 – 21 years

Average for consultants: 20 years
0b) - Når avsluttet du forrige prosjekt med XC?
K1 – 1 year ago
K2 – 2-3 months ago
K3 – 1 year ago
K4i – On-going
K5i – A couple of years ago
K6 – on-going
K7 – on-going
K8 – on-going
K9 – half year ago
K10 – on-going
K11 – on-going
K12 – on-going / this spring
K13 – on-going

0c) - Hva handlet prosjektet om?
K1 – Construction Buildings
K2 – Construction Buildings
K3 – Mapping of noise
K4i – Infrastructure
K5i – Water and wastewater-systems
K6 – Road Construction
K7 – Impact Analysis
K8 – Road Construction
K9 – Construction of buildings
K10 – Mapping of noise
K11 – Road Construction
K12 – Construction Buildings
K13 – Impact Analysis
R1 – Environmental consulting and society planning
R2 – Mapping of Noise
R3 – Geo-technic
R4 – Construction buildings
R5 – Infrastructure
0d) - Hvor lang tid pågikk prosjektet?
K1 – ca 1 år
K2 – 18 months
K3 – 2 years
K4i – Several projects. 2-3 days – months – 4-5 years.
K5i – Relatively short period.
K6 – 6 years
K8 – 5 years
K9 – 8 months
K10 – 3 years
K11 – 2 years
K12 – 2 years
K13 – 9 months

0e) - Har du hatt mange prosjekter, også med andre rådgivere?
K1 – Yes, we use consultants on every projects
K2 – Yes
K3 – Yes
K4i –Yes
K5i – Not the last few years
K6 – Yes
K7 – Yes
K8 – Yes
K9 – Yes
K10 - Yes
K11 - Yes
K12 – Yes
K13 – Yes

R2 – Yes, several projects all the time.
0f) - Hvordan / hvem bestemmer innkjøpene av tjenestene?

K1 – Customer and contact persons decides.

K2 – Customer. Are involved of 90 % of the projects in the company.

K3 – Customer recommends. Strict governmental regulations with a purchasing commission.

K4i – Customer recommends, but customer’s customer decides.

K5i – Customer decides whom to use.

K6 – Customer and contact person suggests. Depends on size, contract is usually signed by CEO or one level down.

K7 – Customer suggest a consultant, depending on project. Controlled by competence and single individuals

K8 – Customer and contact person suggests. Decision Public purchasing board

K9 –Public competitions - The law and regulation about public purchasing.

K10 – Customer recommends with advices from lawyer, and the purchasing board decides.

K11 – Customer recommends consultant. We have got a framework agreement. If it is big, we will ask more than three.

K12 – To a large extent my self.

K13 – No idea. It is not myself. It is a large purchasing organisation in XX. Where I used to be, I decided.

R1 – Many of my customers have been decision makers, but for customers from larger companies the decision is often a few positions over in the hierarchy.

R2 – A combination. Mostly through public competitions. Some of them through contacts.

R3 – To a large degree purchasing are decided from those we meet in meetings. But depending on the size of the projects, and how large my part is.

R4 – Varies. The customer is often ordering, but often need to get someone else to sign the contract.

R5 – A combination. Depending on the customer.

0g) - Hva slags prosjekter er det du har?

K1 – 1 – 2,5 år

K2 – For example 18 months.

K3 – About 2 years

K4i –Depends. 2-3 days – months – 4-5 years

K5i – 1–2 years
K6 – A few months – 6 years.
K7 – A month – about a year
K8 – about 2 years. Varies.
K9 – From 4 months – several years
K10 – 1-3 years
K11 – A few months – couple of years
K12 – A couple of years
K13 – Varies. Maintaining projects are short from 6-12 months. Developing projects are often lasting in several years.

R1 – Used to have couple of months – 3 quarters of a year. Now more longer projects
R2 – 2 days – 6 years
R3 – A few hours – 2 years
R4 – A month – several years
R5 – 1-5 years

0h) - **Kontraktsform [medgått tid, fast ramme osv]**.
K1 – Time spent with an upper limit.
K2 (0h) – Mostly fixed prices. If its smaller things its on hourly basis.
K3 – Framework agreement with prices per hours after that.
K4i – Time spent with an upper limit. Sometimes a framework agreement.
K7 – Framework agreement with fixed prices per hours.
K8 – Paid by hours, limit on contract. In case of more hours, paid by hours.
K9 – Time spent with an upper limit
K11 – Framework agreement
K12 – Depends on the project. Fixed price agreement or time spent

R4 – All varieties of different forms.
R5 (0contract) – A combination. Very few fixed prices.

0i) - **Hvor i prosjektet/samarbeidet er disse faktorene mest viktige?**
K1 (0ib) – The start phase is the most important.
K2 (0i) – Start phase.
K3 (0i) – The start phase.
K4i (0i) – Projecting and construction phase.
K5i (0i) – Offering phase.
K6 (0i) – In the start phase.
K7 (0i) – In the final product
K8 (0i) – In the construction phase, because I am there. If something is different from planned, the time and money flies away fast.
K9 (0i) – In the start phase and in the ending phase.
K12 (0i) – Start phase of the projects. Less important at the end.
K13 (0i) – Everything need to be ready before the execution.

R2 (0i) – Depends. Trust important from start. Delivery and deadlines are important towards the end. Communication all the way through.
R3 (0i) – Execution phase. Then you need to be there at once, when the machines are standing still at the site.
R4 (0i) – The start phase.
R5 (0i) – Start phase, in order to build up good relations. And often in times of adversity. When things are going wrong, if they are going wrong.

Core service.

Reliable Delivery and Solutions.
R2 (1a) – That we suggest solutions that are implementable.
R2 (1a) – And the best solutions, when It comes to costs for the customer.
R2 (1a) – Deliver exactly what the customer requests. Nothing more, nothing less.
R2 (1c) – Elements that we feel from a professional perspective should do and document, in order to be able to trace back things and make it correct.
R2 (4) – I think they are interested in what we deliver, and price.
R2 (5) – Try to answer the assignment as efficient and good as possible.
R4 (1c) – The things I’m doing are necessarily in order to reach the agreed target. Might be things (that does not add value), but cannot come up with
R4 (1d) – The customer can measure the progress in the project after what we are doing.
R4 (1d) – Our customers know if we have done a good job.
R4 (4) – The customer’s value is when the final product that we have contributed to, have satisfied end users.
R5 (1a) – Top quality, is most likely a premise. And I believe we should deliver that.
R5 (3a) – Deliver good quality on everything we give to the customer. This is important.

K1 (1a) – Concrete suggestions for solutions
K1 (1a) – Creative solutions can give me added value, through cheaper execution.
K2 (5a) – What makes me satisfied is when we see the solutions the consultants came up with are actually working, and supposedly have got good quality. And that it is predictable compared to where you will end. That makes me really satisfied.
K2 (5a) – If the theoretical person can come up with a solution that actually is working really good in practice, it is worth a lot.
K2 (1d) – It is really important to us that the consulting engineers are documenting. They document all the solutions for us.
K2 (3a) – If you know that the consulting engineer are good at coming up with good solutions that actually benefits the contractor, the developer and the environment. Then we might choose him, because we know that he will deliver better solutions. Cheaper solutions, so it might be that those 30 – 40 thousand in honorarium in the one direction or another does not matter.

K3 (1a) – The most important is of course that the consultant can answer our questions. Deliver what we want.
K3 (1d) – That the consultants are delivering according to a high professional level. That is absolutely the most valuable.
K3 (1c) – That they answer the assignment as I tell tem.
K5i (1a) – And seen that way, the quality is the depending factor.
K5i (5a) – What makes me satisfied is that we can deliver an ok product within the cost limits we’ve got. And makes the contractor satisfied. It is positive if the internal consultant contributes to reaching the target.
K5i (1a) – Good suggestions for improvement is definitively a positive feature. Better solutions on what I have drawn up as a starting point.
K8 (5a) – That I’m able to build what the consultant intended from start, and within the time limit. Because the consultants have often been in the projects before we are coming in as contractors.

K8 (1a) – Pre-investigations and investigation of the ground is important to me.

K10 (1c) – Also surprised over elements in deliveries that have not been thought of or been done better, taking a starting point in the consultants experience and CV.

K10 (1d) – The best possible solution on the task we are solving. Manage to solve the problems in the project.

K11 (1a) – Solution oriented and present ideas.

K11 (5b) – Appreciate that they are knowledgeable and that they contribute with ideas and alternatives to what we have put up.

K12 (1c) – Every consultant can come up with wrong advices and wrong basis of decision. But we just fix this. It will usually get revealed relatively fast by other consultants, and corrected.

K12 (1d) – Our goal is to deliver a product that is flawless to our customer. That is the added value for us.

K12 (5a) – Accuracy (of the solution) is important.

K13 (1d) – Get the systems to work.

K13 (3a) – The consultant deliver what I expect, “about so”. The consultant has done his job, when I want to recommend using him again.

K7 (1d) – Adhered good reports, with high professional competence that creates confidence. We are completely depended on that.

K7 (1a) – First of all that the consultant delivers the answers I wish to receive.

K7 (1b) – I guess when they deliver better than expected on the things that are important to us, on time and competence.
K9 (1d) – And quality (and progress. Progress more than price actually).

K9 (1a) – Delivers quality, but in the pre-projecting it is a question of interpretation of what is good and acceptable quality.
K9 (5a) – Receive a good product, to the right time. Where you don’t need to take several rounds in order to get it approved.

Overproduction.

K1 (1c) – Not more drawings and projecting then necessarily. Sometimes it may be drawn and project engineered more than necessarily. It is seldom, but we have experienced getting drawings, as the consultants believe we need, which there is no need for. Things that just are getting solved at the construction site. Things that is obvious for us, as a contractor. But the consultant thinks we are in the need of the drawings, without having asked us. It is quite a few things the contractor can tell, know and solves best, at the site without any need of drawings from the consultant.

K3 (1c) – The consultants might over produce a few things, really. As I used to say in relation to the water and wastewater-branch I have experience from. It is not necessarily to draw everything out in scale 1:1, because a professional will execute the physical work. They know how things shall be. That a door sits in a wall, and pipes are to lay in a ditch. It is not necessarily to draw this. And I might have an impression that the consultant business wants to produce and write hours. It may become quite lot documentation and papers on things that are obvious.
K7 (1c) – It can be consultants want to sell competence, reports and impact analysis we don’t need, and that is perceived negatively.
K8 (1c-) – Do not do things that not have been ordered, does not add value to me. If we feel that they sometimes have written too many hours on a small change they were asked to do. We may feel that they have used way too much time on this small change, and on top of that when they do things we did not ask for, and writes hours for that.
K9 (1c-) – I have got an impression of that some consultants just want to increase sales, and where I not get the impression of that they actually cares of the project as a whole.

**Competences / Knowledge.**

R1 (4) – To use the knowledge from the surroundings creates good relations.
R1 (5) – Use the broad experience, and the experience from the company.
R3 (1a) – If the experience does that you can see what is needed, and get the relevant information already at an early phase. It can be very valuable, and save a lot of expenses.
R3 (1a) – Have the experience. And see what is needed. And get the solutions in place at an early phase.
R3 (1a) – Importance of a person that know what he is doing
R4 (1b) – See things in prior of what happens, report as early as possible in case of difficulties or troubles in the project.
R4 (1b) – That you are accurate, and don’t let the contractors do everything they want.

K2 (5a) – Shared reference projects with the consultant. And experience.
K2 (5a) – The construction business is experience.
K2 (1d) – We do not have the competence about fire, sound, and foundation, so we need to get in experts there.

K3 (5a) – You must know the technical area, (and answer easy and neat on it.)

K5i (1d) – To get the supplement competence we need in order to cover the projects to a larger degree.

K6 (3b) – Specialists that are high informed at any time, so you are secured the latest knowledge.

K6 (3b) – The combination of own workers and consultants (in the project team) to form a whole (Competences)
K6 (1a) – We need consultants with a high core competence, because we are generalists
K6 (1a) – Uses engineering consultants due to resources, but mostly competences.
ourselves.
K7 (5b) – A wish for even better competence. Competence is the important thing for us.
K7 (5b) – Many of these small consultancies have got a good network and can get the
competence they need.
K7 (1a) – (We do not look that much at price,) but competence and continuity. Likely to do
with this company to be a small and quite specialised company, that demands special things.
K9 (3a) – A consultant that are ok competent
K12 (1a) – The consultant’s knowledge
K13 (1d) – A broad interdisciplinary spectre. So we can use one provider for all the services.

Creativity.
R1 (1a) – Adding something new to the customers project during the process. (Some
customers like new elements, some do not.)
R5 (2) – See the opportunities. Get in competences I don’t have from other places in the
organisation. Think sustainability.

K1 (1b) – (…) Creative solutions that can give added value, by giving me a cheaper
execution.

K2 (1a) – It is important for me that a consultant moves out from the calculation programs
and can be creative outside of that. Come up with the solutions that are time saving and cost
saving. That is important, because that benefits the contractor, the developer and the
environment. Everyone can extract data from their diagram, but actually to be creative. For
instance a person with a lot of experience. Really important. A person that have been in one
setting before, that can predict the pitfalls.

K4i (5a) – It is always exciting with projects that are a bit new, and not the same as you had
the last 20 years. More challenging, and more satisfactory.

K8 (5a) – Important that we (as the contractor) are open for new ideas, and willing to let them
test new things, and let them try out new ideas. We should be more willing to do this.
K13 (1a) – Subjects within areas I find interesting, that is important to me. Somehow touches upon what I think are fun. I want to have it fun at work. And preferably new things.
K13 (1a) – Me personally goal is that I learn something new. I have said that if I don’t learn anything new, I will change job.

Costs.
R1 (5) – Everyone are satisfied if it is not more expensive then planned. Meet the budget.
R1 (5) – (When purchasing) Content and relations is more important than price. We see more and more examples on other elements than price that makes them satisfied in the end.
R2 (1a) – Importance of cost efficiency are depending on the customer.
R3 (3) – A contractor that pays the bills in time.
R4 (1a) – That I do not compromise on quality, if the budget is too strict I don’t take the job.
R5 (1a) – A good economy.
R5 (1b) – A lot of the elements I have mentioned, they will not receive. Especially on the long projects the budget are likely to be exceeded.
R5 (3a) – Money and economy. Manage to meet their budgets. Not always the customer are willing to accept those reasons, and that can make a mismatch. That may lead to a situation where you don’t do things to well, because you don’t want to work without getting paid for it.

K1 – Cheaper production then estimated.
K1 – Identification of the best economic solutions, as well as the correct technical solution.
K1 (5b) – Going under the budget.
K1 (5b) – In the case of unpredictable cases, exceeding budget just have to be accepted by us.
K5i (1a) – Lower construction costs for the developer through better quality and better economy in the project.
K8 (3a) – A good project at the description we have given. Not necessarily at the price asked, the price does not matter so much. The most important is that the project becomes what we imagined.
K10 (1d) – The consultants have often got many good solutions, but they are often not realized due to cost restrictions.
K11 (1c) – If they break the costs framework, but there is usually a good reason for why it is more expensive.
K11 (1d) – Accomplish things according to budgets and time. That is the success criteria.
K7 (5a) – To a decent price. Price doesn’t mean that much for us.

K7 (1a) – We do not look that much at price, (but competence and continuity. Likely to do with this company to be a small and quite specialised company, that demands special things. )

[[K9 (1d) – (And quality and progress.) Progress more than price actually. ]]

Peripheral service.

Presentation.
R2 (1a) – Delivered and presented in a way that they can use continuously for later decisions. Including suggestions for the different efforts/alternatives.
R2 (1a) – Delivered in a way that is understandable, and delivered on time.
R2 (5) – Try to communicate the answer in a way, which easily can be understood by the customer.
R4 (5) – My style is not long reports, but to be more concrete, down to earth. Focus on the concrete relevant information the customer needs in order to take his decisions.

K1 (1b) – Short precise answers, where you rapidly are led to the conclusion. Do not use more time then necessarily. (Overproduction) (In some consultancies, as answer on one single question, I may receive a long two-pager where they write a lot in the introduction part. Things I know from before, which lead to a conclusion. And it is only the conclusion I am interested in.
K7 (1c) – That the reports and findings are presented in a good way, which are prepared for decision-making processes.

Structure.
K8 (1b) – Orderliness from the consultants, with easy access to minutes and relevant documents.

K9 (1b) – One consultant we got now, and we are very satisfied with her. She makes very clear project plans and is clear and neat in her communication.
K9 (4) – Minutes from meetings is a part of the process, and clear and good minutes is a good thing to keep in order.
K9 (4) – In a working process, (For example) for reaching the optimal roundabout. There are several parallel processes intern process at the consultant’s, one intern process at us, one process with the consultant and us, and one external process. In this work it is very good if we could follow the decisions reasoning throughout the process, towards the final product.

Reasoning.

R1 (5) – Tell them if they are at the wrong way. Also from the start, if give them a direction they can believe in.

R4 (1a) – And gives the customers different options, and make them understand the consequences for each choice. And then we need to do it, unless it is beyond our professional standards.

R4 (1a) – Tell them (the customers) a briefly estimate on what the different elements of the contracts will cost.

R4 (4) – A cross point in today. Between energy efficiency and energy use of ventilation and a good in-door climate. Explain the consequences for the customer

R5 (1a) – Participate to create something.

K2 (1b) – Listen to things, ideas and thoughts, because I have got a lot of ideas and thoughts. But it not always my thoughts are realisable. But to put the thoughts together with consultants, that actually can calculate and consider it. That is incredibly useful.

K2 (2) – The consultant need to sell something to me, which I can believe in. Why shall we choose this solution? Come up with solutions he believes in, and stories of why we should choose them.

K2 (3b) – A good argumentation and reasoning for the solutions, are likely to sell in a good relation. And I will call him the next time.

K2 (4) – That the consultant is able to be a part of a discussion around solutions. Able to see it from the other parties angels. Being open for ideas and thoughts are very important. It should be to-ways communication.

K3 (5a) – (You must know the technical area,) and answer easy and neat on it.

K8 (2a) – The consultants understand and give constructive feedback on what the contractors developer and other stakeholders are saying about the project.
K8 (3a) – I believe it is very important that consultants that give feedback. Both positive and constructive negative feedback. This is important for us to learn as well.

K8 (1b) – Consultants that are good at explaining why things are done. Those who are working with the demanding cases take the time necessarily to understand how the different parts are thought through.

K8 (1b) – Important that the consultants ask critical questions on why we do what we have done.

K9 (1b) – Be clear on the best solution, even though we disagree.

K9 (1b) – Be one step ahead and describe the effect and consequences of different decisions for the economy and progress.

K9 (3a) – A consultant that are polite, and don’t use to much technical terms in case of different subject area,

Responsiveness.

R2 (5) – Deliver and be in time

R3 (1a) – Deliver in time. Precise in delivery and deliver what are requested.

R3 (3) – Deliver in time.

R3 (5) – Try to deliver when the customer expect it. Within a reasonable time.

R5 (1a) – Progress on the deliverables. And the time limit.

R5 (3a) – Do what you said you going to do. Meet the deadlines. In case deadline cannot be met, say it long time in prior.

R5 (2) – This can be internal factors. Other on-going projects can take up time from other projects. And often we are saying that the customer that are pushing in the most are getting the most. This is both internal and external.

K1 (1a) – That is quick feedback, (...) 

K1 (1b) – No, nothing but that they should not use more time the necessarily. 

K1 (1b) – That we receives the drawing material that we need constantly. And a delivery at the agreed time.

K1 (3a) – Get the material that we have ordered and requested. As fast as possible, to the lowest cost.
K1 (3a) – In large projects on-going for several months, it is very important to have good relations, and that the chemistry between the persons are in order. And the most important is that the core product is delivered to the correct time. And within the expected expenses.

K5i (1a) – From project start I have got a wish that I will get something delivered within a certain time. And that it have been delivered at the right time.

K5i (5a) – To deliver the product within the agreed time.

K6 (5) – Consultant that be there quickly if something urgent is needed in the on going project.

K8 (4a) – Quick deliveries in case of unpredicted happenings. The machines are often standing still if things are changing, and we are waiting on a new solution.

K11 (3a) – The consultants are doing what they promise. Good quality. At the right time.

K11 (5) – Delivering things as promised according to the scheduled plan. Important that deadlines are obeyed.

K12 (5a) – It is the progress of the project. Speed. That the consultants are fast.

K7 (5a) – Delivery in scheduled time are prioritised.

K9 (1d) – (And quality) and progress. Progress more than price actually.

K10 (1a) – That the consultants have got capacity to deliver

K1 (4a) – In a situation where two consultants are equal in delivering the product on time and costs, how do you differ them: Often on capacity, and if they are equal it is like he is on top of the phone list. But it is seldom we put two companies up against each other like that.
Accessibility.

K4i (1b) – Really important that, even if you don’t have time, to talk about things. Maybe not now. For instance in two weeks. Not just put down the bar, and say they don’t have time.

K8 (2a) – The consultants need to be accessible, which they often are.

K12 (1a) – Availability. Often the consultant you engage have got other projects as well. And which leads to a lower availability, in the case of answering on phones, e-mails and on site visits.

K10 (3a) The consultants are available. Literally (Egentlig), all the time. Even though it is difficult, and since they only are humans. Availability is important for a good cooperation. That they return your call, and answer as fast possible when you’re requesting

Physical meetings.

R4 (1b) – Extra audits, of the technical operating systems in the building after it is finished.

K2 (1b) – The importance of the consultants participating in meetings, and special meetings. Because solutions are often discussed over the table, which is not always as easy via e-mail or telephone.

K2 (5b) – I would appreciate if the consultants actually came to the site, to check up on the construction. Talked with the handrafters, to check up if the different calculations and projected elements, actually worked in practice. Then they would get some experience on what worked and not, and why it did not work. Exchange of experiences.

K2 (5b) – And he is out and looking. And I like that. Dig a bit and put on the rain boots, and raincoat and. That is important. Because then he know a little bit on what it is all about. And then he is willing to take it a bit further for the calculations, for the estimates. And listen to others. That is incredibly important.

K8 (2a) – I believe inspections at the site are important.

K10 (3a) – In a case of disagreements the consultant should suggest a physical meeting in order to straight things out and clear the misunderstandments, since e-mails quickly can get misunderstood. Often they would like to get paid for it, but if both parties are to blame they should not bill for it.

K12 (1b) – Follow up the projects in the field. A higher degree of proactivity in terms of the production on the construction site. Out at the construction site in order to see what have been drawn and what we are talking about.
K12 (3a) – Personal contact at the construction site is important. It is easier to make them responsible/interested. E-mail and telephone will not give sufficient closeness.

**Relationship.**

R1 (3a) – I’m usually saying relations, relations, relations.

R1 (3a) – More concretely it depends from person to person. I am trying to get to know the person. Which main character is the customer? If deadlines are most important, that is emphasised. While someone is not that stressed on time, and want a more profound investigation that takes longer time. I have this mapping of the customer a bit subconscious all the time. But in general predictability and time is the most important these days.

R2 (4) – Behave professional and polite. But that is also a part of the product were selling)

R3 (1a) – It is a lot about human relations. That you know people, and how they act and what they expect.

R3 (4) – The different companies does not matter. It is the person they want. We use the ones we had best experiences with, that delivers, that you can have an ok dialogue with, and it is likely these factors that matters for our customers as well.

R4 (1b) – An open relation to the customer

R4 (3) – What is important is to have a decent professional relation. It should be correct, but does not need to be too formal.

R5 (3a) – Especially good humor is important to withhold throughout a project.

K7 (3) – Down to earth engineering surroundings is appreciated, different from classic lawyer or financial consultant.

K7 (4) – General traits of the company that delivers the service to us.

K3 (1b) – I have got a wish to be professional and that, so you kind of don’t need them (consultants) all close up to me. I appreciate some distance. Other times we are suppose to do business, and other times we might have conflicts in case of economy and those things. So it is important to have it a bit like that.

K2 (1a) – To me the person you need to relate to have very much to say.

K9 (3a) – Have got a relaxed sense of speaking (tone). But not too much. There need to be a balance between personal and professional.
Cooperation.

**R3 (3)** – An understandable contractor that is willing to cooperate, that might also be a bit humble. It is a matter of cooperation, and not from down to top case. It is much nicer and better to work in those projects where you feel you are working together towards the goal.

**R5 (1a)** – Their (the customer’s) perception of a good cooperation.

**R5 (1a)** – Having a good time at work. Comfortable cooperation and communication

**K1** – Close cooperation with the under-contractors. (Because the best specialists are often there)

**K2 (0h)** – And again it is this about the cooperation. We are kind of, us from XX (contractor) are quite dull (trauste) and have, to build relations. That is nice and safe really. You know what you get.

**K2 (1a)** – To be humble, and to try different things and calculations, in order to see how it works. Not just refuse, and follow his diagram. In other words, it is about cooperation.

**K3 (1d)** – It is comfortable and pleasant if the cooperation is going on in a good way.

**K3 (1a)** – The cooperation. Pure physical cooperation. The contact, really. How good it is. That it is very important

**K8 (1a)** – The cooperation between the different external consultants.

**K8 (1b)** – In situations where the consultants are getting other consultants to the project, outside their own company, they might not be as coordinated as usually, in terms of professional competences. Need to straighten things out before they present it to us.

**K8 (1d)** – A good cooperation setting.

**K8 (1d)** – The cooperation is everything (alfa omega) in order to get a good project. If you’ve got trouble with the cooperation, it will be hard/heavy, and I believe this will affect the deliveries in the project negatively.

**K10 (1a)** – They (the consultants) have got the competence, but their subcontractors might be difficult to relate to for me. But in most cases I am satisfied with what I have received.

**K10 (1b)** – The cooperation with the consultants that have got competence within this specific subject area have often got a good cooperation due to their interest and often ideological approach to the assignment.
Communication.

R2 (1b) – Maybe good information and frequent updates of how things are going. Being even more communicable in the process.

R2 (3) – A loose and good dialogue. An informal contact.

R4 (3) – When we are allowed to discuss with the person form the customer that have got decision power. Have the dialogue directly to the customer, so we can understand what the customer really wants. And tell the customer the consequences for the different options.

R5 (3a) – Communication. When speaking with the customer you need to be professional in the communication, watch out what you actually are writing in emails in case of forwarding. And to speak together.

R2 (4) – Good communication, where things are easy going.

K1 – Close dialogue between engineering consultant and (third party) client – everything does not need to go through the total-contractor.

K1 (3a) - A good dialogue and communication.

K3 (2a) – Inter-human relations. How well we speak across the table. Incredibly important.

K3 (3a) – We need to understand each other. Have a good communication, and understand the same language. How is the other person to speak with.

K3 (1d) – A good consultant does not only answer every time you ask, but also asks back.

K4i (2) – That you can talk about things, and have running dialogue all the way

K6 (4a) – A good way of speaking (Ha en god tone).

K8 (1d) – Good communication. In case of changes (in the project) make sure (it is understood).

K8 (1d) – An open and constructive dialogue throughout the process.

K10 (0i) – A good communication and cooperation within the whole process.

K10 (3b) – A good way of speaking (Ha en god tone).

K7 (4) – A low threshold for contact.

K9 (3b) – Consultants with a bit longer experience and that might have other relations to the organisation and if they operate through them without dialogue with me, that might be irritating.
Chemistry.

R3 (3) – It is a lot about chemistry. A good way of cooperation. Be there for the customer.

R5 (3a) – Find the chemistry with the person you are working with. Sometimes I am saying that you need to be a chameleon. It is a lot of contact with humans, and that is a big part of the job. If you cannot get hold of that part, it does not necessarily help how good your technical competences are, if you cannot reach out with a message.

K1 (3a) – It have to do with the chemistry between humans. After a while you figure out whom you cooperate well with, and whom you have troubles cooperating with.

K2 (1b) – And the interaction. I’m likely to return to this a hundred times. It has to do with the chemistry. The humans.

K3 (3a) – The chemistry is really important.

K3 (1a) – I have been in the business for long enough time that I have cooperated with consultants, which didn’t work too well. But it is off course less and greater extent of it. But it is much easier when there is good chemistry, also with the consultants.

K4i (1b) – It is this about people, the chemistry between persons. It is a really important element. There are some persons you find it more comfortable to cooperate with than others. The personal plan, feeling of being at the same level. Speaking good with each other.

K4i (1b) – If you have worked much together with some of these internal customers, it can develop a relationship of trust and good chemistry.

K5i (4) – The human relation. That it is okay to work with the person, and solve problems with him. So it is what we talked about with chemistry. It can give something extra in relation to the more concrete technical that is going in to the project.

K5i (1a) – An okay chemistry among the ones you work with, and that it does not goes bad (skjerer seg). This is usually okay at our place, but that might be that you select persons you know from before, and knows that they can do that kind of job.
K6 (1d -) – When large projects is progressing smoothly, due to the team. And when the consultant is helping with this.

K6 (2a) – Choose the workers in a project team that have matching chemistry in order to get the project fast forward.

K6 (3a) – And that the chemistry is good, and that might touch upon the trust.

K6 (4) – The importance of putting together the right team of competence leads to good chemistry.

K6 (3a) - What creates the good chemistry? The good chemistry comes if the team concentrates on the same goal in the project, with this the chemistry will come by itself unless there is something special with them. Then the chemistry will come, with the feeling of community.

K8 (3a) – The chemistry between the persons in the project. It might be challenging if your chemistry is not matching.

K11 (3a) – It is nice if the chemistry fits together, since we are going to cooperate for a while. But usually it is doing fine.

K7 (1a) – You don’t get away from the fact that some persons are nicer to work with than others, and that have got a value.

Professional relation.

R2 (3) – The customer’s opportunity to easily contact us in a neat way. Ask and get answers from us. Easy communication. I believe that is important.

R5 (3b) – Try to be professional in the situation. And the most important is to try to solve the problem, and not focus on the economy and money. If you solve the problem, you will be remembered for how you solved it, and not for how the problem raised.

The customer can accept quite a lot if you have had a good effort and created a good customer relation, they can tolerate much more mistakes by us, if the relation has been built up.

R5 (4) – The customer know were to find the competence he need.

R5 (4) – The relations you create that can benefit later. The optimum for us is to create a relation that will lead to a request another time. Without the offering process. In that case we have got a job without doing to much for it, and the customer have got a consultant he can trust.
K7 (3) – But in the cases when you know a consultant, and that makes you able to receive a
delivery faster, that is ok.

K7 (3) – It is a value that it is a relatively low threshold to contact, but I also appreciate that
you keep a way of speaking (tone) that keeps it professional. In the cases with long on-going
projects, it is important that the consultant does not get too comfortable.

K7 (1d) – That we as a small company get treatment as a big company is important for us,
And that is important for our selection of consultants. This is person oriented and we want to
control which persons we are getting, which we risk not to be able to do with the biggest
companies.

K2 (3a) – I’m coming back to personal relations. The construction business is all about it.
The value in the companies is the individuals that are working in the company, and everyone
has got the books.

(K2 (4)) - It is that I can take one telephone. I am often in projecting meetings. A lot of pre-
projecting in relation to projects getting realised or not. In these meetings solutions often are
discussed. If we are back at foundation work (Grunnundersøkelser). If it is rock, clay or just
something third? It is millions of Kroner in differences. If I can call a consultant I have
confident in. And he can tell me something about it, without any bindings of course, that is a
huge value. Because then I can say: I don’t now, but most likely we don’t have to stake. All
right, that equals savings of 3 millions, well then we continue. But opposite, if it had been
said: No, we need to stake. So can the developer assess it will not hold. So, just being able to
take that phone call to someone for some tips and advices. Running tips and guidance gives
me a good relation to a consultant.

K5i (3) – That the person is on professional (faglig) level that is matching, and you can
discuss problems and get a clever (vettug) dialogue. When we are the customer, at least if we
are engaged within the same subject area, our professional level is at least at the same levels
as those we are renting in.
K4i (3) – Many have got personal contacts that come back and back with new projects. It is an obvious relationship of trust both ways. That is positive.

K4i (3) – You cannot avoid the fact that if you have known someone for a while, it is usually much easier in a project. You know what is expected from you as a consultant, and what the customer expects. So that is usually straight forward.

K5i (4) – It can also be elements that does not necessarily is from the project, but maybe within the subject area, and you can get dialogue about that on the side.

K6 (1b) – Relations from projects come handy when help is needed. You know their competences and where to find them.

K10 (3b) – Not be afraid to contact each other on the phone

K10 (4) – The possibility to just call this guy to get advices as a buddy.

K10 (4) – Get to know people. Get a network within the subject area. Meet old relations. Not meet at a daily basis, but sometimes meet up.

Social relation.

K3 (4) – Throughout a life you absorb a bit from everywhere, and meet humans.

K6 (1b) – Create a kind of social setting/environment. On a project it can be a group, which as a whole wants to get good results.

K10 (3b) - Manage to, maybe not become buddies, but be a bit social as well. Make sure that it is not only technical (fag) technical (fag) technical (fag). Talk a bit about informal things as well.

K12 (3a) – If they are social individual, nice to be with. And easy to talk with.

K13 (3b) – In some projects you will work together for a long time, and then a good personal relation is important. In other shorter projects it is not that necessary. It is sometimes a waste of time to grab a beer or a coffee with a consultant, but other times it should be done.
Professionalism.

R1 (4) – Politeness.

K1 (3a) – Understanding of that the other party also have got competences within the subject area.

K1 (2b) – And we have got consulting engineers, which are in a way trying to rise themselves a bit. They mean they can rise a bit over us as contractor. After all we are their contractor, and it is a bit important that they give us precisely the services we ask for. *We too have got a few years of experience. And it is us who knows what is happening at the construction site. But sometimes we do experience that the consulting engineer is trying to rise himself a bit above the contractor. That makes a bad relation*

K2 (1a) – That the consultant is interested in listening to other’s experiences. And to listen to others opinions and thoughts around it. And preferable drag some conclusions form that.

K3 (2a) – That we are taken serious, and perceived serious, when we are the one to pay and order (the services).

K8 (1d) – (…) and differentiate person and case (sak). Do not take things personally.

K12 (1a) - The consultant’s professionalism. That the consultant is acting professional.

K7 (1b) – Persons that we talk with, and the behaviour of the consultant are clearly contributing to add value. And makes it nice to work with this.

K9 (1a-) – Actually small things, but states the difference between the consultants. For instance arriving delayed to meetings, as few consultants are doing, while others are always on time. That gives a bad impression to me.

Negative relationship.

K7 (3) – The conclusion. The technical subject (faglighet) needs to be correct and adhered, and not be affected by the relationship.

K7 (3) – The final report shall not bear traits of the good relationship.

K7 (3) – When working with persons you share a good chemistry with; you might get too well known. Shared responsibility to keep the relationship on a professional level. Not to take advantage of the relationship.
Trust.

R1 (4) – Honesty and openness. The openness is important when you have to give out everything you know about a case problem, and not to hold information back. Not business secrets, that is honesty.

R2 (3) – A mutual trust, that we do not only want their money. Especially in projects on time spent. That they feel that don’t need to control invoices and working lists.

R2 (3) – The customers feel that they can trust our competence and feel that they receive good advices.

R4 (1a) – What is important for the customers is that we are honest

K2 (0h) – We have used XXC (consultant) and XC (consultancy) many times, exactly because I have confident in him.

K4i (1c) – Some consultants can be very scant and short (knappe), and not really give any information out. There are some consultants that hardly can send a drawing without you receiving it on a .pdf, which you can do nothing but look at kind of. But this varies a lot. Mostly it happens in terms of external consultants. Internally we will exchange all we can in order to make the project best as possible.

K4i (2) – In the first row it is about openness.

K4i (2) K4i (3) – Honesty and trustworthiness. That goes everywhere, but it is there. It has to work both ways. That you feel you can talk things out. And that you can trust each other.

K8 (1d) – Honesty and Openness, (…)

K8 (4a) – Honesty and trustworthy

K10 (3b) – We do not hire consultants we do not trust. We have resumes, and contact persons that we can call a person that previously have worked with the consultant.

Trust in Content and competence.

K1 – It shall never be any cases of doubts when it comes to the drawings.
K6 (3a) – For the first we need to trust the consultant. This starts with that we need to be able to trust the competence he is suppose to have. If not it will be revealed after some time, but that might be too late.

K6 (3a) – Trust each other is important – Have not got the time or possibility to control all the delivery in detail.

K7 (4) – We trust them, don’t have to double check every invoice they send.

K7 (1a) – This means confident in that the product is precise and correct, and something that can be built on. That the consultant produces reports that I dare to take a decision from.

K7 (5a) – A good technical report that I trust, where I know it have been through quality controls systems.

Adaptation.

Adaptation.

R1 (5) – Different customers have different demands. Luckily. Have plans, and follow the plans, and deliver at time have become very important. In order to answer on technical measurable parameters.

R2 (1c) – Trying to think a lot of what the customer want, and what that would benefit them.

K1 (5a) – If we (contractor) see that what have drawn and projected, is not possible to do in real life. Then they (consultants) must be amenable (lydhør) towards the contractor and realise that this was a bad solution. We are re-projecting the solution I cooperation with the contractor, in accordance to what the contractor wants.

K6 (1d) – A consultant that can adjust to our organisation, so everyone are working towards the same goal.

Understanding the customer needs.

R1 (3a) – How you communicate and understand each other from the very first day does matter. A mutual understanding of the project makes it much easier to reach the agreed targets.

R1 (4) – The ability to understand the customers overall business. And take the little part as the project represents, in to the overall surroundings. Understand the overall value chain. This
is more important the longer lasting the project is. I was chosen by this specific customer, because I knew the company and their purpose from earlier experiences.

**R2 (3)** – The customers feel that we understand what they actually need.

**R3 (2)** – We have often got short agreed deadlines and frequent meetings, so we know what they are expecting.

**R4 (1a)** – Solve the assignment the way the customer wants. But since we are the experts, we need to tell the customer what he actually needs in terms of energy, environmental etc. in order to keep operating expenses low.

**K2 (5b)** – XX is kind of a perfect consultant: Humble, at the construction site, trustworthy when he speaks. He has got. Sells stories that we believe in. And when he receives input, you can tell he is considering them. Even though he might have other meanings.

**K3 (1d)** – That the consultant is helping us with the problem formulation and the answers. Not only delivers a kilogram of meat, when we ask for it.

**K3 (1a)** – It is important that the consultant understands the assignments, and makes a good and neat description of it. We have a broad subject specter and many employees, and we don’t have the knowledge about everything, so the consultant shall know what we ask for, and not ask for. In other words, understand what lies underneath and define a bit of the task him self, and then answer it.

**K5i (3)** – If the person understands the task, and expresses that he understands it.

**K5i (1c)** – If the consultant does not grasp the assignment, and starts at the wrong part. Uses his effort on wrong elements. That can happen, but cannot come up with concrete examples.

**K6 (5)** – Quickly understands what the problem is.

**K10 (3a) K10 (5)** - And come up with suggestions that are outside of what we actually are asking for. At least in larger projects.

**K11 (1a)** – Never answer precise on what I Ask, but present ideas, that can make it cheaper and faster accomplished.

**K13 (1c)** – The ability to see what the customer need, even though the customer defines something else.
K13 (4) – Consultants see the needs that I am not able to ask for. If I knew everything, I would not use them. We use consultants on fields outside of our core competences.

K13 (5) – Get what I want, without having specified it in the order. It don’t always I know what I want, when using a consultant. In order to be completely satisfied, I need to be left with something that makes me feel added value.

Understanding the overall surroundings.

R2 (4) – That we are having a broad horizontal, and thinks outside from our subject area, and include other subject areas represented in the company. I believe the customers will think that as valuable.

K2 (1c) – It is to combine the solutions and put everything together, and come up with a complete good solution.

K2 (5b) – And it’s this with the coordination. You need to see the value of all the factors, coordination is incredibly important.

K2 (5b) – And he needs to be able to see the value of what comes from others.

K4i (1d) – That we show that we can cooperate internally in XC. I believe that absolutely adds value, that we can manage that.

K4i (1a) – In most cases solve all assignments internally in XC, to show that we are a interdisciplinary company that can solve most assignments.

K6 (4a) – A consultant’s competence outside the core, in order to see the project as a whole.

K8 (1a) – Take care of the surroundings, with the buildings and local persons. And the vulnerable road users, as cyclists. Think as a whole.

K8 (1a) – Clear the operation and service for the future, before construction starts. This have been an issue on a few of the projects.

K8 (1a) – See the wholeness I in the projecting. Include all the parties. If something need to be built down, it often need to build something first, but this cannot be on top of each other.

K8 (5b) – The side/external-consultant need to be coordinated

K8 (5b) – Check and be aware of the construction sites borders. Secure the site for vulnerable road users, and adapt to constant traffic. See all the construction phases, and adapt the plans in order to allow the traffic to run as normal as possible. Relatively often a challenge from the consultant. Especially in urban areas.

K12 (4) – Interdisciplinary coordination is important.
Fairness.

R1 (2) – Were interested in that the customer should perceive the project as fair. A lot of this foundation is put in the starting phase, in a starting meeting with plans that clearly states the content of our service. I believe it is essential that both premises and content be stated clearly as early as possible in the project.

R2 (2) – Fairness is depended on the agreed price, and which contracts form (that is used). I believe that fixed low prices gives less perceived fairness, because it gives us less freedom to act. But projects were we get paid by time spent, we can have a dialogue, and the project can easier be adjusted to things we find out in the process. This is the same as my experience.

R2 (2) – Fixed prices are often including a tight budget, which may interfere the fairness

R3 (1b) – We are working after time spent models for most of our returning customers, because they see the value of the proper mapping in the start phase. Fixed rates can force you to do as little as possible.

R5 (2) – This can be external effects are often economical limits and budgets. When an updated cost estimate show that it will get much more expensive then planned. It can also be political. Different interests from different stakeholders can have a saying.

R5 (3b) – In cases of mistakes and lacks in delivery, we can see a trend that the developers have been focusing on placement of guilt in case of mistakes in a construction. That is not value adding.

K1 (2) - Don’t know between contractor and engineering consultant. (Seldom discussions regarding demands and contracts between consulting engineers and us as a total contractor.)

K5i (2) – Examples where the internal hourly billing rate is higher from some consultants than others. Those from specific subject areas may be 20 % higher. And it is usually not a problem, as long as the hours from these consultants are limited.

K10 (2a) – I have never experienced that they have tried to get away with tasks that are not done. A single e-mail with a reference to the paragraph in the contract solves that. This goes both ways.
K10 (2a) – The issue is the consultant’s organisation’s invoice system, which is not compatible with our systems. And the invoice process gives us a lot of extra work in order to check if the economical costs and budgets are met according to what have been done. Agreements with the consultant from start, how to control the economy.

K12 (2) – Our subcontractors are often based on a fixed price. And if the projects are meeting a tough on the budget, we might get a bit dirty in terms of going through contracts and deviation reports, in order to get out some money, and meet the budget.

K7 (2) – In the case where we do not get the priority from the consultancy, due to a larger customer, we believe that they are not the consultancy that we should work with.

K7 (2) – I seldom perceive things as unfair, but if we do we will say it clearly and straighten it out.

K7 (2) – One issue can be that the consultancy might have other customers in the same branch. The ownership and knowledge they gather by working with us, it is important that you don’t experience that this is used and sold to others. So loyalty and confidentiality is appreciated.

Commitment.

Engagement.

R2 (1c) – Sometimes you get engaged in a specific subject area you find interesting, and investigates that, without that being exactly what the customer wants.

R2 (3) – A customer that is genuinely interested in the subject, and not something that they just have to do due to governmental regulations.

K2 (5b) – And it is engagement. I don’t want a consultant that isn’t engaged. In that case, he can just stay at home. He must be engaged in what he is doing, he should chat away so I almost need to ask him to be quiet.

K2 (1c) – It is important to have passion, to have interest in what you are doing.

K2 (3a) – The consultant seems interested in his subject. You need to be passionate interested in order to work in the contractor business.

K2 (3b) – If the consultants do not offer them selves, and only are focusing on what’s written in the books, then I don’t believe in the consultant. In that case I believe he is a newly educated engineer that don’t even have got a clue, or that he is not interested.
K6 (5) – The feeling of that the consultants are genuinely interested in the project I am working on.

K6 (1c) – Consultants that are too eager. You can get more than you ordered. But we don’t pay for more then we agreed.

K13 (2) – Feel that the consultant is taking the responsibility (ansvar) and ownership for the solution he provides.

K9 (1a) – Consultants that cares about the content, checks up via telephone how the delivery was.

K9 (1b) – She cares about the result (Talking about a good consultant).

 initiates / self-going.

R3 (3) – Continuously follow-up. The contractor feels that you are there for them upon request.

K10 (3a) K10 (5) – The consultant need to take initiative, and come up with suggestions and ideas.

K3 (1a) – That they are self-going, and we don’t have to repeat the questions and problem formulation too many times.

K13 (1a) – If I am to use other persons then my self, they need to take ownership and show engagement, and deliver without having to ask twice. I might have very high demands, but as a manager I’m not interesting in following people around.

K13 (1c) – The consultant are using his network and his knowledge in the project, without me having to define that. Including solutions that are seen other places.

K9 (3b) – Consultants that don’t listen is irritating, when you need to mention things several times in order to get things done.

 Positive attitude.

K10 (3a) – And that they are positive, and that they do not say no. In stead yes, but we do not have the resources right now. Contribute in the cooperation.

K10 (5) – A positive attitude for everything we request for (within the contract),
Extra mile.

**R2 (5)** – Be flexible. Don’t say no, say yes instead. Give the little extra. The positive attitude. Help with small things extra tasks, without talking about the contract.

**R3 (5)** – Be there (for the customer) upon request.

**R4 (3)** – If a good customer calls and ask for thing, I’ll just take those phones and take care of it immediately, without sending letters of acceptance and doing to complicated.

**R4 (3)** – Doing what the customer says. If the customer needs you, you help him.

**R5 (3a)** – To give service, if you can give extra service. Manage to do thing faster. If a task appears that is not locked to the progress and you can get it done fast. If you are able to give some extra, I believe you get it back later.

**R5 (5)** – To provide service. The most important customers of yours should you stand up for. And do what they ask for. And to give the little extra service, compared to other consultants.

**R5 (5)** – For instance a request coming in late one day that needs to be ready the net morning, then try to have it ready until next morning.

**K6 (5)** – Willingness to give a bit extra. Things are happening constantly, need to trust that the consultant can help out.

**K4i (4)** – If we can give something extra, if someone are expecting or demanding some extra.

**K7 (1a)** – The consultant are prioritising you. We as a small company tend to work with a few, not too big, consultants that give us priority, competence and continuity. We also use regular engineer companies for technical construction. But also there we are using the same strategy. To find a small company with someone we can trust.

**K9 (1a)** – The consultant’s flexibility matters to me.

**K9 (1d)** – For my organisation flexibility is important, due to sudden political changes that interferes the project.
Other factors.
K2 (5b) – And if he feels that he belongs a bit to XX, and that he feels secure here. He will then do a brilliant job here.

K3 (1d) – I get a bad experience with consultants that send drafts of drawings, and you do your corrections and notes, and when you get it back everything you noted is taken in. That is a way of spelling correction. I mean that is like… (Negative)

K4i (1a) – Sales of extended services to the projects. Offer construction management instead of only project management – often significant increased sales – increased value for us in the project.

K8 (1c) – In the case of a pilot projects. It need to be stated clearly that it is a pilot project.

K10 (4) – In the cases where the engineering consultancy sends a letter of complaints regarding competitions they lost. Some consultancies send multiple letter of complaints, which takes up a lot of time for us to handle. Of course it is okay that they ask for reasoning, and we could also be better to reason. But they know that we are doing it by the rules.

Image.
R3 (4) – A management that is expansive and are having a good image.

K7 (5b) – We are depended on that the consultancy we are using have got a good name and reputation that makes it trustworthy for the surroundings.

Proudness of result.
K10 (1d) – If we are building a large road construction project, it is to meet the demands and solutions that are agreed, but also to go a little bit further in order to get a project we can stand for and be proud of. Not always that easy, due to time and money.

K4i (1a) – The satisfaction of being able to accomplish the project.

Sustainability.
R1 (1b) – We used to do a straightforward process directly targeting the goal. But after a project we had, focusing on general sustainability, we are also thinking in direction of the environment. The customer can get solutions that can give a better reputation.

R1 (1c) – The customer can perceive things as negative value can be a case in environmental consulting, when the customer does not know the norms and regulations, and advices pointing in that direction could be perceived as extra costs.

K13 (2) – Feel that it is quality in the solution, and that a change will give at least one footprint benefit.

_Newly hired consultants._

R5 (1c) – They may not see it. If we are having younger consultants in the projects, that are getting induction training. But maybe on the next project it would benefit them.

K1 (3b) – We are contacting the consultant we know from before, and it have happened that he is accepting projects even when he actually have got no time for it. (…) It is the same consultant that is our contact, but we can see that someone else does the work. And sometimes I’ve got the impression that it can be used younger, less experienced consultants. Where we don’t get delivered exactly the material we expected. That have happened, a few times.

K5i (1c) – If we have had one of the more freshmen at the project it may be bit hard, and he might not hit the mark on what he is suppose to do. And maybe the technical knowledge can be a bit on the edge as well, if the experience is low, and you’re new to the exact technical subject.

K3 (5a) – When really good things are presented at the offering, and with all kind of respect, we might receive one of the newly hired, there is nothing wrong with that. In situations where the consultant is young and promising, how much help and support is he receiving throughout the process, of the overall competence in the company? The question is how much follow-up they get in order to deliver a good product to us. That varies from company to company.

_Learning and teaching._

R1 (1a) – The customer learns and we can see things from a different perspective.
K6 (1a) – Consultants that are open and honest, and you can play ball with, and learn of each other.

K6 (1a) – Consultants with good competences, who wants to share that competence with you, in order to learn from each other.

K8 (1b) – I am learning a lot from them. When they are very skilled/competent.

K8 (4a) – They are willing to learn, and willing to teach.

K10 (1c) – Good advises and tips from the more experienced consultants, but that might be because I have only done this for four years. A consultant may have the same competence and background as your self. And in many cases more competent than your self.

K13 (3a) – I am left with more knowledge then when I started.

A good starting point.

R1 (1a) – Make an effective and predictable process in order to get the license or permission that the customer wants.

R3 (1b) – Importance of laying proper plans for the overall period in an early phase. That gives a lot to the contractors.

R3 (1b) – Importance of mapping solutions at an early phase.

K6 (1c) – A good conversation and discussion with the consultant in prior of the project how it will be structured and done, in order to reach the goal.

K6 (1d) – Start out with a good overview of what are to be done.

K6 (3a) – The starting conversation.

K10 (4) – Consultants can be better at contacting the contractor earlier if the description in the competition is unclear. May seem like they write the offer the day before the deadline.

Evaluation.

K3 (0i) – The delivery or ending phases tend not to be as good as they should be. Maybe an evaluation or something, or time to sum up when we have reached the point of delivery. We receive what is delivered, and when we receive it we kind of approves it. And than the dialogue is over. Until next time and the same time pressure.

K9 (5a) – A proper closure on the projects, also the small things. Make sure all the documentation is in place. Maybe a small evaluation of the project.
Customer satisfaction equals service value.

R3 (5) – It is the same again.

R4 (5) – I will deliver a product, as the customer wants, what he expects. I want to do that professional and to the right time, and correct price. Have a good dialogue, and not deliver to much, and not too little.

R5 (5) – Those three points I have said earlier. Progress, economy and quality.

K1 (5a) – Is still on, delivery of what we requested to the agreed time. And that it is carefully projected. And it shall never be any doubt on what we are supposed to do. That the material is free for errors. And that if errors are revealed, that the consultant quickly investigates the case. And quickly gives feedback and returns revised drawings.

K3 (5a) – Again, it would be the three sentences I have said the whole time.

K4i (5a) – I guess that is, in keywords: Solve the case to agreed time price and time. That we feel we solved the assignment in a correct and good way, which hopefully makes the customer satisfied.

K6 (5) – This might be a bit of the same of what I have been saying earlier.

K7 (5a) – If were going to sum that up (...)
What is customer value in business-to-business professional services?
A case study on which factors that leads to customer value in business-to-business professional services.