

Enhancement opportunities for the Customer Service of the CIS market in the Selected Company

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ABSTRAKT

Vybraná společnost je nadnárodní ropná a plynárenská společnost, která prodává paliva a maziva po celém světě. Tato diplomová práce se zaměřila na oddělení zákaznických služeb, které podporuje distributory z ruský mluvících trhů: Ruska, Ukrajiny, Kazachstánu, Běloruska, Arménie, Uzbekistánu, Tádžikistánu a Turkmenistánu. Diplomová práce obsahuje obecný přehled současných trendů v CRM a operacích zákaznické podpory ropných a plynárenských podniků v sektoru B2B. Práce popisuje současné obchodní procesy v týmu zákaznických služeb a popisuje, jak ovlivňují úroveň spokojenosti zákazníků a zaměstnanců. Je důležité vyhodnotit účinnost stávajících procesů v oddělení zákaznických služeb, protože v současné době společnost čelí problému s nedostatkem zaměstnanců v týmu. Použité procesní modely vizuálně popisují všechny základní operace, které přímo ovlivňují spokojenost zákazníků. K detekci slabín stávajících obchodních procesů bylo použito dotazování zaměstnanců a zákazníků. Diplomová práce dále obsahuje doporučení a možné způsoby vylepšení současného stavu vyplývající z provedeného průzkumu zákazníků a zaměstnanců společnosti.

Klíčová slova: zákaznický servis, B2B, spokojenost zákazníků, CRM, vylepšení obchodních procesů

ABSTRACT

Selected company is a multinational oil and gas company that markets fuels and lubricants all around the globe. This Master's Thesis focuses on the Customer Service Department that supports distributors from the Russian-speaking markets: Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Master's Thesis includes general overview of current trends in CRM and customer support operations of oil and gas businesses at the B2B sector. Thesis describes the current business processes in the customer service team and describes how it affects the customer and employee satisfaction levels. It is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing processes in the customer service department because currently company is facing an issue with the employee shortage in the team. Function allocation models in the Master's Thesis visually describe each basic operation that directly affect customer satisfaction. Employee and customer questionnaires were used in order to detect the weaknesses in the existing business processes. Moreover, Master's Thesis includes the recommendations and possible enhancement solutions provided by customers and company employees from the conducted survey.

Key words: customer service, B2B, customer satisfaction, CRM, business process enhancement

I hereby wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to the supervisor of my thesis, Ing. Pavel Ondra for his support and expertise in this journey. It would not have been possible for me to create this piece of work without Mr. Ondra and his mentorship. He kept me motivated and helped a lot to stay positive during this devastating pandemic. Moreover, I want to take this opportunity to thank my family and friend for always believing in me.

I hereby declare that the print version of my Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays there is a tendency of tough competition among companies and high customer demand for the service quality. In many cases, the most important parameter when choosing a supplier is not only the price level but also the quality of service. Modern successful companies know that the path to success is to provide customers with goods and services that would fully satisfy their needs and desires. Therefore, more and more companies are now focusing primarily on their customers, and the ways to improve the quality of customer experience. High-quality customer service implies, first of all, building a system in the organization that allows employees to do the job perfectly right the first time and having an action plan that immediately takes effect in case of failures. The creation of such a system is possible only through the optimization of all business processes of the organization for serving customers, adjusting the organizational structure, as well as the implementation of policies, procedures, and technical guidance that allow this objective to be achieved (Jeston, 2018).

A business process is a group of organized activities; for example, the order fulfillment process includes steps such as accepting an order, finding the desired product, packing, scheduling a shipment, loading a vehicle, and shipping (Fawcett & Fawcett, 2014). If these actions are performed correctly, and they are combined, then company will achieve the result that the client needs: the necessary product will be delivered to the right place at the right time. Separately, none of the actions mentioned above is more important than the other. Desired outcomes could be reached only if they are combined. The internal cause of many problems is the inconsistency of business processes (Chong et al., 2010). They are divided and distributed across functional departments: sales, marketing, finance, logistics, manufacturing, and others. Each next step in order fulfillment is performed by a new employee. Often workers are situated in different company locations and this fragmentation leads to more mistakes, higher costs, and less flexibility. This also means that no one involved in the process sees it as a whole.

Trying to adequately respond to changes in the external environment, more and more companies are moving towards creating a separate centralized division in the organizational structure. Its name may vary from the customer service department, customer support department, customer relationship management department, etc. The main functions of this division are the same - they are processing claims, inquires, customer requests; preparation of analytical reporting; training of personnel involved in customer service; external contacts

with consumers through regulatory measures. The aim of the department is to enable customers to contact the business, to obtain input in any form from each customer. In this way, excellent customer service can be defined as a process that starts with providing information to the customer and ends with a call to the customer about their feedback on the quality of the product and the level of service. A process-based organization gives a sense of involvement in the result created for the client, in the final result of the activity. Over the past ten years, consumers have acquired a huge number of ways to connect with business: phone, email, chat, instant messengers, social networks, SMS and so on (Knight, 2018). Most companies include them in the contact center system, but few of them provide ways to circulate information in a single contact center ecosystem to provide a personalized and comprehensively oriented approach to serving each client. The importance of customer service quality cannot be underestimated. According to a 2014 survey by Frost & Sullivan dedicated to customer service issues, the quality of customer service is in the first place among the criteria for choosing a bank, and, importantly, it takes the second place among the reasons for changing the service bank (the leading in this category is the amount of fees for banking service) (Frost & Sullivan, 2014). The quality of customer service has also become the second most popular reason for the change of telecommunication service provider, second only to the cost of the subscription fee. Moreover, this survey results showed that only one third of 1,300 respondents believe that their insurance company has integrated various service channels with each other. More than half of the respondents were dissatisfied with the level of service when using several communication channels at once to communicate with the company. Such results are not surprising: the fact is that today's consumers expect businesses to fully meet their needs and requirements. Customers are ready to provide information about themselves, their tastes and preferences, only when confident that they will benefit from it. When the number of digital channels expands, it becomes more difficult to monitor them, and their isolation grows, requiring more and more effort from both the customer and the business.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis is focused on the B2B customer service processes' analysis in the Selected Company and opportunities to improve the most challenging operations and procedures. The objective of this thesis is to identify enhancement opportunities for the customer service department of the Selected Company in the B2B segment. It provides a detailed analysis of the essential company activities affecting the customer satisfaction. Moreover, there is a general overview of the B2B customer service functions in the oil and gas industry and a modern approach to the improvement of the business processes. For a better analysis of the current state in the Selected Company, there is a visual explanation of core business activities performed by customer service team, as well as engagement of other company departments in those processes. As the main task is to make recommendations on the challenging processes for customer service – the problematic aspects in every process identified. An anonymous customer and employee satisfaction surveys used to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing policies and steps. Moreover, survey results helped to reveal the customer education level regarding company policies, processes, and technical capabilities provided by the company systems. Survey sent to all B2B customers of the Selected Company from the Commonwealth of Independent States – including Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. In total ten respondents agreed to participate in this research, and three customers agreed to help creating the survey questions over the phone interview. Customer surveys conducted in Russian language - as all of the customers better understand this language. To evaluate the employee satisfaction with the current operational state of the division, Customer Service team members participated in the anonymous survey. The two Customer Experience Professionals, Ilen and Ashot, from the team helped to create questionnaire. The survey was in English language.

I. THEORY

1 CUSTOMER SERVICE

Marketing has been conceptualized and accepted as an activity directed at the satisfaction of customer needs while earning a profit. Integrated marketing activities aimed at producing customer satisfaction include the "four p's" of marketing: product, promotion, price, and place (Juska, 2017). Generally, marketing is considered as the primary functional area in the firm directed to customers to ensure that they will be more likely to repurchase, leading to increased sales and market share for the firm. The supply chain management mechanism that reflects the face of the business to the consumer is customer service management. This operation is the main touchpoint for the administration of product and service agreements established as part of the customer relationship management process by customer groups. Customer Service is about offering a centralized source of customer information that needs a real-time system to respond to customer requests and promote order placement, such as product availability, delivery dates, and order status (Kazak & Choi, 2009).

It is important to provide outstanding customer service regularly in a way that exceeds customer standards, as there is a high risk of losing them otherwise. Nowadays due to the fast speed of WOM with the help of the Internet 96% of dissatisfied customers usually tell 7 other people about their bad experience; 13% will tell at least 20 others, and 90% will never return. Also, it costs 8 times as much to attract a new customer as it does to keep an existing one" (Chitty et al., 2019). That's why businesses always should take care of their existing customers because dissatisfied customers will generate a negative reputation for the organization which is extremely difficult to reverse (Buttle & Maklan, 2019). As people are the key to delivering good customer service, management must develop a customer service philosophy that runs right throughout the organization and makes clear employee expectations.

Therefore, management teams must develop an intimate understanding of who are their customers and what are their needs which will reveal the tiers of customers that compose a company's supply chain. Organizations may have several tiers of downstream customers and focus only on the first-tier customers when planning scenarios - may be dangerous, because distant downstream customers have a huge impact on the lasting success of any organization (Fawcett & Fawcett, 2014).

As it was mentioned before, today customers possess powerful instruments such as the Internet and other modern technologies that allow them to get a better deal on the desired

product by providing necessary information from everywhere. Customers of B2B settings also have access to valuable data about potential suppliers, prices and even with the help of special websites can track and benchmark supplier performances (Bryce, 2018). Only a few papers are addressing the notion of service in a B2B environment, and many scholars emphasize that because of its intangible existence in B2B, it is difficult to determine aspects of service (Rahimi et al., 2018). "B2B" which is "business to business" is a concept that describes all businesses that produce goods and services that are geared to other businesses. Designing and providing services that fulfill the demand of stakeholders and are substantially different from the offerings of competition by experiential service will act as a critical touchpoint for B2B services (Marquardt et al., 2011).

1.1 Customer Service in B2B

The dollar value of the transaction is much greater than the equivalent case of B2C in certain B2B scenarios (Uzialko, 2021). Many B2B businesses sell their customers diverse and sophisticated goods, so any interaction with customers has more severe revenue consequences. In this context, the major goal of the business is making a profit - direct or indirect. Several business needs have an impact on the decision-making of goods purchase (Rahimi et al., 2018). For example, obtaining a product for resale at a surcharge. Purchase of technology at a wholesale price of \$ 1000 apiece, and reselling for \$ 2500 by adding some augmented properties. Another option could be that the product participates in the production chain, like buying a 3D printer to produce the construction element of the final good. Additionally, services can improve business processes - consultation with a lawyer allows businesses to resolve controversial issues or arrange mutually profitable agreements. The target audience in B2B sales of goods will depend on the product itself (Uzialko, 2021). Suppliers of electrical equipment, transformers most possibly will search to find their potential clients at an automobile plant, to which you can also sell consulting and warranty support, and later, when the equipment fails, sell a new batch. You will not sell a single copy to your neighbor in the garage. But in the case of service providers, the situation can be complicated by the fact that it is not always possible to quickly and accurately determine the target audience. Hague & Hague (2018) stated that B2B companies tend to manage quality control, Six Sigma, and logistics in a good manner rather than understanding the customer's emotions and ensuring excellent service. If one client gets angry and returns the product in a B2C case, the company may lose several hundred dollars. Trade amounts can be tens of thousands of dollars or even several million in a B2B setting, which potentially, might have

a significant effect on sales if there is a customer service deficiency in a B2B environment. It is very unlikely to know your clients in a B2C environment - usually any contact is with a new client, and although you might have some knowledge about someone, there is rarely a personal relationship with them. In the case of B2C, goods are mostly distributed through retail outlets, so a company's very first contact with a client may be through a retail store. It is usually the other way around in a B2B setting, as the business has been involved in the customer relationship and is highly knowledgeable about the client already. The sales representative should have as much information as possible when the customer calls on a certain matter, so they shouldn't have to ask any questions for relevant data that the company already has (Care & Bohlig, 2014). Sometimes, businesses end up with good partnerships and maybe even personal friendships with their clients in a B2B environment. In B2C, it doesn't really occur much, and it's one of the biggest advantages about B2B sales.

Generally, problems in the B2B sector tend to be more complicated and require more interaction than in B2C. But suppliers are more privileged in this type of commerce as they have been in a business with their clients for a long time. Their clients got used to the procedures and time strains,, the most important factor is that they are already familiar with the product quality and can be sure on this matter. This phenomenon, in most of the cases, does not anyhow motivate suppliers to concentrate on the enhancement of their service quality (Hague & Hague, 2018).

The findings of Merkle Company (Doheny, 2021) has revealed that B2B consumers today are more sophisticated, emotional, and complex than ever before. They need to see not only a "business value add" from brands that help them reach their goals, but also a "personal value add" from brands that help them evolve as people. Suppliers can also provide details, a show of interest, transparency, and compelling benefits to help B2B buyers make informed decisions.

Customer experience (CX) is a top priority for B2B marketers, and they must build superior customer journeys. That means getting to know their customers, engaging with them, and moving away from out-of-date techniques and tactics in order to have more personalized, meaningful experiences. Due to the more complex problems experienced in the B2B setting, First Contact Resolution (FCR) for B2B customers is usually lower than for B2C customers. As a consequence, in B2B, FCR is not as relevant as clients are always tech-savvy enough to realize that they are reaching out to their supplier for difficult issues that might not be easy to solve. Also, B2C interaction is with one person - the product has been purchased by one

person and they report issues with it. More frequently, the product is used by several individuals within the client company in a B2B environment. It assumes that many different individuals may call on various issues, but still remain part of the same company. In the case of B2B clients, there could be several different individuals calling on the same issue. There is a belief that spurious loyalty is often practiced in B2B commerce, as customers find it easier to work with service providers through inertia (Hague & Hague, 2018). Finding a new supplier requires such efforts like creation of new agreements and financial arrangements, and buyers think that the new service provider may not be necessarily better.

The reasoning behind B2B support is that it can lead to duplication of work among customer support, and also an overall lack of business interpretation (Decker, 2021). All records generated by someone in the purchasing company must be accessible to customer service representatives so that they can be proactive in addressing repetitive and corresponding problems. According to Marquardt, Golicic and Davis (2011), the goods and services in B2B exchanges tend to become highly standardized across firms within an industry and can lead to commoditization, thus it's vital to concentrate on developing and communicating points of difference, such as the firm's technical competence or the strength of the company's reputation.

1.2 Challenges in B2B Customer Service

The B2B context is different from the B2C setting, and this should have an influence on the buying process of the technological advances. The selection of help desk applications for daily operations should take the B2B space into account and provide the correct collection of features for a selected business. A customer database is a great example, but most of the support software designed for B2C does not provide this functionality, because it is not required. It enables all the information, problems, and interactions associated with a client company to be seen and helps to monitor important client trends and metrics.

B2B International and Merkle B2B conducted research interviews with 5,622 B2B brand experiences, analyzing these brand experiences at every touchpoint of the consumer journey, mindful that different variables impact the customer experience at different points (B2B International, 2021). Their research, which was conducted during the 2020 COVID-induced lockdowns, showed that over 35% of the large enterprises find it difficult to make decisions regarding selection, evaluation, and final choice of B2B suppliers. It means that the B2B solution providers are responsible to help buyers through the decision-making process, to

provide transparent information, and to provide positive CX. Providing the desirable service level may be challenging, as an analysis of Net Promoter Scores (NPS) shows that two-thirds of B2B customers have a passive or negative customer experience. The majority of failures happens with the big buyers because it's difficult to impress them compared to smaller businesses. Jeff Bezos remarked in 2019 that customer expectations are always increasing and to be competitive in the market it's necessary to think like leaders and be one step ahead. Consumers in the tech and finance industries make a final quote of the services in advance, before being exposed to the brand attributes as these industries have the highest direct exposure to consumers.

We can infer from the above findings that the most important problem is determining the competitive means to achieve dominance in the delivery of customer service in B2B markets. There are 3 essential opportunities that provide important benefits in addressing this issue: stimulating product renewal and innovation, effective marketing and market sensing (O'Cass & Ngo, 2012). Firm's product innovation capabilities are believed to be vital for ensuring growth in an increasingly competitive business environment because it helps to meet the needs of changing markets. It represents an ability to develop new solutions to satisfy customers' current and future needs. Abell, Felin, and Foss's (2008) has defined product innovation capabilities as routines and processes that companies use to carry out innovation-related activities such as designing new products, expanding product lines, enhancing existing product quality, increasing manufacturing versatility, and using cutting-edge technology. Product innovation capability is especially applicable in the creation of superior performance value, co-creation value and relationship value as nowadays there is a tendency for shorter product life cycles, more dramatic changes in customer's preferences and their will to seek newer products.



Figure 1 Important Touchpoints Across the Buyer Journey (B2B International, 2021)

Successful companies pay a lot of attention to effective offer marketing and building a strong product reputation brand success. Marketing capability includes procedures like pricing, product delivery, brand communication, sales, and marketing preparation. They must be developed as a combined marketing knowledge and skills to execute marketing actions specifically for every company (Juska, 2017). Due to the peculiar manner in which businesses combine their market and marketing expertise, these capabilities cannot be easily substituted by competitors thus firms with superior marketing capability can create superior performance, relationship and co-creation value and communicate this to customers. It is recommended for the firms to conduct product innovation and marketing activities together when striving for superior performance as it will enable the both- creation of the customer base and protection of this valuable asset (Pisano, 2015).

The third capability, market sensing helps to use product innovation and marketing capabilities to achieve excellent value creation (O'Cass & Ngo, 2012). It is important to undertake the market-oriented behaviors as there is a high need of direct firm-customer interactions in B2B markets. Siahtiri et al. (2014) has identified the behavioral approach to market orientation (MO) as the generation, dissemination and market intelligence responsiveness which lead to the superior value creation for customers.

B2B firms have to pay attention to what value they are offering to their clients and strive for “positional superiority based on the provision of superior customer value” (Baker, 2001). That's why offering a unique solution which distinguishes the product or service from the rivals can be advantageous in creating superior value. Payne et al. (2005) have emphasized a strategic approach to value creation where the value offering is a supplier firm's interpretation of and responsiveness to business customer requirements. It is achieved by offering the superior mix of performance value, relationship building value, and co-creation value. According to some researchers, value development from a firm point of view operates at the level of positional advantage (Zablah et al., 2004). In a practice, a key task for the replenishment of this operation is deciding on components of a value offering that distinguish businesses in the marketplace on the premise of customer preferences.

1.3 Customer Service in Oil & Gas Industry – Ad-in Analysis

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the oil and gas complex in ensuring the dynamics of the socio-economic development of society, associated with the orientation of enterprises of the national economy to the use of traditional energy resources, and, as a consequence, the frame-forming status of the complex in the economic system. The latter is associated, among other things, with the formation of cluster ties, high energy intensity and energy dependence of the economy, the impact of the cost of energy resources on the costs of producing goods, and, consequently, on the competitiveness of the national economy and on the welfare of the population (Caruso et al., 2020). The role and place of oil and gas companies, which are not inherent in any other production, give particular relevance to the issues of maintaining efficiency and regulating its functioning on the basis of monitoring areas such as improving organizational forms, developing an effective mechanism for assessing enterprises' activities, improving tax and tariff regulation, stimulating the development and implementation innovative solutions and many others (Duliaba et al., 2019).

As this paper is intended to analyze customer service experience in the company that specializes in the oil and gas products let's describe the common business structures from this sector. Some researchers believe that value creation in the context of industrial marketing is a core for the functioning of the company and any kind of activity dramatically affects the way how businesses analyze, create and deliver value to their clients (Kotler & Keller, 2009). This industry offers a classic model for implementing supply-chain

management techniques which are linked to its upstream suppliers and downstream distributors. The configuration, organization, and continuous improvement of a sequentially ordered set of operations can be described as supply-chain management (SCM). According to Chima (2007), since the major goal of any organization is to maximize profits by maximizing the benefits and minimizing the costs, supply-chain management aims to provide maximum customer service at the lowest cost possible. The major supply-chain links in the oil and gas industry represent the interface between companies and materials that flow through the supply chain (Chima, 2007):

Exploration → Production → Refining → Marketing → Consumer

Each stage represents a separate company or an organizational unit within the company. A supply chain has existed for as long as oil firms have needed a phalanx of vendors to keep their networks constantly re-supplied. There are several operations within each level, such as seismic, geophysical, and geological operations in exploration, and drilling, reservoir, production, and facilities engineering in production. Refining is a complicated process whose output is used as an input in marketing, which involves the retail selling of gasoline, engine oil, and other refined goods (Tordo et al., 2011).

The most difficult problem encountered along the oil and gas supply chain's ties is balancing benefits and costs. The types of shipments made in this industry range from gloves to tubing, pumps, cranes, chemicals, cement, steel, and drilling rigs, etc. Moreover, a vast number of commodities require to be transported domestically, internationally, onshore and offshore in significant quantities on a daily basis. At the exploration and production stage companies have to conduct repetitive activities like drilling the gas wells and it requires contractors and other services to complete each well. For this reason, almost all significant operations in the industry are planned in advance- so they can be manipulated and fine-tuned to become a high-performing money-making machine. Exploration operations add value to the industry supply chain by analyzing seismic data and defining opportunities while manufacturing operations become the consumers that absorb the products of exploration (Koppelman, 2019). Similarly, refining is a customer of processing, while marketing is a customer of refining, and the ultimate customer is the buyer of refined goods such as gasoline. For this structure, it is necessary to ensure that each player along the chain can adapt quickly to their customers' exact material needs, shield themselves from supplier issues, and buffer their operations from the demand and supply volatility they face. Many organizations' supply chains have the problem that each unit is likely to behave in its own best interests in order

to maximize profit, and the key objective of pleasing the final customer can easily be ignored (Cowan, 2017). There would be less need for raw material inventories, quality control systems, rework, and other non-value adding activities if suppliers could be made more reliable, resulting in lean production. Tubes and tubular goods are very crucial and form part of the supply-chain link of the oil-gas industry. The tubular goods supply chain is critical to the overall process of crude acquisition, and any delays in the delivery of pipes, casing, tubing, and other accessories can cause extensive rig downtime and, as a result, high operating costs (Bhardwaj, 2013).

Nowadays, improvements in information systems and communication technologies provide more opportunities for coordinating activities across a supply-chain in complex operations such as oil and gas. Integration of different operation functions allows all departments to be involved in the supply-chain management decisions. There are some concerns about the topicality of the oil and gas industry due to the scarce resources, but it was proved that there are booked reserves, new recovery technologies, further potential discoveries, and new extent of vast oil sands and oil shale reserves (Miller & Sorrell, 2014). Essentially, according to the vast majority of industry research, there is enough capital available to maintain current production levels for at least the next 50 years, and the greatest problem facing the oil and gas industry is bringing these reserves into production and supplying the final products to customers for the most affordable price. Which once again proves that the solid supply-chain management program to provide optimum customer service at the lowest possible cost is the major aim of all competitors in this industry.

To better understand the business environment of the oil-gas sector, let's consider the term "Hydrocarbon Value Chain"- which represents the simple sequential flow of work activities from the New Venture Exploration, Development, Production and Sales (O'Reilly, 2020). There is a decline in revenue for many oil and gas companies throughout the world as gasoline, jet fuels, and lubricants are seeing significant demand reductions. The importance of value chain optimization has become essential to survive on the market in recent years, especially during the devastating period in the operations of oil and gas companies due to quarantine. It can be critical in minimizing supply disruptions, and the dynamic rebalancing of demand and delivery of products caused by escalating tension between oil-producing nations and lower oil prices. According to SAP, an oversupply of crude and natural gas causes storage capacity overruns with demand reduction, and the market is experiencing lower capacity operation of refineries due to lack of demand (Palmer, 2020). SAP has

published a new Hydrocarbon Value Chain (HVC) Optimization, which portrays the sequence of activities that occur from supply sources to trading mechanisms, in which oil and gas are sold and oil derivatives are exchanged for hedging purposes. This process includes upstream - exploration and production of crude, midstream - as it transported and stored, and downstream - when it is processed or refined into petroleum products, and eventually sold at wholesale or retail prices.

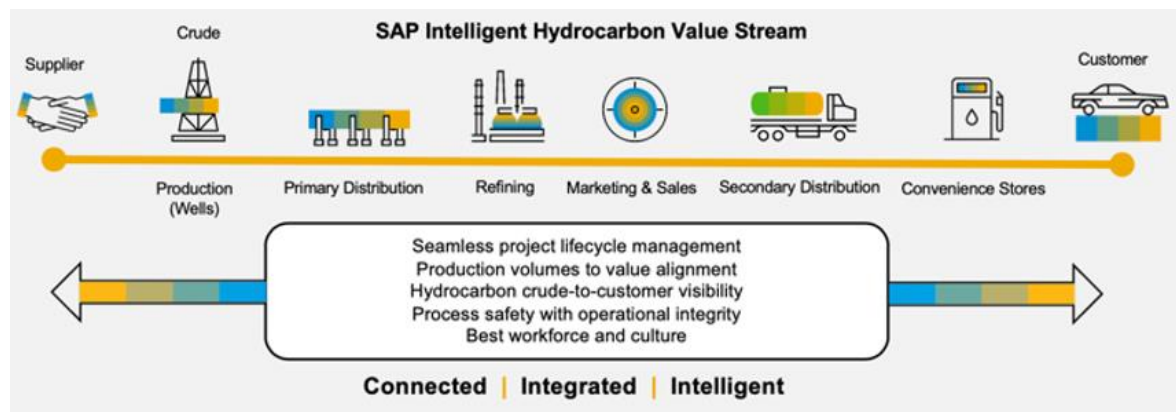


Figure 2 SAP Intelligent Hydrocarbon Value Stream (Palmer, 2020)

SAP organizational approach to "hydrocarbon molecular management and costing" replaces the decades-old "business as normal" approach of complete accounting after the final hydrocarbon sale and then back-allocating various operating costs, asset costs, margin pools, and physical position records. This new innovation approach "follow the molecule" is a digital thread for hydrocarbon management and inventory optimization linked to direct and indirect costs. Its main advantage is complementing robotic process automation that will simplify routine processes for hydrocarbon management teams while also allowing them to create and provide predictive refining, marketing, and distribution based on recognized trends. After detailed insight into the value chain of the business, it is possible to concentrate on the major mechanisms which drives this sophisticated engine. There is no doubt that the IT landscape of the digital economy based on digital platforms will change the existing structure of the market, which presupposes a certain allocation of roles between the manufacturer, distributor, service provider and other traditional participants. However, Deloitte says that the petroleum and gas industries have been the last in terms of digital sophistication, and although using advanced machinery and tools at the heart of its activities, the industry has fallen behind as regards exploiting real-time insights and data. The report shows that the industry has lost trillions of dollars in potential revenue as it is unable to be fully transformed digitally (Dickson et al., 2020). The 2019 Report reveals that by scoring a

mere average of 1.3 Digital Maturity Index, the industry lost trillions of dollars to potential sales, rendering its spectrum smaller than all other industries. Meanwhile, other players, like Google, are rapidly entering and reshaping the industry by investing in third-party energy and mobility-related technologies.



Figure 3 Deloitte: Digital Transformation (Cornelissen et al., 2019)

In this sphere we can see that companies like GazProm, Shell, Chevron and ExxonMobil are located in the grey part, indicating them as traditional players with a conservative approach to the business. At the same time, comparably new entrants on the market like Apple, Tesla and Google are indicated in the light blue part of the sphere, meaning they are more opt for digitalization of their value chain processes. It can be concluded that most of the companies from the oil-gas sector need fundamental re-imagine and change of their operation management across the entire value chain, the industry needs to identify a specific strategic approach for digital transformation.

Oil and gas companies are currently searching for new ways to lower overall operating costs while still increasing production and earnings (Cornelissen et al., 2019). Usually, changes in technology and customer preferences may shape the ideal configuration, thus oil and gas companies should think about improvement opportunities of their supply-chain configuration and coordination systems. It is very crucial in gaining competitive advantages in the marketplace and ignoring this aspect of the firm's supply-chain optimization can lead to deprivation of the company status. The following four strategic priorities, recommended by SAP, can help oil and gas companies to transform their business in accordance with the emerging trends in the modern market: **Extending beyond the barrel** – presumes customer

empowerment due to the digital economy and the deregulation of energy markets, which demands simplicity and service quality from the energy providers (Potts, 2018). Oil and gas firms will be able to broaden their business models beyond the barrel, creating new demand and revenue streams. For example, fuel delivery services, where customers can order fuel through a mobile application to be filled in the car at any location and time. Shortly, it will increase revenue sources, add new value to goods and services, and lessen exposure to oil price fluctuations and global demand variability.



Figure 4 Extend Beyond the Barrel (SAP Industries, 2021)

It is expected that the entire oil and gas value chain can be destabilized without having a necessary inventory or labor force. Thus, companies should strive for asset and service digitization by finding methods of minimizing manual human interventions. **Digitalization of production and delivery** – meaning that future oil and gas operators can master the use of real-time tracking, advanced data sources, AI, predictive analytics, and machine learning to gain insights into operations, products, and services. Implementation of the digital hydrocarbon supply chain will facilitate companies' process efficiency and proactive awareness. For example, technology for mobile devices Shell's Skypad, based on SAP Cloud Platform, offers real-time sales and stock data to assist decision-making, transforming the experience the company provides to its airport customers.

Competing as an ecosystem – It is projected that by 2025, the energy market will be more volatile, with a wider variety of asset types and energy sources, as the boundaries between oil and gas companies and renewable energy companies blurred and combined into energy companies (Biol, 2021). As a result, operators would need to push the limits of automation and artificial intelligence (AI) in operations activities to enhance safety and efficiency, as well as share data seamlessly with all ecosystem stakeholders to ensure that output, profitability, and safety goals are met. It is projected that the future success of energy operators will depend on three variables: safety, cost, and agility. It means that they must

establish interconnection between automation and artificial intelligence in operations activities for a smooth data transition within the company ecosystem. It can be arranged by the application of integrated digital platforms that will ensure visibility, agility, and responsiveness among different business parties or company units (see Figure 5).



Figure 5 SAP Integrated Business Planning for Supply Chain solution (SAP Industries, 2018)

This solution will allow new prospects to fast-tracking the innovation, reducing costs, and providing operational transparency. The main advantages that can be listed are a collaboration between R&D and sourcing to market time acceleration; inventory optimization by demand prognosis; customer satisfaction improvement with the sales, manufacturing, and distribution alignment; digital supply networks; company-centered collaboration of stakeholders and adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies.

Digital core of predictive analytics, blockchain, and machine learning is becoming a stage for workforce management, customer relationship management, and new business model developments. **Unlocking customer value with technology** will make data a strategic asset for the purpose of innovation, operations effectiveness, safety, and profitability. Such an approach to data management will force oil and gas companies to optimize business processes in the cloud and establish flexible business partnerships over networks. Let's consider the 2 scenarios of payment calculation processes: traditional method of this process versus modern method enabling artificial intelligence, machine learning, and robotic process automation capabilities (refer to Figure 6).

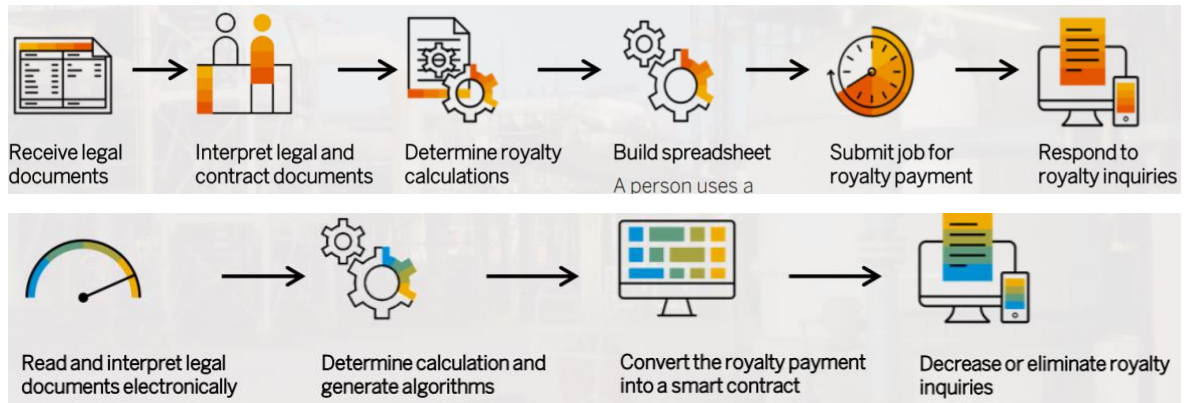


Figure 6 Using Technology as an Enabler (SAP Industries, 2021)

Digital investments are allowing companies to shape their in-company processes with effective asset design and construction. The application of robotic process automation, artificial intelligence, and machine learning are improving accuracy, employee productivity, and data transparency which consequently have a good impact on the customer satisfaction levels (SAP Industries, 2021).

It can be seen that the electronic, transfer, interpretation of documents and system-generated algorithms for calculation will shorten a 6 -phase traditional procedure to 4 stage process. We can conclude that intelligent technologies will have a huge impact on every aspect of the businesses in the oil and gas sector and companies should monitor and adapt to these trends. Companies in the Petroleum Distribution Industry transport two of the most critical energy commodities, as well as their derivatives, from the wellhead to the final customer. These companies manage activities like gas collection and distribution, intrastate and interstate transportation, and customer delivery (Repko, 2020). Companies should reconsider distribution-related strategy and execution in the changing market environment, namely one that needs a digital, multi-channel focus—from back to front office, according to the leadership report "Succeeding in a Multi-Channel World: Channel Efficiency, Optimization, and Speed to Value" (Garth, 2017). Traditional oil and gas supplier sales models and channels cannot satisfy different buying experiences and expectations of tech-savvy customers and consumers. Many downstream oil and gas companies are finding competition increasingly difficult because a new generation of customers seeks simple, effortless, technology-enabled solutions, and interactions (Jacobs, 2020). Moreover, the modern digital age sets standards for customer expectations to conduct business on-line or on-app at their convenience.



Figure 7 Deloitte: What do next-generation oil and gas customers expect? (Cornelissen et al., 2019)

This increases the demand for omnichannel consistency across all the channels of oil and gas company partners and distributors. Also, there is evidence that buyers prefer to manage their purchase activities on their own terms via channels and platforms that are convenient for them.

Furthermore, downstream oil and gas enterprises can improve customer engagement by adopting a digital mindset, launching new digitally- driven business models, and looking at all touchpoints and activities from the perspective of today's digitally empowered customer. True digital transformation in the oil and gas industry involves the creation of a customer-centric culture, in which employees are appreciated and rewarded for delighting customers by delivering an easy, seamless, and satisfying digital experience (Dickson et al., 2020). Downstream oil and gas companies will improve their consumer relationships by communicating with them on their terms and meeting them where they need information and expect assistance.

The downstream sector managed to outperform similar industries in total value creation for the past 10 years, but it was unprepared for a global COVID-19 pandemic situation when means of air and land transportation were stopped leading to full storage tanks and a decrease of demand for transportation fuels up to half. It forced refineries to cut their rates and experience the most enduring and sharpest shock they had ever seen (Chakrabarti et al., 2020).

Major industries' total returns to shareholders,¹ index (100 = year 2010)

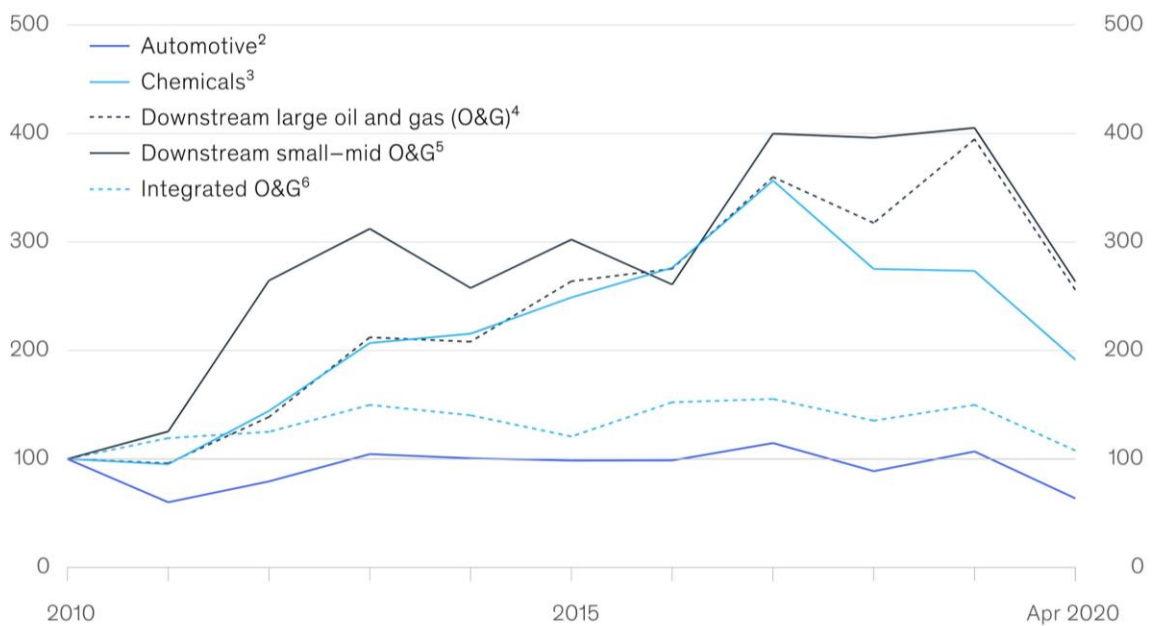


Figure 8 Market-cap average of major US players (Chakrabarti et al., 2020)

It is expected that the next rise of hydrocarbon demand will be 2030's after experiencing sudden travel interruptions and a rise in telecommuting due to several surges of COVID-19 cases worldwide (Barbosa et al., 2020). It will cause downward pressure on profits from the demand-side challenges and oil-gas companies have to start the radical transformation to adjust for upcoming challenges. A deep understanding of market trends and willingness to continuously transform business models always have allowed experienced market leaders to stay competitive. Faced with increasing Asian competition in the car industry, US and European companies such as Fiat Chrysler Automobiles actively restructured their business models and cultures by seeking disruptive mergers (Chrysler first, PSA Group more recently) to gain scale in, or access to, preferred market segments, and to add global brands to their portfolio (Research and Markets, 2020). Similarly, during the financial crisis, JPMorgan Chase used its "fortress-like" balance sheet to make lucrative acquisitions and aggressively seek market leadership in segments it believed in (McKinsey, 2021). These examples of the companies from other industries can be applicable in the case of oil and gas

industries in developing their own strategy during the current crisis. In the case of market leaders, it is recommended by McKinsey to keep creating superior value to their customers even during difficult times. Traditionally it is believed that stable companies with superior operations always find a way to create value even in challenging times (Barbosa et al., 2020). Many questions require attentions of the players in the oil and gas sector, concerning possible supply chain partnership for the future business model, or operational transformation requirements raised from digital and advanced analytics that support new business models. Also, the impact of technology and innovation on the industry development, and lastly, consideration about radical shift toward renewables from oil and gas and how it affects the value flow of the customer relationship and integrated value chains (McKinsey, 2021). Companies should pay attention to several aspects while deciding on the future tactics for the emerging concerns. Most importantly, they should aim to be market leaders with strong regulating and operating standards. Companies should make complex and fundamental choices across the asset base and permanently reallocate resources away from lower-return businesses into sources of distinctiveness, according to studies across several industries (Wyman, 2020). Some companies may decide to accelerate their transition to future energy technologies at this time, but it will require an environment in which companies must also ensure stability with capital markets by providing attractive returns on capital. Furthermore, now could be the time for many industry players to explore mergers and acquisitions, as the winners would emerge with stronger portfolios that can tolerate longer-term trends (Barbosa et al., 2020). They can only consider assets in upstream, refining, marketing, and petrochemicals that are in the best possible position. Leading businesses will redouble their efforts to scale up technology, digital, and artificial-intelligence investments, and they will not return to business as normal once the crisis is over (Chakrabarti et al., 2020). The COVID-19 crisis has prompted companies to work in new ways, triggering a reevaluation of the size and role of functional teams, field crews, and management processes needed to run a successful oil and gas business.

2 CONCEPT OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Many businesses' productivity is based on logistics and distribution, and it is difficult to sustain an effective supply chain without it (Chong et al., 2010). Customer service, on the other hand, is a crucial component of a successful logistics operation. It is difficult to run a logistics activity chain without a high degree of customer support. Customer Relationship Management is an essential aspect of every company's logistics services.

Successful business performance management requires business process automation (Lau et al., 2016). It is a prerequisite of successful operation for the large corporations, the activity of which is composed of various elementary business processes. The customer relationship management (CRM) process refers to one of the main business processes within the broader concept of the process approach to enterprise management (Buttle & Maklan, 2019). Automation of the business support systems has been actively developing since the last two decades of the previous century. The first developments concerned the system of automation of production processes and accounting, then reality demanded a transition to automation of service, sales of goods and services, marketing operations. Then it was necessary to consider and automate the tasks of cross processes, covering the work of many departments, an extensive supply chain and a huge number of customers (to optimize the work with the customer network - CRM software). Customer Relationship Management refers to all the strategies, methods, tools, and technologies that a business uses to develop, retain, and attract customers (Lau et al., 2016). CRM is a special approach to doing business, in which the customer is at the forefront of the company's activities and the main goal of implementing a CRM strategy is to attract new customers, turning neutral customers into loyal customers, forming business partners from regular customers (Chalmeta, 2006). The tools to attract new customers and increase the loyalty of current customers affect the company's sales. An analysis of acquisition channels shows the effectiveness of advertising campaigns, promotions, mailings, and other types of interaction to achieve the desired conversions (Legler, 2019). Also, CRM can serve not only as a system for working with leads but also for assessing the performance of managers. The customer relationship management system (CRM) has been successfully operating in the world since the second half of the 90s and continues to develop (CRM Switch, 2013). In the West, almost all large corporations and medium-sized companies use CRM systems, which can, to a certain extent, influence the success of an enterprise's business. Customer relationship management has always been critical for product development companies and distributors who are usually very careful

with choosing vendors and clients. By tailoring a CRM solution to their current needs and immediate requirements, most companies can take care of their customer management system efficiently and seamlessly. CRM solutions typically include contact management, lead tracking, opportunity management, dashboard and charts, email handling, email marketing campaigns, and other sections of decision support strategy. There is huge competition between software companies based in India and China as they are exceptionally experienced in their field and extremely cost-effective compared to their Western counterparts (Raman & Chadee, 2011). Many programmers and companies in India understand the importance of maintaining open lines of communication with clients, so they contact them on a regular basis to provide updates on ongoing and completed projects.

2.1 Modern Practices of CRM

Nowadays there are various organizations that can provide excellent deals and solutions for CRM development, customization, and implementation. Furthermore, some of them provide open source CRM customization services, such as adding new features and integrating CRM with other systems (Hawkins, 2021). Most third-party CRM solutions are easy to implement, but they require additional customization and synchronization of information between different clients. Business process automation is critical for different types of businesses that's why it is becoming a trend to have multiple interactive channels including sales and marketing. CRM solutions must match the customer's business logic, so customized solutions work better and more efficiently in customer management. The solutions are built for the industry the company is associated with, with the business acumen required to support the solution and integrate routine business processes. It can be said that CRM is a modern management strategy that unites information technology with marketing for nurturing a Company's interactions with customers, clients, and sales prospects (Messner, 2005). It acts as a companywide business instrument of embracing all client-facing departments while reducing marketing and operational costs. Companies today realize without a doubt that their customers are the cornerstone of their market life, and they are forced to increase customer attention as a result of increased competition arising from multiple factors such as globalization, economic and cultural opening, which resulted in the diversification of single product categories and increased purchase alternatives for consumers. Customer relationship management is crucial for a business to achieve its long-term objectives, and as reported by Nguyen, Sherif and Newby (2007), "the success of organizations in achieving their goals depends largely on the efficiency of management of their customer relations." In the last

years CRM has grown into a technology-enabled market management platform for building and optimizing consumer expertise in order to develop, sustain, and improve profitable relationships. According to Zamil (2011), CRM can be used to build an ongoing dialogue with customers to gain a deeper understanding of their needs, which would benefit businesses in the form of increased customer loyalty. There are many benefits of CRM strategy implementation like increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, increased sales volume, improved service quality, increased profits (Buttle & Maklan, 2019). Moreover, some researchers believe that CRM benefits can be tangible and intangible (Chen & Chen, 2004). For example, profitability, costs, productivity, and investments are tangible benefits, while customer satisfaction, quality, communication channels considered intangible benefits. Helgesen (2006) stated that the relationship between customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and customer profitability creates a foundation of the marketing concept. Many researchers believe that customer loyalty, which is a result of good CRM, subsequently generates the word of mouth (WOM) mechanism. It means that by exceeding customer satisfaction, the organization can establish the behavior of repeat purchases, positive reviews, favorable publicity regarding a product, which will, even more, increase the number of loyal customers (Chalmeta, 2006). According to Messner (2005), CRM is a strategic activity-oriented approach that acknowledges the enterprise-customer relationship and then facilitates its re-design. A CRM strategy is a road map for determining a company's competencies in developing business value propositions with the greatest potential. These competencies then produce business results, which are extracted from the organizational strategy and linked to the business model, and then combined with other strategies at the operational planning stage. As you can see in Figure 9, implementation of CRM strategy is expressed as the complex network of various operational strategies. The aim of the Strategy Development Stage is to create an organizational strategy based on an overview of the market and its competitive environment. This stage can be summarized as a synthesis of business and customer strategy, with customer strategy defining the strategy for attracting new customers and maintaining existing ones (Lindgreen, 2004).

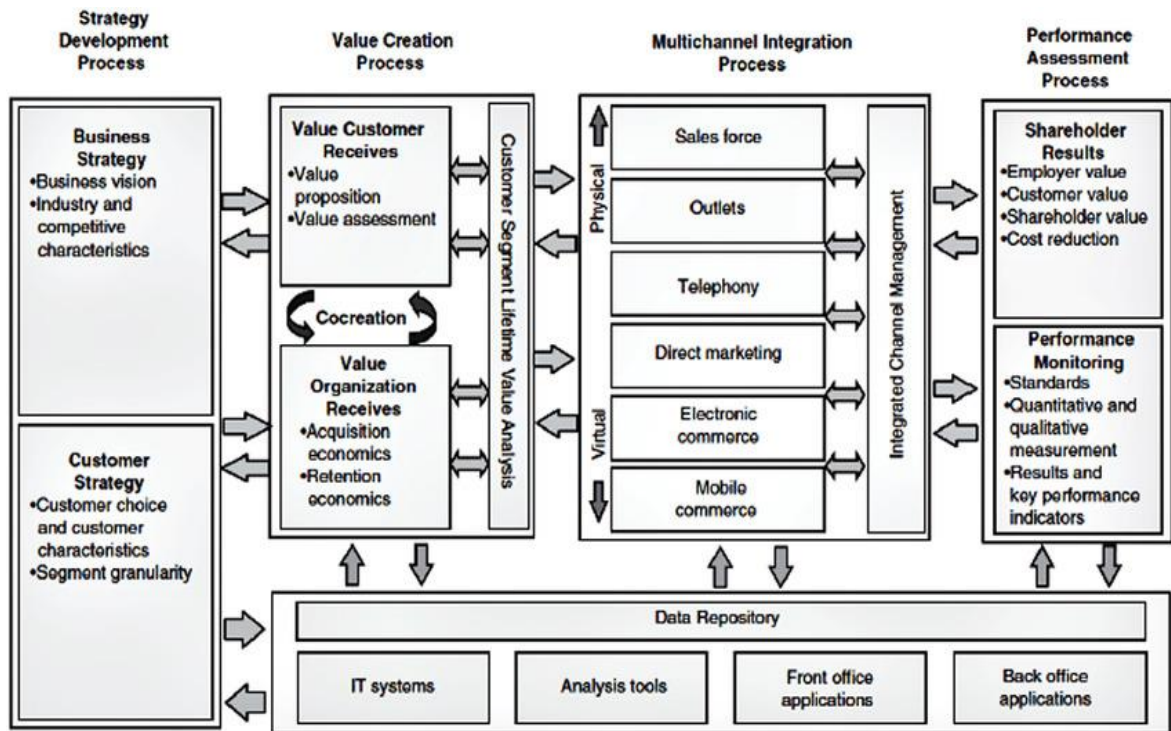


Figure 9 CRM Strategy and Implementation Model (Adapted from Payne & Frow, 2006)

Value Creation stage aims to transform “the outputs of the strategy development process into programs that both extract and deliver and co-produce (or co-create) value” (Payne & Frow, 2005). The main purpose of this stage is to support companies in recognizing their most profitable customers and implementing the best customer retention plan. The organization's sales force, different channels, telephony services, direct marketing, e-commerce, and m-commerce are the six major channel categories. The stage of multi-channel integration assumes that an effective CRM implementation plan would result in excellent customer interactions across all channels. IT has greatly helped organizations in gathering information from all consumer touchpoints in order to obtain customer insight and relevant marketing responses. CRM is an efficient method for gathering, evaluating, and turning useful customer information into managerial action and information is a key component of successful CRM implementation (Nguyen & Mutum, 2012; Ernst et al., 2010). At stage four, one of the key objectives is to decide what information is needed and what advantages are associated with it for each department. The purpose of the performance assessment stage is ensuring the attainability of the strategic CRM objectives. Employing a suitable CRM tool is very crucial in achieving shareholders' satisfaction, better monitoring of organizational performance. CRM systems provide opportunities to adjust some of the elements to a particular industry by using standardized configuration tools. One of the distinctive competitive advantages of CRM vendors is providing pre-configured vertical solutions for specific industries (Messner,

2005). Enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems share a similar philosophy but most companies prefer default configurations, as modification of complex programs may cause delays and cost overruns without providing a meaningful differentiation on a business level. Lynch (2002) states that the application of the best industry practices is more effective than keeping the old processes but it should be noted that there are different external and internal factors that affect the creation of CRM for individual companies. The technology replication cycle is getting shorter and the payback time for new technology investment is also getting slimmer. In 1995, an American IT firm Gartner Group, proposed a standard adoption Hype Cycle diagram which shows the growth of new technology from market introduction to maturity (Mullany, 2016). According to this model technologies have 4 stage processes: Emergence: "The Technology Trigger"; Excessive enthusiasm: "The Peak of Inflated Expectations"; Excessive disappointment: "The Trough of Disillusionment"; Gradual, practical adoption: "The Slope of Enlightenment" and "The Plateau of Productivity".

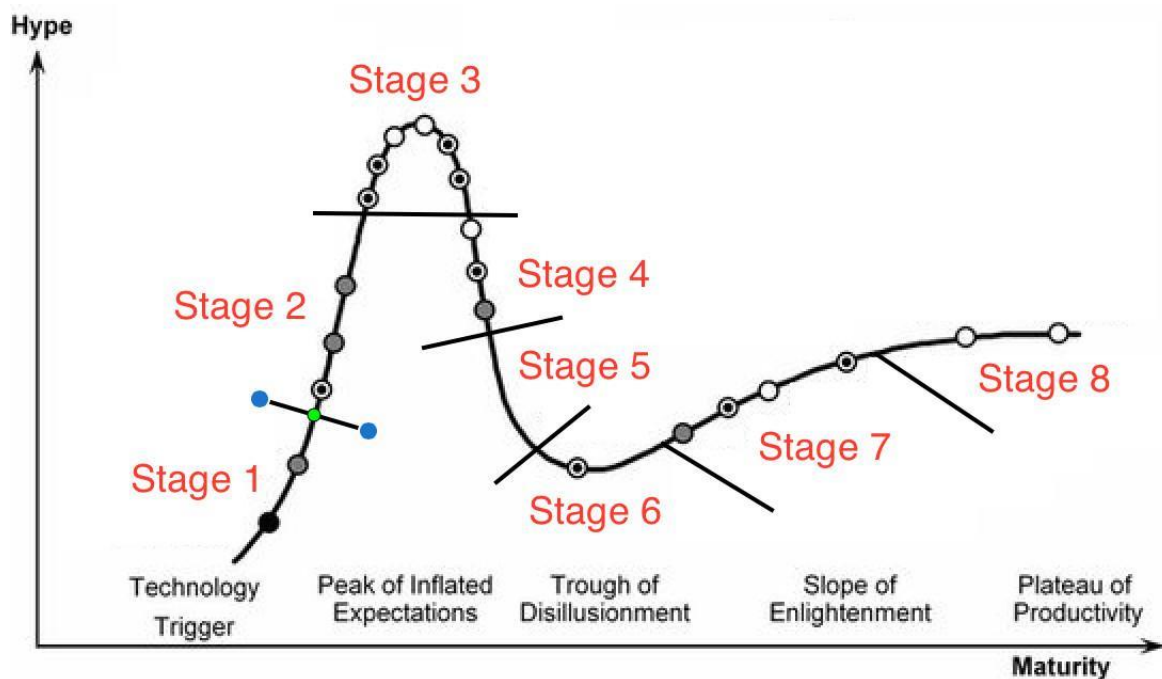


Figure 10 CRM adaptation cycle (Mullany, 2016)

The technology trigger stage represents a phase of over-enthusiasm and sometimes unrealistic projections on the business benefits of utilizing the new CRM technology as a differentiating factor due to industry interest generated by a breakthrough invention. Companies are usually forced to invest in a new infrastructure before they learn how to manage it because they want to stay abreast with their competitors. During the peak of inflated expectations, a new CRM technology is pushed to its limits and usually, conference

organizers, magazine publishers, and consultants tend to benefit the most at this stage (Gartner Group, 2003). At this point, it's difficult to draw any broad conclusions about the effects of CRM systems on individual businesses' competitiveness or profitability. Trough of disillusionment happens when the new technology cannot fulfill its inflated promises. Selecting a target group for marketing campaigns is used in practice, and CRM vendors need to combine these algorithms in their analytical CRM suites to achieve the slope of enlightenment. At this point, businesses have a thorough understanding of the new technology's capabilities, and methodologies and resources to make its implementation easier are available. Personalization, for example, helps businesses to align themselves with their customers' existing and unique needs and desires. When the benefits of applied methodologies and tools are justified, and the connection between technology and business strategy is formed, a plateau of profitability is reached. The height of the curve in the adoption cycle varies according to the level of technology benefits. According to recent research of the Salesforce (2021), many businesses were pleased with their decision to introduce a single cloud-based CRM platform to store all company data and provide value to customers. The most influential developments on the digital market are cloud-based CRM platforms.

Due to the pandemic many industries lost the opportunity to personally interact with customers and it became clear that it is time to proactively adopt an omni-channel approach (Svoboda, 2020). Therefore, CRM systems that allow you to manage all communication channels from a single window, integrate with postal services and PBX, and provide tools for analyzing interactions for each channel are now in high demand (Legler, 2019). Connecting a maximum number of communication channels with customers allows CRM to see end-to-end analytics on how the customer came to the company and to contact them from a single system using convenient tools like, messenger, chatbot, phone, e-mail. Today there are more niche players appearing on the market and offering relatively inexpensive CRM products for specific industries. Since customers want to get fast results for little money, it becomes more difficult for the old players on the market to offer appropriate high-tech systems to compete with niche players. Modern CRM market requires industry expertise and understanding of the customer's business processes and recent years showed that companies prefer CRM systems which are designed specifically for their industry, and tools that cover the maximum number of key processes (Legler, 2019). As it was mentioned above, one of the most significant market trends is the transition to cloud solutions. This solution gives

customers a possibility to reduce constantly growing support costs and opportunity to develop their own infrastructure. Cloud-based CRM platform benefits apply to companies of all sizes, industries, and ownership (Salesforce, 2021). The main advantages of such solutions are flexibility and low cost of ownership. The client receives a ready-to-use and relevant service, and the provider is responsible for maintaining and updating the basic infrastructure. The speed with which systems are launched in the cloud is always faster than the speed with which they are deployed on your own infrastructure.

There is a recognized need from the clients to have a single platform on which all information about customers will be concentrated, and on which suppliers, sales managers, marketers, and top management will be able to work and make decisions (CRM Switch, 2013). CRM is a desired one-stop customer journey platform whose aggregate function allows you to collect customer information from different channels, run pre-configured business processes and generate reports (Nguyen et al., 2007). From the client portrait collected by the CRM, a company can recognize who are their clients, what are their needs, and how to communicate with them. However, simply collecting data into one profile is no longer enough. The ability to be proactive and one step ahead is the next requirement for a CRM system (Rahimi et al., 2018). Because businesses want to see sales reports in a convenient interface in various aspects, many vendors integrate additional analytics into CRM. For example, Salesforce bought the BI manufacturer Tableau to enable these capabilities (Salesforce, 2021). Moreover, Microsoft is embedding built-in data analytics from CRM systems into Power BI. In the past few years, in line with the general trend in IT, major CRM platform vendors have focused on developing AI-powered products, where predictive analytics allows faster response to changes, and automating tasks that were previously impossible without human intervention significantly reduces operational costs (Buchholz & Briggs, 2020). The potential growth of artificial intelligence capabilities will certainly affect the functionality of CRM platforms.

Improving the customer experience remains a top priority for businesses, and the introduction of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and advanced customer analytics is helping to accelerate this process. AI-powered scripts can help shape the right customer engagement strategy, provide salespeople with the right information, and optimize campaigns, product configurations, and pricing (Buchholz & Briggs, 2020). Advanced customer analytics will allow businesses to build hyper-personalized customer interactions because customers expect exceptional service based on their history, preferences, context,

and intent. In following the end of the pandemic, many businesses have abandoned major CRM investments due to uncertainty. As a result, the market is now concentrating on expanding into new commercial areas such as online sales and new product launches. This trend is observed not only in B2C companies but also in B2B (Hague & Hague, 2018). It is worth noting that businesses strive to provide personalized communications with their customers to create a better customer experience. It is critical that key products and services can now be obtained remotely and, ideally, without the need for human interaction. The same is true for CRM: it is difficult to overestimate the importance of digital channels in customer interactions. The main thing now is that the client should trust the brand and want to use its products, so businesses must invest in customer experience to maintain and grow market share (Kazak & Yee Choi, 2009). It means that in terms of customer relationships vendors need to work with customer and employee feedback, monitor key CX metrics, analyze customer paths and X-data (Heger, 2020).

II. ANALYSIS

3 CURRENT SITUATION OF THE SELECTED COMPANY

This thesis will be dedicated to the Customer Service department of the selected company. Firstly, one will describe a company and its organizational structure to understand exactly which part of this huge organization we be analyzed. This company is one of the world's largest suppliers of oil and gas products, exploring resources on every continent. It manufactures its fuels and lubricants under several brand names. Like most companies in the oil-gas industry, the company has several divisions, namely 4 of them: Upstream, Midstream, Downstream, and special C-division.

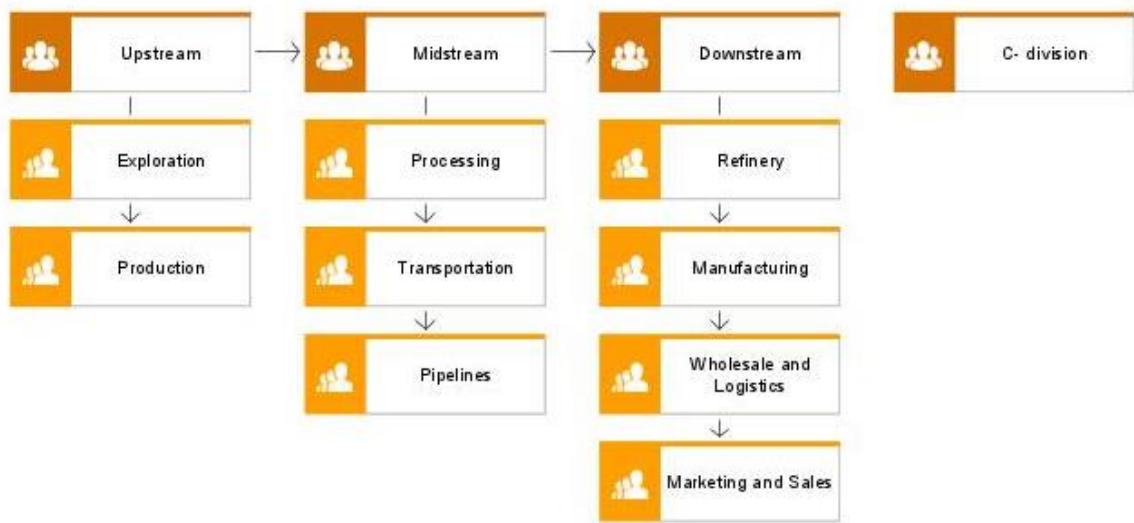


Figure 11 Company Divisions (Own data, 2021)

Upstream is an industry division involved in oil and gas exploration, drilling, and liquefaction of natural gas for transportation to the refinery. Scientific and technical activities of upstream include:

- Exploration for oil and gas (Hydrocarbon exploration);
- Seismic survey;
- Well logging and drilling;
- Completions of wells;
- Well testing;
- Reservoir development and stimulation;
- Operation intervention of wells;
- Crude oil and raw gas gathering;

Midstream is an oil and gas business unit that is responsible for the storage, and transportation of oil and gas. Transportation of oil and oil products can be carried out by the following methods: pipeline; railway - products are pumped into tank cars; highways; and sea - products are pumped into tankers. Midstream technical activities are:

- Refinery and Transportation
- Oil treatment (Crude oil treatment, Crude oil processing);
- Gas treatment (Raw gas treatment, Raw gas processing);
- Storage and transportation;
- Natural gas liquefaction.

Downstream is a division of the business that is responsible for the processing of oil and gas and the sale of the final products. As a result of oil refining, the following products are obtained: liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), gasoline, plastics, jet fuel, train fuel, fuel for large vehicles, marine fuels, lubricants for passenger vehicles as well as industrial vehicles, asphalt. Downstream technical processes are presented as “Petroleum products distribution, Deployment, Logistics, Sales, Marketing and Customer Service.

A separate C-division of the group is in charge of producing supplementary products that are not the company's main product. Usually, in most oil and gas companies, this division is called - Chemicals as the product portfolio of this division includes: aromatics, acetone, polyethylene, fluids and solvents, olefin, synthetic products, etc.

As previously stated, a company manufactures its products under many brand names, each of which is dedicated to a particular consumer category and need. In this paper, one will consider the fuels & lubricants of passenger and commercial vehicles. The downstream business units operate in 6 different geographical areas including more than 60 countries. The pie chart below represents the Petroleum Product Sales Volume from all 6 geographic areas in the year 2019 and this work will focus on the European Downstream division of the Company - specifically, it will describe the main connecting processes of the Logistics, Sales, and Customer Service.

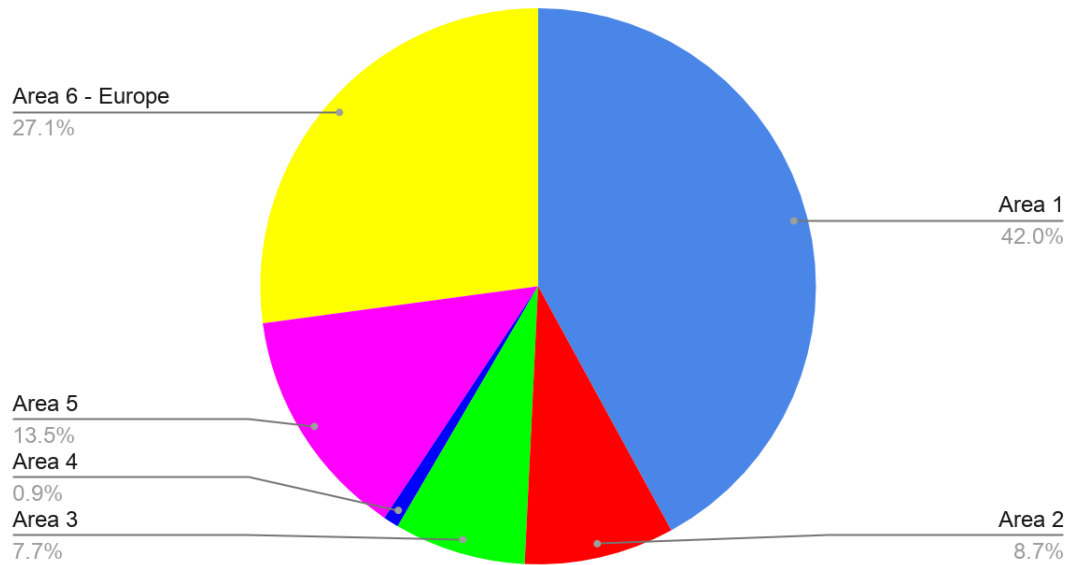


Figure 12 Sales Volume of Petroleum in 2019 (Internal Company Data, 2021)

In the European area, there are almost 19 countries where the company departments and specific projects being handled. Even though company departments such as IT, Sales, Logistics, Marketing, Customer Service, Deployment and others are located in different countries - they have one major goal, which is serving the needs of company customers in B2C and B2B context.

3.1 SWOT Analysis of the Selected Company

The SWOT Analysis helps to get a better understanding of the Selected Company's current position on the market. The selected company is the largest refiner who operates in many countries. Moreover, it has explored crude and oil on every continent and has a very strong R&D capacity, which allowed the company to develop a diverse product portfolio. Due to the extensive upstream and downstream operations managed by qualified product experts – company sells every product obtained from the refinery. According to company employees, during the pandemic there was an extremely high demand for company fuels and lubricant products in the Middle East and Russian regions, despite of the fact that demand in European countries dropped drastically. There were many cases when the European planned supply products re-labelled in accordance with Russian standards to cover the demand in the CIS countries. On the other hand, this re-labelling case shows the company weaknesses in terms that it is not capable to supply enough volumes. The reason is for supply problems arise from the fact that company has an increasing debt and facing the lack of input components to produce necessary fuels or lubricants. Their financial situation is affecting badly on the

relationship with vendors and other business partners. As many other giants of Oil and Gas industry, the company name has been involved in many environmental scandals and badly affected the brand image.

Table 1 SWOT Analysis of the Selected Company (Own data, 2021)

Strengths	Opportunities
Global Presence Product Portfolio Research and development Product Quality High Demand Qualified Experts	Other Sources of Energy Concentration on the developing countries
Weaknesses	Threats
Increasing Debt Bad Brand Image Weak Financials Unable to supply enough	Environmental Regulations Green Energy Strong Competitors Political Volatility Covid-19

It is obvious that in the modern Europe the popularity of traditional energy are dropping (International Energy Agency, 2020a), but still there are few opportunities to save the situation. According to Pickl (2019), some of the oil and gas giants have already started investing in renewable technologies and sustainable energy projects. Even though majority of them prefer to invest in carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS), rather than in alternative energy sources like solar PV, biofuels and wind power- the concern about environmental problems of our planet is increasing every day (IEA, 2015-2018). Now the selected company has a chance to direct their financial resources on the project of future energy, and in support of the Environmental projects of decreasing CO² emissions. Undoubtedly, organization should move in this direction to be prepared for the future market demands. Moreover, it was clear during the last 2 years that there is a high demand for company goods from a certain markets. It shows that company has higher chance to survive on the oil and gas arena if it knows on which customers it should concentrate its efforts. On the other hand, the same fact of the Green Energy trend and its increasing popularity is a main threat for every company in this industry. Additionally, global environmental regulations like Paris agreement are decreasing the popularity of oil and gas companies (Mckeever, 2021). Another threat for the Selected Company- is the other strong players in the industry. Some of the competitors have comparably better public appearance because

their brand name not mentioned in the global environmental scandals (Ambrose, 2019). A combination of the COVID-19 pandemic, trade tensions, environmental issues, and a variety of other issues influenced political decisions, much as they did at the postwar highs. It has intensified tensions about economic inequality in many nations, as well as significant volatility about the policy environment that businesses encounter (Rickert & Cline, 2020). The selected company's strategy planning and execution is at risk by the uncertainty that comes with such a dynamic policy climate.

The results of the SWOT analysis shows that by 2021, the Selected Company has an active global presence due to strengths such as product portfolio, strong R&D, high product quality and demand for its output. However, it has a weak financial capabilities and questionable brand image supported by a low production capacity and inability to fulfill the existing customer demand. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity for the company to apply one of the Ansoff's Growth Model - Diversification. It implies that the selected company could develop new products in accordance with current energy trends and invest in green energy. The other option is to apply Market Penetration Strategy in the Developing Countries' Market like CIS region and Middle East, shift supply efforts to those regions as they have shown a high demand levels during the pandemic. Company should consider these opportunities, otherwise there are number of threats that may have negative impact on the company's well-being. Global environmental restrictions, political instability, pandemic consequences, increasing popularity of alternative energy and high competition on the market- all these external factors may result in unfavorable outcomes for the company.

3.2 CIS Market Support Functions

A key customer focus group for analysis will be B2B clients from Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Yarov & Bulyakov, 2011): Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. As these countries are located almost in the same territory Eurasian Continent - there are special departments dedicated to the management of the mentioned market needs. Before listing the respective department, it is important to note that there are 2 types of B2B customers from these countries and they are offered different product divisions and business support programs and procedures. We will divide them as Distributor Companies (future referred to as D group) and Strategic Global Alliances (future referred as S group). The major departments that serve the business needs of these customers are:

- Sales and Marketing
- Account and Price Setup Team
- Logistics Team
- Export Team (Warehouse)
- Customer Service

Here we will describe each department and its responsibilities in regards to customer profile management. The main function of the Sales and Marketing Team is the analysis of market opportunities, finding potential customers, managing offered products, prices, and discounts of the existing customer portfolios. One of the important characters of this unit is Dedicated Business Consultants (DBC) -they are responsible for the creation of contracts, monitoring customer product needs, providing discounts and supervision of the product catalog offers, enabling the changes in the customer data management in the system. Actually, DBC of the D-group customers has the opportunity to meet their clients directly to conduct negotiations and meetings (if needed). While DBC of the S- group customer usually handle their responsibilities online or on occasional business trips.

The Account and Price Setup Team is responsible for setting up the customer data and product catalogs with prices in the company ERP system. But they cannot act without the endorsement and approvals from the Sales. This party plays a crucial role in the data visibility across the organization, also they have the ability to manage data that is visible to the customers themselves. Shortly, they deal with all kinds of confidential data management and system setups regarding all customers across different geographical areas. Department is located in the country outside of European Continent.

The logistics team is accountable for timely delivery of compliance documentation for offered products: declaration of conformity, test- protocols, passport of safety and etc. Moreover, they have to monitor label compliances with the law regulations of destination countries and testing of product samples before approving product sales in the selected countries. Logistics Team for D-group customers is located in the Territory of Russia and logistics teams for S-group customers can be various depending on from which warehouse customer is ordering the products.

As it is noted, the logistics team is closely related to other operating warehouses. The company currently has more than 20 warehouses on the 6 continents, but our customers load

from the 3 key warehouses depending on their geographical location. All D-group customers load from Finland, and the Export dispatching team is responsible for receiving a final order list and providing this information to the Warehouse team for a physical preparation of goods one day prior to the loading day. The dispatching team also prepares customer invoices and other shipping documentation. Some of the customers load from the Netherlands, where the warehouse manages available loading slots and prepares shipping documentation. The same responsibilities conducted at the Turkish warehouse - from which S-group customers of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan pick up their orders.

3.3 Customer Service for CIS Market

One of the most essential departments that act as a communication bridge between all these departments is the Customer Service Russia Team. A team consists of 5 Customer Experience Professionals and 2 Process Experts in the face of a Billing Specialist and Account Receivable Specialist. The major responsibility of a Customer Experience Professionals (CXP) is to be a First Contact Resolution Point for D and S- group customers and to provide exceptional services to them. CXPs determine customer needs, respond to customer inquiries, and work with internal departments to improve customer service and brand recognition. Account Receivable (AR) specialist manages ensures that the company receives payments for goods and services from customers, and records these transactions accordingly. The Billing Specialist is accountable for ensuring that the company is charging customers appropriately and to track all the payments regularly. The next chapter of our paper will be dedicated to the analysis of all processes connected with the work of the Customer Service Department which affects the customer experience of the company clients.

4 MAJOR PROCESSES FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer Service Operation is based on the Order to Cash (OTC) Process, in this section, we will define and briefly describe each function within the Order to Cash Process. The OTC process encompasses all activities from the creation of a customer to the approval of a purchase order and the receipt of payment for the ordered product. There are 8 major functions covered by OTC, and 5 of them are managed by the Customer Service Department.

Customer Service Teams owns 5 functions of OTC: Account Set-Up; Commit Order; Billing; AR Management and Cash Application. In the following chapter we will get deeper inside into each function and describe major roles and systems used to perform key activities.

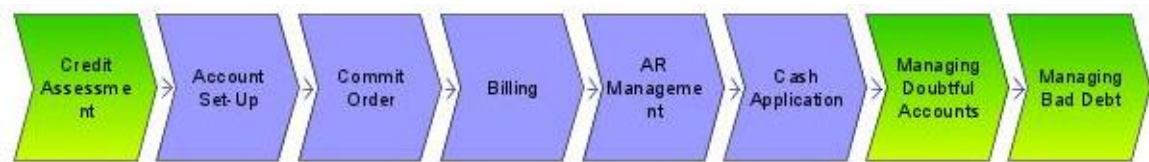


Figure 13 8 functions of the OTC (Internal Company data, 2021)

4.1 OTC: Account Set-Up Function

Account Setup Function is an establishment of a new customer where a contract is prepared and a credit rate is established for the customer. During this step, Sales negotiate the business terms with a new customer, create a product catalog and contract with the prices, after they request the Account and Price Setup team to put this data into the company ERP system. Finally, the Customer Service Team validates whether all settings are correct and initiate further customer education. People in the roles for Account Setup ensure all customer and pricing data are used correctly for Ordering, Billing, Delivery, Invoicing, Collection, and Cash Application. Systems used in OTC process are presented below:

- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a global internet-based application used to store customer and pricing information, and to supplement SAP/ERP system functionality.
- Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP/ SAP) is a generic information technology term for backbone transactional systems.
- Advanced Customer Experience (ACE) is an ordering system used by CXP and customers. Customers can see the status of invoices and creation of Service requests.

- Accounts Setup is the first important step in the OTC process and competence of each professional involved in this process is essential in the creation of favorable customer experience for the new clients. Functional Allocation Diagram of Account Setup is presented below.

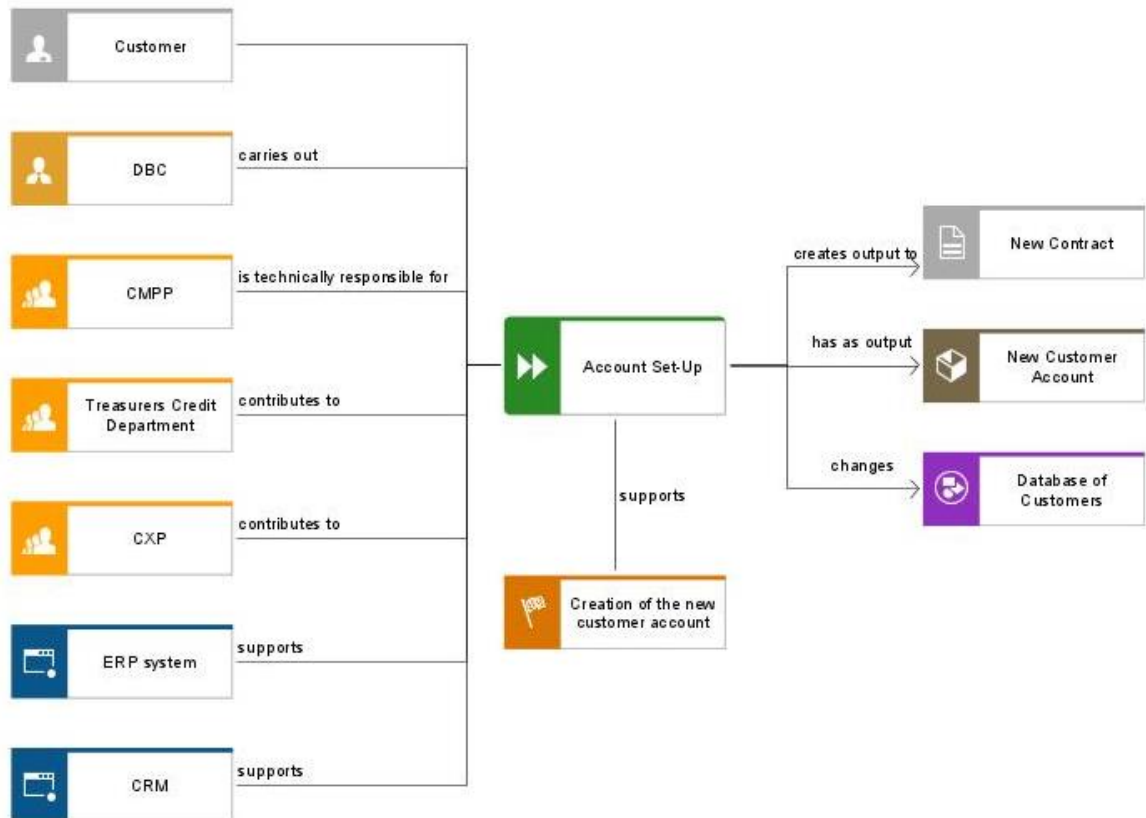


Figure 14 Account Set-Up Function (Own data, 2021)

Account Setup responsibilities start with DBC having a personal contact with customers and collecting customer data. After that, the Sales support team sets up a new account in CRM for Treasurers Credit to make credit risk assessment of the client to identify their risk group, categorize customer type and set a credit limit. Finally, Customer data is given to CMPP for the purpose of setting up a new account in the company ERP system- which is SAP in our case. As an Account Setup is the beginning of CS functions within OTC, any errors follow through and affect all subsequent processes.

4.2 OTC: Commit Order Function

Commit Order - is the most sophisticated and the core function within OTC where several departments are involved in order to successfully satisfy customer needs. The major customer contact figure in this process is CXP (Customer Experience Professional) whose

role is entering customer orders efficiently and accurately; responsibility for the order from creation to billing; and resolving issues on order controls report. CXP interfaces with many positions: CMPP - to help with new account setup; AR - to resolve customer invoice disputes; Billing- to assist end of the month billing maintenance; Sales Support - to update customer accounts; Supply and Distribution - to ensure order fulfillment. Moreover, CXP handles several types of orders: Sales Order, Return Order and Back Orders. The Commit Order process starts with a customer placing the order in the ACE system and CXP recognizing the order and communicating the need to the Warehouse, where goods are prepared for shipment. There are different loading processes depending on the warehouses. As we mentioned there are 3 key warehouses: Finland, Netherlands, and Turkey. General graphical representation of Commit Order can be found below:

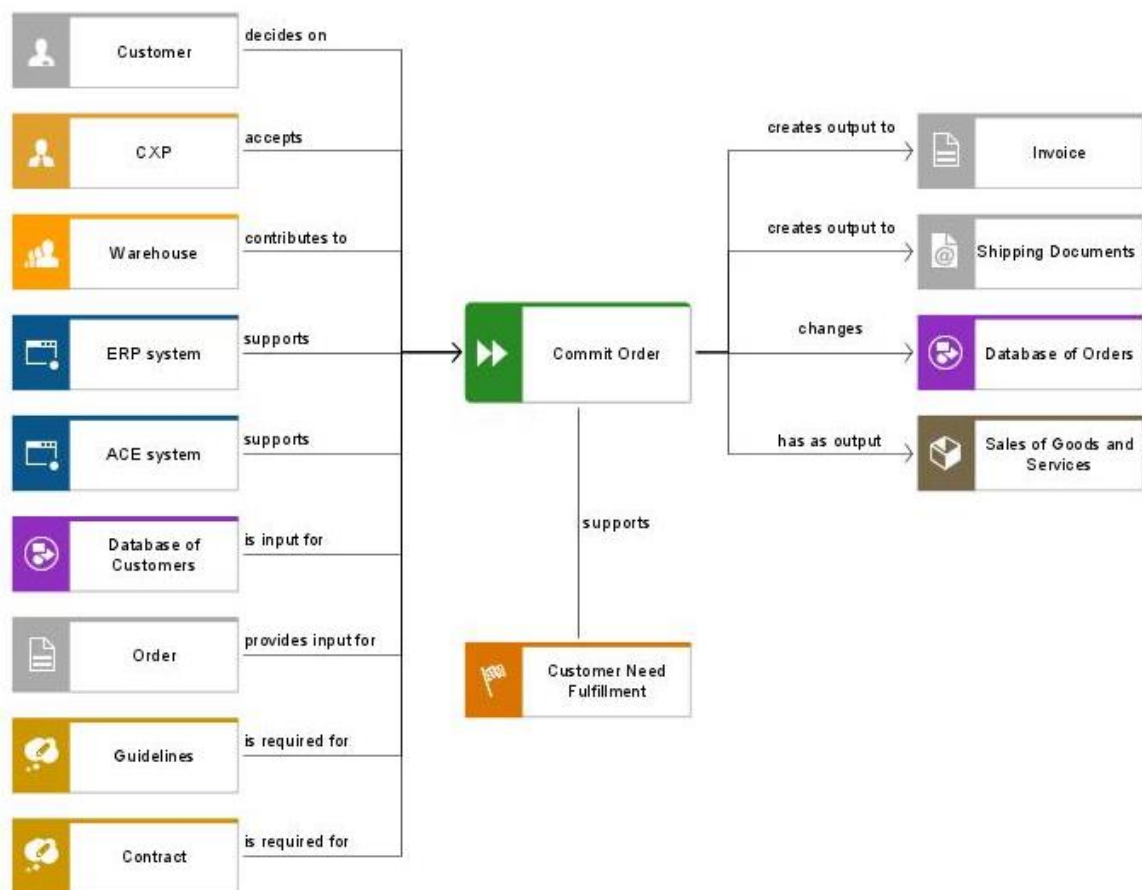


Figure 15 Commit Order Function (Own data, 2021)

Loading from the Netherlands and Turkey have the same logic: customer places a new order via ACE, CXP approves the order in the SAP and asks the warehouse to validate when the requested products from the order will be available on stock to arrange the possible loading dates. After confirming the loading date with both parties - warehouse and customer, CXP

prepares Commercial Invoice with the product names, quantities, prices, and total gross weight. Commercial Invoice to be sent to the customer for verification and to the warehouse for preparation of shipping documentation. When the correctness of the Commercial Invoice is confirmed, the customer arranges the truck and on the loading day all the shipping documentation is given to the truck driver by the warehouse, and scans are sent to the customer by CXP.

Loadings from the Finnish warehouse are performed in a more complex way because all of the D-group customers load from here and they don't have an opportunity to wait till the products from the orders become available on stock. These customers place their orders at least 6 days prior to the desired loading date and reserve their trucks in advance. Moreover, they have a minimum gross weight requirement for their orders - around 21 tons. 3 days after the order is recognized by CXP, available items from the order are reserved for the clients and the warehouse prepares a report identifying the current status of the order. If the order is underweight (less than 21 tons), CXP and the customer have 3 days to finalize the order by adding other items which are available in stock. This subprocess of the Commit Order function is called "Picking". When the order is finalized within 6 days prior to loading Finnish Warehouse prepares a Commercial Invoice and CXP asks their clients to verify the correctness of the document, when the document is confirmed the warehouse starts preparing the goods to be loaded on the next day. On the loading day, the Export Dispatching Team provides shipping documents and CXP sends the scans to the client.

4.3 OTC: Billing, AR and Cash Application

The final steps performed by Customer Service in the scope of OTC process are Billing, AR management, and Cash Application. After the loading has been done, the company bills the customer for ordered products, billing includes monitoring all inbound and outbound payments. **Billing** specialists are responsible for processing sales adjustments, monitoring reports, billing blocks, cancelling and rebilling invoices to correct issues, as well as managing invoice dispute resolutions. This professional commonly interacts with **AR** to resolve inaccurate and untimely invoice problems. AR specialist generates a record to enable customers to pay the invoice and makes sure that there are no overdues on the customer account. After the fact of receiving the goods, the customer sends payment according to invoices and the AR specialist is responsible for correct allocation of the received payments and controlling debts on the account. Moreover, it's their responsibility to handle all

customer inquiries, complaints and requests connected with invoice discrepancies, account statements and re-sending of invoices.

The final Customer Service function - **Cash Application**, implies that all the manual payments and customer remittances are properly entered in the company general ledger. Usually all payments are automatically applied to the customer's account, otherwise an AR specialist manually applies them. Managing Doubtful Accounts and Bad Debt are the process which may occur after finalization of the mentioned process and they are managed by the Credit specialists and Treasurers department of the company.

5 EVALUATION OF CURRENT PROCESSES IN CS TEAM

After the detailed description of the OTC process, it is necessary to assess actual state of the current Customer Service Team who serves B2B clients in the CIS countries of the Selected Company. Currently, the team consists of 1 Supervisor, 5 CXPs, 1 AR specialist and 1 Billing Specialist. Each CXP has their own dedicated clients from both - Distributor Companies (future referred to as **D group**) and Strategic Global Alliances (future referred as **S group**). On average each CXP should be responsible for handling 7-8 customers, but currently there is a lack of staff and CXPs are accountable for 13-14 clients each. The list of customers under every CXP is called “Customer Portfolio of CXP”, and their portfolio consists of customers from different geographical regions, with their specifics. As the most of the CIS countries are bilingual and speaks Russian, communication language with customers is Russian, but there are exceptions with the customers from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Armenia, who prefer English over Russian. It can be concluded that CXPs are perfectly able to communicate in Russian and English languages. Inside the organization, the official communication language between employees is English.

To understand the specifics of different clients, as an example, let’s compare customer portfolios of 2 CXPs -Illen and Ashot. The reasoning behind choosing these 2 CXP is that they have the most diversified customer profiles, while other CXP clients load only from Finland. The comparison of these 2 profiles illustrates the complexity of the processes depending on the warehouse which perform the loading.

Table 2 Comparison of 2 CXPs (Own data, 2021)

	Illen’s customer portfolio	Ashot’s customer portfolio
Distributors	<p>Siberia:</p> <p>1) SSS: 3 loadings/ week from Finland</p> <p>2) CCC: 5 loading/ week from Finland</p> <p>Central:</p> <p>3) OOO:12 loadings/ week from Finland</p> <p>Northwestern:</p> <p>4) NNN: 8 loadings/ week from Finland</p> <p>Russian Far East:</p> <p>5) II: 6 loadings/ month from Finland and Korea</p>	<p>Siberia:</p> <p>1) CC: 1 loading/ week from Finland</p> <p>Central:</p> <p>2) AAA:12 loadings/ week from Finland</p> <p>Ural:</p> <p>3) AA: 8 loadings/ week from Finland</p> <p>4) FF: 2 loadings/ week from Finland</p> <p>5) MM: 6 loadings/ week from Finland</p> <p>6) EE: 3 loadings/ week from Finland</p>

	6) TT: 1 loadings/ week from Finland 7) DD: 1 loadings/ week from Finland 8) OO: 1 loadings/ week from Finland	
S - customers	Russia: 1) TYTM: loading from Russia 2) TYTS: loading from Russia	Central Asia: 1) Turkmenistan: loading from Turkey 2) Tajikistan: loading from Turkey 3) Uzbekistan: loading from Finland and Turkey Europe: 1) Armenia: loading from Netherlands 2) Belarus: 4 loadings/ month from Finland 3) Ukraine: 4 loadings/ week from Finland

As we can see from the table above every CXP has different amounts of customers from the various geographical locations. According to the table, all D-customers of the both CXP are located in the different parts of Russia: Ilen has most of her clients from the Russian Far-East (4 clients) and Siberia (2 clients), while Ashot has most of his clients from the Ural region (4 clients). In the table we can see the loading frequency of the d-customers which indicates their size. In both portfolios, customers from Central Russia have a frequency of 12 loadings per week- which makes them one of the biggest clients. Moreover, we can conclude that 2 CXP can be accountable for the competing distributors of the selected company products in Central Russia. On the second place there is 1 distributor from Northwestern Russia with 8 loading per week and the biggest distributor from the Ural region with the same loading frequency.

5.1 D-Customers Loadings

According to the table almost all loadings for D-customers take place from the Finnish warehouse, meaning that CXPs apply similar policies and follow the same processes to support those clients. However, Ilen has 1 big client from Russian Far-East who picks up orders from 2 different warehouses: in Finland and Korea. Their orders which are loaded from Korea take place according to different policies and Ilen follows different processes to support this client.



Figure 16 Russian loadings for Illen and Ashot's customer portfolio (Own data, 2021)

The main difference of the distributors loading from Finland and Korea is the process of order creation and order modification prior to loading day and process ownerships between Customer Service and Warehouse. In the case of orders loaded from Finland customers have a general policy of order creator at least 6 business days before loading and opportunity to add and remove products from the order prior to loading date. Warehouse supports customer service during the order modification processes and creates shipping documentation for the customers. CS and Warehouse have access to shared tools for loading schedule monitoring and editing (DSMS) - adding new loadings, checking the available loading slots, etc. For the loading from Korea, customers should create an order with the necessary product list and can't make further adjustments in the order content. Moreover, the customer will receive the loading confirmation when the warehouse will have all products from the order on stock and there are loading slots available. CXP is responsible for the creation of Invoice and Warehouse is in charge of providing export documentations. Ashot and Illen share the same responsibilities and processes in providing services for distributors who load from the Finnish warehouse, but Illen has 1 d-customer loading from Korea which makes her portfolio more sophisticated. Talking about the technical support systems for distributors, all of them use the ACE system to create their orders and CXPs finalize them through the company ERP - SAP together with the Warehouse team. Customers have the possibility to monitor their

loading history, invoices, catalogues and prices through the ACE system. Generally, all departments involved in the OTC process can validate the data connected with the D-customers' orders through the ERP system. Customer service team use Zendesk and Amazon Connect as a communication tool.

5.2 SGA Customers Loadings

Now, let's describe the S-customer portfolios of these 2 CXPs: as it was mentioned earlier there are 2 types of customers, and Strategic Global Alliances are considered as the direct clients of the company under the name of famous auto and construction brand names. The main characteristics of S-customers is that they are located at the different regions but operate under the same brand name. In the table we can see that Ilgen has 2 Russian S-customers of the famous automotive manufacturer, whereas Ashot has 7 S-customers from countries other than Russia, but all of them are the part of 1 construction machinery and equipment company.

Table 3 Comparison of 2 CXPs (Own data, 2021)

Strategic Global Alliances (S - customers)	
Ilgen's portfolio	Ashot's Portfolio
<p>Central Russia:</p> <p>I. TYTM: loading from Russian warehouse</p> <p>Northwestern Russia:</p> <p>II. TYTS: loading from Russian warehouse</p>	<p>Central Asia:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Turkmenistan: loading from Turkey 2) Tajikistan: loading from Turkey 3) Uzbekistan: loading from Finland and Turkey <p>Europe:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Armenia: loading from Netherlands 5) Belarus: 4 loadings/ month from Finland 6) Ukraine: 4 loadings/ week from Finland

Both S-customers from Ilgen's portfolio load their orders from the Russian warehouse and the OTC process for them is other than it was described earlier. In this scenario CXPs play a central role acting as an Account Setup Specialist, Price Set Up Specialist, AR- specialist, Billing Specialist together with supporting other customer related issues. Customers provide the list of products they need to CXP through ZenDesk, after that CXP creates an order in SUN system, calculates the prices of the products in RUB (using the correct currency rate) and send order content to the Russian Warehouse with fax and warehouse confirms the earliest possible loading day for pickup. In the SUN system CXPs are empowered to create and modify customer accounts, easily manage customer product lists and prices. Compared

to usual activity plans described in relation to D-customers, here there is no involvement of other company departments are needed- only 2 teams are performing all OTC functions: Customer Service team and Russian Logistics team. Now let's concentrate on Ashot's SGA customer portfolio which consists of 6 customers from different countries but under the 1 brand name. Those clients are picking up their orders from 3 warehouses depending on their geographical location. 3 Central Asian clients prefer to get their products from the Turkish warehouse as it's geographically closer to them, but Uzbekistan also loads from Finland as there are some kinds of greases which are blended in the Finnish factory. Unlike other customers, Armenian is loading from the Netherlands in a sea container and Ukraine and Belarus clients follow the standard loading process from the Finnish warehouse. We will not describe the cases of Finnish loading procedures as they are identical as for distributors, so for supporting Ukraine and Belarus Ashot performs the same activities as mentioned earlier. For the Central Asian customers loading from Turkey, customers don't have an opportunity to create the order in the ACE system and usually they request CXP to create the order in SAP manually, after the order is created CXP asks the warehouse about the possible loading date. Turkish warehouse will check the product availability forecast and inform CXP about the possible loading date when all products will be in stock, and CXP will communicate this info to the client. Prior to the loading date when all products are in stock - CXP creates an invoice and sends it to the customer for verification. When the customer confirms the correctness of the invoice, it is sent to the warehouse for the preparation of other export documentation with the hauler info. On the loading day the warehouse sends shipping documents and Certificates of Origin to the CXP for further validation of the customer.

5.3 Challenges in the CS Loading Processes

As we can see each CXP can perform different kinds of activities to deliver the best customer experience to the company clients, depending on their business needs, structure and geographical location. The company is very concerned about the whole customer experience and tries to introduce the new solutions for improving existing OTC. In the past few years the company decided to apply FCR - First Contact Resolution tactic in the face of CXP, who may be able to address all possible customer inquiries in the shortest period of time. As a result, the customer service team became a central point, which connects all company departments to support their clients. After the application of this new approach, the CS team is facing many cases when they have to perform additional workload, even though they are not authorized to solve those kinds of issues. It was revealed during the Employee

Satisfaction Survey presented to the CS team. The table below represents the most popular customer inquiries and Process Experts (PE), whose support is required by CXPs for the fast resolution of the case.

Table 4 Customer Inquiries for CXPs (Own data, 2021)

Category	Description	Responsible Department
Product Availability	B2B clients have an agreement with their B2C clients to supply special materials within the agreed timeframe and they ask CXP to provide stock availability dates	Deployment Team
Contracts, Additional agreements (ADs)	Customers have limited contracts for a certain product list on a specified price and sometimes they have inquiries regarding the contract renewal status. Also, some of them are offered ADs which give discounts on specific products from their catalog for the limited time.	Sales, Contracting, Pricing
Order Modification	All the customers have a possibility to make changes in their orders within 24 hours after placing it in the ACE system, but after that they need CXP to make modifications in SAP if needed. But 3 days prior to the pick-up, only CXP with the Warehouse Dispatching team can modify the order	Warehouse
Change of the LD	Sometimes haulers need to pick up the orders earlier or later than the initially requested loading date, and in this case CXP doesn't have an authority to make decision - as it can be only approved by the warehouse.	Warehouse
Material	As the company operates in several	Sales

Code	<p>locations- loadings from the 1 warehouse could go to different countries. Thus, it is necessary to have the correct labels on the products to comply with the local regulations. For example, material “Super X Grease” can be available for the ordering for Russian market, European market, and etc. But for every market it should have special markings and marketing information in the selected languages for the customs purposes. To manage this, the company has developed a solution in the form of different product codes under 1 name, 111222- available for RU market and 155222- available for EU market. Recently, due to the shift in product demand due to the Covid case, the company decided to relabel the 155222 for the RU market and this code became open for a market, but 111222 was fully depleted and closed.</p> <p>This new approach has increased the workload for the CS team as they get inquiries from the customer about the product code availabilities, and request to add new codes to the product catalog and contract. This complex process requires the support of Product Master Specialists, Sales, Contracting, Account Setup Team and Price Setup Team</p>	<p>Contracting Pricing Account Setup Material Master</p>
Picking	<p>Every day, CXPs start their working day with the order modification process- called “picking”. This activity is applicable to the</p>	<p>Warehouse</p>

	<p>loadings which take place from the Finnish warehouse. Sometimes, not all materials from the order became available on stock in 6 working days and the weight of the order appears to be significantly smaller than it's required. For this reason, the last 3 days customer needs to make replacement of the missing items to fill their trucks. As soon as the CXP is informed about the additions- CXP adds it in SAP to the order and asks the warehouse team to reserve that item right away to the client.</p>	
Price Issues	<p>Each customer catalog is changing regularly and sometimes during the addition of the new product to the price list- employees make mistakes and customers contact their CXP asking for a help – making the price visible in ACE, correcting the price according to contract, adding the price (sometimes products may have a price of 0 RUB!).</p>	<p>Price Setup Pricing Sales</p>
Service Requests/ Claims	<p>Customer Service Team's KPI is evaluated by the days spent on the service request resolution. There are several types of claims – claims connected with damaged goods, price discrepancy in the invoices, missing items, etc. The main task for CXP in this case is to find the responsible department- translate the information in the claim into English and communicate it. CXP should monitor the status of the request, send reminders and keep the client posted. Claim</p>	<p>Plants Warehouses Price Setup Sales Invoicing</p>

	tickets will be assigned to the dedicated CXP and will affect their KPI- sometimes it is very difficult for CXPs to get comments from the other teams to close the case on time and compensate the costs to the client. This process hugely effects on the customer satisfaction rates.	
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As we can see from the table there are number of different inquiries from the clients, which requires the support from other departments. Even though CXPs are considered as FCR (First Contact Resolution) points, in real, there are many operations and communication going on at the back office. To better evaluate the customer and employee satisfaction with the existing processes for solving customer inquiries – survey results will be analyzed in the next part.

6 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH THE CURRENT PROCESSES

For this research purposes B2B customers from the CIS market of the Selected Company were asked to answer several questions to determine their satisfaction level with the existing processes connected with the order loading process. Survey consist of 6 Likert - scale questions to evaluate satisfaction levels, 4 open question to get some suggestions and recommendations, 1 question to understand customer education level and 3 question to identify the pain points during the OTC. 10 customers agreed to participate in this survey, and majority of them (6 clients) have been company customers for more than 10 years. There were 3 respondents working with the Selected Company for 5-10 years, and the 1 youngest client with a 2-5 years long cooperation.

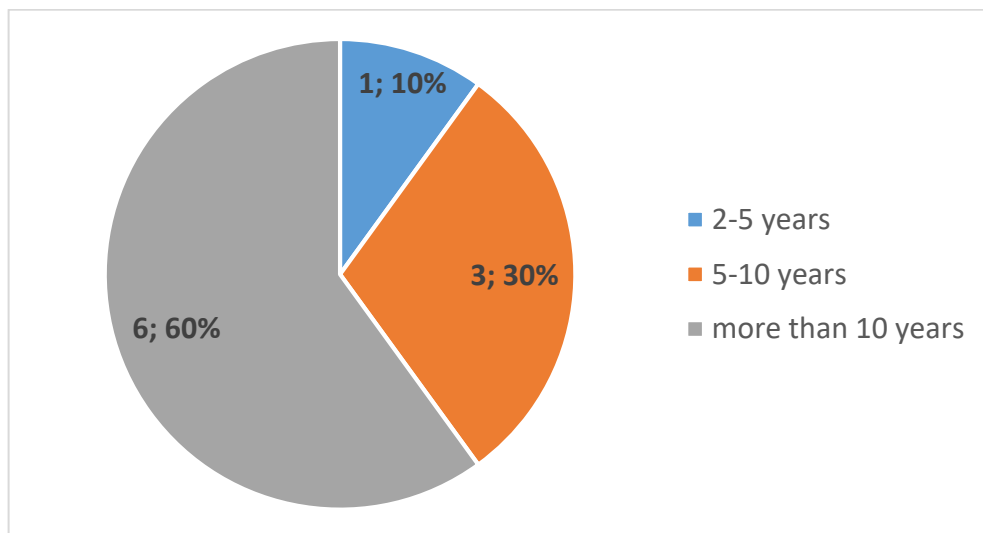


Figure 17 How long have you been working with our company? (Own data, 2021)

To understand a customer satisfaction rates and to find out problematic aspects of the business management, participants were asked 3 questions:

- How satisfied are you with the quality of our products? from 1 to 10
- How satisfied are you with the quality of our services? from 1 to 10
- How satisfied are you with the existing loading processes? from 1 to 10

Results showed that customer's satisfaction rate with the quality of the offered products is 9,7 out of 10, while the satisfaction rate with the service quality is 8,2 out of 10. Such figures are suggesting that customers are more satisfied with the company products and services rather than unsatisfied. Visual representation shown below:

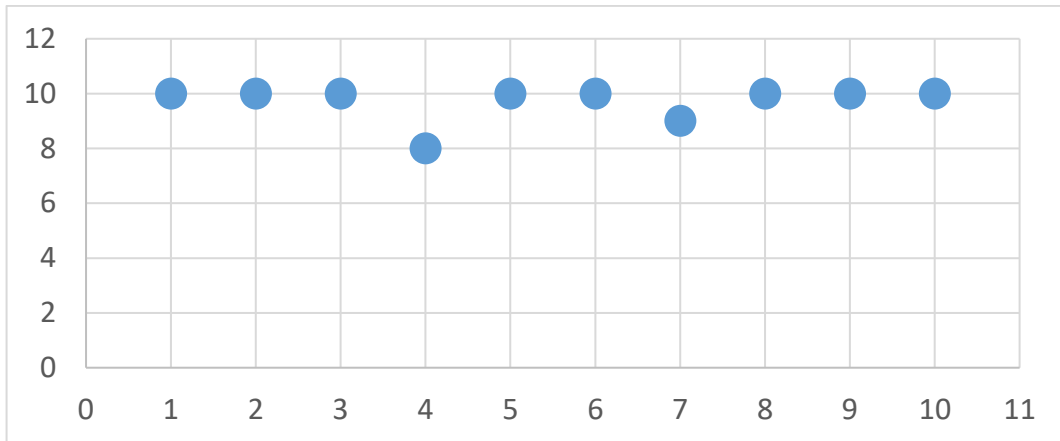


Figure 18 Satisfaction with quality of products (Own data, 2021)

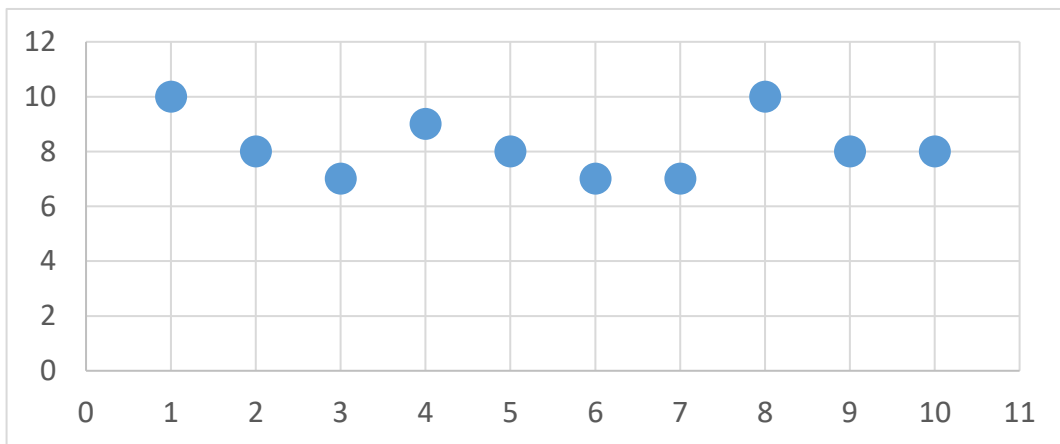


Figure 19 Satisfaction with quality of services (Own data, 2021)

However, respondents rated their satisfaction level with the existing loading processes at 6,5 points out of 10, proving that there is an opportunity for improvement. Based on this results, further survey questions will be helpful in identifying which loading processes and which teams create an unpleasant.

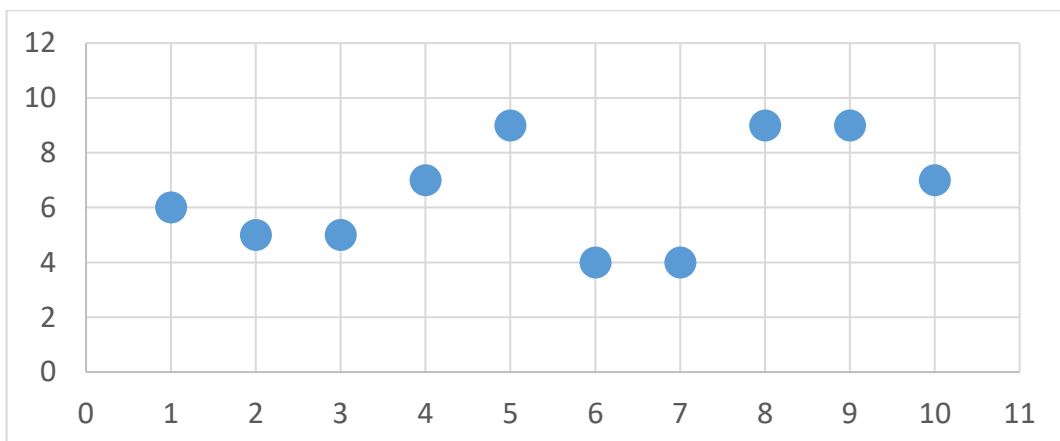


Figure 20 Satisfaction with existing loading processes (Own data, 2021)

For the question “In your opinion, which department in our company plays the most important role for you?” – all the respondents (10) chose Customer Service. Moreover, Logistics (4), Sales (3) and Pricing Teams (3) were also indicated as the critical departments.

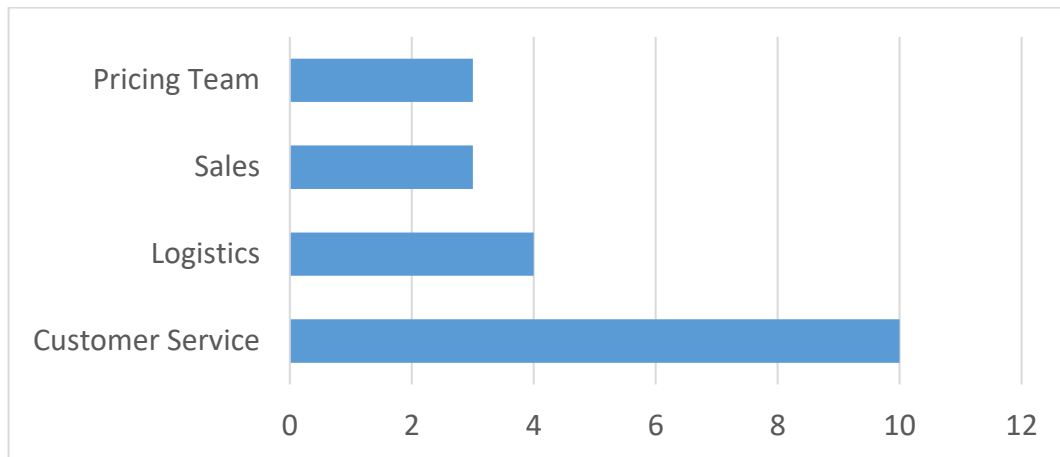


Figure 21 The most important department for customers (Own data, 2021)

Respondents pointed out that they have faced difficulties in getting information from these departments: Pricing Team -60%; Sales -30%; Logistics – 20% and Other -10%.

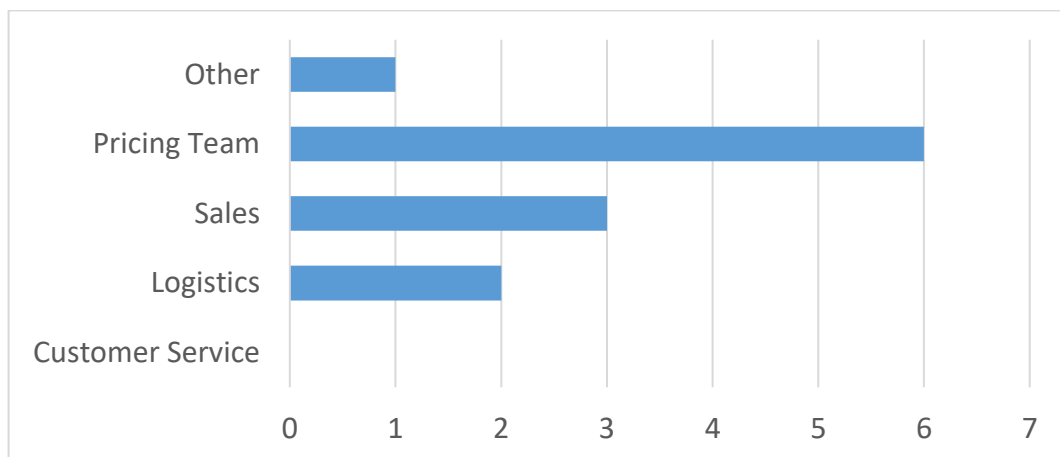


Figure 22 The most difficult to reach out (Own data, 2021)

In order to better understand the customer experience with each unit- respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction level with each team and to make comments on “what processes require improvement in the work of Sales, Logistics and Customer Service”. Only these 3 departments were chosen because the Customer Service Team interacts with them daily, and the management of the teams is fully committed to improving existing processes for more productive work. Moreover, the company has decided to outsource the Pricing Team to a different vendor- as there was much negative feedback on the team’s performance. According to participants, they are least satisfied with how the Sales team do their job – at

the 6.9 scores out of 10; in the middle Logistics team was rated at 8.2 out of 10, and customers are mostly satisfied with the performance of the Customer Service Team at the 9.6 points out of 10. Survey respondents pointed out that most sales processes are lack efficiency, accuracy, and promptness. Many of the customers faced inconvenience due to the delays in providing agreements and ability of the Sales to make a fast decision and helping in resolving urgent issues. Moreover, customers stressed the importance of the timely delivery of information regarding the changes in their contract and mentioned that the team should avoid making continuous mistakes connected to product prices and correct material codes in the system. In a short, Sales department needs to be more accurate, efficient and fast to increase the customer satisfaction with their performance. Logistics Team received comments requesting more flexible loading schedule and the ability of the direct communication channels with them. Also, one customer suggested the need for an open database where all the loading documents could be found: certificates of analysis; test protocols and declarations of conformity. Even though customer service team received the highest score from the customers, it also received the most of the comments and suggestions for the improvement of the processes. Many respondents made clear that they want a faster way of communication with the team: messengers, bots or making calls on a mobile phone. They pointed out the biggest problems they face in general: shortage of products; tracking the changes in product codes; monitoring status of the claims and managing backorders (missing products from the orders, which became available after the loading). Customers proposed to receive some material production calendars from the deployment team, making the claim statuses transparent and to have strict deadlines for a claims' resolution. Moreover, they recommended having an open source where they can track the changing product codes and prices. Additionally, one respondent asked for an assistant in creating a service request via ACE system, which brings a suspicion that the customers are not educated to work with the company systems by themselves. To check the customer knowledge about the responsibilities of CS team, respondents needed to select the functions of CS in the order loading process. Only the 5 functions out of 14 were correct: Only 30% of the respondents selected all 5 functions correctly- Timely placement of orders in the shipping schedule; Making changes to the order 3 days before shipment; Acceptance and processing of claims; Help in communication with other departments within the company; Answering calls in the Amazon system. 90% and 80% of respondents were correct by selecting the top 4 functions of the team.

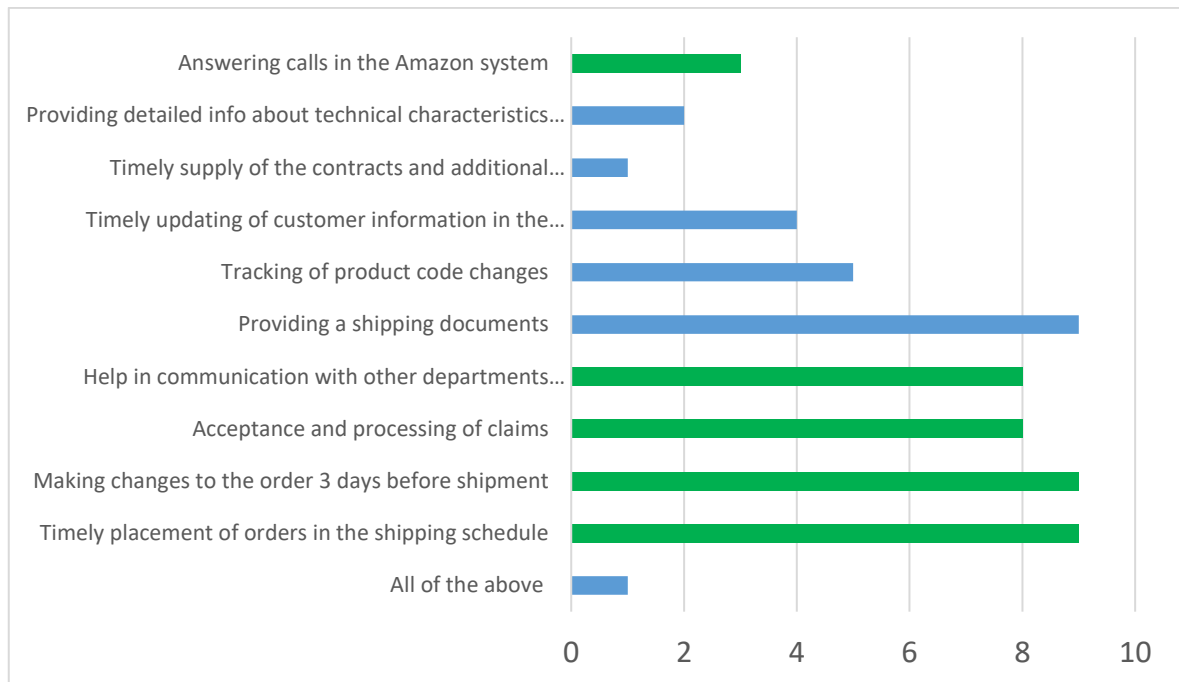


Figure 23 CS functions according to the customers (Own data, 2021)

However, 90% of participants were incorrect thinking that CS is responsible for creation of the shipping documents on the loading date- this function is the responsibility of the warehouse. Also 50% thought that CS is responsible for the tracking of product code changes – this data is available online; 40% were incorrect thinking that the CS team has a capability of timely updating of customer information in the company's systems –that is the responsibility of the Sales Team. Additionally, 20% thinks that CS can provide detailed info about technical characteristics of the products- while Technical Support Desk is responsible for that. The one respondent think that CS Team is responsible for everything, including the timely supply of the contracts and additional agreement- those are the Sales functions as well. Thereafter customers were given the list of 5 functions performed by CS team and they were asked to choose the most problematic one which needs some improvements. Their votes presented below:

- Timely placing orders in the shipping schedule- 10%
- Answering calls in the Amazon system- 30%
- Acceptance and processing of claims – 40%
- Making changes to the order 3 days before shipment – 30%
- Help in communication with other departments within the company – 60%

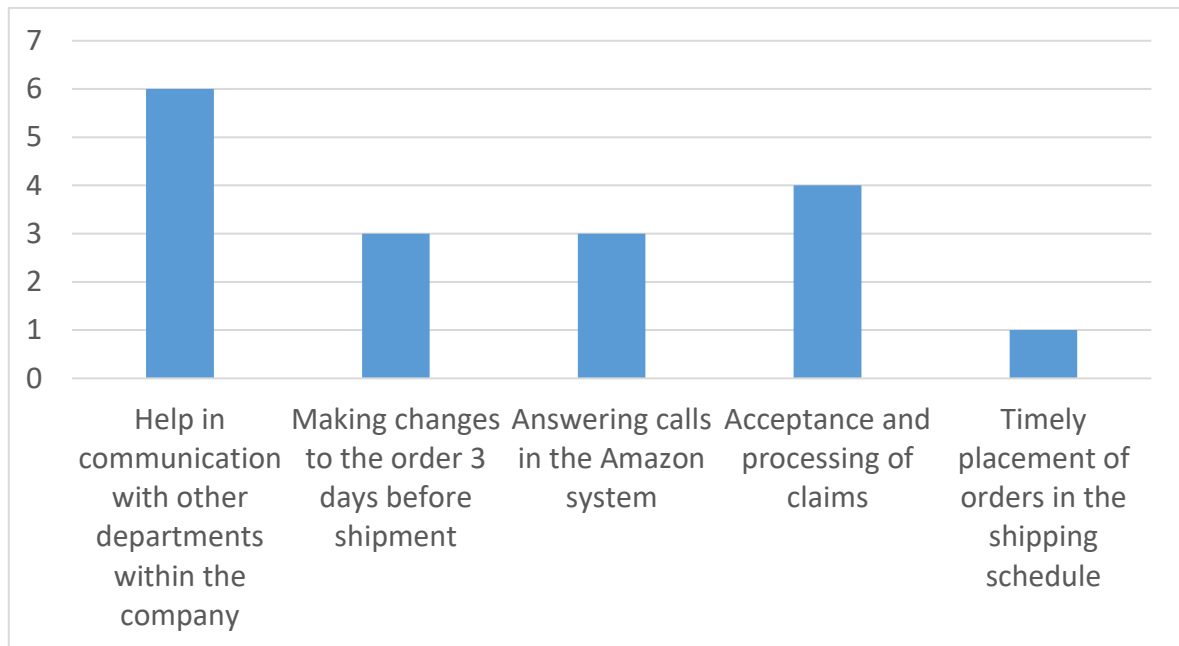


Figure 24 CS functions that need improvements (Own data, 2021)

At the end of the survey, participants were able to make suggestions or ideas for improving the work of the CS department in particular. It is important to mention that 90% of respondents were from Russia and one client participated from Armenia. Here are some of them:

“Everything suits me”; *“I don't understand most of the systems”*; *“Some improvements needed as regards the acceptance and processing of claims - increasing the efficiency of providing feedback on the progress of the consideration of the claim”*; *“no suggestions”*; *“Authorizing the CS department to resolve issues on prices, contracts without involving other departments”*; *“please provide the opportunity for a faster communication”*; *“Automatic newsletter of new declarations of conformity”*; *“Display in more detail the status of claims / requests in progress and the approximate time frame for a solution”*; *“It is necessary to be able to transfer a product from one order to another without involving warehouse”*.

As we can see from the customer responses, they want more transparency on the management of claims and service requests. Secondly, they want faster communication with the team. It also mentioned in their previous comments where they suggested application of messengers, mobile phones and chat bots. Thirdly, they want some automation of the company systems to provide updated information on time: declarations, test protocols and certificates of analysis. The most importantly, many of the customers suffer from the no timely delivery of important information and updates on their profiles by other teams, and

they want CS team more authorized to resolve their issues. This arises from the fact, that customer communicate with CS team on a daily basis and has less difficulty in reaching them comparing to Sales Team. At the end of the survey 90% of participants agreed that the company should conduct surveys to improve the quality of the services it offers.

7 EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION WITH THE CURRENT PROCESSES

For the purpose of employee satisfaction evaluation with the existing loading functions managed by CS team, team members answered 11 closed and 2 open questions anonymously. Firstly, they have rated their satisfaction level regarding their current position in the company, current workload, existing OTC process and current communication process among company departments on a scale of 1 to 10. As we can see from the table below, employees are very unsatisfied with the current workload with the weighted average point of 4.4 out of 10. Secondly, they are quite unsatisfied with their current position in the company (5.8 scores) and communication status with the other departments (5.8). This is a valid point because customers also have mentioned about difficulties reaching other departments for a faster resolution of the different cases. CS team members have rated the current OTC processes at 6.4 out of 10, which is also a quite low indicator.

Table 5 Employee satisfaction rates (Own data, 2021)

On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with your current position in the company?	On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with your current workload?	On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with the existing Order-to-Cash process for your team?	On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with the current communication status among company departments?
7	5	7	8
8	8	8	5
6	3	8	6
2	2	2	3
6	4	7	7
5,8	4,4	6,4	5,8

Employees then chose the departments which they found the most difficult to reach out, or to communicate. The 80% selected Account Setup and Prices Setup, which is reasonable because customers also find the performance of those teams very weak and inefficient. 40% of the employees are not satisfied with the Logistics team communication and 10% find it difficult to contact Sales. That is quite surprising because customers as well find it quite difficult to reach out Sales Team for the resolution of their problems. Employees in general agrees that the most of the company processes need further enhancements and automation: 60%-strongly agrees; 20%- agrees and 20%- is neutral.

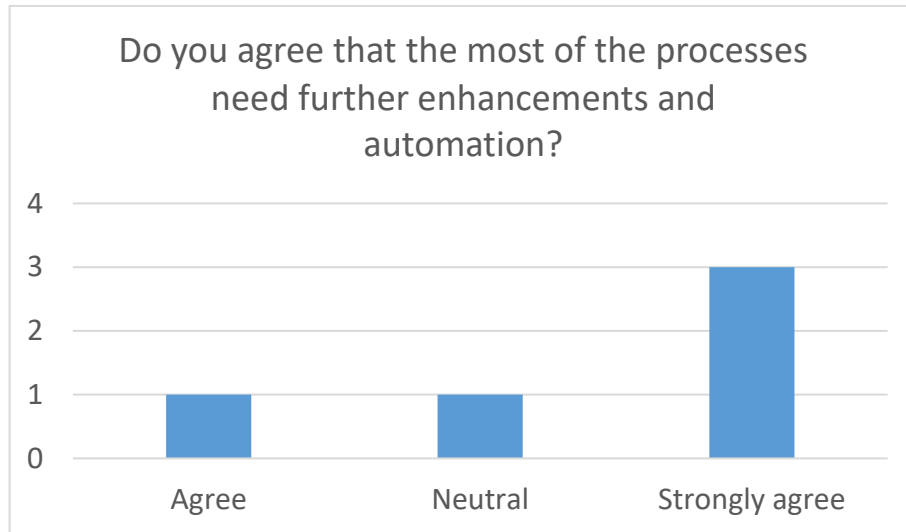


Figure 25 CS team opinion on the process improvement (Own data, 2021)

As the majority of employees recognize a need to enhance existing procedures and systems, it is necessary to find out what kind of operations have a negative effect on the teams' productivity and efficiency. For this purpose, the following questions are aimed to reveal the most problematic aspects of the daily CS functions, mainly the effect of other teams' performance on the productivity and KPI of CS team.

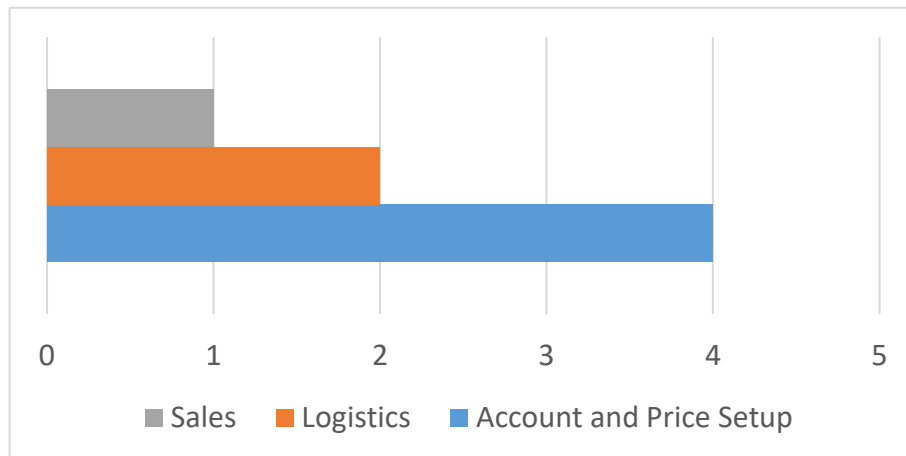


Figure 26 Departments with difficulties in communication (Own data, 2021)

All of the employees 100% think that the Account and Price Setup departments mostly need process improvements; followed by CS department itself- 40% and Logistics -20% as well. It is very unusual that CS employees doesn't mention problems in the Sales processes, but it may be due to the fact that Sales have problems updating the system information due to the delays in communicating Account and Price Setup Departments.

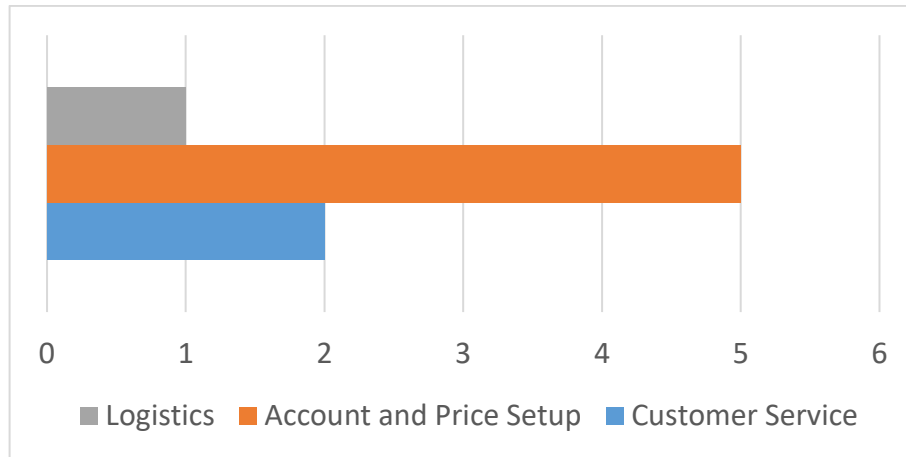


Figure 27 Departments that need process improvements (Own data, 2021)

As the previous survey results showed that most of the customers are not aware of the real functions of CS, this survey evaluated the employee knowledge of CS functional responsibilities. Survey results revealed that some of CS employees tend to overestimate their job responsibilities, and they are taking a charge for some tasks intended to other departments. A figure below shows that two of the surveyed employees consider four extra function as the responsibility of their team.

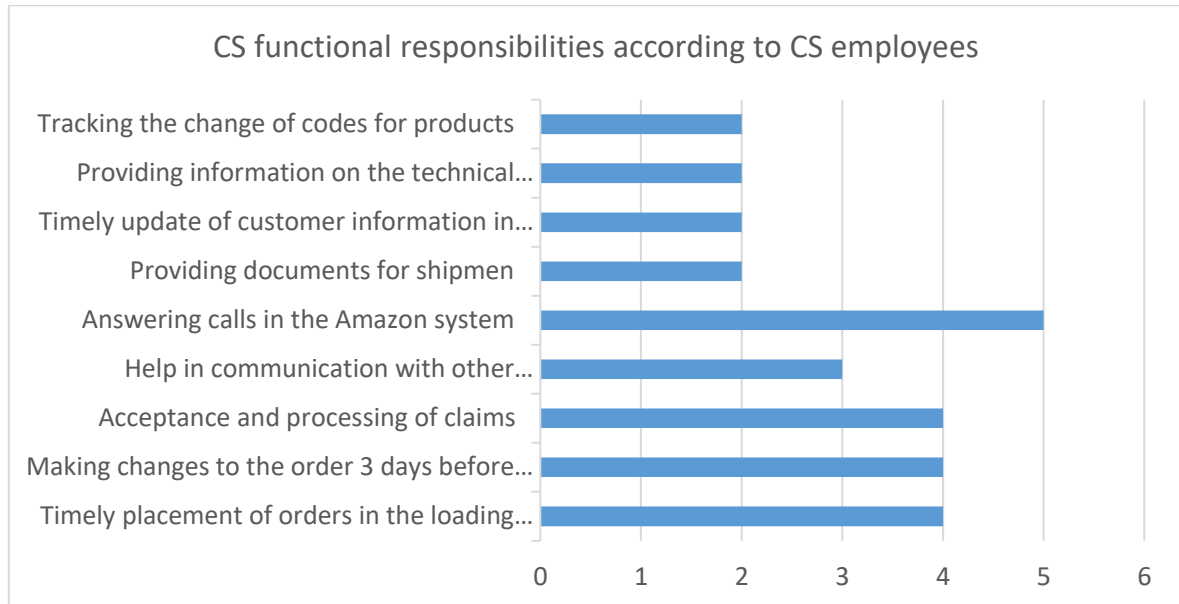


Figure 28 CS employees understanding of CS functions (Own data, 2021)

Additionally, 60% of the team knows that customers do not know the exact responsibilities of the Customer Service Department, and 40% suspects that customers are not aware of CS responsibilities. The fact that customers and some of the team members are overestimating the capabilities of CS employees causes a confusion and increases the workload for the whole team.

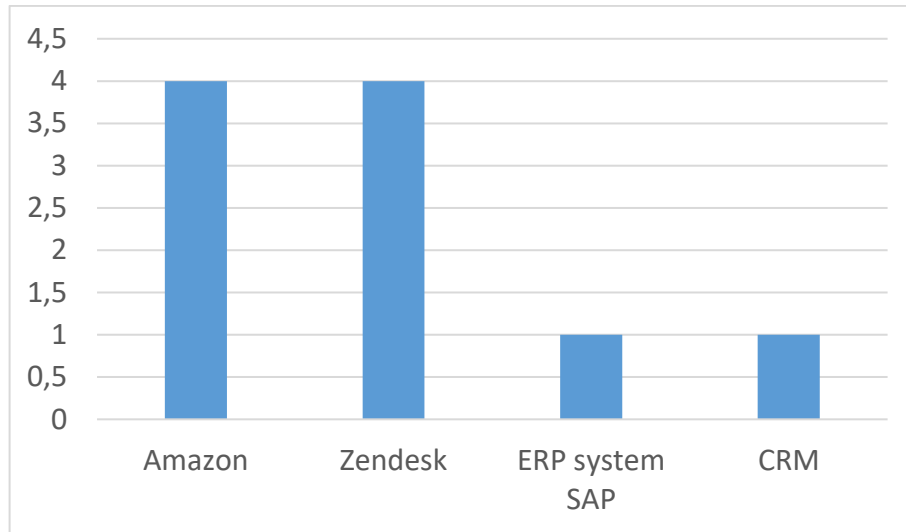


Figure 29 Company system which fails the CS team (Own data, 2021)

Additionally, employees pointed out the company systems which create difficulty in their every day work. 80% find Amazon and Zendesk communication system tools not effective and causing troubles in the daily work activities. This adds up to the customers' low satisfaction level with the current method of communication as well. In this term we can conclude that the both parties agree that the management should find a new, more effective ways to communicate with distributors. In the comment section employees have described the processes that need improvements: "Order modification processes and management of and customer accounts and pricing. There are many problems we are facing due to the incorrect information in the company systems, and it involves many departments to find the solution"; "Correct prices"; "More transparency, quicker response time"; "Price change, quotas control"; "Sales". These comments show that the core for the most problems in OTC process connected with the errors made by Price and Account Setup Departments. Moreover, it seems like CS teams also have difficulties reaching colleagues in other departments to provide help for the company clients.

At the end of the survey, employees' ideas for the improvement of the current order-related processes were requested. Most of the respondents mentioned the need to educate customers about their opportunities with the correct application of tools. Also it was suggested to clarify the segregation of duties between CS and Sales to allocate fair workload between these departments. Similar to that, one of the employee mentioned the need in clearer description of work responsibilities to customers, as well as more detailed instructions inside departments. Employees want to have special team who will be responsible for a monitoring and quick corrections of customer data and pricing data in the system and team who will

monitor product code changes and sent up-to-date info to the customers directly. Finally, order fulfillment processes need further improvements in terms of automation.

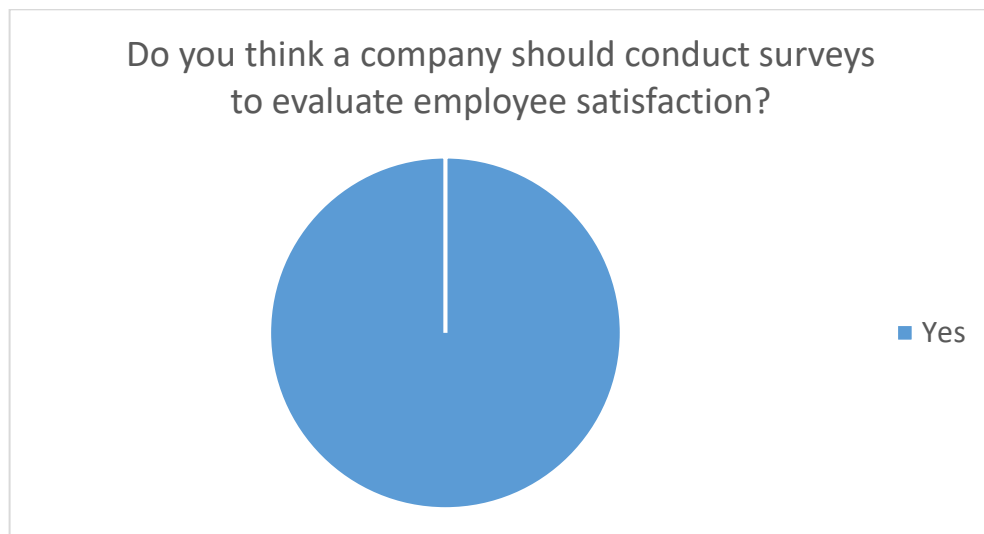


Figure 30 Does management need to evaluate employee satisfaction? (Own data, 2021)
The first questions of the survey showed that in average CS team of the Selected Company is not highly satisfied with their current workload and position in the company. It shows that the company management should be careful and apply preventive measures to avoid possible problems in the future. 100% of the surveyed employees agreed that it is important to conduct employee satisfaction survey. It is known that the customer satisfaction is primarily driven by employees and there is a direct link between customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction (Prossack, 2019). This is especially important in any organization where staff is in direct contact with customers, and it is helpful when acquiring more professional insights from the team to develop new business enhancement strategies.

8 ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CUSTOMER SERVICE

Study results revealed low degrees of customer and employee satisfaction with the existing business processes in the Selected Company. There are some steps in Order to Cash operations which may be improved for the benefit of both parties. The Merkle Company has examined the customer experience excellence of more than 500 B2B companies and came up with 6 foundational steps for the successful customer experience in B2B business (Doheny, 2021). There are main 6 steps to deliver an exceptional customer experience to the B2B customers: Commitment, Fulfillment, Seamlessness, Responsiveness, Proactivity and Evolution. For better structuring the problematic aspects of the current customer experience in the Selected Company and to make recommendation for the further improvement, we are employing this “The Six Pillars of B2B Customer Experience Excellence”.

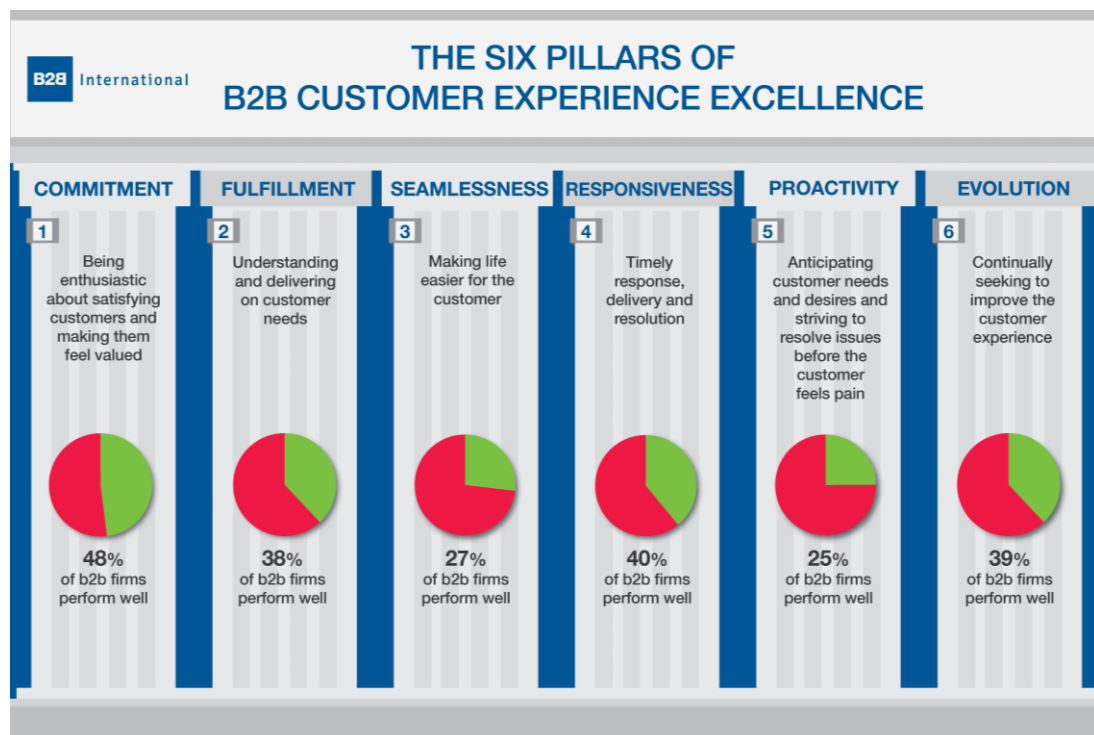


Figure 31 The 6 Pillars of B2B CX Excellence (Doheny, 2021)

Commitment- making customers feel valued and striving to deliver the best service by having motivated employees. In order to improve this aspect of the customer experience foundation, companies should boast customer experience-dedicated teams. Those teams' main functions are to analyze customer feedback on interaction and ensuring the customer experience is ingrained across all processes. Moreover, employee motivation and

satisfaction has a direct effect on the customer satisfaction, that's why it's recommended for the Selected Company to introduce some rewards for the exceptional contribution to customer experiences.

Fulfillment- understanding customers' needs and behaviors, as well as demonstrate empathy when customers report some problems or claims. For the improvement of this customer experience aspect, it is necessary for the company to make efforts to better understand the customer needs and try to deliver appropriate solutions. Survey results showed that the customers suggested several ideas and shared their concerns about what they need for the better experience. Monthly customer satisfaction surveys and voluntary feedbacks could be the best option to advance better understanding of customer needs.

Seamlessness- is about making processes easier and more clear to the client. The study results showed that the selected company currently lacks this feature for both employees and customers. First of all, existing communication channels considered inconvenient for both parties, it's making the communication more difficult. Secondly, there is no clear understanding of segregation of duties among different departments- especially the Sales and Customer Service Team. Customer loses time while addressing his inquiry to the wrong contact person, whilst there is a possibility to avoid double work. Thirdly, there are time-consuming processes like providing documentation from the company database, or getting the updated information regarding the material code changes. These types of activities could be avoided by the automatization of database and making it accessible to the clients. The Selected Company has its IT department and Process expert Teams which could have worked on such automation process for the better and more advanced customer experience.

Responsiveness - providing timely answers, quick problem resolution capabilities and the possibility of arranging fast deliveries. Responsiveness encompasses many touchpoints along the customer journey, such as communications, deliveries, and service requests/ claim resolutions. Surveyed customers and employees have reported the issues connected with the communication failure with the other teams. Customers have outlined that they wish to get faster decision on their claims connected with damaged products and incorrect invoices, but the Customer Service Team, which is usually responsible for the processing of claims, is not able to provide faster feedback because it may take too long to get a response from the plant, warehouse or pricing teams. This issue must be drawn into attention of the higher management. Introduction of collaborative culture within the organization could be a solution, as it will enable cross-functional experts with a shared commitment to customer

centricity. Furthermore, customers underlined a need to the organize emergency order or to have more flexible loading schedules. Such flexibility could be discussed with the Logistics Teams at the different warehouse. Additionally, some of the customers find it too time-consuming to write emails and suggested to use some kind of messenger for a faster communication. Organization can supply it's employees with personal smartphones, but the most-cost effective solution is introducing the chat-bots. They could avoid formality and get faster replies to the most common inquiries automatically.

Proactivity - anticipating customer needs and desires and try to resolve possible issues in advance. When improving fulfillment capabilities- the company can foresee potential customer needs and pain points. Examining root causes for customer claims can provide insights on where proactive measures are needed. The current state of the customer service activities shows that in the Selected company there is a need for customer education. Company have to create a knowledge database where customer could participate in online courses and workshops to better understand company systems and policies. Moreover, it's necessary to have a written documentation with the loading rules at different sites, so the customers will have accesible information prior to planning any new orders. Most of the price dispute issues the Customer Service Team is receiving on a weekly basis, could have been avoided by the proper customer education of invoicing procedures and by anticiating possible discrepancies which could arise due to different taxation in different countries. In addition, customer service team have to collaborate with multiple departments within a single client account, so group meetings/ collaboration meetings among those parties could be a perfect way to find the best ways to proactively approach different customer-related activities.

Evolution- constantly striving to improve the B2B customer experience because over time customer needs, behaviors and attitudes are changing. The customer-centric organization needs to constantly reengineer and transform client interaction processes for a better customer journey. The organization advised to apply KAIZEN philosophy, which will develop a culture where everyone in the company suggest and implement improvements to the company. It will force the company to monitor customer and employee satisfaction, to collect feedback, engage all departments to be more committed to create and deliver the exceptional customer experience.

These findings provide a potential mechanism for CRM process enhancements. Below is the list of problematic aspects of the customer service function and recommended technical solutions for them.

Poor communication tools. Management of the selected company is advised to consider more reliable and faster instruments for a better interaction experience between employees and clients. The most cost-effective and convenient tool for calls can be Skype. All of the company employees already have active accounts with the assigned phone number. Moreover, unlike Amazon Connect System - Skype allows to make calls to different countries. In his portfolio, Ashot has customers from all 9 countries and he already uses Skypes to receive and to make calls to the countries like - Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Application of this solution requires zero financial support, only some changes in the Skype setting will be enough. This way Customer Experience Professionals will get email notifications about missed calls and clients will have the opportunity of making direct calls to their assigned agents rather than calling the unified telephone line of the whole customer service team. From the performance management perspective, this enhancement project will allow management to track missed call rate for each employee. As a result, it expects to have positive impact on the customer experience related to phone communication. From the financial perspective, elimination of Amazon and solely using Skype is beneficial and could save company decent amount of money. According to Ashot, each CXP makes approximately 5 calls per day, with an average call length of 4 minutes. If we calculate annual medium call lengths in minutes, we will have =2600 min. Calculations are below:

$5 \text{ calls} * 5 \text{ CXP} = 25 \text{ calls daily};$

$25 \text{ calls} * 4 \text{ min} = 100 \text{ minutes daily};$

$100 \text{ min} * 5 \text{ working days} = 500 \text{ minutes weekly};$

$500 \text{ min} * 52 \text{ weeks} = \mathbf{2600 \text{ min annually}}$

Currently, company pays Amazon 4.37 cents per 1 minute for the calls to Russia, but Skype charges 2.4 cents per minute. Annually company spends around 1136.2 USD for Amazon to support Russian market, but it could have saved 512.2 USD by paying 624 USD for calls in Skype. Calculations are below:

Amazon: $4.37 \text{ c/min} * 2600 \text{ min} = 1136.2 \text{ USD}$

Skype: 2.4 c/min *2600 min = 624 USD

1136.2 USD - 624 USD = **512.2 USD**

The most efficient way to respond for the common customer inquiries is the establishment of Chatbot program. Creation of chat bots will help to automatically answer commonly asked questions around product availability at certain warehouses, changes in material codes, technical product characteristics (viscosity, density, etc.). The capability of the Chatbot will depend on the level of integration with internal company systems. Ideally, it can also be empowered to provide necessary product documentation from the company database by simple entering of product name or the batch number. Importantly, it will let to gain fast customer feedback if the company will as well decide to insert voluntary surveys at the end of each interaction. Consequently, it will contribute to the continuous improvement and increased quality of the services provided. Because of their ability to automate the data management process and map the data according to organizational patterns, B2B chatbots are effective in data mining frameworks. To sum up, enterprise chatbots exhibit the ability to generate immediate responses; offer personalized experiences; avoid wait times by easily giving the necessary info from the vast amount of data. Communication recording features of the tool provide deep insights into the customer behavior patterns and buyer's persona map. Collaboration efforts of several teams are needed for the execution of this process. The customer service team can point out the type of questions and requests that potentially in scope of the Chatbot project and which systems they usually use to get that information. The company controls department should decide on which internal systems and database allowed to integration with the Chatbots as a source of information. Additional services of external vendor is required for successful adaptation and smooth transition. The main ERP system used in the company is SAP and recently SAP Conversational AI- a messaging platform with user channels that can connect to a variety of messaging platforms became available. 10 months subscription costs around 360 USD (SAP Store, 2021). This solution will contribute to increase in productivity, responsiveness, increased customer experience and allow customer service team to concentrate on more complicated tasks. Also there will be no delays which usually occurs due to human factors: CXPs cannot reply on emails if they are on a lunch break; they cannot accept customer calls when they are already speaking with another customer, when CXPs are concentrated on a critical task they may not be checking new emails. SAP Conversational AI provides personalized human-like conversations 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from any location, on any device (SAP Store, 2021). While

CXP are only available 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. Table 6 visually represents type of inquiries and current efficiency metrics compared to potential metrics if Chatbot program is applied. Current efficiency metrics include an effort level - the number of manually performed steps to provide the answer; and an ideal resolving time of each ticket in minutes, and with possible delays. Average frequency per CXP column defines how many tickets CXPs receives such emails/ tickets on a daily basis. The last column describes average amount of saved time due to this digitalization strategy.

Table 6 Chatbot Inquiries Effectiveness (Own data, 2021)

Inquiry Type	Ideal resolving time	Delayed resolving time	Effort level	Average frequency per CXP	Chatbot's resolving time in min	Saved time
Product Availability on Stock	5	60	2	10 tickets per day	1	From 4 to 59 minutes
Product Availability Dates	60	360	4	6 tickets per day	1	From 59 to 359 minutes
Material Code Changes	15	120	4	2 tickets per day	1	From 14 to 119 minutes
Status of Claims	10	240	3	5 tickets per day	1	From 9 to 239 minutes
Technical Characteristics	15	60	2	1 ticket per day	1	From 14 to 59 minutes

Documents: CoA; DC; POS; TP	20	240	4	7 tickets per day	1	From 19 to 239 minutes
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Ilgen and Ashot provided the data about resolving time from the real cases in their Zendesk tickets. They have explained that these delays occur due high workload, urgent cases which needs prioritization and mainly because they for the reply from their colleagues in other departments. On top of that. CXPs have shared that both of them had a case when customers were complaining to higher management about delayed answers for their questions. Presented figures show that Chatbot implementation considerably improves the resolution speed of the mentioned tasks. Calculation of average saved time is below:

	Ideal	Delayed	Average Time	Average Saved Time per Task	Daily saved Time per Task
1	5	60	32,5	31,5	315
2	60	360	210	209	1254
3	15	120	67,5	66,5	332.5
4	10	240	125	124	248
5	15	60	37,5	36,5	255.5
6	20	240	130	129	129

When compared to CXP response rates, Chatbot provides information 32 or 210 minutes faster for each task, regardless of task complexity or effort level. Every day, customer service team can shorten their workload by 42.2 hours => (315 +1254 + 332.5 + 248 + 255.5 + 129 =2534 minutes).

One of the most difficult tasks for customers is to learn company software and integrate it into their business processes. Study results uncovered the fact that the customers lack knowledge regarding the current processes, systems, and policies in the Selected Company. It emphasizes the need of launching educational platforms where customers can get answers to their questions and learn how to use the company's available systems.

Learning materials with a sequence of actions could walk customers through the company systems and provide them with genuinely valuable advice on how to get the most out of their investment. It empowers the clients to use the full potential of self-service tools. For the best results, it has to be accessible, clear, and engaging. Moreover, customers should be able to use different gadgets for convenience to watching videos; read articles, and access necessary

information at any time. First of all, it's necessary to define the main goal for the Customer Education Program. Taking into consideration the specifics of OTC process at the Selected Company, the following topics should be considered:

- 1) ACE system: how to place orders; how to decode status of the orders; how to check product prices; how to see invoices and due dates; how to check order history; how to see product gross weights; how to cancel the order; how to create a claim; how to see a status of the claim. Most importantly it's important to show the special features in the system that can provide insightful info on the order volume of selected products; available quota quantities and available discount codes for new orders. Moreover, train them how to change profile settings: language; adding and deleting secondary users; how to personalize display settings.
- 2) Loading policies in different warehouses: as the customers are loading from several warehouses of the Selected Company, the fact that each premise has different rules can be misleading. The loading procedure at the Turkish warehouse is very different from the Finnish, and when 1 of the customers decides to load their order from Turkey instead of Finland - it requires an additional workload for the different teams. Customer usually has many concerns and they ask customer service team to find out the answers for each inquiry which comes to their mind. According to Ashot, on average, a customer sends from six to ten emails before making a decision in such cases. On top of that, on the loading day carriers may encounter problems at the customs clearance regarding export requirements of the respective country. In such cases, the customer service team is forced to involve the expertise of the Logistics Department, Sales, and Legal Department. Meanwhile, this could have been avoided if the detailed information on procedures, policies were available and customers were well-educated about the specifics of each warehouse in every geographical area.
- 3) Technical characteristics of the products: obviously, every company has to provide the most detailed information about the offered products and services. Having clients which know all benefits and features of the products is a key for a successful business. Online courses about product technical features and their application will increase customer knowledge and product popularity.

The best option to develop an educational platform is to use external vendor services to gather all the necessary data from the company intranet and to organize it in the most user-friendly way for the customers. There is a variety of Learning Management Systems that can

deliver such value. Talent LMS can be the best option to deliver fully customizable, easy-to-manage training material for clients. This vendor already supports over 70, 000 teams worldwide, and it is one of the few platforms that also support the Russian language (Epignosis, 2021). At this moment there are around seventy-five B2B customers supported by the team and the most cost-effective option is to buy a Basic package for 129 USD per month. It has the capacity to support up to 100 users and to develop unlimited courses. This solution is profitable in the long term and as the company will change and improve. Annually company will invest 1548 USD to maintain knowledgeable customers who are up to date on technological advancements and can fully utilize self-service tools.

These basic findings are consistent with research showing that the company will benefit from applying offered CRM automation solutions. Implementation of presented strategy will increase team productivity, customer knowledge, improve response rate and decrease the number of complains. Most importantly, these solutions will have a positive effect on employee satisfaction as it will allow the team to better manage their time and direct their effort for delivering exceptional customer experience regarding more sophisticated issues along OTC.

CONCLUSION

Current papers gives insights about B2B customer service situation in the oil and gas industry considering current unstable economic situation. It describes common challenges along B2B customer service processes and operations, as well as their impact on the overall performance of the business unit. Theoretical part of this work mainly concentrates on the contemporary business automation opportunities to improve customer relationship management in the B2B organizations. According to many researchers and consulting organizations, nowadays, successful vendors employ the latest technological solutions and digitalization tools to satisfy increasing customer needs and to be on track with their competitors. The main purpose was to analyze the current state of the Customer Service at the Selected Company in the Russian- speaking region and to evaluate its existing processes. The SWOT analysis of the Selected Company as of 2021, shows, that there are many environmental concerns that have poor effect on the company future. Timely adjustment of the business development strategy and investments in the renewable energy can avoid those external threats. Practical part of the paper explains the Order to Cash Process and its structure. Moreover, it describes each function within the Order to Cash and responsibilities of every team involved in the process. A detailed interpretation of every small process performed by Customer Service team provided insights on the common challenges that has negative impact on the customer journey. It was found that there are four key departments that actively involved in the delivering of exceptional customer experience: Customer Service, Sales, Logistics and Account Setup Team. On a daily basis customers reach out to Customer Service Team- specifically, to their assigned Customer Experience Professional (CXP). Every CXP has several customers in their portfolio and usually every customer is unique and has its own specifics. Besides their customer support function, CXPs also act as a communication bridge among other company departments in the tasks which are aimed to deliver best customer experience. The second department, which most interacts with B2B customers- is the Sales department. They are responsible for business inquiries, agreements, special offers for the potential or existing B2B clients. Logistics Team, or in other words- Warehouse, plays a major role in supply and loading of the demanded products to the clients. There are several warehouses in the different geographical locations and each of them has their own policies and procedures in accordance with the local regulations. Finally, the last department supporting OTC processes is Account Setup, sometimes referred as Price Setup. This team is responsible for the creation of accounts and prices in the company systems.

Each of these teams effect on the quality of the offered services, and this research took place to get clear picture of the process fallbacks. The customer support team of five employees and ten B2B customers from nine countries: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan participated in this study. Electronic questionnaire forms used as the main tool to collect the information from the employees and customers. Additionally, two customer service employees actively participated in the creation of questionnaires, as well as explained the specific aspects of their daily work. Study findings revealed that there is a need for improvement of Sales and Account Setup performances. The thesis goal was met, and several enhancement opportunities for the customer service department of the Selected Company in the B2B segment were recommended. It was proven that the most of the daily operation performed by customer service team require digitalization and automation enhancement for better efficiency. Moreover, survey results suggested that the Selected Company emphasize on customer education, and develop clear description on the functional responsibilities of each division. Overall, the study outcomes underlines that the company employees does not possess customer-centric vision and there is a high need to apply this culture inside the organization. Finally, for the successful business results company have to develop evolutionary strategy and try to foresee upcoming customer needs in this ever-evolving world.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Advanced Customer Experience-
AR	Account Receivable
B2B	Business to business
B2C	Business to Customer
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CS	Customer Service
CX	Customer Experience
CXP	Customer Experience Professional
COA	Certificate of Analysis
DBC	Dedicated Business Consultant
DC	Declaration of Conformity
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
FCR	First Contact Resolution
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
OTC	Order to Cash
PE	Process Expert
POS	Passport of Safety
SCM	Supply Chain Management
SGA	Strategic Global Alliance
TM	Territorial Manager
TP	Test Protocol
USD	United States Dollar

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