Abstract

Firms are increasingly operating as part of networks and entire networks are competing against each other, not only individual firms. When firms operate together as partners and aim at overcoming competitive networks, the firms need to have a common direction – strategy – which guides the co-operation, systematizes the operations and commits the partners to the network. Common network strategy tells how the firms can succeed together and also sets the direction for the development.

The objective of the thesis is to answer the following question: *How can a common global network strategy between a firm and its existing network partner companies be created?* The main research question is divided into three sub-objectives:

- *To determine the current situation of network relations by mapping out a firm's and its partners' interpretations concerning the partnership.*
- *To find out how these interpretations align and differ.*
- *To give an idea about a systematic approach for formulating a global network strategy based on the research findings and literature.*

The research has been conducted as a qualitative case study and the empirical data has been collected by semi-structured interviews. The case company is a Finnish marine engineering group which has established a global partner network around it but a common global network strategy has not been created.

To answer the research objectives it has been first examined on the basis of existing literature and research what factors are considered success factors of networking and therefore also critical issues in creating a network strategy. The following factors have been identified: understanding, win-win situation, competence, trust, information sharing and involvement as well as commitment. The current situation of the network relations in the case company's network has been determined by mapping out the state of the success factors. On the basis of these findings and literature an idea of what the common network strategy in this specific network could look like is provided.

| Key words | networking, networks, partnership, strategy |
| Further information | |