



|                                     |                     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Master's thesis     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Licentiate's thesis |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Doctor's thesis     |

|             |  |                 |            |
|-------------|--|-----------------|------------|
| Subject     | International Business   | Date            | 10.10.2005 |
| Author      | Johanna Esa  | Student number  |            |
|             |  | Number of pages | 141        |
| Title       | International Client Relationship Marketing in a Professional Service Organisation |                 |            |
| Supervisors | Dr. Sc. (Econ.) & Ph. D. (Soc. Sc.) Kari Liuhto<br>M.Sc. Harri Lorentz             |                 |            |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Abstract</p> <p>The relative share of the service sector in GNP has increased continuously, while more and more services are, by nature, professional services. Finland is in many respects a technologically knowledgeable country, but in spite of this, internationalisation has often been found to be challenging amongst expert companies. Moreover, marketing operations have traditionally been considered as useless in professional service companies. However, due to more fierce competition, professional service firms must also ponder new ways of attracting clients and maintaining their current clientele in particular.</p> <p>The primary purpose of this study is to carry out research on international marketing efforts in the professional service sector from a customer relationship marketing standpoint. Methodologically, this paper is qualitative. Empirical material has been collected in a semi structured way by interviewing eight employees within one professional service organisation (Technical Research Centre of Finland, VTT). The research approach can be described as constructive, because the aim of this study has been developed in the form of explicative construction and is a solution for an actual managerial problem. Furthermore, the results found in the outcome of this research will be applied in practice.</p> <p>The present research problem can be divided into two sub problems:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <i>How does a professional service company acquire new clients in the international market?</i></li> <li>(2) <i>How does a professional service company retain its current clients loyal?</i></li> </ol> <p>Partly related to the study's later sub problem, the need to store information in a client database has been discussed in a wider scope. As previously noted, while researching on these sub problems, client-orientated customer relationship marketing has been used as a framework and in particular, the main focus has been placed on building international network connections.</p> <p>According to the results, marketing of Finnish professional services is still in the early stages of development when compared to European research institutes. Hence, there exists a clear need for a more active and customer-orientated approach to marketing. Nevertheless, absorbing customer relationship marketing as a part of the company's strategy is a time consuming process, and furthermore, all levels of the organisation – including the top management – should commit to both binding long-term client relationships and to increasing customer satisfaction. These results are also supported by the marketing literature. Although generalisation of the results outside of the case company can be questioned due to its unique organisational structure, this study, however, facilitates a deeper understanding of the problems concerning customer relationship marketing in other service organisations.</p> |  |
| Key words   | Professional service, customer relationship marketing, networks, client database |
| Further information   | Case VTT (Technical Research Centre of Finland)                                  |