INTERNAL ORGANIZING IN PROJECT BUSINESS ORGANIZATION IN RELATION TO CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

Elina Pernu

Department of Marketing, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, University of Oulu, P.O. Box 4600, 90014 University of Oulu, Finland
elina.pernu@oulu.fi

Abstract

This paper focuses on multinational project business organization and how the customer relationship is organized in such context. Organizing is used as a concept to describe the internal actions needed for creating a unified understanding of the customer. The present study employs process research strategy in a single case study setting with two embedded subunits. The case company is a provider of process technologies for the mining and metals industry. The primary empirical data consists of interviews done with the managers of a mining technology company in different organizational units and levels. Managerially there is a need to understand how corporate relationships are composed and to notice that the customer is not always the same; the created knowledge can be deeply embedded into different contexts.

Keywords: customer relationships, internal network, project business, organizing

INTERNAL ORGANIZING IN PROJECT BUSINESS ORGANIZATION IN RELATION TO CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

Abstract

This paper focuses on multinational project business organization and how the customer relationship is organized in such context. Organizing is used as a concept to describe the internal actions needed for creating a unified understanding of the customer. The present study employs process research strategy in a single case study setting with two embedded subunits. The case company is a provider of process technologies for the mining and metals industry. The primary empirical data consists of interviews done with the managers of a mining technology company in different organizational units and levels. Managerially there is a need to understand how corporate relationships are composed and to notice that the customer is not always the same; the created knowledge can be deeply embedded into different contexts.

Keywords: customer relationships, internal network, project business, organizing

INTRODUCTION

Any organization itself is a complex network consisting of internal relationships between people, departments and different functional units (Ritter, Wilkinson & Johnston, 2004). It has been stated that the primary reason why multinational companies exist is because of their ability to transfer and exploit knowledge more effectively within the intra-corporate network of differentiated units than through external market mechanisms (see e.g. Andersson, Forsgren & Holm, 2002; Adenfelt & Lagerström, 2006; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000). MNCs' are facing a need for better mechanisms to share know-how within multinational companies as well as to facilitate learning and the international dissemination of best-practice (Campbell, 2003; Millman, 1996). Coherent worldwide management in these organizations requires extensive interunit coordination and integration (Campbell 2003; Ghoshal, Korine & Szulanski 1994). In addition to specific internal processes, a major change catalyst in the organization's internal network is the process of evaluating and managing important customer relationships (Campbell, 2003). Intensive organizing is needed to ensure effective operations of MNC's and to create a basis for efficient global customer relationship management.

Relationships are the most important resources that company has (Håkansson, 1987; Ritter, Wilkinson & Johnston, 2004). An organization's ability to develop and manage successfully its relationships with other actors can be seen as core competence and important source of competitive advantage (Möller & Halinen, 1999; Ritter, Wilkinson & Johnston, 2004; Wilson, 1995). Multinational customers demand global based contracts, prices and products instead of just country based services (Montgomery & Yip, 2000; Harvey, Myers & Novicevic, 2003). Due to changes in global procurement and increasing demands for uniform global price and product offering, suppliers are starting to realize that if they wish to continue to serve their customers at a national level, they are also required to serve their customers globally (Campbell, 2003; Wilson & Weilbaker, 2004). Therefore, ensuring sufficient internal knowledge sharing of global customer relationships is needed. In this process, mere customer data alone is not sufficient, instead it needs to be transferred and integrated throughout the organization into customer knowledge (Campbell, 2003).

Ensuring internal organizing inside a MNC and especially in fractured project business context is challenging. In the project business organization the knowledge and capabilities of the organization are created in its major projects (Hobday, 2000). Projects in this multicultural context are global and involve numerous of different business units inside the project organization. The nature of project organizations is fractured (Hellström &Wikström, 2005; Skaates, Tikkanen & Lindblom, 2002) and together these issues multiply the challenges in internal organizing in a project business organization. How to organize a coherent customer interface in a dispersed project business organization as well as how to organize the internal network and knowledge creating remains a challenge. As Gibbert, Leibold and Probst (2002) state, it would "be interesting to investigate if, and to what extent the customer's views differ from the 'way we do things around here' in the firm".

This research concentrates on the internal organizing and processes of the multinational project business organization. *Organizing* is used as a concept to describe the internal actions needed for creating a unified understanding of the customer. As multiple business units are involved when dealing with the customer, the functioning of the whole organization becomes more crucial. Having unified ways of action when dealing with the customer and offering a distinct contact interface to customers helps to fulfill the quality expectations of the customers. The effective operations of the whole multinational project business organization are guaranteed through knowledge creation in multiple levels, which in turn create the basis for efficient global customer relationships. Therefore, this paper aims to answer the question: *How to coordinate customer relationships inside the multinational project business organization?*

The present study employs process research strategy in a single case study setting with two embedded subunits and qualitative empirical data to create further understanding of the studied phenomenon. The case company is a provider of process technologies for the mining and metals industry. The primary empirical data consists of 10 interviews done with the managers of a mining technology company in different organizational units and levels. The internal organizing in case company in relation to their customer relationships will be analyzed through two, selected global customer relationships. In the end some suggestions for the internal organizing inside a multinational project business organization are given.

THEORETICAL BASE

Customer relationships and internal network

It has been commonly stated that for the past 30 years, relationship between companies have been increasingly significant and through that the network-like features of the business landscape have had considerable effects for business (Håkansson et al., 2009; Wilson, 1995). Network research focuses on relationships among actors, whether they are individuals, units or organizations (Brass et al., 2004).

Relationships are based on repeated interactions, which may cover a wide range of functions, activities and actors in the organization (Holmlund, 2004). This means that customer relationships consist of diversified interorganizational contacts, which can involve multiple organizational levels (Holm, Johansson & Thilenius, 1995). In supplier company, usually more than one person is involved in the management of specific customer relationship (Helfert & Vith, 1999). Over time, interactions between organizations build up to an interorganizational relationship (Ritter & Gemünden, 2003).

Relationship building and management, or *relationship marketing* is a process including several actors interacting within their internal and external network of relationships (Grönroos, 1994). Management of a customer relationship covers multiple tasks and therefore, requires extensive knowledge base as well as specific skills and abilities from the supplier (Helfert & Vith, 1999). When analyzing customer relationships, also the behavior of actors, interactions and relationships in specific market context as well as managerial decisions and actions can be included into analysis (Grönroos, 1994).

According to Ritter, Wilkinson and Johnston (2004) organization is "embedded in a network of ongoing business and nonbusiness relationships, which both enable and constrain its performance" and can thus be defined as a "corporate network" (see Holm & Sharma, 2006). Large multinational corporations have been perceived as networks of quite independent players (see Ritter & Gemünden, 2003). Discussing about organization as a network is relevant approach, since network perspective concentrates on relations and patterns of interactions and thus differs from the traditional perspectives in organizational studies, where the focus has been more on isolated actors and attributes (Brass et al. 2004).

Ford & McDowell (1999) stated that the actions in each relationship are of great importance to the overall portfolio of relationship and the competitive success. This is especially true in a more complex context of multinational project business organization, where the individual dyadic relationships between supplier and customer representative are more intertwined to each other and together create a dynamic relationship portfolio, which can be seen constituting the interorganizational relationship between organizations. Acting in relationship has effects on multiple relationship levels, some of which are planned and expected and others that are not (Ford & McDowell, 1999). Ford and McDowell (1999) divide these effects on four levels: effects in the relationship, on the relationship, on the portfolio of the relationships and on the network.

Organizing and knowledge sharing in multinational project business organization

Multinational corporation (MNC) has been described as a network of different organizational units, where knowledge and competencies from different parts of world is gathered to create a competitive advantage (Holm & Sharma, 2006). Customer knowledge is a salient competitive factor in global competition, but according to Gibbert, Leibold and Probst (2002) may be overlooked by corporations. However, knowledge sharing across nations and organizational units is central for the survival and success of an MNC (see Holm & Sharma, 2006).

In the corporate network, some organizational units emerge as independent sources of knowledge for specific business actions and functions (Holm & Sharma, 2006). Knowledge can be defined as relevant and actionable information based at least partially on experience in business context (Lin, Su & Chien, 2006). However, knowledge can be seen more than just information and actually being closer to action (Kalkan, 2008). Gibbert, Leibold and Probst (2002) see customer knowledge being socially constructed through the interaction of the customer with members of the organization. In this paper, customer knowledge is simply defined as *the different perspectives and understanding of the customer in and between different units and individuals* and used as concept to create understanding of the internal organizing. Previous research (see e.g. Gibbert, Leibold & Probst, 2002; Lin, Su & Chien, 2006; Kalkan, 2008) has focused on customer knowledge management, which in some research streams is defined as gaining, sharing and expanding the knowledge embedded in

customers to gain mutual benefits (Gibbert, Leibold & Probst, 2002). This means that the focus here lies more on "knowledge about customers" than "knowledge from the customers". Knowledge can be seen centered around people and process and knowledge management can thus be defined essentially as a social process, where human factors need to be taken into account (Kalkan, 2008). Knowledge is sought from customer experience and (dis)satisfaction with products or services (Gibbert, Leibold & Probst, 2002).

Multinational project business creates a context for this study and the internal organizing of customer relationships. Using MNC as a research context is suggested by Roth and Kostova (2003), since it has a potential to provide novel insights and explanations regarding individual, organizational and contextual interactions. Project business is seen as a relevant research context as it is one of the dominating modes of international business and periodical purchasing is a fact in global projects (Hadjikhani, 1996). Projects do not exist in isolation; instead they are embedded into wider organizational network (see Lindkvist, 2004). This also means that all previous relationships and projects affect the potential future projects and relationships (Hadjikhani, 1996). The organizing of project business organization is challenging. These organizations are fractured and discontinuous by nature (see e.g. Hellström and Wikström, 2005; Skaates, Tikkanen, and Lindblom, 2002). In multinational context projects also involve numerous of different business units inside the project organization. Lindkvist (2004) states that using project as forms of operating means that projects have a big autonomy and decision power is largely concentrated in lower organizational levels. Thus, projects can easily be disconnected from each other and company-wide developing and learning as well as linking projects to business level processes may be a challenge.

Working in a project environment also means that customer relationships in project business contain periods of discontinuity, or sleeping periods (Hadjikhani, 1996) which further complicates the relationship. The previous interaction between parties can be seen generating the positive experience after the project, which in turn is needed for future selling (Hadjikhani, 1996). A seller may have several ongoing business logics (such as projects, services, product deliveries) with the buyer at the same time (see Leminen, 2001). A relationship continues as services and product deliveries after the project is finished. Also, all these business logics can exist simultaneously. Projects consist of individuals with different competencies, belonging to different groups, which make creating a shared understanding or common knowledge base difficult (Lindkvist, 2004).

Relationships are formed from smaller components (see Holmlund, 2004) and for example Leminen (2001) sees that relationship consist on different projects, which can be further broken up to episodes and acts and thus each relationship can be analyzed on all of these levels. The interactions between these levels are two-way and thus it is important to recognize how relationship is build. Each level of relationship is also embedded into its surrounding environment.

Internal organizing in multinational corporation is important, since in fractured organization, knowledge about customers is difficult to combine into organization-wide understanding. In multinational project business organization, relevant pieces of knowledge are decentralized into multiple local settings and to various individual actors (see Lindkvist, 2004). When organizing in this context, one must recognize organization's dependence on knowledge of individuals and the challenges in integrating and generating knowledge. Leminen (2001) sees that there are both intra- and interorganizational knowledge discrepancies, or gaps, in and

between organizations. Gaps exist between different organizational levels both within and between companies, which leads to situation where multiple gaps complicate the buyer-seller relationship. In his research, Lindkvist (2004) describes projects as "separated, time-paced and time-pressured undertakings" where much of the knowledge is generated and immediately applied and notes that in that context, it is difficult and bit illogical to document and transfer knowledge to benefit other projects.

Researching multinational context involves multiple units and actors and therefore, can be considered as a multilevel phenomenon. Previous research both on relationships and networks as well as organizations, has pointed out the need to research those issues on different levels of analysis (see see e.g. Möller & Halinen, 1999; Ritter & Gemünden, 2003; Brass, 2004; Provan, Fish & Sydow, 2007). Every construct is built on different levels (Klein et al. 1994) and therefore one needs to take account level issues while conducting a research. Also relationships can be analyzed in different levels, and Leminen (2001) discusses buyer-seller relationships in the level of a company, between companies (relationships) and in a network. For analyzing organization Brass et al. (2004) have identified interpersonal, interunit and interorganizational levels of analysis. Organizing the internal knowledge sharing does not only benefit the supplier by enhancing organizational learning but it can also benefit the customer by offering them an unified interface to act with (see Gibbert, Leibold & Probst, 2002).

The figure 1 describes the internal organizing process in multi-unit project organization. Because of the fractured nature of project organization, the interunit level of analysis is divided into smaller components including business unit, production unit and project level.
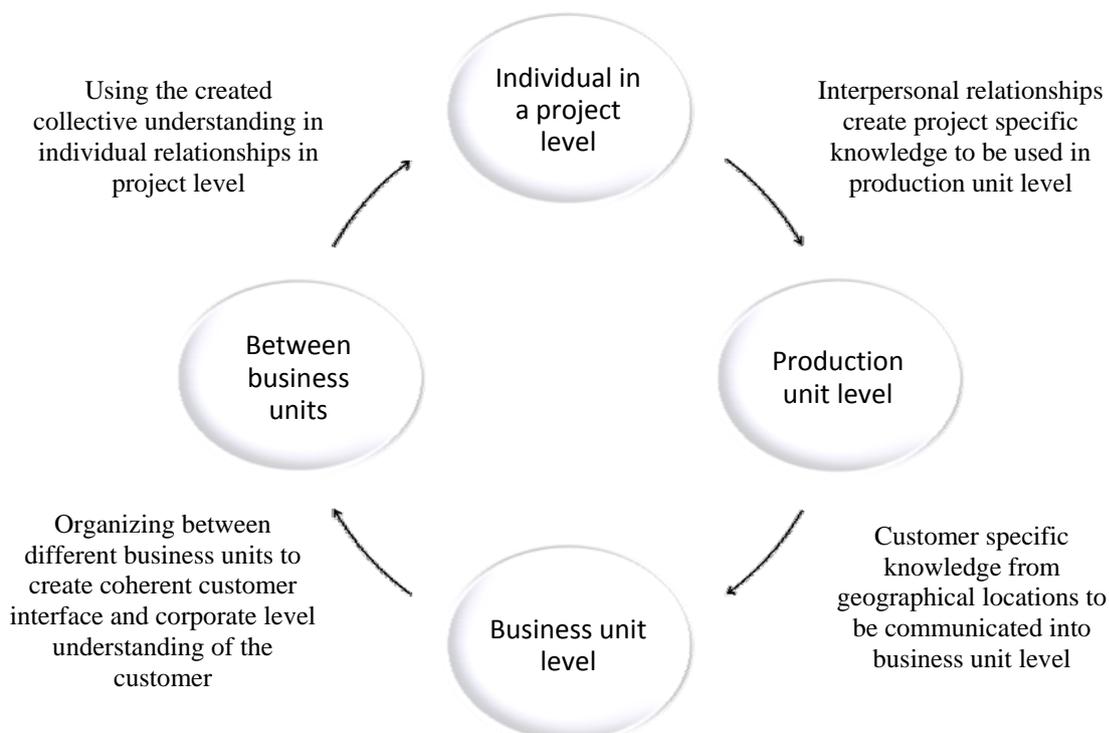

Figure 1. Internal organizing process in multi-unit project organization

The interactions in project business organization are largely centered in a project level. Through interactions and interpersonal relationships in projects, project specific knowledge is created. Different projects together create an understanding of the specific customer, which can then be used in production unit level and through that utilized in new projects. Different

production units or geographical locations further communicate the customer specific knowledge to business unit level. The organizing between different business units is needed to create coherent customer interface and corporate level understanding of the customer. This collective understanding can then be used in individual relationships in new or existing projects. The figure describes the internal organizing through the whole organization, but it should be noted that knowledge sharing also exists inside business and production units.

METHODOLOGY: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

"Industrial marketing research is characterized by the use of qualitative case studies to build theory" (Beverland & Lindgreen, 2010). Also this research is qualitative by nature, because by conducting qualitative business research, researcher has the opportunity to focus on the complexity of the phenomenon in its own context (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 3). In this research the case study method is applied, since it can offer a valuable way of gaining knowledge in a cross-cultural setting (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch 2004, 7-8) and therefore it is also relevant for this research. A case study can be seen both as the process of learning and the product of learning (Ghauri 2004, 109). Qualitative research is also suitable for cross-cultural research since it offers deeper understanding and is less likely to have cultural bias or ethnocentric assumptions than traditional surveys. In this study the chosen methodology follows abductive research logic, which means that theories and empirical data take turns and together aims to develop the theory of global customer relationships.

The present study uses interviews, documentation and sketches and presentations collected from a provider of process technologies for the mining and metals industry as a primary empirical data. 10 interviews are done with the managers of the case company in different organizational units and levels (see table 1). The customer relationships of the case company are analyzed by concentrating on two customers, which both are big, metal producing concerns that have strategic importance to the case company. Together these interviews consist 15 hours and 42 minutes of recording. Interviews focus on the history and development of customer relationship, features of the relationship, cooperation between the companies and different units and shared projects. By analysing data on the two customer relationship of the case company, a better understanding of how customer relationship are organized inside the multinational project business organization and between different divisions can be created.

Table 1. Primary empirical data: interviews.

Interviewee	Concentration	Date	Duration
President – Market Area India	Customer A, overall view	12.11.08	2h 40min
Senior Vice President of Marketing Development	Customer A, B, HQ perception	12.11.08	59min
Vice President, Business Development, Division II	Customer B, Division II	12.11.08	1h 48min
Senior Manager of Marketing Development	Customer A, B, HQ perception	12.11.08	1h 2min
Managing Director of Division II, North America	Customer B, Division II	3.3.09	1h 29min
President of Division I, North America	Customer B, Division I	6.3.09	1h 23min
Vice President - Business Development, Division I	Customer B, Division I	9.10.09	1h 29 min
Sales Manager, Division II	Customer A, Division II (unit 1)	15.10.09	1h 56 min
Technology Sales Manager, Division II	Customer A, Division II (unit 2)	19.10.09	1h 45min
President – Division I	Customer A, B, Division I	21.10.09	1h 11min

Secondary data (namely 15 interviews with the case company) was collected by other researchers during the larger research project, in which this research is also connected. Data is also collected from written sources, namely from the web-pages of the company and its

customers, brochures, project memos, as well as workshop materials and case-specific seminars. This secondary data was an important supplement and it was extensively used before the actual interviews to create a comprehensive understanding of the context and actual phenomenon.

CASE STUDY ON INTERNAL ORGANIZING OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

The case company consists of three business units (divisions), with different historical backgrounds and areas of specializations. Division I is geographically divided into smaller units where Division II is divided based on different technological solutions. Divisions differ from each other also on their independence, for example Division III has become part of the company through acquisition, which means that its cooperation with other two divisions is smaller. The customer relationships of the case company are analyzed through its two, selected, global customer relationships (namely customers A and B). Customer A is mainly working in India, Zambia and Australia. The relationship with the customer A has started actively in 2003. Customer B is focused in North and South America, Australia Pacific and Africa. It has had a long, steady relationship with Division I (from 1990s) of the case company and it is offering great potential for Division II (relationship started in 2006). Both customers have multiple productions units and have (or have had) projects with all the divisions.

In project level, interpersonal relationships create the basis for overall customer relationship. Individuals act in different positions and roles and some individuals may have more central role in the customer relationship as well as inside own organization. The introduction of global account management and manager, and through that, the more consistent handling of customers, has changed the overall relationship.

> *" It [key account management] has brought new things, people think more over divisional borders, understands that this customer plays potentially with all of us -- we coordinate now more -- this didn't happen before, but now during two last years it has happen -- mainly because of the [President of Division I, North America] who has good relationship with few persons in [customer organization] -- and worked as a contact person between two divisions". (Vice President - Business Development, Division I, Customer B)*

These central individuals in the relationship (such as global account managers) can act in multiple levels. The figure 2 below describes these levels in which individuals act and how this acting creates relationships.
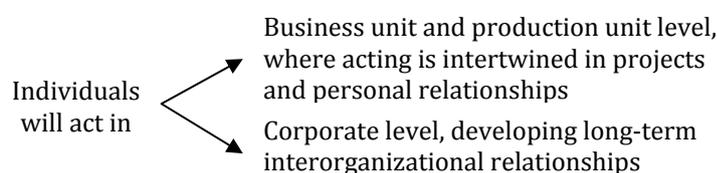
Individuals will act in →
- Business unit and production unit level, where acting is intertwined in projects and personal relationships
- Corporate level, developing long-term interorganizational relationships

Figure 2. Individuals acting in different levels

Division I and II have the closest relationship with customer B. The relationship with this customer includes multiple supplier units. For example from Division I, geographical units from Canada, USA, Chile, Peru, Australia and Finland are involved in relationship with the customer, which describes the multinational nature of the operations. The challenges of a MNC are described as follows by the managing director:

"You are not only dealing with different divisions, with different responsibilities, but also with different cultures and with different locations that have been used to working independently. -- It takes a lot of relationship management, internal as well to handle this [multidivisional customer relationships]." (Managing Director of Division II, North America, Customer B)

As stated above, internal organizing is needed to handle multidivisional customer relationships. Cooperation between and inside divisions is not always trouble-free – challenges do exist. The case company sees customer B as a "seemingly easy customer", who is easily contacted, but getting a sale is still not guaranteed. Question therefore is how these kinds of "easy" customers should be handled. Possessiveness increases with these customers, since it is easy to go to the customers through own routes, strive to protect own contacts and share reports only to some persons. This can be seen on both business unit level and inside business units.

"People used to take contact [to the customer] without knowing from each other, and then found, noticed, that this and this has been done, either heard it from the customer or found it out by accident" (President of Division I, North America, Customer B)

Conflicts in relation to customer and between business units exist. The cooperation with customer and one division may work well, but in relation to another division, problems occur. Clear conflict is if the equipment supplied by one division does not work, despite of numerous attempts. This naturally affects the operations of other divisions. In these situations, top management or key account manager takes the lead. Different divisions need also to prioritize customers due to limited resources, which also mean that not all customers are equally important to different divisions.

The relationship with customer B has shifted from a one division relationship to also including others. Cooperation with customer has changed, and is not always been straightforward. In the beginning, knowledge sharing between units was highly problematic:

"Of course it was quite difficult and it surely is not ideal yet, but quite good -- we can get the information -- but there is still room for improvement between units." (President of Division I, North America, Customer B)

There are however benefits with having multi-divisional level of relationship. Division II was able to exploit the existing relationship with Division I, when negotiating the first projects. Also Division I benefitted from this development, since after Division II involvement, its relationship with customer B has deepen and become more strategic. Also customer can use the previously created relationship with one business unit to ensure the effectiveness of operations with another business unit. Therefore organizing between business units is needed for offering "one supplier" to the customer.

"I think also one thing that sometimes was challenging was combining our divisions because we have two divisions who are dealing with [Customer B] from [our company] and a lot of these projects --, not really needed to work together and there we still have to make sure to work together because at the end of the day the customer doesn't care if the division A or B, -- So the challenge was always to remember that what the customer sees is one [Company] not just one division of [the Company]." (Managing Director of Division II, North America, Customer B)

Internal organizing in relation to customer is not a simple task. One challenge arises from the very nature of project business; since operations are centered around projects, one project

leader in customer organization might have multiple visits in a row from different supplier project personnel. Problems arise also if contracts and operation logics differ between divisions and customer gets confused and irritated. Creating an established practice is demanding.

"There are lots of problems related to our internal organizing of this type of marketing and sales functions -- we don't have any kind of system to gather project knowledge or the information people receive". (Vice President – Business Development, Division II, Customer B).

As project business organization is centered around projects, the importance of lower project level is emphasized in relationships. In multinational context, also the customer is organized around different levels.

"The correct way to influence them [top management] is to go bit lower in this situation. We need to go through project managers, research managers and purchasing managers, and through that find the consensus, which they can further mediate to the top management, who could then look to us favorably and agree to talk and build trust. This is typical hierarchical organization" (Vice President – Business Development, Division II, Customer B)

As the above citation points out, contacts to customer need to exist on multiple levels. The case company has devoted resources to ensure interactions between different organizational levels, since it is seen as the best way to develop relationship and win projects.

"You might say was that we were fighting on two fronts, there was somebody dealing at the top and somebody dealing a little bit below. So basically I was making sure that the people in the project level were supporting [the Case Company] and [the Vice President of Business Development] was making sure that the people at the higher level were supporting [the Case Company]" (Managing Director of Division II, North America, Customer B)

As mentioned, supplier may have multiple units in contact with the customer and the customer can actually consist of multiple customers. The "network picture" presented below (figure 3), describes the case company's relationship with customer A.
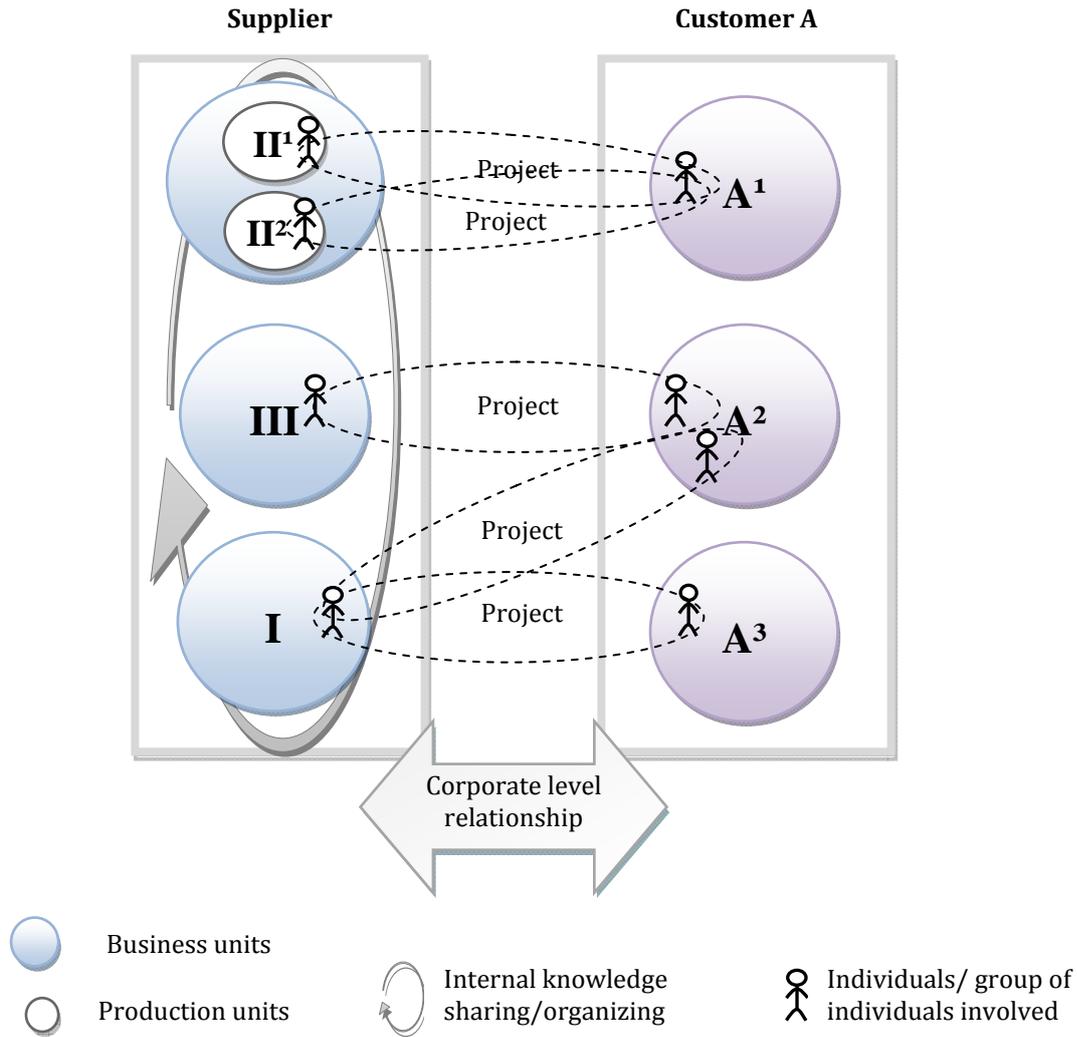
Figure 3. Relationship with customer A on different levels.

Division II consists of independent units with competing technologies. In history, there has existed competition inside the division on what technology to offer to the customer. These situations are not common, but in these situations division management needs to make the decision.

When looking this kind of representation about the network (figure 3), it is obvious that even though units I, II and III would share knowledge about the customer, they might not be actually talking about the *same* customer. Customer is embedded in different context, which might make the customer knowledge context-bound, even in the situations where the supplier units would be dealing with just *one* customer's business unit. There is, however notable advantages in organizing the customer relationship internally. The citation below describes how the acting of a global customer relationship manager in interorganizational level in India helped the project level relationship in Zambia.

> *"He [global customer relationship manager] has mainly acted -- as a contact to the management level, owners, mainly to the management team of the Indian [company]. He has there quite close friends, with whom he can talk openly about problems, highlight them. -- We get from there the information of those underlying factors -- it has somewhat increased the level of trust [from our side] that we have information route to the management level and we can through that distribute*

the information -- the information which goes from us to plants -- we can also through this other route get the information to the [customer's] top management. [The information] which might not otherwise go there. -- You have to have the information routes to different levels. It might not always be like this, but in this case it has been quite good." (Technology Sales Manager, Division II, Customer A)

CONCLUSIONS

In multinational project business organization, the interactions mainly happen in project level, which complicates the creation of corporate level understanding about the customer. Projects are quite independent operation forms with a big autonomy and they can easily be disconnected from each other. However, the collective understanding of the customer can create benefits and smooth the operations in individual relationships and in new or existing projects.

Some individuals may have more central role in relation to customers as well as inside own organization. Individuals can act in interpersonal level, creating personal relationship where the acting is focused on project or production unit level. Some individual acting also develops long-term interorganizational relationships, where the acting is not bounded in divisional borders. These individuals can work in one or multiple levels.

Customer needs to be contacted through multiple levels to ensure most effective operations. The supplier also faces the challenge to remember that despite the fractured nature of multinational project organization, the customer sees just one supplier, not just one division of the supplier. Managerially there is a need to understand how corporate relationships are composed and this requires understanding of multiple levels and units involved. In the fractured business environment, there is also need to notice that the customer is not always the same; the created knowledge can be deeply embedded into different context and thus it might not be directly usable in another project or context. There are however benefits with having multi-divisional level of relationship. Units can exploit the existing relationship and that can further develop the relationship with the customer into deeper and more strategic one.

References

Adenfelt, M. & Lagerström, K. (2006) "Knowledge development and sharing in multinational corporations: the case of a centre of excellence and a transnational team", **International Business Review**, Vol 15, pp. 381-400.

Andersson, U., Forsgren, M. & Holm, U. (2002) "The strategic impact of external networks: subsidiary performance and competence development in the multinational corporation", **Strategic Management Journal**, Vol 23, pp. 979-996.

Brass, D. J., Galaskiewicz, J., Greve, H.R. & Wenpin, T. (2004) "Taking stock of networks and organizations: a multilevel perspective

Beverland, M. & Lindgreen, A. (2010) "What makes a good case study? A positivist review of qualitative case research published in Industrial Marketing Management, 1971-2006", **Industrial Marketing Management**, Vol 39, pp.56-63.

Campbell, A. J. (2003) "Creating customer knowledge competence: managing customer relationship management programs strategically", **Industrial Marketing Management**, Vol 32, pp. 375-383.

Eriksson, P. & Kovalainen, A. (2008), **Qualitative Methods in Business Research**. London: Sage Publications.

Ford, D. & McDowell, R. (1999) "Managing business relationship by analyzing the effects and value of different actions", **Industrial Marketing Management**, Vol 28 No 5, pp. 429-442

Ghauri, P. (2004) "Designing and conducting case studies in international business research". In Marschan-Piekkari, R. & Welch, C. (eds.). **Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for International Business**. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 109-124.

Ghoshal, S., Korine, H. & Szulanski, G. (1994) "Interunit communication in multinational corporations", **Management Science**, Vol 40 No 1, pp. 96-110.

Gibbert, M., Leibold, M. & Probst, G. (2002) "Five styles of customer knowledge management, and how smart companies use them to create value", **European Management Journal**, Vol 20 No 5, pp.459-469.

Grönroos, C. (1994) "From marketing mix to relationship marketing: towards a paradigm shift in marketing", **Management Decision**, Vol 32 No 2, pp. 4-20.

Gupta, A. K. & Govindarajan, V. (2000) "Knowledge flows within multinational corporations", **Strategic Management Journal**, Vol 21 No 4, pp.473-496.

Hadjikhani, A. (1996) "Project marketing and the management of discontinuity" **Project Marketing and the Management of Discontinuity**, Vol 5 No 3, pp.319-336.

Håkansson, H. (1987) Product development in networks. In Håkansson, H. (ed.) **Technological Development: A Network Approach.** New York: Croom Helm, pp. 84-128.

Håkansson, H., Ford, D., Gadde, L-E., Snehota, I. and Waluszewski, A (2009) **Business in networks**, Chichester: Wiley and Sons.

Harvey, M. G., Myers, M. B. & Novicevic, M. M. (2003). "The managerial issues associated with global account management", **Journal of Management Development**, Vol 22 No 2, pp.103-129.

Helfert, G. & Vith, K. (1999) "Relationship marketing teams, improving the utilization of customer relationship potentials through a high team design quality", **Industrial Marketing Management**, Vol 28, pp. 553-564.

Hellström, M. &Wikström, K. (2005) "Project business concepts based on modularity – improved manoeuvrability through unstable structures", **International Journal of Project Management**, Vol 23, pp.392-397.

Hobday, M. (2000) "The project-based organisation: an ideal form for managing complex products and systems?", **Research Policy**, Vol 29 No 7-8, pp. 871-893.

Holm, U. & Sharma, D. D. (2006) "Subsidiary marketing knowledge and strategic development of the multinational corporation", **Journal of International Management**, 12, pp. 47-66.

Holmlund, M. (2004) "Analyzing business relationships and distinguishing different interaction levels", **Industrial Marketing Management**, Vol 33, pp.279-287.

Kalkan, V. D. (2008) "An overall view of knowledge management challenges for global business", **Business Process Management Journal**, Vol 14 No 3, pp. 390-400.

Klein, K. J., Dansereau, F. & Hall, R. J. (1994) "Levels issues in theory development, data collection and analysis", **The Academy of Management Review**, Vol 19 No 2, pp. 195-229.

Leminen, S. (2001). " Seven glasses for buyer-seller relationships: a framework for analysing gaps", **Management Decision**, Vol 39 No 5/6, pp.379-387.

Lin, Y., Su, H.-Y. & Chien, S. (2006) "A knowledge-enabled procedure for customer relationship management", **Industrial Marketing Management**, Vol 35, pp. 446-456.

Lindkvist, L. (2004) "Governing project-based firms: promoting market-like processes within hierarchies", **Journal of Management and Governance**, Vol 8, pp.3-25.

Marschan-Piekkari, R. & Welch, C. (2004) "Qualitative research methods in international business: the state of the art", In Marschan-Piekkari, R. & Welch, C. (eds**.). Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for International Busines**s, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 5-24.

Millman, T. F. (1996) "Global key account management and system selling", **International Business Review**, Vol 5 No 6, pp. 631-645.

Montgomery, D. B. & Yip, G. S. (2000) "The challenge of global customer management", **Marketing Management**, Vol 9 No 4, pp. 22-29.

Möller, K. & Halinen, A. (1999) "Business relationships and networks: managerial challenge of network era", **Industrial Marketing Management,** Vol 28, pp. 413-427.

Provan, K. G., Fish, A. & Sydow, J. (2007) "Interorganizational networks at the network level: a review of the empirical literature on whole networks", **Journal of Management**, Vol 33 No 3, pp. 479–516.

Ritter & Gemünden, 2003 "Interorganizational relationships and networks: an overview", **Journal of Business Research**, Vol 56, pp.691-697.

Ritter, T., Wilkinson, I. F. & Johnston, W. J. (2004) "Managing in complex business networks", **Industrial Marketing Management**, Vol 33, pp. 175-183.

Roth, K. & Kostova, T. (2003) "The use of the multinational corporation as a research context" **Journal of Management**, Vol 29 No 6, pp. 883-902.

Skaates, M. A., Tikkanen, H. & Lindblom, J. (2002) "Relationship and project marketing success", **Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing,** Vol 17 No 5, 389-406.

Wilson, K. & Weilbaker, D. (2004) "Global account management: a literature based conceptual model", **Mid-American Journal of Business**, Vol 19 No 1, pp. 13-21.

Wilson, D. T. (1995) "An integrated model of buyer-seller relationships", **Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,** Vol 23 No 4, pp. 335-345.