

Creation and Implementation of Business Solutions: Effects on Supplier Firms' Network Position and Identity

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Abstract

This research investigates the dynamic effects that the creation and implementation of business solutions have on the supplier's network position and identity. The study is based on publicly available data from websites and industry reports, as well as interviews with key decision makers in industrial firms and their networks. It contributes to business marketing literature by modelling the dynamic changes that organisational networks experience when organisational actors interact to create and implement business solutions. It focuses on the concepts of network position and network identity.

Previous research on the creation and implementation of business solutions find that this is a highly interactive process that reshapes markets, introduces new actors, and makes redundant other actors to the focal company network. Overall, the wider business environment where organisational actors operate is affected. Dynamic changes on the network level occur despite the parties' intentions and are also difficult to predict. Nevertheless, the effects on the shape of the network become quite apparent, and affect the parties' rights and obligations as perceived by other organizations; that is, the changes on the network shape affect organizations' network position. As the process of creation of business solutions evolves, both customer and supplier find themselves interacting with new companies and organisations. This change requires the learning of new norms and rules, and creates opportunities to develop new skills. The introduction of new parties onto the network changes the set of resources and capabilities that the supplier can access and thus make available to their customers. Customers, then, construe the supplier's network identity differently, eventually more capable than the network identity of competitors, which may create and lead to sustained competitive advantage of the supplier. To conclude, this paper portrays how the network identity changes as a consequence of the parties' interaction in creating and developing business solutions.

Introduction

The development and implementation of business solutions is a highly interactive process with potentially disruptive effects: it potentially reshapes markets, introduces new actors and makes redundant other actors in the network (Biggemann, Kowalkowski, Maley, & Brege, 2013). Hence, business solutions can affect the wider business environment where organisational actors operate (Spencer & Cova, 2012; Windahl & Lakemond, 2006, 2010). Research on the creation and implementation of business solutions (e.g., Tuli, Kohli, & Bharadwaj, 2007; Woodruff, 1997) find that the creation of business solutions increases customer value and thus, strengths the relationship with

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the beneficiary customer and increases loyalty. However, dynamic changes on the network occur despite the parties' intentions and are difficult to predict (Biggemann et al., 2013). These changes have effects on the shape of the network that become quite apparent, and affect the parties' rights and obligations as perceived by other organisations; the perceptions of other parties' rights and obligations is known in literature as network position or network identity (Anderson & Narus, 1990; Johanson & Mattsson, 1992).

We therefore suggest that the concepts of network position and network identity are fruitful means to better understand the dynamic effects of solutions, being complex offerings embedded in longitudinal, relational processes, have beyond the buyer-seller dyadic 'island'. As the process of creation of business solutions evolves, both customer and supplier may find themselves interacting with new companies and organisations, this, may require learning new norms and at the same time may create opportunities to develop new skills. The introduction of new companies onto the supplier's network changes, potentially, the set of resources and capabilities that the supplier can access to and therefore can make available to their customers. Customers, then, may construe the supplier's network identity differently, eventually more capable, than the network identity of competitors, which could create and sustain competitive advantage. This research aims to investigate how this new network identity changes as a consequence of the parties' interaction in developing business solutions.

In the next section we review the literature on network identity/network position to portray how this concept explains the creation of suppliers' competitive advantage. Then we focus our attention on the contributions about network pictures, aiming to uncover its relationship with network position. Next, we present our research method and design, before finishing with a brief summary on business solutions and how they appear to provoke changes on companies' networks and thus changes on suppliers' network position.

Literature review

Network Identity

A long tradition of IMP researchers has been to think of business networks as sets of connected relationships between firms that have advantages beyond the sum of the involved dyadic relationships. Thus Johnston and Lawrence (1988) argue about the flow of goods and services along the value-added chain and how to build, in groups of independent companies, relationships to working together. Anderson, Håkansson, and Johanson (1994) distinguish interaction between two directly connected parties (dyad) and interaction among other parties connected in an extended network pointing out the effects of interaction in the extended network and how they influence the creation of network identity which in turn defines the attractiveness or repulsiveness of a firm as an exchange partner. The network identity is an indication of the competence, capabilities to perform certain activities, and resources that a firm possesses. The firm's identity Håkansson and Snehota (1989) stress, lies in how and with whom it is connected.

Drawing on the relationship between identity and attractiveness, Gulati and Gargiulo (1999) argue that organizations engage in interaction with new organisations relying on their previous experiences and the information from their prior partners about the other parties' possession of critical resources. Engaging with new parties modify the network structure increasing

interdependencies with prior mutual alliances and also the new parties. This, ultimately changes the network centrality that Anderson et al. (1994) refer to as connectedness and argue can be captured by the following two constructs: Anticipated constructive effects on network identity, and Anticipated deleterious effects on network identity. Anticipated constructive effect include: a) anticipated resource transferability (how and where the experience are transferable); b) anticipated activity complementarity (the value of the outcomes in other relationships); and c) anticipated actor-relationship generalizability (the possibility that cooperation with certain actor may have broader implication with other actors), while anticipated deleterious effect include: a) anticipated resource particularity (the potentially problem for using resources in more than one relation); b) anticipated active irreconcilability (the difficulty to integrate activities in different relationships with each other); and c) anticipated actor-relationship incompatibility (the unwanted baggage that may come from engaging in a focal relationship). Anderson's et al. view on connectedness implies that network identity is prone to change when a company engages in interaction either positively or negatively as perceived from other companies in the network.

Network Position

Like network identity, network position is an equivalent concept that Johanson and Mattsson (1992) use to describe an individual party relationship with others in a network structure. For Easton (1992) network position is about the nature of network connections, it provides "a language to talk about network changes." Position offers access to the resources of the rest of the network. However, Easton stresses changes in network position are not always easy to achieve. However, a significant number of articles freely mix identity and position. For instance, Gadde, Huemer, and Håkansson (2003) regard the network position of a company as the result from interactions with other parties. However, they stress that such interactions influence how other network actors construe the firm's identity, which at the same time demonstrate the parties' perceptions of the company's position. Huemer, Becerra, & Lunnan (2004) argue that a combination of external and internal factors affect the development of a company's position and identity. While Öberg, Grundström, & Jönsson (2011) focusing on company's internal dynamics, showing how changes of ownership challenge a company's network position, they argue that those changes affect the perception of the company's business partners regarding their identity. Hence changes of ownership change perceptions of identity, thereby changing network position.

Network Pictures

In studies of network identity/position, some authors developed the idea of network pictures, initially as a research method, but later indulged in reifying network pictures and even proposing network pictures as a construct. In this section we review the literature on network pictures with the intention of decided whether it could replace the concept of network position/identity or should remain as a data gathering method.

Only a few authors have relied on network pictures for research. Moreover, among the selected group of researchers that do research using network pictures, some authors have used them more intensity than the rest. Most research on network pictures, if not all, has been conducted by members of the IMP Group. Likewise, the majority of published research related to network pictures has been published in IMM. In a review of this topic, we found 37 articles that include either network pictures in their title, their key words, or within the text. More than 70% are IMM journal

articles, and in addition to Ramos et al. (2012) six out of 37 were written by the same authors (i.e., Hennenberg, Naude, and Mouzas). These three authors are central to the development and use of network pictures. Although we did not count proceedings of IMP conferences (because many are later published in journals), two IMP articles are significant to mention. The first, Ford, Gadde, Håkansson, and Snehota (2002) introduces network pictures as the basis for actors' perceptions of what is happening around them, and the second, Mouzas, Henneberg, and Naudé (2004) is the first paper of this group of authors about network pictures.

In the search of better representations of networks, Johanson and Mattsson (1992) propose the concept of network position that Ford, et al. (2002) argue affect the network picture. Since Ford et al.'s paper appeared, the majority of network pictures' contributions revolved around the role of network pictures and network position. Leek and Mason (2009, 2010) perceive network pictures as providing a picture of a company's position within a network their lines of communication, their perceived relationship atmosphere and the impact of environmental factors. While Windahl and Lakemond (2006) see networks pictures as vehicles that managers could use to understand their network and create their network horizon, which also relates to addressing the problem of network boundaries. Ford and Redwood (2005), concerned about network positions and boundaries, explain that a network picture captures the complex inter-dependencies that exist in the network, from the company's perspective. Ford and Redwood use network pictures to "*explore the interplay between a company and the surrounding*" (p.649). In another work Ford and Håkansson (2006) describe an actor's network picture as its view of the surrounding network. More recently, Andersson and Mattsson (2010) define network pictures as the actor's perceptions and cognitions of the specific network.

In line with Andersson and Mattsson (2010) a number of researchers have used network pictures as an instrument to making sense of informants views of networks and companies' actions. This idea of network picture builds on the concept of sense-making (Czarniawska and Joergers, (1996); Weick, (2001). Network pictures have proven useful in understanding how actors make sense of network changes (e.g., Ford et al., 2002; Henneberg, Mouzas, & Naudé, 2006; Mouzas, Henneberg, & Naudé, 2008). Weick's (2001) and Czarniawska's and Joergers's (1996) ideas were used in the context of industrial networks to create the term network horizon, which is indicated by the scope of the picture. Henneberg et al. (2006) call network pictures the managers' subjective mental representations of their relevant business environment. Network pictures, they stress, work as "sense-making" devices, shaping managerial decisions, actions, and evaluations. Leek and Mason (2010) augment reporting that network pictures were useful sense-making tools for information sharing within a relationship. In addition, Colville and Pye (2010) study network pictures from an organizational sense-making perspective, finding that network pictures have been used as exercises in sense-making, however, needlessly involving the concept of network pictures in reification, when a more dynamic perspective of network picturing provides greater research opportunities. Furthermore, Borders, Johnston, and Rigdon (2001) developed the idea of picturing the network for mapping networks, but does not use the expression network pictures.

Overall, network pictures have helped researchers to capture the informants' conceptualization of their companies' networks. Ramos and Ford (2011) define network pictures as a representational technique used to capture the informants' views regarding the networked environment in which

they operate. Ford and Håkansson (2006, p. 16) see network pictures as 'a descriptive construct that can be used by researchers to encompass a particular actor's view of the surrounding network and its scale, structure and interactions, as well as the evaluative dimensions it applies to them.' Thus, they go further by arguing that a network picture delivers a view of what actors do and should do, something like the blueprint to build a network. While Ford and Håkansson (2006) call network pictures a construct, we would argue that their view on the term resembles more a tool than a construct.

Network pictures and cognitive mapping, Abrahamsen (2011) suggest, are both means to gain knowledge about actors' perceptions. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe (1991) explain that in cognitive mapping managers attempt to model the complexity of their organizational problems as they see them. However, other researchers and some of those who used network pictures in the sense described lines above, move to a different stage in their description of network pictures. For instance, Öberg, Henneberg, and Mouzas (2007) argue that changes in network pictures change network action. They study the effects of mergers and acquisitions and how they change network pictures; after two companies merge it is possible that what changes in reality is the network, and therefore the way people make sense of it. That is, their network picture.

Network pictures and strategy are also reported in literature. Ford et al. (2002) stress the usefulness of network pictures as part of a company's strategic analysis where the picture helps assessing the company network and where different individuals within the organization have different network pictures that in the strategic development exercise could be used to build a collective wisdom. They argue that network pictures arise from interaction and participants' experience in specific relationships and the corporate wisdom of each company. For Henneberg et al. (2006) network pictures work as sense-making devices that shape managerial decisions, actions and evaluations.

As network pictures are suitable for defining the company network position (Leek & Mason, 2009), it could be argued that relying on the picture, actors can change their network position, which is consistent with Abrahamsen's (2011) view. Sociologists such as Bothner, Smith, and White (e.g., Bothner, Smith, & White, 2010) have studied social networks from a perspective that is not completely different to the IMP approach, However, although they aim to picture actors' positions within the network, and the concept of network position also relates to actors' resources and interdependency, picturing such position is used in the sense of portraying a reality within the actors' network.

Andersson and Mattsson (2010) call network orientation to the forms how actors perceive and understand their market context. Abrahamsen (2011) use network pictures to study actor's perceptions of change, arguing that actors interact in the network based on their perception of reality. The former, we argue, is not different to any previous application of network pictures to study networks. However, Abrahamsen goes further when suggests that network pictures are a theoretical development that have a 'role in underlying network structure.' (p.55). This last sentence appears to suggest that network pictures are more than only a data gathering method that helps the researcher understand the informant's view about the network. Ford et al. (2002) also build and argument that appears contradictory, on the one hand they describe network pictures as actors perception of what is happening around them, but on the other they argue that network pictures have a central role on their model. However, Henneberg, Naudé, and Mouzas (2010) take the issue

further when they call network pictures a construct, a central sense making concept for network analysis. However, Henneberg et al. (2010) also refer to network pictures in a more traditional way explaining that network picture captures “what the relevant business network looks like, and how it ‘works’” (p.356). Abrahamsen, Naudé, and Henneberg (2009, p. 7) argue that ‘network pictures are the manager’s network theories, they represent what managers subjectively perceive to be of importance in their business environment and what the pertaining logic for actions and consequences of managerial activities in the business network are.’ In an earlier study Henneberg, Mouzas, and Naudé (2006) attempt to take network pictures one step further by bringing on board literature on managerial cognition, particularly the concept of sense-making related to Karl E. Weick’s work. It is on this grounds where the group led by Henneberg began their attempts to transform network pictures that others researchers see as a research instrument capable to deal with issues such as network boundaries and network position, into the equivalent of “*higher level constructs of beliefs and attitudes that have directional behavioural repercussions.*” (Henneberg et al., 2006, p.409). They argue that network pictures are essential to the construction process of an organisation’s identity like Weick’s (2001/1995) notion of sense-making does. Ford and Håkansson (2006) posit that network pictures are appropriate to the purpose of portraying the subjective sense-making of managers within complex systems of business interactions and relationships. They augment that network pictures resemble constructs found in both the cognitive mapping and the cognitive group literature, in the organizational behaviour literature, and in the strategy literature.

While Weick’s work is extensive and impossible to summarise in a single sentence, his views of organisations “*as collections of people trying to make sense of what is happening around them.*” (Weick, 2001, p.5) is consistent with the traditional application of network pictures and may not justify elevating them into high level constructs. Besides, Abrahamsen’s (2011) extensive work on sense making in networks starts with seeing network pictures as “*how actors make sense of what is happening around them.*”(p.3). Abrahamsen clearly uses network pictures as a data collection method. However, Henneberg et al. (2006), attempt to conceptualise dimensions of network pictures, including directionality of interactions, time horizon, power, and environment. These dimensions, we argue, have been conceptualised in a few studies of business networks, starting with Anderson, Håkansson, and Johanson (1994) seminal contribution for the study of business marketing from a network perspective.

Abrahamsen (2011) argues that the development of the ‘real network’ cannot be understood if researchers fail to recognize that actors base their actions on their perceptions of the network, not the network itself. Abrahamsen’s argument is based on the critical assumption that there exists a ‘real network.’ However, there is not or at least cannot be portrayed for a number of reasons. First, because the limits of the network are indefinable, second, because the network keeps changing, and third, because depending on the situation the relevance of some actors compared to others changes and therefore the network changes. Thus, the network is a social construction, so the picture of the network is a perception of a social construction, not of a real thing.

Ramos et al. (2012) argue that although there is an increasing interest in the relationship between managers’ perceptions of their surroundings and their interactions with other actors, the complexity of network pictures has been neglected. Thus, the authors pledge to address this fault by theoretically deriving a model of network picture complexity. Nevertheless, the dimensions of

complexity such as the tenure and experience of managers within the company, the number of years a company has been established in business, and the complexity of companies' internal structures can well be argued that assess the complexity of the network using network pictures as data gathering instruments, like the majority of the literature reviewed in this paper uses. Thus, we side with Colville and Pye (2010) regarding the futility of reifying network pictures that have proven useful to study networks from an organizational sense-making perspective.

Method

Studying the processes of how the network identity of the supplier firm changes as a consequence of developing business solutions required a research setting that allowed an analysis of the key actors in the network. This research is the continuation of an initial enquiry on how business solutions are created and implemented conducted in the context of the mining industry. Among the outcomes of this enquiry it became apparent that one of the suppliers investigated, who recently created and delivered an innovative business solution to the industry, started to position itself as an expert of automation instead of a supplier of mining equipment like its closest competitor. As a consequence of this, we started to speculate whether this new expertise was only a delusion of grandeur or instead a shared view with others in the industry. Hence we decided to investigate whether the supplier's network position had changed. The overall methodology could be deemed a case study, drawing on Yin's (2003) definition. However, the methods are a combination of primary data gathered for the original research through interviews with business buyers and marketers operating within the mining industry that we revisited bearing in mind our new research question, public information available in the form of press reports, technical reports and websites of both suppliers and customers, and a retrospective ethnography conducted by one of the researchers who has working experience in the mining industry and worked in the late 80s for one of the major suppliers of mining equipment worldwide. An interpretivist approach to analyse interview transcripts, website and technical report contents, and the recollection of past event was taken.

The Mining Study

Relevant aspects of past event are explained in this section to provide context to the case study. In the late 80s a 40 years partnership between Atlas Copco and Sandvik terminated. Both companies with headquarters in Sweden had been working together in a commercial arrangement where Sandvik manufactured rock drilling tools that Atlas Copco would sell as if they were their own, however always displaying Sandvik's brand. The market would not distinguish the two brands as Atlas Copco customers were used to seeing Sandvik's brand printed in almost all Atlas Copco's sales leaflets and technical datasheets. Both parties gained value from the relationship; Atlas Copco took advantage of Sandvik's superior quality, and Sandvik of Atlas Copco's marketing skills and position in the market. It was by all accounts a happy marriage. However, in the last few years of the relationship, Atlas Copco became concerned about changes that Sandvik started to make to the contract that governed their relationship. The contract changed from a unique general contract between Sandvik and Atlas Copco at their respective headquarters level in Sweden that was valid worldwide, to individual contracts between Sandvik Sweden and each Atlas Copco subsidiary around the world. Atlas Copco construed Sandvik's changes to the contract as the preparation to cut contracts in those markets around the world where Sandvik had developed commercial capability and appeared not to need Atlas Copco anymore. Eventually, Atlas Copco responded to Sandvik's

unfavourable behaviour by buying Secoroc that had similar manufacturing capabilities than Sandvik, an action that Sandvik responded to by buying Tamrock, Atlas Copco's main competitor, and terminating the relationship with Atlas Copco immediately. A marriage of 40 years was broken; an abyss now separated the two.

Over the next few years, Atlas Copco developed the competencies to replace Sandvik's products and devoted its energy to explain that, although for 40 years they advocated Sandvik's brand, a better product was finally available, one which was designed, manufactured, serviced, and sold by Atlas Copco. Sandvik used its strengths to leverage the products of the company recently acquired and continued buying companies until they were able to offer an almost identical product range than Atlas Copco. The former partners were then in ferocious competition, not only for customers but also for human resources that both tried to attract from each other. Over time, in the eyes of customers both companies became indistinguishable, customers would not even thought of them as competitors. As one informant in our phase 1 research commented: "well... they are both Swedish, they do not compete, they will never enter a price war... they are brothers fighting each other." In fact, they even located their sales companies within the same vicinity and used the same colour in their logos.

However, in the late 2000's Sandvik was more responsive to an invitation that a major customer made to both Atlas Copco and Sandvik. It concerned the development of a business solution to controlling the equipment for loading and transportation (scooptrams) of blasted rock and ore wireless. Sandvik's solution turned out to be a major success; its scooptrams were not only wirelessly operated, but the solution enabled one operator to operate five of them at the same time and from a remote distance. The increased productivity and safety earned Sandvik a market dominance that Atlas Copco is still about to par after more than five years after Sandvik's first delivery of its solution. Despite the open invitation that customers made to Atlas Copco to develop an equivalent solution, as customers were concerned about having a one only supplier of these products. The supplier, one of our informants said: "he was struggling to respond to such an invitation because his company could not rationalise why it should invest a significant amount of money to fight for such a reduced market."

Hence, Sandvik was quick to capitalise on its solution and started to dominate the scooptram segment of the market worldwide. Rio Tinto, a British-Australian MNC –metals and mining, appeared to be so impressed with Sandvik's skills that the company invited them to develop a joint project of mine automation for their Northparkes Cu, Ag mine in Australia. The parties announced in October 2012 the initiation of a joint automation project, which went beyond the scope of the already automated loading and transportation of ore that Sandvik provided to the mine. Sandvik was brought on board this project as an expert in automation rather than as a supplier of mining equipment only. Interestingly, Atlas Copco is not mentioned as alternative supplier of this expertise in any documents revised for the study of this case. This automation system project and customers' changing perception of Sandvik's position vis-à-vis its main competitor triggered the present investigation, which results we present in the following section.

Findings

Data from interviews of the first phase of the research already shows Sandvik's dominance as supplier of transportation equipment: "Sandvik already has the best LHD (Load, Haul, and Dump; i.e.

scooptram) with the best automation capabilities available...” reported the general manager of a medium size mining customer in Australia. Based on comments like the previous, we recognised that one of the main benefits of creating and implementing business solutions was to achieve market dominance. Contrary to established views on service-led growth and solutions, in manufacturing firms, however, it did not translate in customer loyalty. The very same customer that regarded Sandvik as the market leader, because of their solution, explained their interest in bringing Atlas Copco on board to avoid being locked into a relationship with Sandvik only. Nonetheless, Northparkes Mine eventually launches their mine automation project and selects Sandvik as their partner. The company’s mining manager for infrastructure explains: “we investigated what automation packages were available and Sandvik Automine® package was the only one that met all our needs.” On a similar note, the automation project manager reports: “one of our greater advantages is we had Sandvik on site for a long time they know our systems and the regional guys are absolutely fantastic, they are as motivated about this technology as we are.”

We were todate unable to interview the mine’s senior staff, because soon after we approached the company requesting access to the site, the mine was sold to China Molybdenum Company's (CMOC). CMOC’s priorities went primarily to the transition in ownership and little new information was made available about the project. At this stage, it remains unclear if the mine will continue with the project. Drawing on Öberg’s et al. (2011) findings on changing network pictures due to acquisitions, we hypothesise that the mine’s network position had changed due to the new ownership structure. Indeed, in an interview with the Human Resources Manager at the mine, she explained: "the managers are finding negotiations difficult as a small fish in a big pond," in reference to they being now a small player in the mining world, so it appears that all the managers feel a little lost without the clout of Rio. They feel as if they have lost a great deal of negotiation power with their suppliers. This could potentially affect also Sandvik’s interest to continue the project. Thus, further enquiry is still necessary. However, after complementing the interview data with secondary data sources, we find that Sandvik is marketing their mine automation systems beyond the scope of automation of ore loading and transportation only. On their website they emphasise: “Sandvik Mining’s automation expertise is the result of years of continuous research, development and close collaboration with our customers. Today, we offer the most advanced automation solutions in the industry.” This, in conjunction with Rio Tinto’s invitation (before Northparkes mine was sold to CMOC), reflects Sandvik’s changed network position and perceived value of their offering, which represents for them a source of competitive advantage, consistent with Woodruff (1997) and Huemer et al. (2004).

Arguably, Rio Tinto invited Sandvik for the automation project as their anticipated resource transferability, as part of their anticipated constructive effects on network identity, were high. However, the change of ownership may have increased the mine’s anticipated deleterious effects on network identity and hence suppliers may have changed their views on working with the mine. These effects on network position are in line with Anderson et al.’s (1994) view on how interaction between actors influences network identities, which in turn determine future willingness to collaborate. Consistent with Gulati and Gargiulo’s (1999) view on how organizations engage in interaction with new organizations, relying on their previous experiences and the information from their prior partners about the other parties’ possession of critical resources, the mine’s established suppliers are much less knowledgeable about CMOC than they were with Rio Tinto. Thus, we hypothesise that Northparkes mine changed network identity could slow down not only the automation project, but any other projects that require significant interaction with suppliers as

suppliers learn the norms and rules of interaction with the new company. Siding with Biggemann (2012) and Mooi and Frambach (2012) the new relationship between the mine and Sandvik may need time to develop enough trust to allow information sharing that enables innovation.

Conclusions

The case shows how the process of creation and implementation of business solutions attracts new parties to the network, which brings new capabilities and thus changes the network position of the supplier. The renewed network position delivers competitive advantage and creates market dominance. This strains the relationship as customers apprehension towards being locked into a relationship with a unique supplier grow prompting customers to encourage competitors to develop similar solutions. However, the level of market dominance acquired by the supplier who developed the solutions makes potential competitors hesitant to invest in the development of their own solutions because of concerns regarding the recovery of costs. Instead, the developer of a solution capitalises on its new network position and progresses further as the only possessor of an expertise that its competitors cannot offer, entering in new projects for innovation that appear to be closed to their competitors. This dynamics, could be argued, might explain the increased relevance of progressing towards solution offerings instead of staying in the market of products and services only. However, as the case illustrates, the dynamic nature of business markets could prompt changes also to the network position of customers, such as through mergers and acquisitions, a matter that has the potential of redefining the dynamics of the market and make the supplier re-evaluate the convenience of relating the customer in its new network position. All in all, who the parties have relationships with, as construed by others in the network, influence how they define their identity and their attractiveness to be engaged with.

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