Master's degree thesis

LOG950 Logistics

How to set up an event company: Success criteria and pitfalls

Tina Lange Olsen

Number of pages including this page: 78

Molde, 27.05.14

Molde University College

Mandatory statement

Each student is responsible for complying with rules and regulations that relate to examinations and to academic work in general. The purpose of the mandatory statement is to make students aware of their responsibility and the consequences of cheating. Failure to complete the statement does not excuse students from their responsibility.

	Please complete the mandatory statement by placing a mark __in each box__ for statements 1-6 below.	
1.	I/we herby declare that my/our paper/assignment is my/our own work, and that I/we have not used other sources or received other help than is mentioned in the paper/assignment.	☒
2.	I/we herby declare that this paper 1. Has not been used in any other exam at another department/university/university college 2. Is not referring to the work of others without acknowledgement 3. Is not referring to my/our previous work without acknowledgement 4. Has acknowledged all sources of literature in the text and in the list of references 5. Is not a copy, duplicate or transcript of other work	Mark each box: 1. ☒ 2. ☒ 3. ☒ 4. ☒ 5. ☒
3.	**I am/we are aware** that any breach of the above will be considered as cheating, and may result in annulment of the examinaion and exclusion from all universities and university colleges in Norway for up to one year, according to the **Act relating to Norwegian Universities and University Colleges, section 4-7 and 4-8** and **Examination regulations** section 14 and 15.	☒
4.	I am/we are aware that all papers/assignments may be checked for plagiarism by a software assisted plagiarism check	☒
5.	I am/we are aware that Molde University college will handle all cases of suspected cheating according to prevailing guidelines.	☒
6.	I/we are aware of the University College`s **rules and regulation for using sources**	☒

Publication agreement

ECTS credits: 30

Supervisor: Oskar Solenes

Agreement on electronic publication of master thesis

Author(s) have copyright to the thesis, including the exclusive right to publish the document (The Copyright Act §2).
All theses fulfilling the requirements will be registered and published in Brage HiM, with the approval of the author(s).
Theses with a confidentiality agreement will not be published.

I/we hereby give Molde University College the right to, free of charge, make the thesis available for electronic publication: ☒yes ☐no

Is there an agreement of confidentiality? ☐yes ☒no
(A supplementary confidentiality agreement must be filled in)
- If yes: **Can the thesis be online published when the period of confidentiality is expired?** ☐yes ☐no

Date: 27.05.14

Preface

This master thesis represents and ending point of a five year long education, where I have spent the two final years at Molde University College. The Master of Science in Event Management has been a time of challenges, learning and growth.

The idea of developing a business plan and to look into success criteria for starting an event company as my master thesis, was initiated during the one year I spent working before I came to Molde University College. I became inspired by the business concept of the company I worked for, and some ideas of how to make some adjustments came to mind. Then, throughout my time in Molde I became even more certain this was a research project for me.

I wish to thank those I have interviewed during this research. They have willingly provided med with absolutely vital information, and this research would not have been possible without them. Then, I want to thank my supervisor Oskar Solenes. He has provided me with guidance and contributed to form my thesis. He has challenged me and given me appreciated help, especially during the last period of the research.

Lastly, I would also like to thank my dear family and friends, for their patience, guidance and good advice. They have supported me all through the process and given me valuable feedback when I have needed it the most.

Molde 2014, *Tina Lange Olsen*

Summary

The subjects researched in this master thesis, was chosen based on my personal wish to start an event company. Then, I wanted to contribute with research on the area of success criteria and pitfalls when establishing an event company. The research questions I decided on were;

How to set up an event company creating meeting arenas between solution providers and decision makers?

What can be identified as success criteria and pitfalls when setting up such an event company?

The literature applied in this dissertation addresses perspectives on business planning and further along perspectives on organizational structure, organizational culture, marketing and event management. In addition to researching the literature on the field, I have conducted interviews through a qualitative method with previous employees of the main competitor of the company I want to establish. These informants highlighted important aspects of success criteria and pitfalls, as well as differentiation and improvement areas.

The most important results was found in identifying success criteria and pitfalls, and the success criteria were identified as: the product itself, high quality events, possibilities of expansion and personal method of marketing. Then, the pitfalls found through this project were: lack of flexibility, focus on public sector, instability in the workforce and a one-sided marketing approach. The results of both researching the literature, and through the interviews have been implemented in the business plan. Concrete findings, analysis and conclusion can be read to its full extent in this dissertation.

Content

Table of figures and tables

1.0 Introduction

When choosing what to topic to write about in the master thesis, it was of high importance for me that the topic I chose would be something I was genuinely interested in, and that the thesis would be of use for me at some point. I sincerely want to start my own business one day and have had this idea for quite some time. The master dissertation then represented an opportunity for me to be able to develop a business plan, based on an idea of improvement and differentiation of another company's business concept, which I have previously worked for. That was how the paper started out.

However, along the research process I decided to limit the business plan to research the aspects of product, organization and marketing along with description of business and market. Instead, the focus on success criteria and pitfalls increased. I saw this as a way of improving the dissertation itself, although the business plan is not completely developed. Nevertheless, I also discovered during my research that the most fundamental and important aspects of being able to set up a sustainable company, can very much be found within the structure and culture of an organization

1.1 Background

The business idea, shortly put is to start an event company where the core business is to create meeting arenas between decision makers in various industries with solution providers. This will not be a traditional event company as seen in the Norwegian event industry, whereas most event firms focuses on creating various types of events on contract for other companies. Instead, the idea is to create seminars and conferences as the framework of bringing solution providers together with decision makers.

The business idea itself is based on the business idea of a company I previously worked for. I worked there for one year, and the company experienced some challenges in terms of entering the Norwegian market and establishing a solid Norwegian team and Oslo based office. Further, I believed the challenges they met and issues related to why the Norwegian market was difficult to entry could be solved by certain changes and adjustments.

1.2 Research Question

This thesis has a two sided focus where as it on the one side mainly based on literature, will provide a business plan for an event company creating meeting arenas between solution providers and decision makers. Secondly, this project has researched success criteria and pitfalls to avoid when establishing this type event company. The pitfalls have had an important impact on the business plan, and the success criteria have been implemented in it.

The research questions are:

How to set up an event company creating meeting arenas between solution providers and decision makers?

What can be identified as success criteria and pitfalls when setting up such an event company?

In this paper, the business plan for the event company will be constrained to mainly look into organizational structure, organizational culture, marketing, and product along with a market and business analysis.

1.3 Literature review

A variety of literature and research has been looked into when conducting this research. This have mainly been theory of how to construct a business plan, marketing, event management and of organizations and its' culture. For instance, the theory applied here on marketing are about how social media can be used and what type of perspective a business can have on social media. The theory emphasized how social media may be applied as a tool to create relationships with customers, and then further how it can contribute to achieve brand awareness, recurring customers and to reach new customers. Then, the literature of organizational culture along with how it can be a source of sustained competitive advantage reaches inward in the company and shows important aspects of building and keeping an organizational culture. Additionally, the literature focuses on how important a well-developed organizational culture is for a company. The literature of event management have brought light to important aspects of event planning, and more in-depth the level of flexibility needed in the various stages and processes of event planning. This literature has been important in enlightening the different areas of the thesis, and to

understand and analyze the findings of this research. However, it has been very challenging to find research conducted on all these areas combined and research specifically providing these types of success criteria and pitfalls. Considering the lack of previous research taken into account, this research project provides a new combination of these areas and within a business plan setting as well. Though I haven't been able to find similar studies conducted on the same areas, one cannot leave out the possibility of that similar studies exists. Still, if that is the case, this research may be seen as additional contribution in the literature field.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

In this part of the dissertation, relevant theory is brought forward with the intention of providing a better understanding of the framework of the research question. As this is a business plan, and a unique one, it has been a challenge to find relevant research. Yet, the theory focus on what a business plan should contain and further into those specific aspects. Then, theoretical perspectives on organizational structure, organizational culture, marketing, event management along with a variety of models and tools of analysis have been applied.

2.1 Business Plan

Innovation Norway is considered the most important tool of the Norwegian Government for development and innovation of Norwegian industry and enterprise. Innovation Norway support entrepreneurs and companies at various levels, to enhance innovation. The organization provides these companies or entrepreneurs with a support system including advisory services, network services, competence and promotional services. They combine business ideas with international networks and with local industry knowledge to create the basis of new successful businesses. (www.innovasjonnorge.no)

According to Innovation Norway (www.innovasjonnorge.no), a business idea describes the gap in the market to be filled, your target market and those aspects which makes you more capable of meeting this needs than others. Further, they stress how the business model should strive to describe how the business can meet needs and create values. The process of developing ones business model can be crucial in terms of separating oneself from others, exploit advantages and to achieve success in the market.

Further, they suggested that a business plan describes and *is* in fact a plan of action explaining what is needed for the business model to achieve success. Further, the business plan may include an analysis of opportunities of innovation, aspects to be improved, weaknesses and strengths. (www.innovasjonnorge.no)

2.2 What is the purpose of a business plan?

According to Nunn and McGuire (2010) one of the main purposes to develop a business plan is for the founder. This is in the perspective of the developer, where the business plan is developed to give guidance in how the business should be developed and operated. In

other words, the business plan gives direct indicators on how to operate the business. Then, ideally with a fully developed business plan, it should also be purposeful in the perspective of possible investors or lenders where the intention is to attract these.

2.3   What should a business plan contain?

Altinn.no is the website of the Norwegian Government, and was established in 2003. They reach out to business in all industries and sectors in Norway, with a variety of services. Altinn delivers tax forms as well as other electronic forms to both private individuals and businesses. Besides from economical and financial plans, they suggest that a business plan should include: summary, business idea, description of product and production, description of market, marketing strategy/pan, organizing and administration of the business and a plan of action. (www.altinn.no)

Nunn & McGuire (2010) proposed that the following sections should be represented in the business plan:

- Table of contents: The authors emphasize that one should keep in mind that the readers of your business plan, might want to read it in a different order than you wrote it. The table of contents should be structured in the perspective of the readers.

- Business Description: Here, factors such as core values for the business and mission of the business should be presented. Further, the facilities as is now is ought to be described. This description includes explaining why you would own or lease, how facilities are used in operating the business, yet brief. Next part, the business strategy should present organizational structure and surely what services or products your business offers. Then a discussion of which opportunities your business is able to exploit should follow. Here, point of leverage and how these opportunities can be taken advantage of should be included. The business' target market, what you plan to offer this market and possible problems with explanation of how these can be solved are also important aspects. Additionally, alternative markets should be considered along with services or products your business can develop in the future. It is important to deliberate on how these services or products may be perceived in the market. What values may your company offer the customers are to be included, as well as a discussion on why these values may be of

importance for them. Explain how your services or products differentiate from others, from the competitors.

- Management: A description of the management team of the business and how they will work as a group should be presented in a separated section. Key positions, who they are, their qualifications and what their contributions to the team should be outlined here. For those positions not filled, desired skills and personality attributes for those you wish to fill the positions are to be described. If the company needs advisors or consultants from outside of the company, these should also be included.

- Market and Business Analysis: Nunn and McGuire (2010) states this is one of the most important parts of the business plan. They say one should start with developing an understanding of your business current state, and go into how your business is organized and what you are doing. Further, they suggest one should conduct a SWOT analysis for the company. This includes:

  o Strengths: Describe and explain which aspects about your business make it strong.

  o Weaknesses: Admitting ones weaknesses are crucial and should be viewed realistically along with a description of how one plan to overcome these.

  o Opportunities: Identify what position your business can fill in the market and other opportunities for your company. Further and just as important, explain how these opportunities can be taken advantage of.

  o Threats: This part is where one considers possible pitfalls, possibilities of what could go wrong. A description of these should be included along with how these threats may be met.

After conducting the SWOT analysis, the various aspects should be compared. Starting with comparing the business' strengths to the opportunities and further show of the strengths can be used to take advantage of the opportunities. Further, threats and strengths should be compared and then describe how strengths can be used to overcome the identified threats. Additionally, opportunities should be compared to weaknesses, and further go into how you will take advantage of those opportunities and then be able to

reduce or overcome the weaknesses. The last comparison is threats to weaknesses, and then an elaboration on how one can overcome the weaknesses and threats.

The last part of this section is to describe competitors, analyze what they do and how. Further, explain the differences between your business and theirs, and look into the possibilities of others starting a competing business.

- Business and Market Development: Here an overview of the labor market should be provided, with aspects such as; availability of desired skills and experience for the business. Look into if the planned product or service will demand costly or rare resources. Then characteristics of the market should be described, where possible future trends in the industry and market should be addressed, and what types of products and services will be attractive for representative customers. Describe further how this business can take part of the business already in the market. Show how a certain part of the customer base can be attracted so that the company can make profits. Handling risk may also be addressed here, and start off with reviewing risk of failing and a following plan of controlling and reducing risk to the minimum.

  Nunn and McGuire (2010) emphasize the importance of showing what the business is offering in terms of products or services, and further elaborate on how this will be done. Elements of differentiation, what separates your product from the competitors should be explained along with what makes your product or service unique and where value is added for the customer. Lastly, one should show how customers can get in contact with the business.

- Marketing and Sales: This part of the plan should include how to attract new customers and further elaborate on the marketing plan for the business. Then, how one wants customers to view and perceive the business should be described along with all PR and promotional aspects planned. As a business owner, creating as many new customers as possible in a given short time period should be your marketing objective. Additionally, there are various companies offering the same as your business to hopefully the same people. Here, one should discuss and elaborate on all types of planned marketing approaches. (Nunn & Mcguire, 2010)

2.4   How to construct an organization

Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2006) suggested that an organization can be explained as a conscious constructed social system with the purpose of conducting specific set goals. In this explanation, social represents that organizations exists of people cooperating combined. Further, this group of people works together and combined makes a unit limited from the outside environment and the group rely on these environment resources, which all together makes the system. Lastly, this group is conscious constructed, which refers to how this is developed in such a way someone believes is the most efficient.

Most theory that address organizations, claims a wish to clarify characteristics of an effective organization, and effectiveness can be described simply as what one is able to achieve related to the use of resources. If one is able to achieve goals, one has to act and assumptions are that attitudes and actions of people may be affected, changed and created by how the organization is. Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2006) refer to three different variables that explain and affect the behavior of people in organizations. The first one is what they call the formal characteristics of the organization, which is the organizations goals, strategies and structure. Second is the informal characteristics of the organization, which refers to the human factor, in other words, personal and social relations specifically referring to organizational culture and power relations. Third and last is the surroundings and environment of the organization.

2.5   Organizational Structure

In terms of the organizational structure of the business, various types exist in different businesses. This paper will present two different structures as those are seen as the most relevant for the business plan.

The entrepreneur organization: According to Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2006) this type of structure contains no support- or technological structure, but is based on a management division and one operational part. This structure may be seen in organizations created by someone who strives for high level of control and whereas the organization is rather small. These characteristics are often followed by direct supervision as a method of coordinating and the manager makes the most decisions. Therefore, the decision making system is often centralized. As a result of this structure, division of labor may be unclear and lead to administrative challenges. Yet, this type of structure provides high level of

flexibility and gives the business the opportunity of handling customers more openly and quickly adapt to changes. Additionally, the structure will keep administration costs low.

The innovative organization: This type of organization contains a structure of network for authority, communication and control where assignments are rapidly adjusted and redefined according to needs. Further, division of labor is simplified and communication flows both horizontally and vertically, depending on what is needed. This form of structure is rather unclear which in turns brings innovation and creativity forward. Innovative organizations has a high level of flexibility, knowledge and competence are taken advantage of, and are often characterized by a high level of coordination. However, unclear levels of authority may bring out frustration and insecurity in the business.

Although there are various types of organizations, most real life businesses are a mix and rarely, if ever, exist of solely one type. Organizational structures are formed by people and can be in nearly any form. Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2006).

2.6 Organizational Culture

Schein's (1990) perspective on organizational culture is that it must be built over time, where a given group of people build a history given certain stability in the group. Further, he states that culture cannot be built if there is no common history or if the turnover of members in the group is high. Schein (1990) defined organizational culture as:

> Culture is what a group learns over a period of time as that group solves its problem of survival in an external environment and its problems of internal integration. Culture can now be defined as (a) a pattern of basic assumptions, (b) invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, (c) as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaption and internal integration, (d) that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore (e) is to be taught to new members as the (f) correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 1990, 111)

This definition highlights the key aspects of what creates and keeps organizational culture. Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2006) explained further that an understanding of organizational culture is important and vital for the success of an organization. Understanding how organizational culture may be applied as a tool in order to improve the results of the

company and to see meaning of values in relation to how the organization is established, changed and kept.

When starting a new company and establishing the organizational culture, developing a sustainable and wholesome culture will be the main focus. Management and the actions of the management are very significant as this is about how the culture is communicated. Further, a variety of tools may be used in order to socialize the employees into the ideology and values of the organization. A continuous focus on values, HR polices, focus on purposes and guidelines are all examples of such tools that can be applied. Development of the formal structure as a living framework of the organization can be used as an instrument to form the culture as well. (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2006)

2.7 Organizational Culture and Competitive Advantage

Barney (1986) developed a theoretical framework where he stated that three conditions must be fulfilled for a company's culture to be able to provide sustained competitive advantage. The first one is about performance leading to high margins, high scales, low costs or other ways of adding financial value to the company, which he referred to as; *the culture must be valuable.* In other words, to produce such performance the culture is dependent on having positive economic consequences, as creating financial value is an economical concept. This condition is a requirement to achieve normal economic or even high economic performance. However, the culture and company cannot be a foundation of sustained or superior financial performance if the culture allows behavior that is inconsistent with the competitive situation of the company. The second condition address rarity of the culture, which means that certain qualities and features of the culture are of a kind the culture does not have in common with many other companies. Lastly, the culture has to be imperfectly imitable. Shortly put, this means that if any other company tries to copy or imitate the imperfectly imitable culture, that company will be at some kind of disadvantage in comparison of the company they strive to copy. (Barney, 1986)

2.8 Marketing

Marketing is, according to Ottesen (2005) about developing a good strategy towards convincing the customers to buy what the business offers. Marketing represents communication of the product or service to the market and how to combine methods of

communication and offers. The author emphasizes the importance of being able to deliver a competitive offer to the market.

2.8.1 The marketing mix

Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) defined the marketing mix as the combination of elements needed to enable communication with and satisfaction of customers. The mix is necessary for any organization and the elements represent those the organization can control.

Services and events are characterized by being simultaneously produced and consumed, where customers are an important part of the process of the service production. The customers are present at a venue and they interact directly with the personnel of the event. Further, customers may seek tangible reminders, as services and events can be defined as intangible, to achieve an understanding of the service experience. This means, taken the perspective of the customer into consideration, that marketing events and services includes using additional aspects to communicate with customers. And more importantly, satisfy them. Then, Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) argued that the original four P's should be expanded, based on the acknowledgement of adding these variables of communications. As shown in the table below, the expanded marketing mix will then also include process, people and physical evidence.

Product	Place	Promotion	Price
Physical good features Quality level Accessories Packaging Warranties Product lines Branding	Channel type Exposure Intermediaries Outlet locations Transportation Storage Managing channels	Promotion blend Salespeople: number, selection, training, incentives Advertising: targets, media types, types of ads, copy thrust Sales promotion Publicity	Flexibility Price level Terms Differentiation Discounts Allowances
People	**Physical Evidence**	**Process**	
Employees: recruiting, training, motivation, rewards, teamwork Customers: education, training	Facility design Equipment Signage Employee dress Other tangibles: reports, business cards, statements, guarantees	Flow of activities: standardized, customized Number of steps: simple, complex, Customer involvement	

Table 1: Expanded Marketing Mix for Services (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003,24)

2.8.2 Social Media

Chaney (2009) considers social media as not only a new method of marketing, but also a new way to get connected to one other. Mainly, this is about starting conversations, something very different from clicking an advertisement or watching an advertisement on TV. Social media has the ability to bring people *closer* to one another, instead of a traditional consumer seeing and advertisement based one-way communication. Further, he explained how marketing in this matter has turned from creating messages directed to the target audience, to actually participate in communities relevant for your business. His perspective is on how social media, in fact is about building relationships, not a campaign or a marketing channel. Social media brings forward starting and joining conversations. One should acknowledge the customer and recognize that the customer is a part of a co-

creation, and treat the customer as a partner. Chaney underlined this very explicit, "its business gone personal" (Chaney, 2009, 42)

2.9 Area of Business: Event Management

Events are a temporary happening, and Getz (2005) specified that planned events are, in advance organized and made public. Events are supposed to have a finite length and this is accepted and *expected* by people. This is in fact, a vital part of why events are attractive and makes each event unique. When the event is ended it cannot be experienced ever again. Even, as several events are repetitive, *the exact same* atmosphere and experience cannot be recreated. Program, venue, setting, people and management may and are often changing even with repetitive events. The definition of all planned events given by Getz (2005) is:

> Planned events are temporary occurrences with a predetermined beginning and end. Every such event is unique, stemming from the blend of management, program, setting and people.(Getz, 2005, 16)

According to Yeoman, Robertson, Ali-Knight, Drummond and McMahon-Beattie (2009) there are four main stages in development of events in event management: decision, detailed planning, implementation and evaluation. As every event is unique, each stage has a relative importance due to type of event and can be very different. The order of these stages may vary as well, as of the purpose and nature of the event.
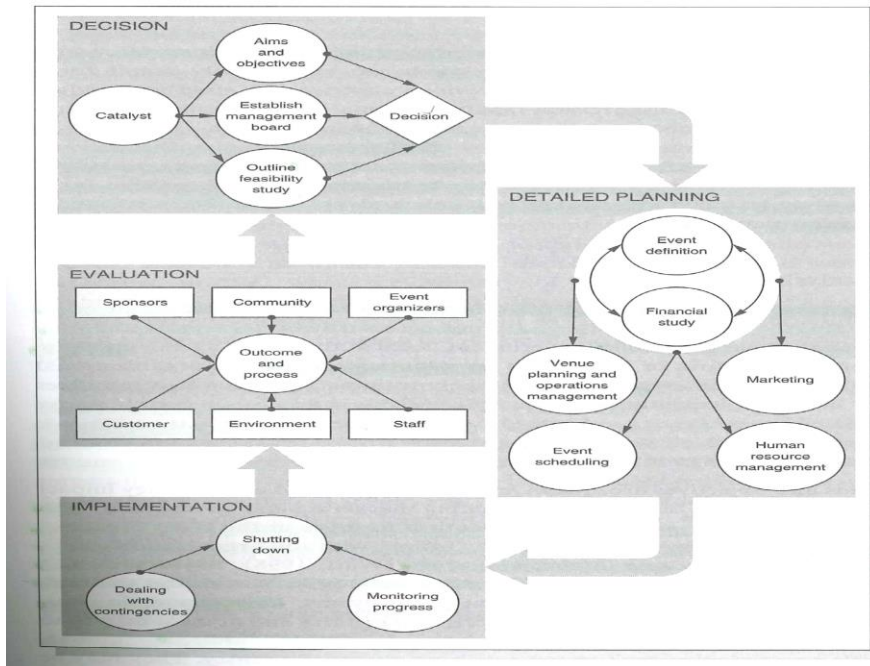
Figure 1: Four Major Stages of Event Development (Yeoman et al. 2009,15)

Getz (2005) argued that event managers need to act and think systematically, as events do not occur isolated, and each management task impinges on others. The event management system is shown in the model below, and the model shows a system of elements which all are interacting or interdependent. This means that the event and its management will be affected by changes in environmental factors, and the event's effect on the environment, economy and the community is equally just as important. Therefore, it is central for managers to fully understand these dynamics of interdependencies and be able to expect changes, and then be flexible enough to adapt. The author defines this as an open system model, dependent and affected by the surrounding environment.
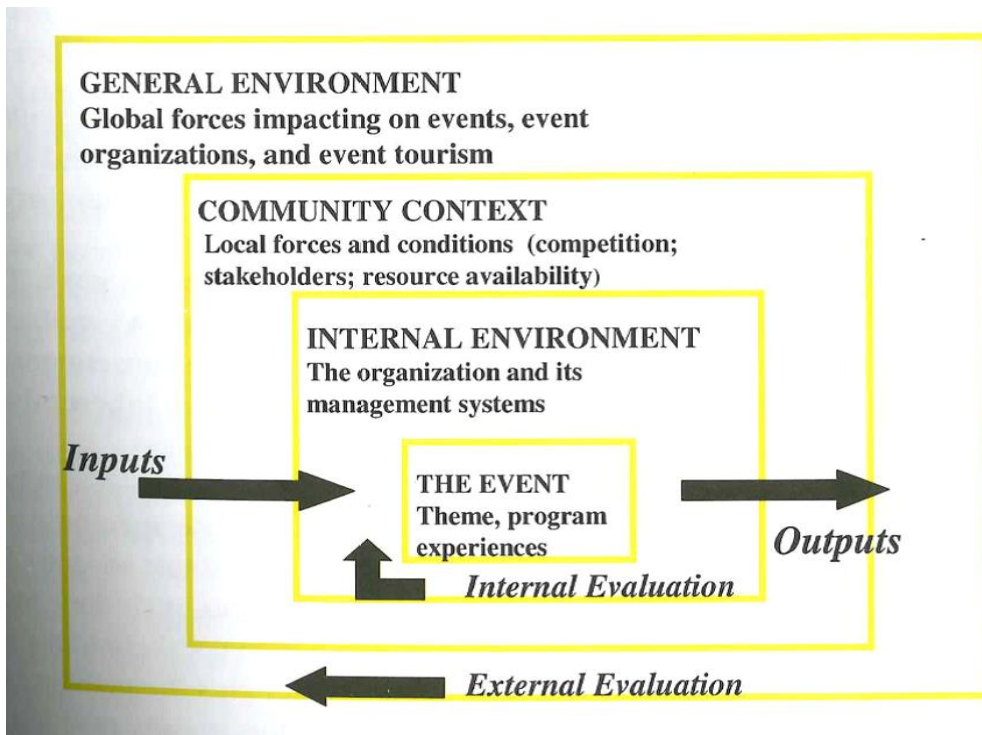
Figure 2: Event Management System (Getz,2005,53)

3.0 Methodology

This part of the dissertation will give insight and information on how the research process has been conducted. From start to end, what decisions have been made at different stages in the research project will be explained in this chapter.

3.1 Research Design

The methodology chosen here is divided between two parts. The first one was chosen to fit the development of the business plan, and the part of the research question; How to create meeting arenas between solution providers and decision makers. Here, previous literature on the subject has been applied along with secondary data needed to complete the chosen sections of the business plan. Considering the research question, and where no or few former studies have been conducted on this subject, I have chosen what Leedy and Ormrod (2013) called exploratory design, as this method may fit the research best. Secondly, to identify success criteria of operating this type of event company along with pitfalls, differentiation areas and improvement factors, what Jacobsen (2000) refers to as a qualitative research design has been applied. This research method was chosen to carry through interviews with a selected group of previous employees of the key competitor, where I myself previously have worked. The business plan is then a result of both methods, where the identified success criteria, improvement factors and areas of differentiation have been implemented. As mentioned earlier, the business plan developed has been limited and contains these sections: business description, products, organizational structure, organizational culture, surroundings, SWOT and plan of action.

3.1.1 Intensive design

The intensive research frame is characterized by going in depth into certain and a few units, or informants. Here, the intention is to gain an overall perspective of a phenomenon, which means that all nuances and details should be brought out to light. To go in depth to a phenomenon often has the intention of bringing out individual varieties and differences that exists in the understanding of the subject, as well as bringing out similarities. (Jacobsen, 2000) In this case, this research may fit well as I seek information and knowledge about the main competitor, and especially how the individuals experienced working there.

3.1.2 Exploratory Design

Exploratory research design are often used, when very few or none at all has researched the subject earlier, as the method provides insight and creates and understanding of the chosen subject. This design is very flexible, but yet it may be a rather unstructured process. (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013) In this paper, this has been the first part of the research method, where previous conducted research has been applied to develop the business plan. Further, secondary data has been collected, hereby statistics to gain information on possible market and customer base.

Jacobsen (2000) stated that an explorative research question will need a method that can bring out data with nuances, a method that allows one to look deep and a method that is flexible and open for the unexpected. In other words, with an explorative research question, you need a method that will highlight the nuances which in turn demands a focus on few units, and therefore with a qualitative approach.

3.2 The Qualitative Approach: Data Collecting

As the qualitative research approach was chosen, the next step was to decide how information should be collected. Firstly, there are the primary data which brings in firsthand information through interviews of different kind. Then there is secondary data, where one looks into previously conducted research on the chosen subject or applies for instance statistics. An important part of the process, addresses how to choose informants. This is about who the researcher wants to talk to or observe. How to analyze the data that is gathered follows as the next step, and this is when one decides how the data should be treated and put in system to be able to use it properly. The results should then be analyzed, considered and interpreted. Final and last stage includes final addressing of results, and conclusions are drawn. (Jacobsen, 2000)

In this dissertation, it has been chosen to conduct what Jacobsen (2000) refers to as the individual and open interview. He stated this is the most common method when it comes to conducting qualitative research. As I wanted to bring out the individual statements and opinions in the interviews, this method of collecting data was chosen. The sample of interviewees chosen is highly relevant in order to provide answers to the research questions and it may therefore be most preferable with this type of collecting data method.

It is important to keep in mind that the choice of data collection method, affects the validity of the data as it may be discussed if the method itself is a good fit for the research problem. Further, the chosen method may affect the reliability of the data, as all methods are selective in terms of gathering of information, where some information by the nature of the method are excluded, and as the method itself may affect the results in a certain way. (Jacobsen, 2000)

Open interview has been chosen in this research. Now, Jacobsen (2000) states that this method will be a good fit if the research is cohesive with the follow assumptions:

1. "When few units are researched". In this matter, eight persons have been interviewed. These informants are all previous employees at the main competitor for Associated. Further, the author emphasized how this may be a rather time consuming process, both conducting the interviews and handling the data afterwards, therefore few informants may be preferable. The interviews have been carried out through telephone, as it requires less resources considering the informants are located in various places of Norway and Europe.

2. "When we are interested in the opinion of each individual". Open personal interviews are individualizing as it brings out preferences and opinions of each interviewee. This research project and interviews pursues to figure out the opinions of previous employees, to bring out success factors and aspects that may be improved in a similar company. Each and every individual's opinion is therefore significant, also to see the differences between various operating markets and their preferences.

3. "When we are interested in how the individual interpret a phenomenon". This assumption is quite similar to the previous one, and means that individual interviews fits well when one want to bring out each individuals perspective and interpreting of a phenomena. In this research, it can bring out important information, to obtain the perspective and interpretation of previous employees on the success and challenges of the main competitor.

According to Jacobsen (2000) there are several reasons for why the interview should be conducted face to face. It may be easier for individuals to discuss themes face to face mostly because it is easier to achieve a level of personal contact, when both people are

physically sitting together. A phone interview on the other hand requires fewer resources and is less costly to carry through. Further the phone interview provides a way of interviewing which may let the interviewee behave and response more naturally, unaffected by the physical attendance of the interviewer. Although, it may have been ideal to conduct the interviews face to face, phone interviews have been chosen in this research project. As the interviewees are geographically far away, situated various places of Norway as well as locations in Europe, phone interviews seems to be preferable. This research project have had limited resources and to travel to interview each interviewee face to face would have been too costly

3.2.1 The Qualitative Approach: The Interview Guide

An interview guide has been developed to apply when interviewing the informants. Jacobsen (2000) specified that the interview may be completely open, structured or somewhere in between. The author further suggested that the interview should not be completely open, as it is important to choose some themes one wants to gather information about. On the other hand, a completely structured interview with given options of answers, may not be preferable as it may act as a barrier for collecting information. He suggested that developing an interview guide can be preferable; to be able to have an aim for the interviews, yet leave a possibility open for the informant to bring out additional information. For this research project, this aspect has been very important. Although, it has been developed an interview guide with a set of head themes, what the informants may bring out as additional information can turn out to be significant. The interview guide is divided into the following main themes: operating market, product, HR and marketing. These four areas have been chosen as I considered them as important possible improvement areas, and areas of success and opportunities of differentiation. Further, the questions is developed in order to bring out information about the organization and its' culture, which can be just as important.

In some situations it may be impossible or very difficult to collect primary data, where one needs to use secondary sources and data. These are data collected for a different purpose, and a benefit of collecting this data is that it is often less costly and less time-consuming than collecting the data itself. (Jacobsen, 2000) It may be of either qualitative or quantitative matter, and this paper have used statistics and information regarding market opportunities and to foresee a possible customer base.

3.2.2 The Qualitative Approach: The Sample

Regarding selection of informants, Jacobsen (2000) suggested to first of all gain an overview of all possible informants that fits the criteria of the phenomenon one is researching. Then, one must try to define the theoretical population one is seeking as informants to ones' research. In this research project, that would technically be all those who ever have worked for the main competitor. Further, Jacobsen (2000) stated that one needs to establish some criteria for selecting informants. These may be controlled by the purpose of the research, what type of information one is looking for and why. A conscious approach to which one is interviewing is of importance. What type of information that is gathered, depends on who one is talking to. The criteria of selection are, according to Jacobsen (2000) random selection, width and variation, information and what's typical. The author then underlined how one does not need to use random methods, but rather base the selection on a more conscious decision and then choose some informants. Not based on them being representative or gives a perspective of width and variety, but because they can provide the researcher with particular and interesting information. This method seems to fit this research quite well, as I am looking for information on how the concept of the main competitor can be changed, improved and where the success criteria and pitfall can be found. This brings the next criteria of selection, information.

Choosing informants based on the opinion that these people may provide good and in-depth information of the subject can be a valid decision. This may be, and preferably are persons who are willing to give away information and with knowledge and experience of the subject. This may not be easy to use, as one need to know how good sources of information the interviewees are. (Jacobsen, 2000) The interviewees chosen for this project are individuals I have worked with, which means I know they have information and knowledge about the subject I am researching. Further, the informants could have been employees for this company *now*, but it might have been rather difficult to get access to the same type of information, due to loyalty issues. Therefore, previous employees have been chosen. Then, it was important to me to have both employees whom worked for the Norwegian market and employees whom had worked for other European markets. This is because, along with working closely with the Norwegian team, sharing managers, these other teams had been operative for several years in opposite to the Norwegian, which can provide other aspects of information. Then I believe it is of interest of the results, to see

both the opinions regarding the Norwegian market and those of other markets within the same company.

3.3 *Analyzing data*

The process of analyzing the qualitative data has been conducted through three phases, as described by Jacobsen (2000):

1. Describe: This phase covers a description of the collected information. In this dissertation, this is presented in the findings chapter, to provide a profound overview and insight in the material from the interviews.

2. Categorize: In this part, the information is divided and categorized to be able to gain an overview of the information. The information has been categorized in both findings chapter and the analysis in this paper. These categories are: product, operating market, HR, organization and marketing. These categories have been selected to provide information to enlighten success criteria, pitfalls, and improvement and differentiation areas.

3. Collect: As the information is placed in system, next step is to interpret the data. In this phase, one should look for the indirect data and often the most interesting part. This final part of the analysis and discussion chapter provides a discussion of the information and the literature framework.

3.4 *Reflections*

Considering the sample and method chosen for this research project, a few aspects may be important to reflect about.

First of all, none of the interviewees were employees on a manager level. This means, the information from the interviews are opinions from individuals with no or limited insight in the company's strategic goals, structure, financial goals, financial status and so on. Yet, they have insight from their working situation, which is also beneficial for the research project. Their experiences of being a 'normal' employee with no manager position may provide a valid impression of the organizational culture, as what the employees actually feel about this are of crucial importance. However, gaining information from all levels in

the company could have provided a more wholesome picture and deeper insight in the 'why's' of the key findings.

Secondly, all the interviewees are *previous* employees of this company. As earlier mentioned, due to loyalty for the company this may be preferable to be able to collect more information on the matters. On the other side, this may also mean that all the interviewees has either chosen to leave the company or been let go, which can indicate they may be predisposed with opinions of the company and colored by their experiences. Then, the information they bring forward is likely subjective as a result of this and may be effected by their feelings towards the company, of whichever art that may be.

Thirdly, as the researcher in this project and myself a previous employee at this company I may also be colored with certain opinions and feelings for the themes being researched within the company. Ideally, I would have been completely objective, as my previous employment and experiences with the company may have had an effect on the research. On the other hand, it is very much because of my personal experience with this company, I got inspired to do this research project.

3.4.1 Research Ethics

When conducting this research project, certain ethical aspects has been taken into consideration. In terms of the informants, they have all been provided with information about the research project, what its purpose is, what the information will be used for and who may be able to read the finished product. Further, they have been made aware of the intentions of interviewing *them* in particular. They have been given a type of anonymity they requested and were satisfied with, where no names have been mentioned in this project or as to which period of time they worked for the company in matter. This means, in this dissertation the informants are referred to by a given number and the company they worked for, which are the main competitor have been given a faux name. Information gathered from the company's website, about the company, has been presented without reference intentionally, and cannot be found in the reference list either. The informants have stated that they were comfortable with providing the information, and as the interviews were conducted during a phone call, this was recorded and deleted three days after the interview.

3.5 Limitations

This research project has some limitations and delimitations. Limitations may be seen as weaknesses of the research and methods chosen. Delimitations can be explained as boundaries set to limit the scope of the research project (Simon, 2011). Some of the limitations have been discussed already, in the reflection section. A delimitation set for the business plan, is that this paper have focused on the aspects of business description, products, organizational structure, organizational culture, surrounding environment, SWOT and plan of action. It has then been chosen to leave out economical and financial aspects, and from a researchers' perspective these have been considered in this case, as *not* the most interesting factors. Then, it is my opinion that this has improved the dissertation, by maintaining focus on analyzing aspects of the organization. These are in turn valuable factors, and have revealed vital areas of improvement and differentiation along with success criteria, that have been implemented in the business plan. Surely a fully developed business plan includes economical and financial aspects however, that has in this case been left for a second process at a later time.

In terms of methodological choices, one may argue that ideally the interviews should have been conducted face-to-face, however I did not have the required resources. Further, from an ideal methodological perspective, the interviews should maybe been written and sent back to the interviewees for approval. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to do this, but in an ideal situation this should have been done. As this research has been conducted over a five month time period, some boundaries have been set. The group of informants may ideally include individuals from all levels inside the organization the project has looked into, and from all functions of the company. Gaining information from the market division, financial division and moreover the management group could have provided important and a different type of information. Some of the aspects brought out by the informants here, may have more meaning or are founded on strategic decisions which this research does not enlighten. The insight of the organization and its' operations are limited to the opinions and experiences of the employees, and leaves out the employers themselves. Also, the informants are previous employees, which mean that certain aspects may have changed since they worked there. Maybe some of the challenging areas have been improved or new policies have been implemented. These are key limitations to keep in mind here. However, in the startup phase of the project this was taken into consideration. As a researcher, I decided not to approach individuals who are employed

there *now*, due to loyalty issues for the employees. Further, expanding the sample with more employees from various divisions and at managerial level would have demanded more resources, and even a shift in focus of the research. Additionally, it was of importance to be realistic in terms of which individuals would take the time and let themselves be interviewed, where the chance increased for those who were previous colleagues of mine.

4.0 Findings

This section provides a description of the collected information given by the interviewees. These findings have been structured in a systematic matter, to be able to bring out the new knowledge of the results.

4.1   Products

This part of the interview guide was developed to research the products of the company, and various aspects of these. First of all, the informants were asked how they experienced the products were received by decision makers and solution providers. Six experienced acceptance, and that both group of customers liked the products and business concept of the company. However, two of the informants stated it was dependent on the program of the event and that some of the decision makers were not too eager to participate. As one of them said:

> Very much depending on whom it was. For some companies this was right up their alley, for others, didn't have the need for attending at our event, and a lot of time was used at persuading them to attend, or at least say yes. (Interviewee #1)

Then the next question was what the opinions the interviewees themselves had of the products. All eight said they thought very highly of the products and the business idea behind. One of the interviewees described it as: "When well executed, these products are really good and provide benefits to all involved in the process." (Interviewee #8). The informants also described the products as very solid and unique and all informants stated that the events were very professional, and executed with a high level of quality. However, two of the Norwegians stated the products lacked some flexibility and room for adjustments.

Secondly, the informants were asked how they saw these products could have been improved. Three informants suggested to further research industrial differences and to increase the level of flexibility of the products. They explained that all events were planned and implemented by a specific structure and suggested that flexibility to make changes due to different industries, could have made the events even better. One also suggested to charge a fee from decision makers as well as solution providers: "Companies

are spending a lot of money just to set up meetings, that's why the idea is brilliant. But there are larger lumps of money to harvest from this." (Interviewee #1)

4.2 Operating Market

The first part of the interview contains questions about the employees' previous operating market. Operating market means which country team they worked for, here five of the informants worked for the Norwegian team while the other three worked for other European teams. First the informants were asked how they felt the company was able to position itself in their market. Here the answers were rather similar, as all eight informants meant that the company was able to position itself as a leading provider of their product. Also, the Norwegian informants emphasized that the company had no competitors delivering the same products as they did and that this brings additional value to their position. Further, two of the Norwegian informants also pointed out that as new in the Norwegian market, the company was able to grow and had an increasing amount of upcoming events.

Secondly, the informants was asked how the company could have improved its' position in the markets. Here, six of both the European and Norwegian informants mention social media as a tool to raise awareness and then be able to increase number of decision makers and solution providers participating. This aspect was also brought out as a method of increasing customer loyalty, which in turn could improve the company's positions. Further, three of the Norwegian informants mentioned keeping focus on the private sector as a key aspect to improve the market position. They explain how the public sector has been challenging due to Norwegian law and regulation in terms of purchasing, and that therefore it is difficult to attract both decision makers and solution providers in particular to the events. All European informants brought up the factor of flexibility when planning and developing the events. As a given structure are applied on all events across markets and industries, their opinion was that to be able to adjust the events according to culture of the country and different industries approached, would have been beneficial to improve market position. As one of the informants stated:

"The company's power and achille's heel is that its events have the same structure everywhere. That provides a clear framework of tested tools with which to build an event. However, it doesn't allow for any flexibility."(Interviewee #2)

A Norwegian interviewee also said that maintaining a high quality level on the events is very important. Instead of going through with every event regardless of number of decision makers and solution providers attending, keep the focus on quality and maybe then rather cancel that years' event and develop an improved one the year after. All of the Norwegian interviewees and two of the European, elaborated on stability in the workforce as a key point to improve the market position. Better allocation of resources, hereby employees and the management of employees were mentioned by both group of interviewees. This was further explained by focusing on cooperation between employees and functions, and more precise and stable management structures.

Then followed the question of what the informants could identify as the main challenges for the company in their specific operating markets. Here, the factor of focusing on public sector was repeated by three Norwegian informants. Further, four Norwegian informants stated that the company had no brand equity and needed to become more known in the market and that this was a vital challenge for the company. Three informants among both Norwegian and European pointed out the company's rigid and inflexible method of building events as a crucial challenge that created obstacles in the working process and success of the events. This was also mentioned as a factor in meeting with solution providers and decision makers both in the development of the events as well as during the events, as customers experienced the inflexibility themselves.

Next was the follow-up question of how the company could overcome these challenges. The overall finding in this particular question was as six of all informants (both Norwegian and European) stated that increased flexibility was a key factor. This flexibility was referred to and related to several aspects such as: working processes, planning of events, management style, reaching out to customers, event programs, conducting the events, handling decision makers and solution providers, the structure of the events. One of the informants concluded:

> More flexibility in the organization of difficult events, e.g. different agenda's, different timetables, paying for really good speakers. More resources devoted to difficult events in an early stage of the organization, not later on. And most of all, the use of social media. (Interviewee #2)

Better allocation of resources was also mentioned, by three European informants, where they suggested to focus more resources towards difficult events instead of keeping same structure at all times. Three Norwegian interviewees also suggested becoming more known in the market, where social media are suggested as a tool. This aspect was also brought up by two European interviewees, to apply social media as a tool of branding and increasing brand awareness and knowledge in the markets. Keeping focus on private sector and leave the public sector out of the business was seen as the only way to overcome the challenge public sector represents, by the Norwegians informants.

The last question in section was related to success criteria, and what the informants considered to be the success factor in their respective operating markets. Here, *all* of them explicitly pointed out that first of all, the concept of the company is unique. As stated by one of the interviewees "..has an excellent product to offer!". (Interviewee #6) Then followed the aspect of very well organized events, which were claimed by half of the informants. In addition, three pointed out the process from the personal invitations to the implementation of the events as a key factor, and that they have developed: "A pretty easy plug-and-play format that requires less organization than that of its' competitors" (Interviewee #5)

4.3 Human Resources

The third section of the interview guide contained questions about the management of human resources, to gain an insight into the organization and its' culture. First question in this part was intended to clarify whether the interviewees considered the workforce of the company to be stable or unstable. When asked this, seven out of eight interviewees considered the workforce to be unstable and one of them explained:

> Very unstable. People come and go. Management structures are opaque and the company is constantly changing, not always in a good way. Sometimes it felt like changing for changing's sake. (Interviewee #2).

Those who considered the workforce to be unstable all explained further that 'cold' management and an inflexible organization was the reason behind. Further, the informants talked about a rigid system with a very strong focus on results, placing high pressure on employees. High pressure then led to stress in the working place, and according to one of the informants: "The reprimand for not achieving results created a culture that did not

emphasize common, mutual dependency." (Interviewee #3). This factor was also brought forward by other informants, which claimed the internal communication was less than optimal and that the decision making process worked top-down and never the other way around. One of the Norwegian interviewees stated it was very difficult at times to be motivated, especially as it was very problematic to fulfill the requirements set for the employees. Two Norwegian interviewees spoke of a rigid, result- oriented, inflexible organization with a very hierarchical system, which was difficult to work in. Communication with managers was challenging, and the informants felt they quite often were not listened to. However, two of the European informants pointed out that training and mentoring lacked efficiency and that even recruitment procedures lacked in screening candidates. Further the same informants indicated that all these factors of strong focus on results, was based on a way of thinking with the intention of maintaining a workforce with high results. As one of them said:

> The company is set up so there is high turnover. It wants to get rid of its least productive employees all the time and hire new people hoping a constant cycle will improve the workforce. (Interviewee #2).

The same interviewee pointed out how it was to develop inside the organization, and climb the company ladder:

> Vertical growth opportunities were limited. A select group of, albeit qualified, people fill the top positions and growth into those positions is not only rare, but most changes at middle and top management level are a mere shuffling of the deck chairs. With the same people moving around.(Interviewee #8)

The one interviewee who considered the workforce to be stable operated in a European market, and when asked for the reasons behind this consideration, the interviewee answered:

> For educated…people living in Europe finding a job is a big issue so when there is a possibility for long term commitment in a corporate environment like.., they take it seriously. It is not because this company treats them really well, it is because they need to have a job. That's it. (Interviewee #4).

Next question addressed the same theme, and the interviewees were asked what they saw as the reasons for the rapid change in the workforce during the first operating year of the Norwegian market. In addition to the reflections on the previous questions, issues of cultural reasons were pointed out by two of the informants as none of the team leaders were Norwegian. This along, with rapid changes in the leadership of the team made the working situation challenging according to four of the Norwegian informants.

After researching the reasons behind instability in the workforce, the informants were asked what they believed the company could have done differently to ensure a more stable workforce. Here, two of them meant a focus on smaller goal achievements instead of only larger results combined with a more realistic perspective on targets, along with more positive feedback to the employees. Again, flexibility was brought forward where three Norwegian interviewees claimed a more flexible organization and a less rigid system could have improved the situation. If the organization had showed more appreciation and listened more to the employees combined with an overall change in focus on human resources, could have ensured a more stable workforce according to the same informants.

To get a better view of and insight in the organizational culture, the interviewees was given a question of how they experienced the working environment. Here, five of both the Norwegian and European interviewees claimed that between employees they experienced a good working environment. They talked about a social environment, with high degree of loyalty between the employees as well as solidarity. However, as one of the interviewees said: "In my opinion, this is a workforce united, to a large extent, against the 'man' in this company. So, that bit of the working environment is exceptionally good." (Interviewee #2)

It was also pointed out by the same informant, that the company made it possible for the employees to be social by taking steps to improve the corporate culture and they created informal moments for employees to get together. Yet, six of all informants stated they were not happy during their working period, and elaborated on how they did not feel appreciated, the pressure on results was very high as well as they felt the chance of being fired, all combined caused a great deal of stress.

> At first in awe of the perks, the camaraderie yet the competiveness, but it fades all too soon when the only thing that really seems to matter are results (sales) and how they reflect on those above you in the hierarchy. This is only reinforced with a

shallow yearly award show for employees only, based on sales or potential sales mostly. (Interviewee #5)

The interviewees were also asked how they felt the company treated its' employees. Three of the Norwegians said they were treated with cold shoulders, and two of these said they were not supported enough when performing their job. Four informants felt an existence of a double standard, as explicitly pointed out:

Very often with a double-standard. As a company that prides itself on being 'internationally-minded' there were quite some differences between foreigners and natives, but it often also felt a select few were protected from any failings while held as an example for others. Often, those who were struggling were shunned, marked expendable and usually it did not take long before leaving the company. (Interviewee #5).

On the other side, three felt they were treated ok, merely rough yet fair. One of the interviewees explained it like this:

In a way, I feel like the company has done nothing wrong to me personally. In the beginning I was given clear instructions and all the guidance and time I could hope for. I was given chances to grow vertically as well. My decision to leave was because it is not a job that I wanted to do, for an organization I felt very little sympathy for, in an industry that I didn't care much about. In retrospect, it surprises me that I stayed that long. (Interviewee #2)

Still, many of the interviewees exploited strong feelings and opinions of this: "Some colleagues of mine, however, have been treated abysmally. Though I want to stress that that was a very small number of people." (Interviewee #2)

Two of the interviewees also claimed that the method of treating employees in the matter they experienced, was not neglect, but moreover a conscious decision from the company to keep a high quality workforce. One of the Norwegian interviewees stated:

What I do think is that the companies exploited the opportunity of hiring trainees to make them do the basic work for a minimal salary. This should be an opportunity for young professionals to get versatile work experience doing a variety of

interesting entry-level tasks, yet they are set to do the same every day, and this
trainee scheme has been used as a tool to decrease cost. (Interviewee #3)

4.4 Marketing

The second section of the interview contained various aspects of marketing. The company
do not market themselves besides personal invitations carried through by telephone, to
both decision makers and solution providers. The first question was developed to reveal
what the informants considered to be the advantages of such a marketing strategy. Six of
them emphasized the aspect of staying in control of who may attend the events. This was
brought out as important, to be able to maintain high quality on the events. Secondly,
accuracy and a personal touch were mentioned as a great advantage of this type of
marketing, which the informants meant makes an important difference. As stated by one of
them: "You are in complete control of the level of importance of your invitees"
(Interviewee #5). Three of the Norwegian interviewees meant the cost efficiency of this
approach was very valuable in terms of marketing along with the effect of word of mouth.

When asked to consider the *disadvantages* of this marketing method, several factors were
brought forward. Here, three Norwegian and one European interviewee elaborated on the
fact that it was challenging and difficult to achieve attention and knowledge of the events,
only applying this method. As one of the interviewees said: "It's hard to create a media
buzz around the events this way" (Interviewee #8). The challenges of creating and building
a brand, to become well known in the market were not easier overcome by this method
alone, according to the informants. Further, to be able to achieve a position were decision
makers and solution providers reach out to the company to attend the events demanded a
richer marketing strategy. Also, five pointed out that one takes the chance of losing
potential decision makers and solution providers, as being dependent on only phone
invitations as marketing. They explained that one rarely was able to reach all relevant
decision makers or solution providers during the planning and invitation period.

After this, the informants were asked if they considered this approach to be adequate in
terms of attracting both decision makers and solution providers. Five specified this
depends on the market situation, as where they have certain markets they have operated for
eight to ten years, this approach was adequate. However, they also pointed out that for new
markets, like the Norwegian one this is different. As time should be spent on building

brand equity and to get acknowledged in the market this approach alone was not enough. One Norwegian interviewee stated this approach was not sufficient at all: " No. The events would have benefited from being advertised more, to build the brand and to become well known in the market, to create and keep interest" (Interviewee #7). Three Norwegian interviewees stated that this market approach was insufficient and should have been combined with other approaches as well and specifically, more aggressive marketing methods in a market entry situation. They also shared the opinion that if applying additional methods, they clearly would have been able to attract more decision makers and solution providers to the events.

As a follow-up, the informants were asked which additional methods of marketing they saw as beneficial to implement. When given this question, five of them claimed social media should have been used as a marketing tool. More specifically, they mentioned Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to enhance visibility and interest, and as one of them said: "There could be an event forum on which both the organizers and the participants could post topics and have discussions" (Interviewee #6). Two informants had no suggestions of additional marketing tools, and one mentioned advertising in business newspapers as a way to bring the marketing further.

5.0 Analysis

This part of the dissertation will provide an analysis of the findings along with relevant theory presented earlier. As of the process of presenting findings and reviewing the information material, this analysis will discuss and analyze the data divided into categories. These categories have been chosen as those have stood out as areas of success or differentiation opportunities. The categories are products, organization and marketing. However, the categories may coincide as they all effect and relates closely to one another.

5.1 Products

As presented in the findings chapter, the products of the company were well perceived by both decision makers and solution providers. Here, one saw that the overall impression among both customer groups where positive.

Considering findings, the products have great possibilities in the market. As discovered through findings, the products were well perceived by the customers and fill a gap in the market. Then, one can argue that certain characteristics of these products create additional value for decision makers as well, as they appreciate meeting other decision makers. Creating value for not only solution providers, but decision makers as well is important. Additionally, this indicates there may be opportunities of developing the product further, and maybe in the direction of charging decision makers as well for attending the events. One of the interviewees described the strength of the products as: "I think they have a great idea. They bridge a definitive gap in the marketplace in terms of putting solutions providers close to their customers" (Interviewee #3).

Although the products were discussed in a positive manner, the findings also showed that the products lacked flexibility. This was referred to as an opportunity of adjusting to various industries, which could have developed the products. Here, findings highlighted how the strict formula of how events were planned and arranged essentially acted as a barrier for differentiation. This seems to be a key area indicating a great possibility of improvement, tailoring the events to each industry rather than applying the same specific format. However, the company has definitely been able to develop a unique product the market needs, appreciate and welcomes. It also seems as the business concept is the key in the company's competitive advantage, which indicates that the business concept itself is valuable and even sustainable. Taking Getz' (2005) Event Management System model into

consideration this is at the very core of the model, the event encompassing theme, program and experiences. Here however, it seems there should be more room for flexibility, according to both the theoretical framework and the findings. As Getz (2005) claims in his theoretical perspective; it is important for managers to be able to expect changes and then be flexible enough to adapt. Therefore, it may be reason to discuss how to find a balance between flexibility and a well-planned event with a ready-to-go structure and format. A given strict structure for the products, for all events, simplifies both planning and execution, but at the same time sacrifices some of the uniqueness an event should contain. According to Getz (2005), his model represents an 'open system' which is dependent on and affected by the surrounding environment. Therefore, it may highly relevant and vital to realize and adapt to various expectations that may exist in the different industries. Yeoman et al. (2009) highlighted decision and detailed planning as two of the four main stages in event management, and it seems this is the part of the process where one may consider some change and give room for flexibility. As a ready-to-go structured event may be efficient to set up and save resources in the planning and implementation phase, it may not provide the necessary space for the possibilities of differentiation.

Even though flexibility and differentiation can be considered as possible improvement areas and key areas of improvement, one should keep in mind that the stern structure also provides a framework of tested tools. It may in fact also be within this framework, a reason of the success of the product and company. Applying the same framework at every event, gives the chance of constant improvement as the same structure is tested again and again. Identifying faults, errors in the process may become easier and provides a streamlined overall structure. It is arguable that this saves time, resources and costs in all steps which then creates value for the company. However, as underlined earlier and as Getz (2005) highlighted: "Planned events are temporary occurrences with a predetermined beginning and end. Every such event is unique.." (Getz, 2005, 16). If every event should provide an atmosphere of uniqueness, one is dependent on giving room for change. Flexibility can be the very ground uniqueness is based upon. Although one may argue that every event is unique on the bases of *being an event*, and that the same atmosphere with the same happenings would be impossible to recreate, two similar events may very much *feel the same.* Besides, as both customer groups and solution providers in particular, may attend more than one type of event, delivering uniqueness may be absolutely essential.

Findings also indicated that the company's position in the markets is rather strong, due to the unique business concept and products. These discoveries may be seen as a further confirmation of how unique the product is, and how important that is for their valuable position in the market. The markets were also described as with very few competitors, even none at all in the Norwegian market. As this has been brought forward, it indicates an opportunity for competing businesses to enter with the same type of products. However, the research also provided some suggested changes due to improve the market position. Maintaining a keen focus on private sector and leaving out the public sector due to laws and regulations, were repeatedly highlighted. Striving to reach out to the public sector may be seen as spending resources on barriers one cannot overcome. Although the products doesn't include purchasing agreements between decision makers and solution providers, one may consider the fact that most of the solution providers buy these meeting opportunities, with the intention of selling his or hers products. A business lead, an opportunity and possibility to sell their product to a decision maker in a company is where the value is created for them. This is a rather straightforward challenge, where one might consider leaving the public sector, or at least find a different method of approaching and including it. Additionally, it may also be of less interest for decision makers from the public sector to meet with solution providers as well, as they know purchase decisions must be bade through tender.

In Getz' (2205) Event Management System model, the square of community context represents local forces and conditions which can affect the event. Regulations of purchasing and rules of tender, is a part of this community context and must be taken into consideration and be dealt with. This is an aspect out of the company's control, still the conditions must be accepted and maybe one are able to create new solutions of including public sector. Ability to be flexible and innovative may be necessary to develop new methods of including this sector.

Reviewing products and operating market from findings, the key success factors seems to be; the uniqueness of the product, easy to organize business concept, no boundaries when entering a market, good opportunities for expansion and high quality on the events.

5.2 Organization

As highlighted in the findings chapter, 87, 5 % of the interviewees described the workforce in their previous team as unstable and one of them stated: "Contracts for Key Client managers and Sales Managers were usually terminated during the trial period, sometimes even within the first week" (Interviewee #5). This can be seen as an indication there was high turnover in labor, in various teams in the organization. Then, lack of focus on personnel development, 'cold' management and a very result-oriented culture and managers have been pointed out as the main reasons for the instability. As pointed out in findings, these reasons came along with a high level of stress and experiences of a one-way communication system. "I felt as if they were not listening to what I was saying, and only seeing it as if I did too little when results didn't show as fast as they wanted." (Interviewee #1) These reasons indicate at its worst an organization with unsatisfied employees who feel unappreciated in an organizational culture failing to motivate them. At its best, it reflects the opinion of a few employees and their experiences. Either way, the importance of how organizational structure and culture affect every individual's professional life and a company should not be underestimated.

Further, the findings reflect a strong result-oriented culture and a hierarchical system were decisions were exclusively made top-down. Bringing a culture lacking mutual understanding and dependency into the combination, chances are, ending up with employees feeling expendable and 'used' to earn the company's profit. Although a result-oriented focus may be with best intentions for both profit and organizational culture, the risk is employees experience this quite differently. Where constant measurements and focus on goals and achievements may initially have been implemented as a tool of motivation, this seems to have turned around into resentment and rather increased demotivation. An impression of low quality on the training program and screening of candidates also came forward in findings as a reason of the ever-changing employees. Even within a week or few months, employees had come and went away again. A rather strong opinion of the company's strategy towards employees was formulated like this:

> I think the company executes its theory of getting rid of the least productive employees very rigorously. Often firing people after only a few months when the organization notices that people do not grow or improve their performances. (Interviewee #2)

Rapid changes in team management, lack in personal contact along with an inflexible and rigid organization were also first-hand experiences in the organization. Findings also showed that the employees felt they had no impact on their working situation, as managers did not listen to them. As explained by Schein (1990), an organizational culture must be built over time given certain stability in a group. *Stability,* is very difficult to maintain when the turnover of employees are high, and yet at the very core of establishing an organizational culture. It seems that as the employees feel no presence of stability, it is difficult to feel a certain continuity or development of the culture. Without, there are no adequate bases for establishing a proper culture within the teams, which may in turn only contribute to the continuance of high turnover. In other words, it may become a 'bad circle' difficult to break, as new employees may find it difficult to settle down in such an environment.

To be able to turn the situation around, findings revealed that flexibility is the overall key factor. However, it seems that a focus change may be necessary as well towards creating a culture where the managers listens to their employees, appreciate employees more and sets more realistic and achievable targets. When asked how the company could ensure more stability in the workforce, one of the interviewees said it like this: "Be more flexible. Change the very rigid framework." (Interviewee #6) Bringing all these changes into the system could have decreased the level of stress experienced by the employees and maybe made them feel more comfortable and satisfied. As Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2006) describes different types of organizations, both the entrepreneur and the innovative organization are characterized by flexibility. This means being flexible inside the organization, but just as well or even more when it comes to handling customers. By obtaining this type of flexibility, the organization would be prepared to quickly make changes as challenges and opportunities appear. The authors also states that most organizations are a combination of several structures, with more or less focus on different aspects. Attaining some of this flexibility may be beneficial for many organizations, yet and maybe more importantly for those creating events as a profession.

Further, Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2006) explained that building an organizational culture in a new company, or in this case a new market, is very much dependent on the management and how they behave. When employees see their management as cold, uncaring and solely result-oriented, it may be difficult to establish a sustainable culture. However, as the company has operated for 10 years in some markets, they may only see it as bringing forward an already established culture when founding new markets and teams. Obtaining a rather different perspective, and consider this as establishing something new could have been a beneficial approach, as to communicate the culture. This approach may also provide some room for flexibility, as seems to be profoundly missed.

The view on the working environment came out rather two-sided in the findings. Here, words as social and good were used to describe the relationship between employees. However, those same words did not apply to relations between employees and managers. This sign of something being not quite right in the organization were further confirmed through how the company image did not correlate with the experiences of working there. 50% claimed they were unhappy in the company, and experienced subcultures developing inside the company. These subcultures may be an effect of unhappiness, feeling miserable and not on the same page as managers and the company as a whole. If workers are unsatisfied, feel wrongly treated they may seek confirmation in others feeling the same way. A mentality of 'us versus them' may arise and cause a negative effect on the culture and organization as a whole. Their unhappiness was due to feeling unappreciated and then not as a 'proper' part of the company. As Schein (1990) stated, culture within a group must be developed by a given group. This may either be very difficult to achieve as of the dissatisfaction of the employees, or then the culture developed will be of a negative mind set, where disloyalty, lack of interest and devotion grows. For any given company this can be very problematic and may lead to employees reluctantly only performing a minimum of their tasks.

This seems to be the case here, as findings expose the employees' feelings going towards lack of responsibility, no ownership nor loyalty to the company. These feelings grew further as some of them experienced a good colleague being fired after a short time, where they meant the company failed to provide the adequate support to maintain the employee. Such specific happenings may not have been taken further notice of among managers, however it shows that employees have taken this quite seriously and felt upset. Although it might have been the employee needed to be fired, one should not underestimate the effect

such an incident may have on the other employees. This can contribute to and only strengthen a 'us against them' mentality, where employees feelings towards the company only grows in a further negative direction. Findings also revealed that the employees were rather sure the company did not neglect or that this treatment was a random set of incidents, but a set of conscious decisions founded in business strategies. This may be very probable, and that the company considered it in their best interest to implement the result-oriented mind set in all operations of the organization. Thinking the management were unaware of the situation may be naïve. However, it is difficult to say whether they do not consider the situation as serious, if they are fully aware of the employees attitudes and do not consider this as negative for the company, or if they are aware and attempts to change it. Considering this company has operated for ten years, it might be likely to believe they are completely aware of the situation, but sees the rigid and result-oriented system as a necessity to create profit. Nevertheless, the employees felt expendable, shunned and pressured. Worst case, this can be signs of an organizational culture gone wrong.

It may be likely to believe that when employees feel treated this way, they do not contribute in the optimal way for the company. Achieving results, pulling forward and to be able to execute great work may require a certain feeling of being appreciated and well treated at one's workplace. Again, a sense of loyalty can be considered as rather important, as keeping a stable workforce may be very difficult without it. Barney (1986) discussed the possibility of how organizational culture may be a source of sustained competitive advantage. He mentioned certain conditions that must be met, and one of these is about how the culture must be valuable; the culture must be created such that it allows the company to perform such that it creates high and maybe even the optimal economic value possible for the company. As the author stated:

> If a firm's culture enables it to behave in ways that are inconsistent with a firm's competitive situation, then that culture cannot be a source of superior financial performance, sustained or otherwise. (Barney, 1986, 658)

Now, this research have not looked into how this effected their behavior and work performance, however one may argue that it is important for an employee to be satisfied at his or hers workplace in order to perform optimal. The company's competitive advantage may be within their unique products, but as from the findings it does not seem to be found in these employees or in the organizational culture. They were clearly not satisfied, and

further felt no loyalty towards the company, yet great loyalty among the employees which may indicate they did not perform as optimal as they would if they were satisfied. Although the company obviously has made great profit and are financial sustainable, maybe flexibility and a different focus on employees could have brought them even further. What also came forward in findings, were that more flexibility was necessary to optimally plan and execute challenging events. Then, stability in the workforce was considered a requirement to deliver high quality events.Without delivering high quality events, it can be difficult for the company to maintain the competitive advantage, and just as pointed out by Barney (1986) it seems the culture has acted in such a way that is inconsistent with their competitive situation.

Considering Schein's (1990) view on organizational culture, where he claims that certain stability in the group is crucial for the development of the culture, the findings correlates well with the theoretical perspective. It was found that stability in the workforce was considered as absolutely vital. Schein (1990) went as far as stating that culture *cannot* be built if there is no common history, which is very difficult if employee continuously come and go. Even further, he claimed that if the turnover of the members of the group is high, the culture within the organization or team cannot be built or developed. Nevertheless, the company has been able to obtain a strong position in the market, even with a rather unstable workforce at hand.

5.3 Marketing

As the findings shows, some strong aspects of the one-sided marketing strategy were identified and hereby the personal side of the marketing was considered a success factor. It became easier to reach those top level decision makers by applying this method and added a personal 'touch'. Considering the marketing mix of Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) where they added people to the original four p's, this may be seen as an aspect of that. The marketing becomes more personal when one brings in the aspect of people and direct contact instead of an email or any written message. Further, it was emphasized that the marketing were very controlled when conducted in this structure. This was considered a definitive advantage, as expressed by one of the interviewees:

> The company targets the top people and only those, this is very well controlled
> through an invitation only structure. I think this is the main advantage. An

additional benefit is the personal approach, which, sometimes, makes a big difference. (Interviewee #2)

Then to be able to create ownership among invitees, and provide them with a sense of exclusivity, created additional value to the marketing. As Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) argue, the customers are an important part of the service production. By approaching them early in the planning process of the events, they are brought into the process and service production. Another primary benefit mentioned, is the fact that is a very cost efficient method of marketing. When marketing only through personal invitations through phone calls, the financial resources spent on marketing are quite low.

On the other side, all approaches have disadvantages as well. Findings showed that creating attention and interest of the events were quite difficult. "It is hard to make the events known, and to build a brand when one does not advertise through other channels." (Interviewee #7) This explicitly means, that they believe very few other than those attending the events, know of the events which may in turn be negative for the next year's turnout of attendees. Reaching out to all decision makers and solution providers may be very challenging, when completely dependent on solely one approach. In turn, this means the risk of leaving a certain number of possible attendees out, were considered rather high. Increasing number of decision makers and solution providers can arguably be a goal, as an increased number of attendees lead to increase in profit. Even more, striving towards a possibly desired future state were the target group *wishes* to be a part of the event before invited, may require a more complex marketing tactic.

It seems as if this method of marketing is enough, depends on the company's leverage in each specific market. According to findings, the marketing approach works very well within those markets the company has operated for at least a few years. In other words, this is sufficient where the company has had a chance to build reputation and brand. On the other hand, when operating in new markets the situation is quite different. This may be as for any new company entering a market where no one knows the company or what it is offering, and quite natural.

More aggressive and applying additional marketing methods, as seen in findings, were considered beneficial when entering new markets. Zeihaml and Bitner (2003) suggested a marketing mix for marketing services and events, and in the section of promotion they

suggest applying a promotion blend, advertising, sales promotion and publicity. All these are suggested tools to be able to market one's business and products. What the authors suggests is that marketing should consist of a number of activities that may approach the market from a variety of angles to be able to reach out to the possible customers and to increase brand awareness. Here, both interviewees and theorists agree especially when in a new market situation. It is believable that reaching out to a larger part of the target group, along with creating general attention of the company and its products would be beneficial. For possible customers to become aware of a company, it must be somehow communicated.

According to the findings, social media marketing was pointed out as the key aspect of adding and improving the marketing approach. This method gives an additional angle to the marketing, along with staying within a cost effective method. Using different social media channels can contribute to raise awareness and intention. Also, internet and social media can be a very useful tool to create arenas of discussion, to establish communication between the company and its' customers. This is exactly what Chaney (2009) emphasize in his perspective of social media as marketing, where he explains this as a new method of becoming connected to one another. It is about bringing the customer closer, provide two-way communication and to engage the customer in the processes. In this setting, such a line of communication could mean the participants discussing important themes before or after an event. Further, for solution providers to converse with decision makers, establishing a level of contact *before* the planned meetings may create additional value. As found through the research, social media could also be used to raise brand awareness among customer groups, and even contribute to create a 'buzz' around the events. Creating a 'buzz', could then in turn contribute to customer loyalty and further strengthen the market position.

Even though one might say the society 'agrees' that social media plays a crucial part of our lives, not all businesses has taken this in is as a useful and important tool of not only marketing, but as a necessity to keep up with the market and customers. Building a brand, attracting customers and to become well known in the market may be considered as aspects that are important for all types of organizations, and may just as well represent aspects of success as well as challenges to overcome.

6.0 Business Plan

As this business plan may be seen as a result and combined answer to the research questions, the findings from the interviewees have been implemented here.

Table of Contents

6.1 Business Description

Most traditional event companies in Norway operates in a way where they either host specific events each year, or hosts events for other companies; such as kick- offs, opening parties and so on. However, this event company has a different focus. The core of the idea is to create meeting arenas between solution providers and decision makers. Although this is the core product, creating conferences as the framework of the meetings is a part of it as well. The conferences are built through thorough research into the specific industry, what their challenges and investment areas are at the given time. Based on that information, the speaker themes and headlines of the conference will be set. Then, the conference may become an arena also for decision makers to meet each other and then discuss important challenges, issues and developments of their area.

The conference will during the first years, be free of charge for the participants coming from manager positions in the specific businesses, yet they have to agree to talk to a certain number of solution providers. The solution providers on the other hand pay a fee to meet decision makers and to get the opportunity to present what their company has to offer them. However, this is not an arena of purchasing new systems or service, but the decision makers will then be able to get insight in what the market can offer.

The decision makers attending may be within a certain industry, for instance Banking & Insurance and then the decision makers invited will be at manager level, based on the largest Banking & Insurance companies in Norway. Conferences will also be created to fit specific manager level roles, such as Executive IT, whereas all the decision makers are IT managers on high level of their company and then the decision makers will be from a whole variety of industries. The basis of the invited decision makers will be the 500 largest companies of Norway, to be able to deliver interesting and possible valuable meetings to the solution providers.

The company will be named Associated, to reflect on the product of creating meeting arenas between mainly decision makers and solution providers.

6.1.1 Vision

Associated will become be the number one meeting point of decision makers and solution providers in Norway.

This vision represents a desired future state for the company, and will be applied as a general image of which direction the company will move towards.

6.1.2 Mission

Associated will bring decision makers and suppliers closer together through developing relevant and high quality conferences. Associated will develop conferences to fit all top industries and all top level decision makers. Associated will be an inspiring place to work and where employees can be creative, challenged and developed within a great working environment. Associated is a company that realizes that creating value comes from passionate and satisfied employees, and will be a company that invests in the employees.

6.2 Products

The core idea is the same for all diverse products; creating meeting opportunities between decision makers and solution providers through conferences. Conferences will then be developed as the framework of the meetings, offering a networking opportunity for the attendees. Additionally, just as well a possibility to see what the market has to offer the decision makers somewhat like 'window-shopping'.

The products of Associated will be developed to fit private sector only. This is as the public sector is bound by law and regulations of purchasing, which means this group may not be as attractive for the solution providers as the private sector. Solution providers purchasing these meetings are likely to have an intention of achieving leads and secondary meetings to sell their products to the decision makers. Further, for decision makers to meet with solution providers may not be as interesting either, as they are constrained and cannot take an interesting offer any further.

Meet is the first type of conference and will be directed towards specific industries, for instance: telecom, banking, retail, insurance and so on. Here the focus will be on the industry, which means that all decision makers in various manager positions will be invited. This gives the companies an opportunity to come together and discuss relevant themes for their specific industry, and to get an insight in what the market has to offer of solutions they may be interested in. The attendees will also be offered insight in the relevant topics of the industry, which will be given by speakers during the conference. During the planning process of the conferences, research will be conducted in order to discover the relevant themes, issues, challenges and success stories of the companies. Here are great possibilities as the number of possible industry focused events Associated can develop, are only limited by number of private sector industries in Norway.

Greet is the second type of conference and focuses on the manager positions, rather than the industries, such as: Executive IT, CEO, COO, Head of Marketing and so on. This means that for instance, an HR manager in a bank will attend the same conference as an HR manager in a retail company. This way, the decision makers will be able to see if their challenges are relevant in other industries, discuss their relevant themes and be able to gain insight on a cross-industry level. As for the industry- focused conference, speakers will provide relevant themes for the manager position, and they also will meet solution providers and gain insight what they can offer as solutions to their challenges.

In order to be able to deliver a certain number of events during a year, it may be beneficial to develop a specific structure and framework for all the events. However, it is important that the attendees get a feeling of uniqueness even though they may attend more than one type of conference. This means that the events will be tailored and differentiated in order to fit the specific industry or manager position that is set as theme for the conference. These differences will be created through the program, speakers, venues and evening program to ensure uniqueness of all events. The differentiation aspects mentioned here, will be what differs Associated from it's' competitor, along with providing events that is less time consuming. The competitor provides conferences which lasts one and half day, and this demands the attendees to be willing to put a side this timespan. It may be challenging for them, as this 'steals' time from either their professional or private life. Associated on the other hand, believes this can be arranged more efficiently, and less time consuming for the attendees, by creating conferences lasting one day. This means that no overnight stays are necessary, and more time back to the attendees along with costs saved for both Associated and the customers.

The solution providers will be offered to purchase different meeting packages, in three different sizes. These packages will vary in number of meetings purchased, where two of the packages include 8 and 12 meetings. A speaker opportunity will be included in addition to 15 meetings, in the third and largest package.

6.3 The Company

In terms of choosing what type of company to establish, it seems preferable to establish a corporation. With this type of company, none of the owners has personal responsibility for the commitments of the company. This means, if in a worst case scenario, the company goes bankrupt, loaners cannot demand payment from the owners, only the company. The owners can only loose what they have invested in the company and there are also laws regulating and limiting the owner's access to the finances bound in the company. When starting an corporation the founders must bring in 30 000, - NOK to the company.

The location of the office should be in the Oslo region. This location has been chosen to be able to conduct meetings with possible customers and to be easily accessible for possible customers. As for the startup phase of the business, renting space at an office hotel may be preferable. In case something goes wrong, the business goes bankrupt or other threats

come true it is preferable for the firm not to be tied to an office more than necessary. Oslo offers a variety of office hotels for start-up companies where one can expand office space and services accordingly to the growth of the company. The company will be located at an office hotel 15 minutes with train outside of Oslo. These office spaces are less expensive than in the central of Oslo, so for the startup phase this is adequate for the company. The office hotel rent outs offices which varies in space, and where all necessities are included, such as electricity, internet, cafeteria and available meeting rooms and auditoriums. (ne.no)

When it comes to labor market, Associated needs to hire one salesperson and three project coordinators. This is not a very high number of people or positions demanding rare experience or set of skills. The same considerations apply for the development of the products, where no scarce or rare resources are a necessity.

6.4 Management and Organizational Structure

In this company, the responsibilities and working tasks will be divided into the following sections: Founder/Managing Director, Sales Coordinator and Project Coordinators. In the startup phase and for the first years of the business, the management will consist of one position. The Managing Director will have the main responsibility for the day-to day operations, economy, human resources and personnel management, marketing etc. A small organization in the startup phase may be preferable to save costs, and as the company grow and amount of planned events increases, it may be necessary to add certain positions in the future. In terms of IT, this will be developed inside the company in the future, after a certain time period when the company is more stable. Until that time, this area needs to be outsourced and handled by a supplier. This includes:

- The website

- A database system

- A registration system, whereas one can easily access databases

Further, this will be an organization consisting of a total of five employees, in the startup phase. In addition to the Managing Director there will be hired one to work with sales and three project coordinators. The one person within sales will be responsible for selling the products to possible clients, and after the first year one additional should be hired to work with sales. Three project coordinators will work with building databases of decision

makers in the chosen markets, and the inviting of decision makers. These will also handle the research phase, to get knowledge of relevant topics of discussion topics to the conferences.

Founder/General Manager

Project Coordinator

Project Coordinator

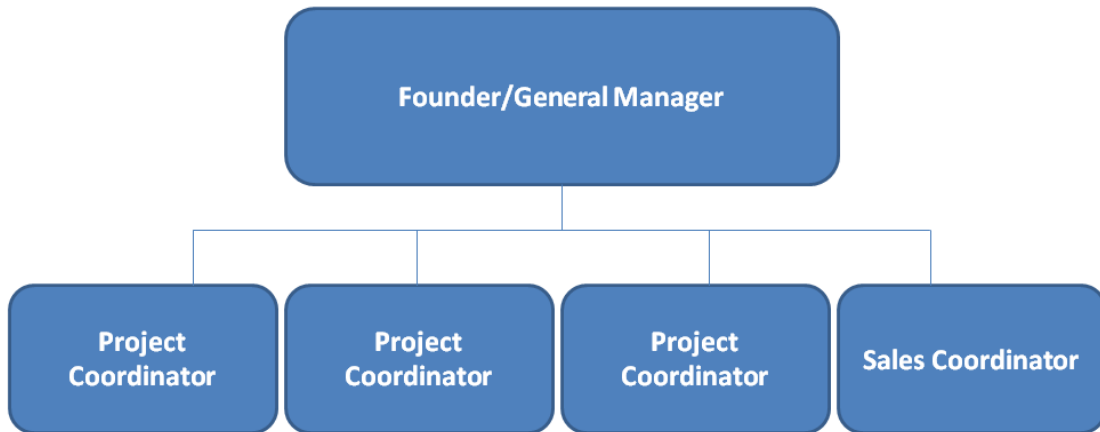Project Coordinator

Sales Coordinator

Figure 3: Organizational Chart: Associated

The structure of the organization will be a combination characterized by both the entrepreneur organization and the innovative organization described earlier in the theoretical framework chapter. As the entrepreneur organization, Associated will also exist of one management division and one operational division. This means, that the Managing Director will be the direct supervisor of all operations in the company and the coordinator of all processes. Further, this fits well as the company is quite small and also means that the Managing Director will make most decisions, and oversee all operations. This means a centralized decision making system, however the high level of flexibility of the structure allows for the employees to be an important part of the development of the products and the company as a whole. Administration costs will be kept low by applying this structure, yet and more important, the structure allows the company to adapt to changes quickly and in an open matter handle customers.

Then, the innovative, creative and flexible aspect of the innovative organization is definitely something Associated will be striving for. This means, as the company goes through the start- up phase that division of labor will be somewhat simplified and adjusted according to what is needed. Although, all employees have job descriptions, various tasked may be given them that exceed their initial responsibilities. It is preferable for the company, as the first operating years may be tough, that all employees can contribute at

several levels. However and more importantly, this is preferable to use as a tool to develop the employees sense of ownership, loyalty and feeling of being important in the value creating chain in the company. To maintain the aspect of centralized decision making, and control of the Managing Director from the entrepreneur organization, Associated will then not be a company with unclear levels of authority, which is important to avoid insecurity in the organization.

6.5 *Inside the Organization: Organizational Culture*

The overall perspective of this organization is that the employees are absolutely crucial in order to be able to create value, sell the product, develop high quality events and then gain a valuable position in the market. Therefore it is of high importance that employees sees Associated as an exciting work place, which takes prides in investing in their employees. This means establishing a flexible and sustainable organizational culture. To ensure this, one must strive to achieve stability in the workforce and create a working environment the employees themselves wish to be a part of. Like any other company, there will of course be a focus on results and achieving goals. This is important, firstly for the company to be able to grow and gain a valuable position in the market. Secondly, for the employees to see their own results of hard work is important and can be used as a motivational factor. However, a focus moreover on relations, *human relations*, may be an effective tool to achieve goals and competitive advantage. Associated believes it is important to make the staff feel appreciated, supported, listened to and safe, to enable them to work optimal.

This organizational culture will provide room for the employees to affect the structure of process and their own working situations. The company will focus on training of new employees and continuous support to ensure the employees grow *with* the company.

These are the following company values of Associated:

Innovative means that the working environment will give the employees and company time to be creative. Associated will not be afraid of something new, we will be open to changes and new solutions.

Passionate is about the work we do. We will be passionate and engaged in our customers, our events and our service attitude. Every employee will bring the certain extra into the

processes and when handling customers and each other, we will be helpful, passionate and proud of our work.

Including is the key term to the working environment. Each employee should be equally included just as we strive to include our customers in our working processes. No one will be left outside and each employee is equally important and should feel appreciated in Associated

6.6 Outside: The Environment of Associated

Here, a description of the competitor of Associated is presented along with a description of the potential market and customers.

6.6.1 Potential Market and Customers

The potential market and target segment for Associated can be categorized in two groups; the decision makers and solution providers.

The first group is represented by individuals at manager levels in the 500 largest companies in the private sector in Norway, in various industries. Those 500 largest companies have been chosen as a target group, with the assumption that those are most attractive and interesting for solution providers to meet. Geographically, the entire country is considered as a potential market and as the distances are not too great this is not considered a great barrier.

For this group, the value created can be found in the networking opportunities, a relevant conference program and insight in the market offers of solutions. One can assume that these professional are interested in meeting with other professionals similar to themselves. The events created by Associated, will give them the chance to meet either other professionals of the same industry, or who shares their manager position, and that provides a networking value. Secondly, the event will provide a program of high relevant themes, addressing challenges of their industry or manager position along with success stories from inside their profession. This is then an opportunity to stay updated on what is happening in their industry or profession, which they then can bring back to their company. Lastly, they can gain an insight of what the market has to offer *them*. This is not necessary only interesting if someone specifically looking for a new system or service for their company, but also to gain knowledge of what is out there. On the other hand, some companies face

challenges solution providers have an answer for. These conferences can then simplify the process of researching what is out there, shorten the purchasing process, by bringing the relevant solution providers to them. This is value created for the decision makers

The second group consists of solutions providers as the paying customer base, and IT companies in Norway has been set as the main target group, at least for the start-up phase. IT has been chosen, as all industries in some matter are dependent on some kind of IT service, product or system. Therefore, one can assume that IT businesses will be interested in meeting with decision makers. These companies develop and deliver solutions to businesses across industries all over the country. According to SSB (www.ssb.no) there are 10 611 companies in Norway offering IT services. Although these companies represent possible customers for Associated now, the customer base market may be possible to research further at a later point, as there are many other types of solution providers as well.

For solution providers, Associated bring them an opportunity to network with their potential customers, a chance to make their target market aware of their solutions and face-to-face meetings with decision makers. The opportunity to network with their target market may have great value, considering raising awareness of their business, making new connections or refreshing old ones. Here, they are given a large part of an industry or manager profession all together, at one single event. To make their target market aware of what their business can offer can be assumed to be of great importance for them. Attending this conference gives them a chance of presenting their products to potential customers, only. For them to invest in this versus traditional advertising or other marketing approaches, can be considered preferable as this is direct, and to the point those exact people they strive to reach. Lastly, the opportunity of meeting them face-to-face and a promised alone meeting with a high level decision makers, touches the very core of the value created for them. They can talk directly to decision makers without endless emails, phone calls, secretaries and sales pitches striving just to get a meeting. Also, those decision makers have the power to either themselves make a purchase decision for the company, or to effect such decision within their company. As the event programs will be set due to challenges, relevant themes and success stories from the industry, the decision makers attending already has a certain *interest* in the solution providers. This simplifies and helps the selling processes, may provide them further business leads, and have the possibility of expanding their customer base.

Almost all businesses with goal of profit maximizing can be assumed to be dependent on selling their products to someone. The product of Associated makes *selling* easier, brings the customer closer and provides a solution to sellers desiring to sell more. Considering that assumption, the markets opportunities here possible to exploit further can be considered quite large.

6.6.2 Competitor

When I researched the market for competitors, this was quite a challenge, however one was identified. There may of course be other businesses which simply I have not been able to find, and that should be taken into consideration. However, the company I previously worked for along with the informants of this dissertation is definitely an important competitor and will be described here. As for anonymity reasons earlier mentioned in the paper, the company has been given a faux name, the numbers given are not precise, but indicates the size of the company. Also, the information presented has been collected from the company website, but due to the anonymity the website will not be given as reference in this dissertation.

The main and what seems to be the only commercial competitor for Associated is Business Events. This company has offices and operates in 8 countries in Europe and 2 in Asia as well. Further they have more or less than 230 employees all over their operating markets, and a few years ago they had a yearly turnover of 24 million euros. 130 events were arranged by them a few years ago, and they managed nearly 60 000 one to one meetings the same year. This company is well established in their market, and has now been operating in Norway since 2012. This company was founded on the same business idea as presented here for Associated, selling meetings between decision makers and solution providers.

Business Events deliver the same type of product as Associated, to the same customer base. One can assume they have obtained a strong position in the market and they are a large, international and professional organization. They have valid experience in delivering these types of events, which means they deliver of high quality. Further, the company is financially sustainable and has experience in starting up in new markets.

I worked for Business Events for 1 year before I entered the MSc program in Molde. This year, was when they decided to start up in Norway, which gave me a unique opportunity to

be a part of it from the starting point throughout the first operating year. Working in this company gave me a fundamental insight, and was the inspiration to the idea of starting Associated myself. As an employee at the company, I had no insight in the financial results for the Norwegian market that year. However, from own working experience from inside of the organization and the findings of this research I have gained important knowledge that has resulted in the most important differences between Associated and Business Events:

1. Business Events is a large, professional organization with characteristics of a strong and rigid perspective on processes and products, nearly in a streamlined 'McDonalds' direction. Associated will be a new and small company, with an organizational structure and culture that enables flexibility in processes and products.
2. Business Events have a strong result- oriented organizational culture, with a high turnover of labor. Associated believes that a stable work force and satisfied employees are a necessity to achieve success, and builds the organizational culture based on that.
3. Business Events deliver their products to both private and public sector, which presents challenges due to laws and regulations of the public sector. Associated offer its products only to the private sector.
4. Business Events market themselves only through personal invitations by phone calls. Associated applies social media as well, to increase awareness, attention and customers.
5. Business Events deliver conferences that have a time frame of one and a half day. Associated deliver conferences that have a time frame of one day, which is less time consuming for the customers and saves costs for both the customers and the company.

This business concept is quite easy to set up; no great investments are necessary nor are there any great barriers to overcome to start this type of company. These aspects indicate that more competitors may come, or are even likely to come in the future.

6.6.3 The Market and Future Trends

The market of this type of business may be considered to be quite fresh, and the event business market as a whole seems somewhat immature. The majority of the companies

operating in this market in Norway today, position themselves as solution providers in terms of offering to arrange events for other companies. However, by overlooking job positions the past two years, it seems to be an increasing trend that these companies purchasing events services moves towards establishing in-house functions of arranging their company events. If this trend continues, the traditional event companies may be forced to find new ways of operating their business. Personally, I believe one is witnessing a gradually professionalization and maturation of the market, as the companies traditionally outsourcing event planning, accept events as a vital part of any company. Events can and in many cases, are an important part of any company's marketing strategy along with maintaining as an important tool of building organizational culture.

This however, forces traditional event companies to think in new directions and either the vast number of event companies in Norway will decrease, or great innovative solutions will appear in the coming years. A few PR companies has implemented events has a part of full service marketing, along with other marketing tools such as commercials, advertisements and so on. This I believe will become more common in the coming years, and delivering meeting arenas between decision makers and solution providers may also be one of the new directions of the event companies in the future.

Associated offers its products to the business market and private sector. Although the market may change, develop and go in different directions, it can be likely to believe that bringing solution providers together with decision makers is a sustainable product. Solution providers will continue to sell their products, and to look for easier ways of approaching and coming closer to their customers, and that is exactly what Associated is offering them. Further, Associated believes that the market seeks time efficient solutions, and to be able to develop time efficient events may be important in attracting customers and taking a part of the market.

6.7 SWOT

In this section a SWOT analysis will be conducted to gain information on the most important strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Associated.

Strengths: The main strengths of this company are that it is a young, small and new organization. The company has the characteristic of being flexible when it comes to

development of products, handling customers and to adapt to the market. The fact that it is a new and young company may make it more adaptable and open to flexibility and able to respond quickly to changes if needed. Further, this company has no previous history, no 'baggage' which may be positive in terms of how the company is perceived in the market.

Weaknesses: Starting up a new business makes one rather vulnerable to the market one is trying to enter. This is a new business, with no brand or no name that anyone knows of or has heard of. The company has no position or place in the market in the startup and is completely unknown to customers, suppliers and the market itself. All these aspects takes time to overcome and it takes time to build a brand and a name for oneself. But it is possible, by a careful considered marketing and operating plan whereas strategic choices are made to build a reputation and with a certain focus on branding. Another type of weakness may be the financial health of the company. When starting up something new, it may be crucial to be able to gain financing through investors or loans to be able to survive the start-up phase, before the company is capable to break even or make profit itself.

Opportunities: The main opportunity for this company is that there exists one other main competitor, which means there is room in the market for another company offering same type of products. With a focus on differentiation of products and services, high standards and professionalism it should be possible to gain a position in the market. This type of market has no great entry barriers. There are no large investments in for instance machinery, fabrics, plants or other costly factors needed to start up and get started. There is no laws prohibiting others to entry, and the startup of this type of company may be less expensive than in other industries. Further, there is certain development of product in the market opportunities present. These conferences can be adjusted towards as many various industries as there exists and the same for the variety of management positions as well. These market opportunities will be a natural part of the development of the company, after some time when the firm has been established.

Threats: One great threat to consider when starting a new company may be on the economic side, financial instability and failure. The company is dependent on financial resources to be able to operate through the startup phase, when the company may most likely make no profit or even break even. Further is the transition, from relying on investors and funds towards becoming a survivable company which will make profit. If

one does not have an honest and controlled view at the financial aspect, the worst threat may be possible, bankruptcy. To be able to meet and overcome this threat I believe it is crucial to maintain an honest and controlled view on all the financial aspects of the economy of the company. Although, financial planning and budgets have not been included in this business plan, it must be developed to be able to take the business plan to the next step. This means, being able to develop realistic budgets, keep financial control, plan operations carefully and to maintain this control further. To continuously being aware and be able to react to changes or challenges that may arise, can be effective to prevent financial failure.

Another threat that should be taken into consideration is how the market perceives the company. Failing in the market may occur and to be able to prevent this may be vital. Careful planning and thought of how one wants the market to perceive the company are important in this matter. Making sure the marketing of the company and its' events are in line with what the customers experience at the events, are of importance, and a method of gaining acceptance in the market. To make sure one profiles a serious company, to operate as professionals and to deliver to expectations needs to be emphasized. Lastly, a new company with a brand new organization may represent a possible pitfall in terms of the organization. A weak or even lack of organizational culture or strength can be a threat. If employees does not feel committed or feel lack of support, this may bring the whole company down. Therefore, planning for and creating an organizational culture with focus on a strong and safe environment are of importance. New employees in a new company may feel an uncertainty for their job in the future. Making sure the employees feel safe, valued and appreciated are important aspects to emphasize. A method of avoiding this pitfall is to be a leader, which listens to the employees, maintains overview and control and appreciates the employees. Support and training can be crucial in the startup phase whereas continuity and a safe working environment should be maintained further.

6.7.1 Marketing and Sales

To be able to reach out and communicate with both sides of the customers it is important to establish some channels that are suitable for communication. This is in order to be able to proper communicate from the company and out, but also and maybe even more important for the market to be able to communicate with the company.

To establish this level of contact, these channels have been chosen to focus on from the start up point:

- A web page. This site will provide information about the company, what we do and who we are. Further, contact information will be available here (email, phone number and office address) along with information about upcoming conferences.

- A Facebook page presenting a more visual side of the company. Contains all contact information, but also pictures from the office and recent events. Updates on what we do, what is new will be presented here. Also, Facebook will be important in establishing a relationship with customers. It will be applied as a forum of discussions and questions, to get the customers closer to Associated.

Then, further in the startup phase Instagram and video sharing will be applied as well to share memorable moments from the conferences with the customers. These channels will also be used to provide customers with insight in the planning process of the events and how Associated operates.

Here, the marketing mix earlier described in the theory based chapter has been adjusted to fit Associated. The mix shows how product, place, promotion, price, people, physical evidence and process will be developed for Associated.

Product	Place	Promotion	Price
-Scheduled one-to-one meetings delivered before the conference takes place -Conference Program based on industry/manager position research sent out to all attendees	-Company Office in Oslo -Conference Venue, located maximum 30 minutes from airport -Hotel: Auditoriums, Lobbies and meeting rooms	-Project Coordinators: Approaching decision makers by personal invitations through phone calls -Sales Coordinators: Approaching solution providers through initial phone calls and meetings -Web site -Soscial Media: Facebook, Instagram and Youtube	-Offer three price levels: Small, Medium and Large package of meetings. -Larger amount of meetings purchased gives lower cost on each meeting - Money-back-guarantee of meetings purchased

People	Physical Evidence	Process	
-Training program for all employees - All employees also works as hosts during the conferences - Including customers in the processes; Establishing relationship through social media	-Different venues to different events -Hosts at the event -Employee nametags -Business cards	-Same time-span for all events - Same planning process: Industry/Manager position research and Invitation phase -Customizing each event program to fit each industry/manager position	

Table 2: Marketing Mix, Associated

Focus on sales is of course of importance for the company. To be able to sell the products to the solution providers, it is important to gain insight in their businesses and operating markets. Researching their challenges when selling their products further, along with identifying solution providers that fits well with the industry or manager position theme for the planned events are vital. Obtaining this type of information and perspective is an important contribution when further deciding how to approach the various solution provider companies. To be able to communicate the products and its benefits of Associated is crucial in the sales process.

Associated will be promoted as a professional and innovative company, with focus on delivering high quality conferences. These are the core aspects of what will be communicated to both decision makers and solution providers. It is important that the market perceive Associated as the serious company it will be, bringing businesses closer together.

6.4.4 Marketing Plan

The marketing plan of Associated will have a strong focus on social media and usage of internet. The channels of social media that has been chosen are a company web site, Facebook, Instagram and video sharing with YouTube. These social media marketing tools will be applied as following:

Facebook: To create and build relationships. Here, customers can contact us and ask questions. The company can communicate what we are working on and give some insight in the processes of the company. Encourage conversations about topics and various industry related themes from upcoming events. Associated will encourage decision makers and solution providers to give feedback at all time, and Facebook fits quite well for that purpose.

Instagram: Provide customers with visual insight. By using Instagram, Associated can share memorable moments from each event to further remind and reinforce the attendees experiences from the event. To include the customers more in the processes, visual insight of how Associated work and plan the events will also be shared using Instagram.

YouTube: This channel will be used to share key elements from speakers of the events. Applying this channel will be an important part of encouraging discussions of the themes from the events, along with attracting new attendees.

All of these channels will provide transparency and be vital tools in building relationships with our customers. Further social media will be a tool of brand building, reputation management, customer interaction, customer feedback, customer support and product development as Associated can directly ask the customers what they liked or disliked about the events. The figure below shows the balance and relationship in the company's' focus on social media and usage of internet to market the company. The company web site will be the core of the marketing, where all necessary information will be provided. Further, Facebook has a crucial role here, as this is the main arena (besides email) where customers, guests or the general public may give the company feedback and their opinions. Instagram and YouTube will be used as more visual tools and supplements and in the strategy of building a relationship with the customers. These channels are for sharing moments in terms of pictures and videos from the events itself and from the office.
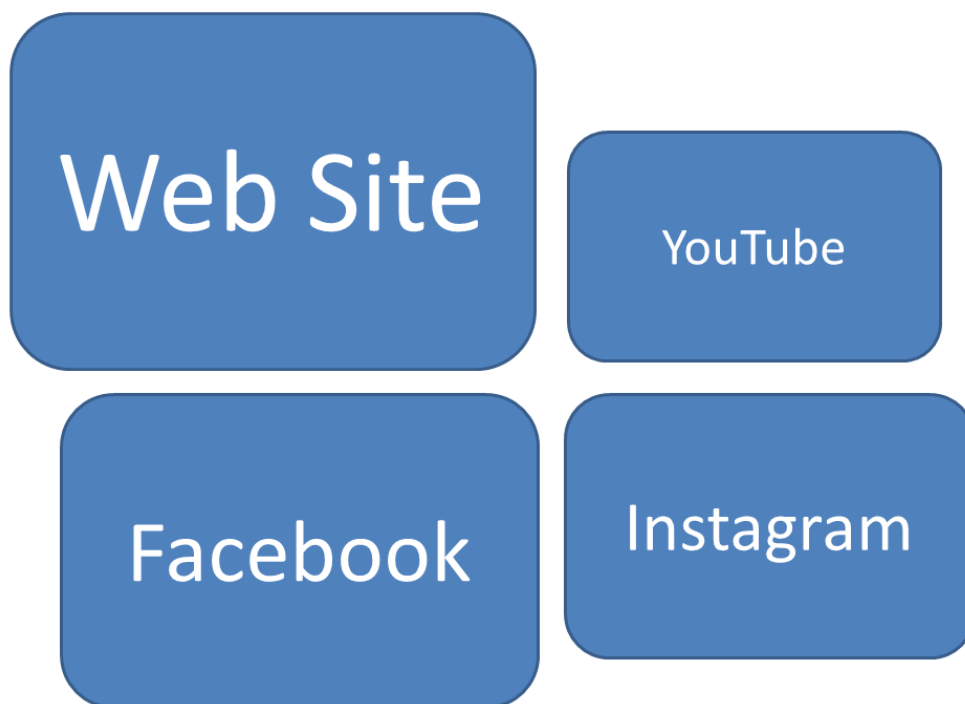

Figure 4: Internet and Social Media Marketing

Figure 3.3.1 Social Media and Internet Communication

This figure of the social media and internet communication shows by the size of the box and letters, which communication channel that will be given most focus.

Here, the marketing plan can be seen. It shows the first year of the company, when the activities will be started and operated.

Activity	Purpose and Description	Jan-March	Apr-June	July-Sept	Oct-Dec
Website	Present the company in a professional way. Provide information about the company, the conferences, contact information and event calendar				
Facebook	Build a relationship with the customers. Provide updates, invite customers to provide feedback, discussions, give insight in the working processes				
Instagram	Build a relationship with the customers. Share pictures and moments from the office and the conferences				
Video Share (YouTube / Vine)	Build a relationship with the customers. Share moments from the conferences and speakers.				

Figure 5: Marketing Plan

6.8   Plan of Action

The following plan of action shows the activities needed and when the activities will be finalized, to set up the company. Each activity has a given goals along with estimated time span, and the plan as action will work as a guideline to ensure that the steps in the process are conducted in right order as well as within the given time set. (www.altinn.no)

Activity	Goal	Time(months)	Jan	Feb	March	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Finishing the Business Plan	Basis of financing	5	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓						
Allocation of financial resources	Final decison to start up	2						▓	▓					
Finding and renting office space	Suitable office space	1								▓				
Registration of the company	Register one month before start up	1									▓			
Start up		2										▓	▓	

Table 6.5.1: Plan of Action

7.0 Conclusion

This final section of the dissertation will provide answers to the research questions. The answers to the first research question will highlight areas of improvement and differentiation, whilst the answers to the second research question will show what the criteria of success are. Combined, provides a better chance of success if the business plan were to be executed.

The answer to the first research question may be found in the business plan section of the thesis. Here a draft of a business plan has been provided. However, the pitfalls and differentiation opportunities found through the conducted research are the key aspects here.

Firstly; *lack of flexibility* represents an area of differentiation as well as a crucial pit fall. This aspect refers to all covered parts of the organization, and has shown to be the most important key factor. Flexibility is about the organizational culture and structure as well as planning and implementation of events. As flexibility in the organization is an area of improvement, flexibility of planning and executing events represent a great opportunity of differentiation. If conducted in a conscious and thorough way, flexibility may become a vital success factor.

Secondly; *focus on public sector* represents another pit fall to be aware of. Avoiding those boundaries set by laws and regulations, may provide a company with more resources to focus on events targeting industries in the private sector. As these laws cannot be overcome, it may not be beneficial to target this product to this sector.

Thirdly; a crucial pit fall is *instability in the workforce*. Ensuring a stable workforce has proven to be absolutely vital for the organizational culture and to create successful events. This area of improvement is highly influenced by the flexibility in the organization, as well as focus on human resources management. Here, a stronger focus on the working environment, employee training and support, appreciation of employees and a general shift in focus from result- oriented to relations- oriented can be the key.

Lastly; *marketing approach* represents both opportunity for differentiation and possible pit fall. Applying several approaches, especially social media are a key aspect in the improvement and differentiation areas, where one can increase brand awareness and

customer base. Reaching out to potential customers, as well as establishing a relationship with them through creating arenas for two-way communication, may as well increase attention as customers.

The second research question was to identify success criteria. These criteria have been discovered through the interviews conducted and the analysis of these.

The first and maybe most significant success criteria, is ***the product***. The business idea of selling and creating meetings between solution providers and decision makers, seem to provide a strong market position. It has been well perceived in both customer groups, and proven to be a sustainable product. Further, the product within the right framework, are easily planned and executed, it is easy to get out in the market.

Then, ***high quality on the events*** is a criterion of success here. To be able to deliver these events, these meeting arenas, with focus on quality in all steps of the process is very important. Well organized events may not only provide recurring customers, but attract an increasing number of them as well.

Opportunities of expansion, refers to that the product itself is rather easy to put to life, which means the possibilities of expanding are quite extensive. This requires that the events are created within a framework which makes it easy to execute within various industries, however leaves room for flexibility for adjustments to tailor them to fit each industry or manager position. This success criterion also refers to that there are no great barriers or boundaries to start up in a market.

Marketing through personal invitations, is a success criteria as well, and an important one. To include the customers in the process of developing these events, as well as the personal touch provides them with a sense of exclusivity and ownership. Yet, this does not need to be the only marketing method applied, nor does it need to occur isolated.

Cost efficient marketing, which very much includes marketing through personal invitations *and* use of social media. It gives an opportunity to market the company through additional channels, without additional large costs.

7.1   Future Research

This research could have been further developed in various ways. One could have expanded the research, looked further into the company researched here and included interviewees from various levels and functions in the organization, including managerial levels. This could have provided a more wholesome picture and one could have been able to review the findings from this research in comparison to the strategies and goals of the company.

Along with this, one could also have looked into other areas of literature and research, such as theoretical perspectives on leadership and management. Then, one could have expanded the research and looked into how the employee's opinion of the company and culture affected their work performance. Lastly, to conduct a similar research, for instance five years from now could also have been interesting to see if and what type of change and development that had happened.

8.0 References

Altinn. 2014. *Forretningsplan.* Retrieved: March 3rd 2014.
https://www.altinn.no/Global/Starte%20og%20drive%20bedrift/Guider/Forretnings
plan.pdf

Altinn 2014. *Aksjeselskap (AS).* Retrieved: March 3rd 2014.
https://www.altinn.no/no/Starte-og-drive-bedrift/Forberede/Velge-
organisasjonsform/Aksjeselskap-AS/

Barney, Jay. 1986. "Organizational Culture. Can It Be a Source of Sustained Competitive
Advantage?" *The Academy of Management Review*. 11(3): 656-665. Retrieved:
February 19th 2014 http://www.jstor.org/stable/258317

Chaney, Paul. 2009. *The Digital Handshake: Seven proven strategies to grow your busines
using social media*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Getz, Donald. 2005. *Event Management & Event Tourism.* New York: Cognizant
Communication Corporation.

Innovasjon Norge. 2014. *Om Oss.* Retrieved: February 23rd 2014.
http://www.innovasjonnorge.no/no/contact-us/#.U00vXPl_vuo

Innovasjon Norge. 2014. *Forretningsplan og Forretningsmodell.* Retrieved: February 23rd
2014. http://www.innovasjonnorge.no/no/bygg-en-bedrift/forretningsplan/#.UvN-Qfl5OSo

Jacobsen, Dag Ingvar. 2000. *Hvordan gjennomføre undersøkelser? Innføring i
samfunnsvitenskapelig metode.* Kristiansand; Norwegian Academic Press.

Jacobsen, Dag Ingvar & Thorsvik, Jan. 2006. *Hvordan organisasjoner fungerer.* Bergen:
Fagbokforlaget Vigmondstad og Bjørke AS.

Leedy, Paul D. & Jeanne Ellis Ormrod. 2013. *Practical Research Planning Design.* New
York: Pearson Education Inc.

Ne.no. 2014. *Lokaler til Leie og Salg.* Retrieved: April 4th 2014 http://ne.no/vis/til-leie-
kontorhotell-p%E3%A5-rosenholm-campus-40942

Nunn, Les and Brian McGuire. 2010. "The Importance Of A Good Business Plan".
Journal of Business and Economics Research. 8(2):95-105. Retrieved: January 15th
2014
http://search.proquest.com/docview/194892288/14300F708B16B2F7FAE/8?accou
ntid=40814

Schein, Edgar H. 1990. "Organizational Culture." Sloan School of Managemenet,
Massachusetts institute of Technology. February 1990: Americal Psychologist.
Vol.45, No. 2, 109-119. Retrieved: February 7th 2014
http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/amp/45/2/109.pdf

Simon, Marilyn. 2011. "Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations." Dissertation and
Schoalry . Research: Recipes for Success. Seattle: WA, Dissertation Success, LLC.
Retrieved: March 26th 2014 http://dissertationrecipes.com/wp-
content/uploads/2011/04/AssumptionslimitationsdelimitationsX.pdf

Spinelli, S., & Adams, R.J. (2012). *New Venture Creation – Entreprenurship for the 21st
century.* New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin

SSB.no. *Statistikkbanken.* 2014. Retrieved March 27th 2014
https://www.ssb.no/statistikkbanken/selectout/ShowTable.asp?FileformatId=2&Qu
eryfile=20144513534752698336NYBedrifter&PLanguage=0&MainTable=NYBed
rifter&potsize=243

Yeoman, Ian, Martin Robertson, Jane Ali-Knight, Siobhan Drummond & Una McMahon-
Beattie. 2009. *Festival and Events Management: an international arts and culture
perspective.* London: Elsevier Ltd.

Zeithaml, Valarie A. and Mary Jo Bitner. 2003. *Services Marketing: Integrating customer
focus across the firm.* New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin

9.0 Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Introduction

1. Please state your previous position and length of employment at Management Events

2. Why did your employment end at Management Events?

In your previous operating market

3. How do you feel Management Events was able to position itself in your previous operating market (e.g.: the Norwegian team, the Netherlands etc.)?

    - What do you believe Management Events could have done different to improve its' position in your previous operating market?

4. What did you see as the main challenges for Management Events in your previous operating market?

    - How do you believe Management Events could have overcome those challenges?

5. What do you see as the main success factors for Management Events in your previous operating market?

Marketing

6. What do you consider to be the main advantages of Management Events decision to only advertise their events through invitations?

    - What do you consider to be the disadvantages of this approach?

7. Do you consider this approach to be sufficient in terms of attracting customers (partners) and participants (delegates) to the events? Please explain.

8. Which additional methods of marketing would you consider to be beneficial to apply?

HR

9. Would you consider the workforce as stable or unstable in your previous team? Please explain.

- If considered stable, what would you believe were the main reasons?

- If considered unstable, did you experience high turnover in labor and what do you see as the main reasons?

10. The Norwegian team experienced rapid changes in workforce during the first operating year.

-What do you see as the main reasons?

-What do you believe the company could have done different to secure a more stable workforce in the Norwegian market, or in your own previous operating market?

11. When you were an employee, how did you experience the working environment?

12. How did you feel the company treated its' employees?

Products

13. When working for Management Events, how did you experience the products were perceived by customers (delegates)?

14. What is your opinion of the products of Management Events?

- If you were to improve these products (the various types of events), how could they have been improved?

Other thoughts

15. Anything you feel should be mentioned in this interview?