



# Attracting new customers using a right service position and relevant references

## Luuk IJland

4Connection is having difficulties attracting new customers for their "SharePoint Connect" and "SharePoint Connect Services" services. Both the SharePoint administration services were introduced without decent market research. After a grounded problem identification, it was concluded that 4Connection did not had a clear service position for their services. 4Connection needed to know what potential customers desired in a SharePoint monitoring and administration service. This report will show the customer values identified by the respondents and eventually the right service position for 4Connection.

## Colophon

### Attracting new customers using a right service position and relevant references

An example for organizations offering SharePoint administration services in an information technology market.

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## Preface

The moment is there, finally! With this master thesis I finished my graduation in Business Administration. Before this graduation, I finished my graduation in Management, Economics and Law, which gave me a bachelor degree. I always knew that a bachelor degree wasn't my endpoint and so I decided to start the master Business Administration at the University of Twente. Before I was permitted to the program I had to finish the pre-master. I have to admit that this wasn't the most interesting track I ever attended but it taught me the basics in methodology and statistics, which was very useful. During the premaster I was looking forward to the courses taught in the master track, which were challenging and very interesting. When I successfully passed all the courses the final part could start, the master thesis.

It wasn't possible to finalize this thesis without help of some people, who I would like to thank here. First of all I would like to thank 4Connection for the opportunity and especially Nico Kienhuis and Rob Scholten. They both helped me with the practical insight in the offered services and products. I always enjoyed working at 4Connection and I am very glad with the job opportunity they offered me. Secondly, I would like to thank Jann van Benthem en Natalie den Engelse, from the University of Twente, for their patience and support. I always appreciated the discussions, which helped me to stay on track.

After the data collection part I had to pause the project for a period of three months. During these months I travelled around the globe. Back in Holland I had to write the results and conclusion for finalizing the master thesis.

Hengelo, 22th of April 2013

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## Management summary

4Connection is an information technology firm (subsidiary of the ResourcIT group) offering a broad range of Microsoft SharePoint services. 4Connection is offering Microsoft SharePoint services for all kinds of organizations but started with a product called the ProjectSupporter. A product developed for municipalities to help them with the implementation of thematic working. In the second quarter of 2012 4Connection introduced two new services called "SharePoint Connect" and "SharePoint Connect Services". Both services are Microsoft SharePoint monitoring and administration services. The services were introduced without decent market research and based on the feeling that organizations were experiencing SharePoint administration problems. Now that the services are introduced 4Connection is experiencing difficulties in attracting new customers.

A literature review was conducted which provided main research directions: customer values, service differentiation, positioning a service and trust. After a grounded problem analysis it could be concluded that 4Connection was missing a clear service position. To gain a clear service position 4Connection needed to know how they could differentiate the new services from its competitors. The literature provided answers and stated that a clear service position could be achieved by differentiating the services from its competitors based on some relevant attributes. These attributes were considered to be customer values, so 4Connection needed to know which attributes their target market would value. Based on these customer values 4Connection should differentiate the monitoring and administration services in order to achieve the right service position.

Given the goals of this research the following research question was formulated: *How should 4Connection position their new introduced services to improve the attraction of potential customers in the target segment?*

In order to answer the main research question, in-depth interviews were held. 4Connection thought that organizations that were using SharePoint and employing between 100 and 1000 employees were the organization with the highest sales potential. Based on this assumption DMU members of IT-departments were selected for the in-depth interviews. Kennis Centrum Handel, Provincie Frylan, Flamco, Nederlandse Spoorwegen, Arla Foods, Woningcorporatie Accolade and Vereniging Eigenhuis participated in this research. The in-depth interviews were structured around four constructs: segmentation, customer values, trust and competitor identification/analysis. The respondents answered basic segmentation questions, providing information about: industry, company size, location, SharePoint versions, purchasing policies, SharePoint applications, urgency etc. During the customer value part the respondents were asked questions about what they desired in a SharePoint monitoring and administration service. All the desires were written down and at the end the respondents were asked to divide 100 points over all the mentioned desires. Based on the ranked desires the most important desires could be unraveled. During the customer value part, special attention was laid on the attribute trust. Trust was mentioned by academics as an important factor influencing the attraction of new customers. The respondents were asked what role trust played in the purchasing process and in what way the respondents checked if an IT-supplier could be trusted. The last part of the in-depth interview was focused on the competitor identification and competitor analysis. The respondents were asked who they could identify as an organization offering SharePoint services.

Based on the empirical data it can be concluded that organizations in the predefined target market used SharePoint for document management, intranet and workflows. More than half of the respondents did not classified SharePoint as a business critical application. Based on these results it can be concluded that there is not much sales potential for organizations in the target segment. One essential remark must be made because almost all the respondents

mentioned that in the future they will use more features of SharePoint which will have consequences for the administration jobs. So if 4Connection do want to create a distinctive place in the customers mind then she should differentiate the monitoring and administration services on the highest ranked attributes. These attributes were: solidarity, experience, responsiveness, reliability and trust. Based on these attributes 4Connection should outperform its competition.

The respondents of 4Connection were able to identify 19 competitors, all offering some kind of SharePoint services. Atos, Capgemini and Wortell were the competitors that were mentioned twice. One remarkable fact is that none of the respondents knew exactly what kind of services the competitors offered. Which could be indicated as not having a clear service positioning. The competitors communicated 4 attributes very strongly: experience, being a Microsoft partner, their knowledge and their SharePoint specialists (employees). Over 80% of the competitors showed references cases of previous delivered work.

The literature already showed that having relevant references strongly influenced the attraction of new customers. The empirical data showed that references were used to check if the supplying firm could be trusted. And trust was indicated as an important attribute influencing the attraction of new customers.

Based on the findings some recommendations can be drawn for 4Connection: #1: 4Connection should built strong references cases and clearly communicate the important attributes in these cases. #2: earn a Microsoft Partnership status (silver or gold). #3: consider another target segment. A segment who implemented SharePoint in the early stages is probably using more features now and experiencing administration problems. #4: offer a free trial. If the customer can see the benefits of the administration services she is more likely to buy it. #5: built awareness with the important customers values in mind. Communicate the important customer values on every website, flyer, sales contacts and exposure on events. #6: 4Connection should do research in the trend of SharePoint on-premise and hosted SharePoint usage. If the trend is that organizations are going for hosted SharePoint then the chances of the administration services increases.

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## 1 4Connection B.V.

### 1.1 Company history

4Connection started in 2006 as a subsidiary of ExplainiT (business unit of the ResourciT group). ExplainiT is a company who offers business training in management, communication and ICT. ExplainiT sold the training: "thematic working" to almost all municipalities in the Netherlands which resulted in the idea to start a new company who could help municipalities with the implementation of "thematic working".

4Connection was born and started to develop software solutions based to support the "thematic working" process at municipalities. The developed software was called the ProjectSupporter and was developed upon the Microsoft SharePoint Platform<sup>1</sup>.

After some successful implementations of the ProjectSupporter, 4Connection widened her scope and started to offer SharePoint professionals for small SharePoint projects. In 2012 the focus changed again which resulted that 4Connection is transformed into a Microsoft SharePoint competence center, selling SharePoint related products and services. 4Connection changed from a company selling a project management product to a company that helps organizations with the deployment of Microsoft SharePoint.



Figure 1: headquarters of 4Connection

#### 1.1.1 Microsoft SharePoint: history and explanation

In 2001 Microsoft introduced SharePoint; a team collaboration product designed to help teams share information quickly and easily. SharePoint is a web application platform and at that time companies associated SharePoint with intranet, content management and document management.

Microsoft invested greatly in the development of SharePoint and the more recent versions have significant broader capabilities. The newest version of SharePoint is called SharePoint Foundation 2010 and is applicable for intranet portals, document & file management, collaboration, social networks, extranet websites, enterprise search, and business intelligence. There are also possibilities around system integration, process integration and workflow automation.

For a good understanding of SharePoint, it is necessary to know that SharePoint is depending on several sub-systems (servers/hardware/databases etc.). The dependencies of SharePoint will be illustrated using the following example:

A company chooses SharePoint technology for their new intranet. The SharePoint application is a server product and running on a Windows Server. When employees are adding new items on their intranet the data they create is saved into a database, called a SQL database. This database is connected to the Windows Server and thus to the SharePoint platform. All the dependencies together are called a SharePoint Farm or SharePoint environment. The example shows that SharePoint is depending on several other products. If one of these product fails, then SharePoint will fail. If the database is full of space? Then no one can add new items to their new intranet.

### 1.2 Organizational structure

4Connections is part of the ResourciT Holding, together with some other IT related business units. 4Connections works with a horizontal structure as shown in figure 2. This horizontal structure gives

<sup>1</sup> Microsoft SharePoint is a platform that enables employees to set up websites to share information, manage documents from start to finish, and publish reports to help everyone make better decisions (Microsoft Corporation, 2010).

them flexibility and the freedom to be entrepreneurial. 4Connection is split up in four small multidisciplinary team. The “development” team contains all the SharePoint developers. The team members develop customer specific features. The “marketing & sales” team is responsible for all marketing and sales related aspects. The team consist of 2 account managers. The project team, is a team of SharePoint consultants who are responsible for the execution of customer project. Some of these team members are for a longer time deployed by a customer. The support team is responsible for the helpdesk function. Customers can sent requests to the service desk of 4Connection and will be helped within a time interval. These request will be followed up by the support team.

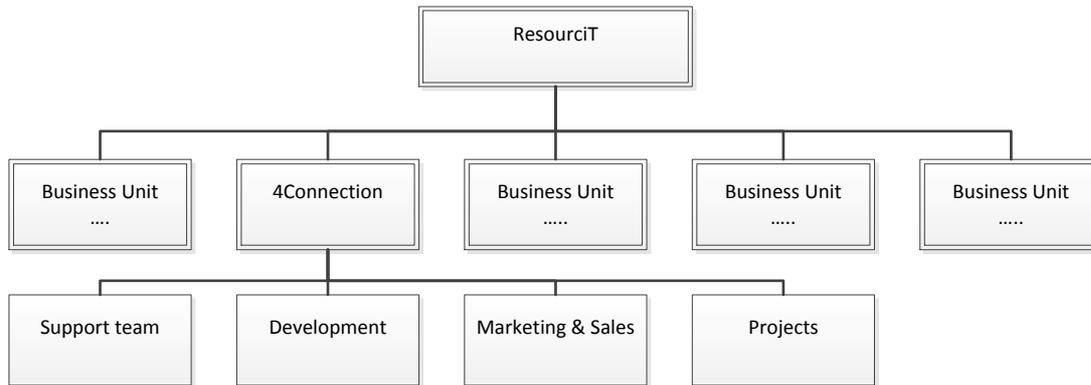


Figure 2: organogram ResourciT group

### 1.3 Products and services

4Connection develops and sells SharePoint based products for: project-, quality-, and knowledge management. 4Connection also offers SharePoint monitoring and administration services called “SharePoint Connect” and “SharePoint Connect Services”. The focus of this research will lie on the SharePoint Connect Services.

#### 1.3.1 SharePoint Connect & SharePoint Connect Services

4Connection offers two SharePoint administration services. The difference between them is that the “SharePoint Connect” service offers the customer detailed monitoring information and with this information an IT-administrator (of the customer) is able to (proactively) solve SharePoint related problems. The “SharePoint Connect Services” service offers the same but here specialists of 4Connection also solve the occurring problems. With “SharePoint Connect Services” the customer has totally outsourced the administration part of their SharePoint farm.

“SharePoint Connect Services” is a SharePoint service that helps the customer to manage and control their SharePoint environment. 4Connection is able to do this with help from a monitoring tool called Microsoft SCOM. Based on the information the monitoring tool provides, SharePoint specialists of 4Connection are able to solve the existing or occurring problems. Sometimes before the end-users are noticing these problems.

Common monitoring tools only monitor the application itself but the tool 4Connection uses, is also capable of monitoring all the SharePoint dependencies as explained in paragraph 1.1.1.

## 2 Research design

### 2.1 Problem identification

One of the founders of 4Connection recognized the opportunity to create a new service to fulfill the needs of organizations experiencing difficulties in SharePoint administration tasks. He believed that organizations find it hard to manage and control their SharePoint environments and were willing to outsource this responsibility. This belief is somewhat stated by consultants of 4Connections who encounter these problems by current customers. The feeling of the founder was based on the general development of SharePoint explained by the following example:

Microsoft introduced SharePoint as a relatively easy product for intranets and websites. The more recent versions of SharePoint had far more complex capabilities. A negative consequence of this development was that a lot of companies underestimated the administration part of SharePoint. Because of the application possibilities of SharePoint in the first versions were lesser than in the current version, administration wasn't really needed. However, the SharePoint environment grew and got more complex, partly due to the new application possibilities (workflow/business intelligence/search/etc.).

4Connection launched, without decent market research, their new SharePoint monitoring and administration services in the second quarter of 2012. 4Connection is offering SharePoint expertise to companies having trouble with managing and controlling their SharePoint environment. Employees of 4Connection are highly skilled SharePoint professionals and capable of administering and monitoring complex SharePoint environments.

The market wherein 4Connection is operating with their new launched services is that of the general IT-companies. General IT-companies are offering basic IT-solutions such as: Microsoft Exchange implementations, Windows Server implementation and Active Directory implementation. These IT-companies are also offering administration services on all of their products. Because SharePoint is becoming a popular product these companies are starting to offer (additionally) SharePoint implementations which make them more or less a competitor. However, most of these companies are not capable of monitoring a complex SharePoint farm and additionally offer administration services. The combination of highly skilled SharePoint professionals and a state-of-the-art monitoring tool for SharePoint would be a great starting point for 4Connection to start the new service. Based on this combination 4Connection should be able to gain market share and turnover.

The problem that 4Connection is facing, is that she is having difficulties attracting new customers for the SharePoint monitoring and administration services. The cause of this problem might be that potential customers find it hard to determine which company they should choose for outsourcing of their SharePoint administration. Most of these potential customers already have a general IT-administrator who covers all the general IT problems. 4Connection assumes that when a potential customer is having trouble with their SharePoint application the general IT-administrator will be contacted to solve the problems. But these general IT-administrators have little knowledge of the SharePoint application and probably aren't able to fulfill the specific needs. The underlying problem then is that 4Connection cannot convince the potential customer that their service is better. For convincing the potential customer the service of 4Connection should perfectly fulfill the needs of this customer and also clearly communicate that the service they are offering is outperforming the other suppliers.

#### 2.1.1 Theoretical background

Before determining the actual underlying problem, it must be clear what type of offerings the "SharePoint Connect" and "SharePoint Connect Services" are. The offerings provided by 4Connection can be determined as services. Services are characterized by three important aspects: services are intangible, heterogenic and inseparable (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Intangible refers to the fact that most services are performances rather than objects. Most services cannot be counted, measured or tested in advance because people have to perform before the result can be measured.

The second character, heterogeneity refers to the fact that most services varies from producer to producer, from customer to customer and from day to day. The latest character, inseparable refers to the fact that production and consumption of many services are inseparable. The offering of 4Connection is about monitoring and administrating SharePoint environments. These environments differ from customer to customer and the employees of 4Connection act based on occurring problems. The result of the employees isn't tangible and the production and consumption can't be seen separated because if an employee of 4Connection 'produces' (solving a SharePoint problem) it is directly consumed. The offerings of 4Connection are based on information technology and thus classified as information technology services.

4Connection wants to attract new customers for their information technology services but is experiencing difficulties in attracting them. The literature provides relevant information on this issue and states that "service positioning" is influencing the attraction of new customers (Chenet, Dagger, & O'Sullivan, 2008). Service positioning is a key element in modern marketing and is driven by differentiation (Andreassen & Lanseng, 2010) (Blankson & Kalafatis, 2010). So if 4Connection differentiates its service on the right attributes she would be able to achieve the right service position. Based on the right service position she would be able to attract new customers. 4Connection is operating in a "business-to-business" market and offering an information technology service, literature shows that for this kind of business it is also important to have relevant references (Salminen & Möller, 2008). Summarizing: if 4Connection wants to attract new customers, a right service position is necessary. The right service position can be achieved by differentiating on the right attributes and with relevant references 4Connection should be able to attract new customers.

#### 2.1.1.1 Positioning

Positioning is considered by both academics and practitioners to be one of the key elements of modern marketing (Blankson & Kalafatis, 2010). The position of a service is used as a marketing tool to address the question, "how is one product or a service different from others?", "how it is positioned relative to the products or services we know?".

Recent studies on positioning and positioning strategies determined this definition: competitive positioning is the combination of choice of target market (where the firm will compete) and competitive advantage (how the firm will compete) (Hooley, Greenley, Fahy, & Cadogan, 2001). The literature shows that differentiation is an important aspect of positioning a service (Kerin & Peterson, 2007) because when a firm is able to differentiate its offering with respect to its competitors, the firm is able to create a distinct and valued place in the mind of the customer. Therefore the concept of service differentiation will be discussed.

#### 2.1.1.2 Service differentiation

Differentiation is seen as essential for business-to-business service providers because the more the service offering is differentiated the less willing clients are to switch providers and more likely they are satisfied with the firms offering. The service differentiation is so important because a firm's distinctiveness it is linked to client-perceived value, competitive advantage, and a target market focus (Chenet, Dagger, & O'Sullivan, 2008, p. 336). The literature also provides evidence that firms with who succeed in offering substantial value for buyers in a way that their competitors cannot, tend to be more successful at retaining customers (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005). Differentiation can be defined as: *the customers' perception of the firm being consistently different on important attributes relative to its competitor's offerings* (Chenet, Dagger, & O'Sullivan, 2008, p. 337). Based on this definition it can be concluded that for 4Connection it is relevant to know on which important attributes they should focus and should outperform its competition.

#### Customer value

The first two constructs show that a position can be achieved by differentiation a company's service, based on several dimensions. Most companies use the attribute strategy (Kerin & Peterson, 2007). Before choosing the right service position based on attributes, 4Connection should know what

attributes their potential customers expect and desire in a service offering. Therefore the construct customer desired values will be elaborated.

For 4Connection it is relevant to know which values are desired in the service offering because then she can differentiate the service on these (important) desired values. The thing is that customer desired values are a prerequisite to determine the real customer values (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). So a definition is needed of the customer value concept and the customer-desired values. (Woodruff, 1997) defines customer value as:

*Customer value is a customer's perceived preference for and evaluation of those product attributes, attribute performance, and consequences arising from use that facilitates (or block) achieving the customer's goals and purposes in use situations.*

(Flint, Woodruff, & Gardial, 1997) define customer-desired values as:

*Desired customer value is what customers seek to adhere to their values and achieve their desired end-states of existence.*

### 2.1.1.3 Trust and references

The right service position, achieved by a differentiated service, increases the chance of attracting new customers. There is another aspect influencing the attraction of new customers, called trust. Trust is strongly influencing the purchasing process (Doney & Cannon, 1997) (Mouzas, Henneberg, & Naude, 2007) (Ryssel, Ritter, & Gemunden, 2004). Trust is also seen as a possible customer value according to (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008) and (Lapierre J. , 2000). Trust is defined by (Doney & Cannon, 1997) as: the perceived credibility and benevolence of a target of trust. Where a "target of trust" means: the extend of trust between two entities. For example: the trust between a buyer and a seller. (Lapierre J. , 2000) defines the context of trust, as a customer value, in an information technology market with quotes as: "trust is the supplier fulfillment of promises made to your organization".

(Salminen & Möller, 2008) state that references are commonly used to attract new customers. They define references as: *an indirect proof, based on some practical or concrete evidence, like product, service or systems delivery, of a supplier's capability of delivery.* Based on this definition a clear link can be made between the concept of trust and the references used in attracting new customers.

### 2.1.2 The actual problem

If 4Connection wants to be the organization solving SharePoint administration problems, they should have a clear service position and should differentiate their services based on some important customer values.

The fact is that 4Connection has little insight in which type of organizations will be potential customers and doesn't know what these potential customers value in a SharePoint monitoring and administration service. Without this information 4Connection isn't able to create the right service position and differentiate their monitoring and administration services from its competitors. A result of this positioning problem is that 4Connection is having difficulties in attracting new customers. A possible key attribute of the service offering is the monitoring part of the administration service. 4Connection thinks this uniqueness is a valuable feature of their administration service but don't know if potential customers share this opinion.

The key problem of this research is the unclear service positioning because there is little insight in what 4Connection differentiates from its competitors and what the added value of 4Connections' SharePoint Connect and Connect Services is for the customer. Another (sub) problem is that 4Connection hasn't found out if the target segment is interested in buying the SharePoint monitoring and administration services of 4Connection. Solving the positioning problem will clearly determine the added value of the "SharePoint Connect" and "SharePoint Connect Services", and will help the sales force to gain a stronger position in the buying process of potential customers.

## 2.2 Research goal

The goal of this research is to find a solution for 4Connection, how they can solve the "SharePoint Connect" and "SharePoint Connect Services" positioning problem in order to improve the attraction of customers in the target segment. The focus of this research will lie on organizations who are already using Microsoft SharePoint because these companies are experienced with the technology and are probably the first to make use of the "SharePoint Connect" or "SharePoint Connect Services".

Regarding to the research goal the following research question is formulated:

*How should 4Connection position their new introduced services to improve the attraction of potential customers in the target segment?*

1. What are the roles of customer values, trust and service differentiation on positioning a service?
2. What are the characteristics of the chosen target segment and does this segment has potential for their SharePoint administration and monitoring services?
3. What do potential customers of the target segment expect and desire from a SharePoint monitoring and administration service?
4. Which positioning strategies can be used to position a service and which strategy will fit the situation of 4Connection best?
5. Who are 4Connection's competitors and which service position do they use?
6. Which values are important in the positioning of the SharePoint monitoring and administration services to communicate to the customer?

## 2.3 Research strategy

For the first sub-question a literature review has been conducted. This literature review will describe the basic concepts: service positioning, differentiation strategies, customer value and trust. The second sub-question will be answered using data collected during the in-depth interviews. Before the interviews, an internal focus group session will be held to identify the possible customer-desired values of the target segment. The outcomes of this session serve as input for the in-depth interview. Sub-question 3 will be answered based on the data collection. The competitors' will be researched by asking potential customers of the target segment who they identify as competitors of 4Connection. The competitor analysis will be conducted using the presented literature. The most important values, collected using a weighting method, will be extracted from the data to answer sub-question 6.

## 2.4 Scientific and practical contribution

For attracting new or potential customers, a right service position is necessary. The right service position can be achieved by a differentiated service based on some important attributes. These attributes can be identified as customer values and play a crucial role in the process of differentiating a service from its competitors.

Literature shows that the attribute "trust" is seen as a possible important attribute in the process of attracting new customers. Literature also reveals that "references" act as indirect proof of a supplier's capability of delivery and are commonly used as a marketing tool. The scientific contribution of this research is that organizations need a right service position to attract new customers but also need to emphasize its trust by using relevant references.

The practical contribution for 4Connection is to determine what the characteristics of the target segment are, if the target segment is interested in the offered services and based on what customer values 4Connection need to differentiate its service in order to achieve the right service positioning.

### 3 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter the previous mentioned constructs will be discussed in detail, and will serve as building blocks for the empirical study.

#### 3.1 Service position

Positioning is considered by both academics and practitioners to be one of the key elements of modern marketing (Blankson & Kalafatis, 2010). The position of a service is used as a marketing tool to address the question, how is one product or a service different from others? How it is positioned relative to the products or services we know? In this paragraph the general concept of positioning is discussed followed by the positioning of a service, positioning strategies, and the positioning statement.

Product positioning is the way that a product is defined by consumers on important attributes – the place the product occupies in the consumers' minds relative to competing products. Because consumers are overloaded with information about products and services they cannot (re)evaluate these products every time that they make a buying decision. Consumers simplify this process by organizing products into categories – they "position" products, services, and companies in their mind. So a product's position is the complex set of perceptions, impressions, and feelings that consumer hold for the product compared with competing products (Kotler & Armstrong, 1997, pp. 224,225). In this definition (Kotler & Armstrong, 1997) mention the consumer but this research is focused on the customer in a business-to-business context. Therefore the definition of (Kerin & Peterson, 2007, p. 147) is used:

*Positioning is the act of designing an organization's offering and image so that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target customer's mind relative to competitive offerings.*

The competitive position of a market offering, such as a service, is essentially the combination of benefits or features the target customer receives from the offering. According to (Hooley, Greenley, Fahy, & Cadogan, 2001) this will be a combination of price charged, quality delivered, service provided, degree of innovation offered, delivery of specific features, and the degree of customization. Within each of these basic dimensions, sub-dimensions may be identified. An example provided by (Hooley, Greenley, Fahy, & Cadogan, 2001): within a service dimension some firms emphasize responsiveness to customer requests, while others emphasize reliability, and yet other empathy or assurance. In practice firms will use a combination of the above factors to create a unique position for their offerings in the market (Hooley, Greenley, Fahy, & Cadogan, 2001, p. 511).

##### 3.1.1 Positioning strategies

The literature provides 6 positioning strategies (Kerin & Peterson, 2007) (Kotler & Armstrong, 1997). Firms can position their services by (1) attribute or benefit, (2) use or application, (3) product of brand user, (4) product or service class, (5) competitors, and (6) price and quality. Most firms use attributes and benefits to position their offering (Kerin & Peterson, 2007, p. 147). Positioning on attributes will require the determination of which attributes are important to target markets, which attributes are being emphasized by competitors, and how the offering can be fitted into this offering-target market environment.

Before establishing an optimal service position, it is relevant to consider the positioning guidelines of (Keller, 2003). He states that before establishes the optimal position a number of considerations come into play. He identifies 2 key issues arriving at the optimal competitive positioning (1) defining and communicating the competitive frame of reference and (2) choosing and establishing point of parity and points of difference. Based on these guidelines it is necessary to know what the points of parity and points of difference are. The communication of the optimal position (position statement) is possible using direct and indirect communications (encounters) with potential customers. Direct ways

are for example phone calls of sales personnel, the indirect communication is based on websites, flyers and other marketing materials.

### 3.1.2 Positioning statement

To communicate the optimal position it is necessary to craft a positioning statement. Positioning statements are used by marketers for crafting a marketing strategy. The statement should identify the target segment and needs satisfied, the service class in which the organization's offering competes, and the offering's unique attributes or benefits provided. A positioning statement generally takes the following form (Kerin & Peterson, 2007):

*For (target market and need) the (service) is a (service class) that (statement of unique attributes provided).*

### 3.1.3 Points of difference

The constructs: "points-of-parity" and "points-of-difference" have to be more concrete and so the definition of (Kotler & Keller, 2012) will be used. Point-of-Difference (POD) are attributes or benefits that consumers strongly associate with a brand, positively evaluate, and believe they could not find to the same extent with a competitive brand. Associations that make up points-of-difference may be based on virtually any type of attribute or benefit. Strong brands may have multiple points-of-difference. Three criteria determine whether a brand association can truly function as a point-of-difference: desirability, deliverability, and differentiability. In the definition of (Kotler & Keller, 2012) the term "brand" is used. This research the term "brand" will be replaced for the term "service". So the definition of POD will be: *"are attributes or benefits that customers strongly associate with a service, positively evaluate, and believe they could not find to the same extend with a competitive service"*.

(Kotler & Keller, 2012) determined three criteria to determine whether a brand (service) association can truly function as a point-of-difference. These criteria are:

- Desirable to customer: customers must see the service association as personally relevant. Customers must also be given a compelling reason to believe and an understandable rationale for why the service can deliver the desired benefit.
- Deliverable by the company: the company must have the internal resources and commitment to feasibly and profitably create and maintain the service association in the mind of customers. The service design and marketing offering must support the desired association.
- Differentiating from competitors: customer must see the service association as distinctive and superior to relevant competitors.

The superiority on an attribute or benefit of the service must be demonstrated. An important aspect herein is that the customer will be convinced.

### 3.1.4 Points of parity

Points-of-parity (POPs), are attribute or benefit associations that are not necessarily unique to the brand, but may in fact be shared with other brands. Again this definition is adapted for this research, replacing the term brand for service. Resulting in this definition: *"Points-of-Parity (POP) are attribute or benefit associations that are not necessarily unique to the service but may in fact be shared with other service of competitors"*. These types of associations come in two basic forms: category and competitive (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 280).

- Category points-of-parity: these are attributes or benefits that customers view as essential to a legitimate and credible offering within a certain product or service. In other words, they present necessary condition the service has to meet. The attributes can change over time because of the development of new technologies, legal developments, customer trends etc.
- Competitive points-of-parity: are associations designed to overcome perceived weakness of the service. A competitive point of parity may be required to either (1) deny competitors'

perceived points-of-difference or (2) deny a perceived vulnerability of the service as a result of its own points-of-differences.

## 3.2 Service differentiation

The importance of differentiation is well discussed in the literature (Aaker & Shansby, 1982) (Brentani, 2001) (Chenet, Dagger, & O'Sullivan, 2008) (Crawford, 1985). Differentiation is seen as essential for business-to-business service providers, because the more the service offering is differentiated the less willing clients are to switch providers, and more likely they are satisfied with the firms offering. The service differentiation is so important because a firm's distinctiveness it is linked to client-perceived value, competitive advantage, and a target market focus (Chenet, Dagger, & O'Sullivan, 2008, p. 336). Next to these concepts, delivering better trade-off between benefits and sacrifices in a product or service is important. When 4Connection is able to offer better value than its competitors, it will help to create and sustain competitive advantages (Eggert & Ulaga, 2002).

The concepts of (Chenet, Dagger, & O'Sullivan, 2008) will discuss in further detail in the next sections, the customer value construct will be discussed separately. Before discussing these concepts it is relevant to know, that firms who succeed in offering substantial value for buyers in a way that their competitors cannot, tend to be more successful at retaining customers (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005).

### 3.2.1 Competitive advantage

Competitive advantage is one of the things that is achieved by differentiation. A competitive advantage can be seen as an advantage of the supplier firm over their competitors. Much of the literature available on competitive advantage is written from a "resource based view" perspective (Barney, 1991) (Peteraf, 1993). This means that a competitive advantage is built based on the available (internal) resources. This research focuses is on positioning, and thus the customer-desired values are important for 4Connection. The customer-desired values are important because they will be established before the purchase. If 4Connection knows the customer-desired values and emphasizes on the most important customer-desired values, she would be able to gain a competitive advantage over their competitors.

To gain a competitive advantage on the competitors, 4Connection should know who their competitors are. It is relevant to know what competitors really are before it can be determined who they are. And what customer-desired values they provide in their service offerings.

#### 3.2.1.1 Competitor identification and analysis

Competitor identification is a key task for managers interested in scanning their competitive terrain (Peteraf, 1993) (Bergen & Peteraf, 2002). Competitor identification is a necessary precursor to the task of competitor analysis (Smith et al., 1992) as cited in (Bergen & Peteraf, 2002, p. 157). Before analyzing the competitors of 4Connection's services it is necessary to know who the competitors are.

##### Competitor Identification:

Competitor identification is essentially a categorization task that involves classifying firms on the bases of relevant similarities. (Clark & Montgomery, 1999) identified competitors using the "supply-based" approach. This approach classifies competitors on the basis of attributes of the competing firm (4Connection). In other words if an organizations is offering the same attributes as 4Connection. The "supply-base" approach identifies competitors on the basis of how similar firms are in terms of technology, products offered, and services offered, and so forth.

##### Competitor analysis

Competitor analysis is an evaluation task, that goes beyond classification to compare rivals on the basis of relevant dimensions. For the evaluation of the classified competitors the construct of resource equivalence was introduced by (Bergen & Peteraf, 2002). Resource equivalence is defined as the extent to which a given competitor possesses strategic endowments capable of satisfying the same customer

needs as the focal firm. In other words, does the competitor have the ability to satisfy the needs of the customer, and what attributes they communicate and offer in their service offering.

### 3.2.2 Target market focus

The last important part of differentiation is the target market focus. Before determining a target market the segmentation process has to be completed. Therefore the segmentation process will be discussed and how segmentation helps to select a target market (focus).

#### 3.2.2.1 Segmentation

(Wind & Cardozo, 1974) define a market segment as a group of present or potential customers with some common characteristic which is relevant in explaining (and predicting) their response to a supplier's marketing stimuli. However, scholars aren't fully agreed upon the definition of segmentation (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1978) (Griffith & Pol, 1994). Therefore the definition of (Mitchell & Wilson, 1998, p. 431) will be used:

*Business-to-business market segmentation is an ongoing and iterative process of examining and grouping potential and actual buyers with similar product needs into subgroups that can then be targeted with an appropriate marketing mix in such a way as to facilitate the objectives of both parties. The process has strategic and tactical marketing implications and should be periodically reviewed to incorporate the lessons of experience and to maintain an optimal cost/benefit ratio .*

Now that it's clear what segmentations is, the two common used segmentation approaches will be discussed.

#### 3.2.2.2 Market segmentation approaches

As cited in (Powers & Sterling, 2008) the identification of customer needs, in order to serve and build the value of customer segments is a major challenge that marketers encounter. Despite the availability of demographic information on business-to-business customers, the actual needs of the customer cannot be determined from this information.

There are two broad categories of methods that can be used to segment business markets as cited in (Powers & Sterling, 2008):

- A needs approach that is theoretically appealing since it is based on a thorough understanding of customer requirements. This approach is typically difficult to implement because benefit segments are not easily described in terms of demographics.
- Identifiable/accessible approaches that are easy to implement, because they assume that buyer characteristics, such as demographics and psychographics are associated with underlying needs (Bonoma & Shapiro, 1984b)

As cited in (Powers & Sterling, 2008, p. 171) the relationship between these two methods has been described in the literature through the macro-micro segmentation method (Wind & Cardozo, 1974) and the nested approach of (Bonoma & Shapiro, 1984b).

#### 3.2.2.3 The nested approach to segmentation

The nested approach to segmentation of (Bonoma & Shapiro, 1984b) suggests five nested phases moving successively from the generalized and objective "macro" level to the specific and subjective "micro" level of the segmentation process: demographics, operating variables, purchasing approaches, situational factors, and personal characteristics.

Based on the outcomes of the segmentation process a target segment (market) can be determined. This segment contains of customers representing similar needs.

### 3.3 Customer Values

Core marketing building blocks, such as segmentation, targeting and positioning, value propositions, and pricing products and services, all rely on customer value as a key constituent (Ulaga, 2011, p. 928). Because this research is primarily focused on attracting new customers it is extremely important to know the customer needs and expectations in a SharePoint monitoring & administration service. Therefore the customer value construct will be explained, followed by the desired-customer values.

#### 3.3.1 The customer value concept

The concept "customer value" is well discussed in the literature and several definitions are given for the concept. Scholars make a distinction between customer-desired and customer-perceived value. This research is focused on customer-desired value, because customer-desired values are established before purchase.

The definition for the customer value concept is presented by (Woodruff, 1997). He defines customer value as: *Customer value is a customer's perceived preference for and evaluation of those product attributes, attribute performance, and consequences arising from use that facilitates (or block) achieving the customer's goals and purposes in use situations.* He states that the basis for improving at competing on superior "customer value delivery" is a shared understanding of the concept of customer value.

In this definition the term "perceived" is a central issue and therefore the a specific definition of perceived customer value is presented by (Eggert & Ulaga, 2002): *customer perceived value in business markets is the trade-off between the multiple benefits and sacrifices of a supplier's offering, as perceived by key decision-makers in the customer's organization, and taking into consideration the available alternative suppliers' offerings in a specific use situation.*

This definition clearly explains that there are multiple benefits and sacrifices of a service offering influencing the key decision maker of the customers' organization. Based on these benefits and sacrifices the key decision maker decides to choose a service offering from company A or from company B. By applying this definition to the context of this research it is relevant to know which benefits are desired in a service offering relative to the acceptable sacrifices. If 4Connection can meet these benefits against acceptable sacrifices than she should be able to attract a potential customer in choosing the SharePoint monitoring and administration service of 4Connection.

An important distinction between the perceived and desired values is that desired customer values are assessed prior to purchase and perceived customer value are assessed after purchase (Parasuraman, 1997). Because 4Connection is interested in what customers will value in a SharePoint monitoring and administration service it is relevant to discuss the desired customer values in more depth.

#### 3.3.2 The customer desired value

The customer value concept is based upon customer perceived value and customer desired value. It is necessary for this research to give more detail about the customer desired values because if 4Connection can fulfill these customers desired values the chance exist that she is able to attract new customers.

(Flint, Woodruff, & Gardial, 1997, p. 170) *state that desired customer value is what customers seek to adhere to their values and achieve their desired end-states of existence.*

For 4Connection it is relevant to know which values are desired in the service offering because than she is able to differentiate the service on these (important) desired values. The thing is that customer desired values are a prerequisite to determine the real customer values (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). (Woodruff, 1997) created the "customer hierarchy model" where he states that customer desired values are based upon three levels: attributes, consequences and goals (real value). In figure 3 the model of (Woodruff, 1997, p. 142) is presented.

What (Woodruff, 1997) suggest in his paper, is that the customer hierarchy model suggests that customers’ conceive of desired value in a means-end way. In other words, the customers have an opinion or desire of something but really wants something of a higher abstract. (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988) illustrate this with the following example:

- (Value) – self esteem
- (Consequence) – better figure
- (C) – don’t get fat
- (C) – eat less
- (Attribute) – strong taste
- (A) – flavored chip

This hierarchical approach of customer desired values is supported by (Graf & Maas, 2008, p. 4). The focus of desired customer values is on abstract value dimensions, or consequences, derived from specific performance characteristics.

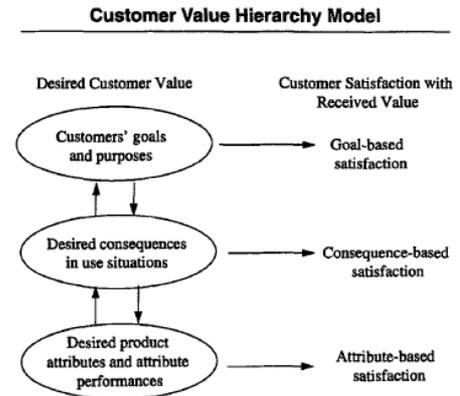


Figure 3: Woodruff (1997), customer value hierarchy model

**3.3.3 Antecedents of customer values**

Organizations need to understand which drivers create value for customers in order to build a competitive advantage (Parry, Rowley, Jones, & Kupiec-Teahan, 2012). It seems that a lot of literature is written about drivers of customer value. However most of this research is considered from the provider’s side (Fiol, Tena, & Garcia, 2011). There are also scholars in the business-to-business scene, that consider the value drivers from a customer’s perspective (Fiol, Tena, & Garcia, 2011) (Lapierre J. , 2000) (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008).

Both (Lapierre J. , 2000) and (Fiol, Tena, & Garcia, 2011) made a distinction between product and service attributes but (Lapierre J. , 2000) also mentioned relationship attributes. In the context of this research the attributes are both product as service related because the SharePoint Connect Service can be considered as a product and a service.

Because the services of 4Connection are information technology services it is relevant to use the research of (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008) and (Lapierre J. , 2000). They did research in the antecedents of customer values in a business-to-business context with professional information technology services. They also used the model of (Woodruff, 1997) to determine the attributes, consequences and end-states. Table 1 and 2 provides the specific dimensions and attributes of (Lapierre, 2000). A comprehensive list of all the descriptions is added in the appendix A.

Product related	Service related	Relationship related
Alternative solutions	Responsiveness	Image
Product quality	Flexibility	Trust
Product customization	Reliability	Solidarity
Price	Technical competence	Time/Effort/Energy
	Price	Conflict

Table 1: attributes by Lapierre (2000)

The research of (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008) identified additional attributes and attributes that were more specific than the attributes provided by (Lapierre J. , 2000) (for example: technical competence).

Attributes	Consequences	End-States
Price	Productivity	Profitability
Integrations	Innovation improvement	Customer satisfaction
Knowledge	Risk reduction	Security
Responsibility	Non-monetary cost reduction	
Experience	Monetary cost reduction	
Customizations		
Expertise		

**Table 2: attributes by Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling (2008)**

Both the researches were based on information technology services and thus applicable in this research. The attributes mentioned by both the authors can be linked to the positioning strategies of (Kerin & Peterson, 2007) mentioned before.

### 3.3.4 Trust and references

Trust is becoming a central topic for marketers to build long-term relationships, what is an important aspect in a service offering (Doney & Cannon, 1997) (Mouzias, Henneberg, & Naude, 2007) (Ryssel, Ritter, & Gemunden, 2004). In service offerings there are a lot service encounters. These relationships are becoming interesting because of the fact that firms are seeking for creative and flexible means to compete.

(Ryssel, Ritter, & Gemunden, 2004) define trust as: the extent to which a customer believes that the supplier is honest, benevolent, and competent. (Lapierre J. , 2000) also mentioned trust as one of his attributes. (Lapierre J. , 2000) defines his attribute by a number of quotes:

- Your confidence that the supplier is telling the truth, even when your supplier give you a rather unlikely explanation
- The accuracy of the information provided by your major supplier
- The supplier's fulfillment of promises made to your organization
- The judgment or advice on your business operations that your supplier is sharing with you

This research will use the context of (Lapierre J. , 2000) as the definition for trust.

Next to the attribute trust it seems that references are playing an important role in attracting new customers . References are commonly used as a marketing tool and are defined by (Salminen & Möller, 2008) as: *an indirect proof, based on some practical or concrete evidence, like product, service or systems delivery, of a supplier's capability of delivery.* Based on this definition a clear link can be made between the attribute "trust" and the references. It seems quite logical that organizations want to see some references in order to determine if the supplying firm can be trusted.

## 4 Methodology

In this chapter the previous discussed constructs are being operationalized. For each construct it will be determined how they will be measured and which research methods will be applied.

### 4.1 Operationalization of the concepts

#### 4.1.1 Customer Values

As discussed in the theoretical framework, customer values can be measured in two ways: customer perceived-value and customer-desired value. Because the service of 4Connection is rather new, the focus will lie on the customer-desired values. Customer perceived values are hard to measure because 4Connection has only got one customer.

##### 4.1.1.1 Desired customer value

Before operationalizing the construct of "customer desired value" the definition of the construct will be provided:

(Flint, Woodruff, & Gardial, 1997, p. 170) *state that desired customer value is what customers seek to adhere to their values and achieve their desired end-states of existence.*

This definition clearly states that the desired customer values are of great influence for achieving their desired end-states. This means that the customers has an opinion or desire of something but really wants something of a higher level.

To determine the actual desired-customer values, the first question in the interview will be "what do you expect from an IT-supplier, offering a SharePoint monitoring and administration service? This question will open the interview and let the respondent think about the expectations and desires. The provided answers can be classified as the attributes mentioned in the ACV-method. The following questions will be structured using the three dimensions of (Lapierre J. , 2000): product, service and relationship. These questions are "what do you desire in the product offering (monitoring tool)?" Subsequently, questions will be asked about why the respondent desire these attributes? This way of asking questions, will provide the attributes as well as the consequences mentioned by (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988) The purpose of the interview is to let the respondent speak about all the topic that come up and afterwards link the answers to the provided attributes of (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008) and (Lapierre J. , 2000).

To determine which of the mentioned attributes are most important the attributes that come up will be summarized and the respondent is asked to rate them. The respondent will be asked to divide 100 points to the mentioned attributes. The most important attribute will earn the most points.

The respondent will not be asked what he/she desires from all the provided attributes of (Lapierre J. , 2000) and (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008) because 4Connection need to know what the customer is desiring. If all the attributes are introduced, a distorted image could arise. However, the attributes provided in the focus group session will be introduced if the respondents won't mention them.

During the interview the respondent will be ask to explain his answers and tell why his answers is important. By applying the ACV method (asking "why" questions), it is possible to determine the consequences and end-states of customer-desired values.

##### 4.1.1.2 Measuring customer values

The process of measuring these customer values is described in the papers of (Anderson & Narus, 1998) and (Ulaga & Chacour, 2001) and is as follows: .

##### Step 1: Start-Up

The objective of this phase is to determine the purchasing criteria from the view of the supplier. In other words a focus group session will be held to ask sales personnel of 4Connection to generate a list

of possible purchasing criteria. This list will be used as input for the interviews with the potential customers. In the start-up phase it is also important to select a customer sample based on a market segment.

#### Step 2: Survey

The second step of the (Ulaga & Chacour, 2001) model is interviewing key representatives of the customer organization who are involved in the purchasing process. The objective is to measure customer values based on the difference between client's expectations and perceptions of performance. In the context of this research the focus will lie on the expectations. After interviewing value maps must be created and analyzed.

#### Step 3: Strategy Formulation

The value map computed in the second phase of the process represents the customers' perception of a "fair" price-quality relationship expressed in terms of a value slope. The map will position various suppliers against this fair level of expectation and visualize gaps in perception. This map can be used by 4Connection to assess strategic options and develop action plans to change their position on the value map by simulating the potential impact of alternative courses of action of the suppliers' overall positioning. In figure 5 the process is presented.

### **4.1.2 Trust and references**

Trust is an important factor that influences the purchasing process (Doney & Cannon, 1997). (Lapierre J. , 2000) also mentioned the attribute "trust" in his paper. (Lapierre J. , 2000) defines the context of his attribute 'trust' with the following quotes:

- Your confidence that the supplier is telling the truth, even when your supplier give you a rather unlikely explanation
- The accuracy of the information provided by your major supplier
- The supplier's fulfillment of promises made to your organization
- The judgment or advice on your business operations that your supplier is sharing with you

(Ryssel, Ritter, & Gemunden, 2004) define trust as: *the extent to which a customer believes that the supplier is honest, benevolent, and competent*. This research will use the context of (Lapierre J. , 2000) as the definition for trust.

Trust is one of the 13 attributes provided by (Lapierre J. , 2000). In the in-depth interview questions are asked about the desires in the service offering of 4Connection. If the respondent doesn't mention the attribute trust, then the attribute will be introduced. Questions are asked about if trust is an important desire in the service offering of 4Connection? How will you test trust of an IT-supplier? Why is trust important? These questions are also asked to cover the 'reference' part. Assumed is, that references are used to check trust of an organization. (Salminen & Möller, 2008) define references as: *an indirect proof, based on some practical or concrete evidence, like product, service or systems delivery, of a supplier's capability of delivery*

### **4.1.3 Competitor identification and analyses**

The competitor identification will be used to determine the competitors of 4Connection. The supply-based approach of (Clark & Montgomery, 1999) will be used to determine the competitors. The supply base approach of (Clark & Montgomery, 1999) classifies competitors on the basis of attributes of the competing firm (4Connection). The respondents will be asked: "Which party helped you with the implementation of SharePoint? Which party helped with/is helping with the administration of SharePoint? Which parties can you point out, that are able to do the same service?"

The competitor analysis will be conducted using the method of (Bergen & Peteraf, 2002). He developed a competitor analysis model where competitors were analyzed according to their resource equivalences. (Bergen & Peteraf, 2002) define resource equivalence as *the extent to which a given competitor possesses strategic endowments capable of satisfying the same customer needs as the focal firm (4Connection)*. These strategic endowments can be seen as competences. To determine this, the

respondents will be asked what the specialties of these competitors are? What services these competitors offer? What attributes do they communicate in their service offering?

#### 4.1.4 Segmentation

(Wind & Cardozo, 1974) defined a market segment as a group of present or potential customers with some common characteristic which is relevant in explaining (and predicting) their response to a supplier's marketing stimuli. This market segment contain the same characteristics and thus probably acts in the same way when purchasing a SharePoint monitoring and administration service. 4Connection thinks that the SharePoint monitoring and administration services have potential in the segment containing these specific characteristics:

- organizations using SharePoint technology
- company size (in FTE) 100 to 1000 employees

Because this segment is still rather vague the nested approach of (Bonoma & Shapiro, 1984b) will be used in the interview. (Bonoma & Shapiro, 1984b) developed a model to determine important segmentation aspects such as: industry, company size, location(s), technology, organization of DMU, purchasing policies, purchasing criteria etc. This model will be used to gather more specific information to create a comprehensive image of the potential customer. The respondent will be asked: "Can you tell something about the organization in general? How many employees are employed? From which location(s) are you operating? Which version of SharePoint do you use? How many employees use this applications? For what purpose do you use SharePoint? Do you consider SharePoint as a business critical application? Do you use purchasing policies? How do you select an IT-supplier?"

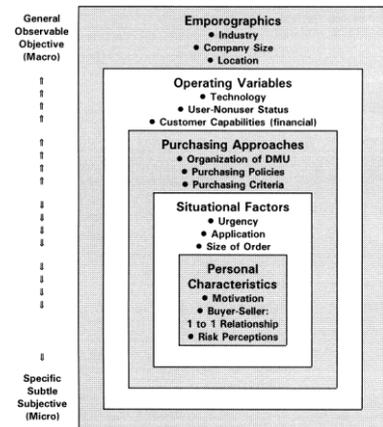


Figure 4: Bonoma & Shapiro (1984), the nested approach model

Business critical applications are defined as applications that are essential in the business process (Hicks, 2004). For example those applications, in which system failures leads to revenue lost, customer dissatisfaction, and/or lost productivity.

## 4.2 Focus group session

The focus group session contains two objectives: determining possible customer-desired values and determining if the customer-desired values that 4Connection think are important are confirmed by the potential customers.

To unravel the potential customer-desired values of a SharePoint monitoring and administration service, a focus group will be created. This group, containing of sales personal and consultants/trainers of 4Connection, will answers questions like "what is important for a potential customer in the purchase process of an SharePoint monitoring and administration service?" but also "what do they desire from the service provider, in this case 4Connection". The group is formed with sales personnel and consultants because these employees encounter the most customers, and probably are the best to make an estimation of customer desires. Based on these answers (attributes), a list will be generated and the group must determine which attribute they think is most important.

The list of attributes defined by the focus group will afterward be linked to the attributes provided by (Lapierre J. , 2000) and (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008). The mentioned attributes will be used in the in-depth interview. During the interview, the respondents will first be asked what they desire in a SharePoint monitoring and administration service. If the respondent doesn't mention the attributes identified by the focus group session, these will be brought forward and the respondent is asked what they desire in this attribute.

Based on the attribute list of 4Connection's focus group and the attribute list of the respondents a comparison will be made. This comparison will be helpful for the sales department for a better understanding of the customer.

#### 4.2.1 The process

4Connection employs about 8 people and 4 of them encounter customers. These 4 employees were selected for the focus group session. Their functions were: sales manager, account manager, senior consultant and a junior consultant. A meeting was arranged with all the participants at a training facility of the ResourciT Holding. First of all this research was introduced. After a couple of minutes the participants were asked various questions about customer values. In particular questions about what they thought important values were for customers in the purchase process. But also what they thought customers would desire in the service offering of 4Connection. All the answers to the question were written down on a whiteboard. When no additional customer values were mentioned, the participants were asked to rank all the answers from most important till less importance. The entire session will be audio taped.

### 4.3 Interview

The interview is built up around four constructs: segmentation, customer values, trust and competitor identification. The constructs will be addressed in that sequence. The respondents will first be asked to tell something about their business and company. Based on these general questions, the segmentation part will be addressed. Next to the segmentation part the customer's desires in a SharePoint monitoring and administration service will be asked. To structure the interview, the three dimensions of customer-desired values of (Lapierre J. , 2000) will be used. The respondent will first answer the general expectation question, followed by the more specific questions on product, service and relationship desires. The attributes belonging to these dimensions aren't mentioned because the real customer-desired values need to come up. When introducing all these attributes of (Lapierre J. , 2000) and (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008) a distorted vision could be created. The attributes mentioned in focus group will be introduced when the respondent won't mention them. During the interview the mentioned desires will be written down and at the end summarized. The summarized desires will be weighted with 100 points, to determine which desire is most important to meet and thus to differentiate on.

When the attribute trust is mentioned, the respondent will be asked what role trust plays in selecting an IT-supplier? How the respondent will test this trust construct and in what way trust expresses itself? If the attribute trust isn't mentioned by the respondent, it will be introduced.

The competitor identification part is the latest addressed issue during the interview. The respondents will be asked which organization implemented their SharePoint environment, who is administrating their environment and if they can identify organizations who are capable of administrating a SharePoint environment. For the competitor analysis part the respondent is also asked what type of services the organization offers.

The goal of this in-depth interview is to let the respondent speak about all the topics that come forward. The purpose of the in-depth interviews is that the potential customer really expose their desires in a SharePoint monitoring and administration service. In appendix B, a comprehensive interview list is presented.

#### 4.3.1 The process

To collect as much data as possible during the interview, the interview will be audio-taped. The interview is built up around the three discussed constructs. During the customer value part, the desires of the respondent will also be written down and at the end of interview the respondent is asked to rank them from most to less important. If some of the desires were part of an attribute of (Lapierre J. , 2000) they will be grouped so the respondent could rank them as the attribute. The audio-tapes will also be used to double check all the desires. This will be done to cover the possibility that during the

interview one or more desires were not written down. The segmentation part and the competitor identification/analysis part will not be written down but will be analyzed from the audio-tape. Based on this analysis the answers will be filtered out.

## 4.4 Data collection and analysis technique

### 4.4.1 Data collection

The technique for collection the data from the interviews is called laddering. Laddering is seen as an appropriate technique for measuring customer values (Woodruff, 1997) (Gao & Pan, 2010) and (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). This data collection technique is based on a means-to-an-end method, discovering the underlying values of mentioned attributes. The method perfectly suites the hierarchy model of (Woodruff, 1997).

The techniques used for this, is the A-C-V method. For the interviewer this means that for attributes that were considered as important for the respondent, it will be asked why this is important. The "why" question will be used often and helps to determine the consequences and end-states.

### 4.4.2 Data analysis

#### 4.4.2.1 Segmentation

The segmentation data is transformed into a comprehensive table. This table will show all the mentioned characteristics provided by (Bonoma & Shapiro, 1984b).

#### 4.4.2.2 Customer values

The analysis of the customer value data is the most complex of this research. The answers provided on the questions asked, were linked to the quotes provided by (Lapierre J. , 2000) and (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008). Based on these quotes it was possible to aggregate the quotes of the respondents to the attributes provided by (Lapierre J. , 2000) and (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008). For example:

Respondent #1 says: I want that the service provider is operating at my location within 2 hours, if there are problems occurring in our SharePoint environment. (Lapierre J. , 2000) states that this quote can be aggregated to the attribute "responsiveness" because (Lapierre J. , 2000) gives a clear context of the attribute "responsiveness". "Responsiveness" is according to (Lapierre J. , 2000) "Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems". A complete list of all quotes provided by (Lapierre J. , 2000) is presented in appendix A.

All provided answers were linked to the aggregated attributes of (Lapierre J. , 2000) or (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008).

#### 4.4.2.3 Competitor identification and analysis

The mentioned competitors by the respondents will be placed in a table, which can be seen as the competitor identification part. The analysis part will be based on strengths and weaknesses provided by the respondents. If they were not able to answer these question, the information available on the websites of the identified competitors will be used as secondary data. With this data the service position of the competitor will be determined.

### 4.4.3 Data validity

In every research validity plays an important role. Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration (Babbie, 2007). The concepts addressed in this research were segmentation, customer values and competitor identification/analysis. Based on the question asked in the interview one can conclude that this research has high level of 'face validity'. Face validity is referring to the fact that quality of an indicator that makes is seem a reasonable measure of some variable.

## 4.5 Population

### 4.5.1 Selection of respondents

The nested segmentation model of (Bonoma & Shapiro, 1984b) will be used to select the right respondents. 4Connection thinks that the most potential for their SharePoint monitoring and administration services lies in the segment of companies that have between 100 and 1000 employees and using SharePoint. This is based on assumptions that companies having more than 1000 employees will have enough resources to attract employees for monitoring and administrating their SharePoint environment. The companies with less than 1000 employees but more than 100 are probably experiencing some troubles with SharePoint and haven't got the resources to attract employees for these issues. And companies with less than 100 employees aren't facing significant SharePoint related problems.

First of all it was necessary to determine which firms in the Netherlands that were using SharePoint technology. These firms will be selected using several channels:

- CRM database,
- LinkedIn profiles
- references of competitors

The CRM database of 4Connection contains several organizations. The organizations that are using SharePoint technology are marked by the sales personnel of 4Connection. Based on this selection it will be possible to determine which organizations are using SharePoint. LinkedIn is the largest professional network site where all type of professional can meet. LinkedIn offers the possibility to search in the entire professional network. This network contains a large number of SharePoint professionals, employed by organizations. The organizations where these SharePoint professionals operate are using SharePoint technology and thus selected in the population. The latest channel is the one of known competitors of 4Connection offering business cases/references. These references are checked for SharePoint implementations or other services.

Based on this information a list could be generated containing 160 firms using SharePoint. The next step was to determine the number of employees. The websites of these firms were used to determine this. The population of companies using SharePoint and having between 100 and 1000 employees is estimated 60. In the following section the process of estimation is explained. The results are presented in figure 5 and figure 6.

For the in-depth interview 7 respondents will be selected from the group that meets the specific requirements. The approach used to make appointments with these respondents will be discussed in the next section.

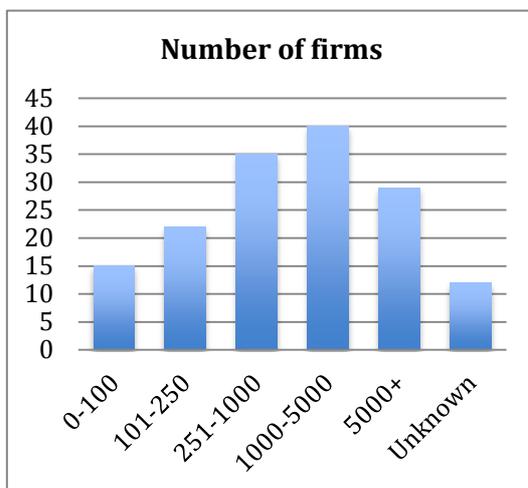


Figure 5: number of firms

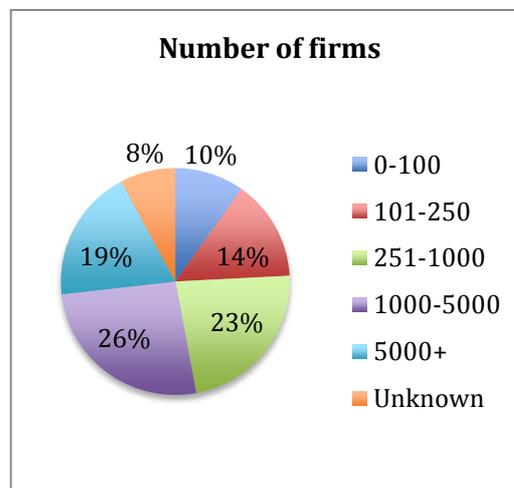


Figure 6: number of firms

#### **4.5.2 Participants and response rate**

In total 19 organizations were asked to participate in this research. Eight organizations were willing to participate, 6 of them did not give a reaction based on a sent e-mail, and five of them weren't willing to participate.

The participants were: Kennis Centrum Handel, Woningcorporatie Accolade, Vereniging Eigen Huis, Arla Foods, Flamco, Provincie Fryslan and Nederlandse Spoorwegen. The Central Bureau van de Statistiek was willing to participate but cancelled the appointment because of an emergency. This resulting in a response rate of 37%, which could be considered high.

#### **4.5.3 Approach**

The respondents were first contacted by telephone. The researcher introduced himself as student and not as representative of the company. This was done because it was assumed that the response rate would be higher this way.

Because the respondent has to be part of the decision making unit the receptionist is asked for a ICT-employee who is affected by important IT decisions. Once the receptionist transfers the call to the right person, an introduction of the research will be given. After the introduction the IT-employee is asked if he matches the criteria and is willing to serve as a respondent. If he is willing to cooperate an appointment will be made and a verification mail was sent.

## 5 Results

In this chapter the results of the focus group session and the in-depth interviews will be presented. First the characteristics of the chosen market segment will be provided, followed by the customer-desired values and the competitor identification and analysis.

### 5.1 Segment characteristics

As described in the previous chapters, 4Connection thought that companies with 100 to 1000 employees and using SharePoint would be interested in the SharePoint monitoring and administration service. However, 4Connection did not know which specific characteristics they contained. Therefore the nested approach of (Bonoma & Shapiro, 1984b) was used in the in-depth interviews. The results are provided in table 3, and will be discussed in further detail.

Organization	Amount of SharePoint users	Application of SharePoint	Version	BC	Purchasing policies
<b>Kennis Centrum Handel</b>	170 of 170	Document management and post-order registration	SharePoint 2010 Server	Yes	None
<b>Woningcorporatie Accolade</b>	200 of 200	Intranet, Document management and knowledge base for new employees	SharePoint 2007 and 2010	No	Public tenders, Microsoft minded
<b>Vereniging Eigen Huis</b>	230 of 230 next to 100 external users	Intranet and communication portal for ZZP'ers	SharePoint 2010 Server	No	Microsoft product only
<b>Nederlandse Spoorwegen</b>	26500 of 26500	Document management and intranet	SharePoint 2007 and SharePoint 2010	Yes	Public tenders, used a Microsoft 'unless' policy
<b>Arla Foods</b>	250 of 400	Document management and intranet	SharePoint 2007 MOSS	No	IT from Holding company
<b>Flamco</b>	100 of 270	Document management and project management	SharePoint 2007 MOSS (enterprise)	No	IT from Holding company
<b>Provincie Fryslan</b>	900 of 900	Collaboration, document management, intranet, exploring Business Intelligence, sharing knowledge	SharePoint 2010 Enterprise	Yes	Public tenders

**Table 3: segment characteristics**

#### Industry

There was no specific industry researched. From the participants: 2 firms were in the production business, 1 in transportations, 1 in service provision, 1 in educational serviced, and 1 in real estate.

### Organization of the DMU

The decision making unit contained in every situation the IT-manager. In some situations also the financial controller was part of the DMU but most of the times the IT-manager was accompanied with one or 2 of his colleagues of the IT-department. These colleagues served as advisors.

### Hosted/on-premise SharePoint

Two of firms had their SharePoint servers hosted by a third party. This party provided uptime and took part of the monitoring aspect. The other firms had their SharePoint servers on-premise.

### Application of SharePoint



Figure 7: SharePoint 2007 solution circle

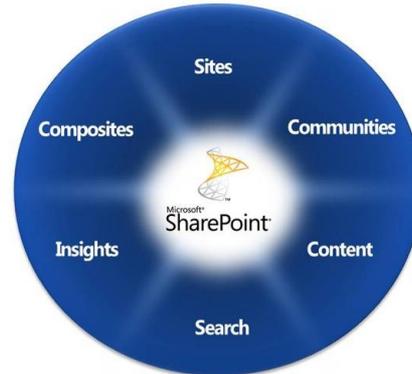


Figure 8: SharePoint 2010 solution circle

All organizations made use of SharePoint 2007 or a more recent version. The application possibilities are diverse but in practice organizations only use SharePoint for: document management, intranet portals and workflows. These application uses can be categorized into the SharePoint solutions circle. Based on these categories firm are only using SharePoint for: content management, business processes/insight and portal/sites.

### SharePoint monitoring/administrating

One of the organizations used SCOM for monitoring their SharePoint environment, and one was considering a SCOM implementation. Two of the organizations used hosted SharePoint services and didn't had to worry about monitoring because the third-party offered this. The other two organizations did not monitor their SharePoint environment but had a third party helping them with SharePoint administration problems. The organizations with hosted SharePoint however, made use of third parties who solved their functional SharePoint problems.

## 5.2 Customer-desired values

As discussed in the methodology chapter, the customer-desired values are identified using an internal focus group session and in-depth interviews with key decision makers of organizations in the target segment. This paragraph will provide the results of both the data-collection techniques. The customer-desired values that were identified are all linked to the attributes provided by (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008) or (Lapierre J. , 2000).

### 5.2.1 Focus group session

The results of this focus group session are presented in table 4. In Table 5 the quotes are linked to the attributes provided by (Lapierre J. , 2000) and (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008). Table 4 presents the quotes from the participants, all ranked from most to less important desires.

**Desires mentioned**

1. Price of the offering must be mark conform
2. High level of experience
3. High level of relevant references/business cases
4. High level of technical know-how
5. There must be a "click" between the employee of 4Connection and the customer
6. Response time to problems must be quick
7. The communication between 4Connection and the customer must be good
8. The information supply must be clear
9. The ability to fulfill promises that are made by 4Connection
10. 4Connection must have location close to the customer
11. The level of reachability must be high
12. Availability of 4Connection (24\*7)
13. Amount of employees of 4Connection
14. Sympathy of 4Connection's personnel
15. The stability of the 4Connection in term of human resources
16. Willing to act outside office hours

**Table 4: attributes determined in focus group session**

The ranked desires provided by the focus group are linked to the attributes provided by (Lapierre J. , 2000) which are presented in table 5.

Dimension	Attribute of (Lapierre J. , 2000) / (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008)	Quotes provided by the focus group
<b>Service</b>	Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price of the offering must be mark conform</li> </ul>
	Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of experience</li> <li>• High level of relevant references/business cases</li> </ul>
	Technical competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of technical know-how</li> <li>• The information supply must be clear</li> </ul>
	Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location of 4Connection in the Netherlands</li> <li>• Response time to problems</li> <li>• Reachability</li> <li>• Availability of 4Connection</li> </ul>
	Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size of 4Connection in employees</li> <li>• Stability of the enterprise</li> <li>• The ability to fulfill promises made</li> </ul>
<b>Relationship</b>	Solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding solutions outside the contract</li> <li>• Sympathy of 4Connection's personnel</li> <li>• The "click" between the sales person and the customer</li> <li>• Communication of the 4Connection and the customer</li> </ul>

**Table 5: focus group session linked to Lapierre (2000)**

The quotes distilled from the focus group session can be linked to 6 of the attributes provided by (Lapierre J. , 2000). It seems that the participants of the focus group of 4Connection thinks that the potential customer, do think that the price for the administration service is strongly influencing if the potential customer is willing to purchase it. They defined price as the reflection of all other attributes. The price is what customers are willing to pay for the service. The second thing indicated by the participants is a high level of experience. This level of experience was strongly related to the relevant

reference/business cases and was seen as the know-how that 4Connection could offer a customer. In fact it was the competence that 4connection could offer in form of services. The competence should be related to the Microsoft competence line. The participants also indicated that there must be a “click” between the employees of 4Connection and the customer. This was affected by the communication between both organizations. The next thing the participant indicated was the response time in solving problems. Response was seen as the flexibility of the organization. They defined it more or less as the flexibility 4Connection is offering in solving problems. Here a distinction must be made between office and non-office hours. The response during office hours must be quick, within three hours for example, but during non-office hours, contracts will determine the flexibility. The location from where 4Connection is operating were also indicated. The participants determined the location as the physical location from where 4Connection is acting. An important aspect was the distance between the customer and the nearest location of 4Connection. The locations was strongly influencing the reachability. Participant also mentioned that a potential customer could desire that the service of 4Connection was 24\*7 available. Next to all these desires the participants mentioned the amount of employees 4Connection was employing and that 4Connection should be stable in terms of human resources. They indicated this as size, defined as the number of employees working for 4Connection, where guarantee plays a crucial role. In other words, each function at 4Connection should be occupied double, to guarantee a continuity of the service quality.

All the quotes were linked to the provided attributes of (Lapierre J. , 2000) and (sorted) presented in table 5. The table shows that 4Connection thinks that potential customer find (competitive) price is the most important attribute influencing the purchase. Price is followed by: experience, technical competences, responsiveness, reliability and solidarity.

### 5.2.2 In-depth interview

As discussed in the methodology chapter, the mentioned attributes of (Lapierre J. , 2000) and (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008) in the focus group session were introduced during the in-depth interview. The respondents were first asked what they desired in a SharePoint monitoring and administration service. If one of the attributes, determined in the focus group session, wasn't mentioned it was introduced. The results are presented in table 6, and a description of each these attributes will be given.

The table summarizes the weighted attributes per organization (respondents). An overview of all mentioned attributes is presented in appendix D.

Dimension	Attribute	Frequency	Quotes
<b>Product</b>	Alternative solution	0	
	Product quality	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The monitoring tool should be pro-active</li> <li>They should provide a trial-version</li> </ul>
	Product customization	0	
<b>Service</b>	Responsiveness	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization should react quickly to requests</li> <li>Based on the support contract, the organization should react quickly and solve the problem</li> </ul>
	Flexibility	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization is should be able to do administration jobs after office hours</li> <li>The organization should not be bureaucratic</li> </ul>
	Reliability	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organizations should be a mature one</li> <li>The organization should be able to prove its continuity</li> </ul>
	Technical Competence	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The employees need to able to transfer a functional question into a "technical" solution</li> <li>The employees need to perform well on technical problems</li> </ul>
	Image	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The employees of the organization should expose their self in the good way</li> </ul>
<b>Relationship</b>	Trust	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization should give me the feeling that everything is well managed and controlled</li> <li>The party must be able to give me advices without any commercial intension</li> </ul>
	Solidarity	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It must be a thinking along organization</li> <li>The organization must be willing to help outside the SLA scope</li> </ul>
	Time/Effort/Energy	0	
	Conflict	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The external employees must be along with our internal employees</li> </ul>
	Price	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization should offer competitive prices</li> <li>The organization should offer attractive prices for product and/or service bundles</li> </ul>
	Integration	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization should not only monitor SharePoint, but the entire chain of the process</li> </ul>
	Knowledge	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization should have knowledge of both SharePoint as other applications</li> <li>The organization should be able to convince us based on knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Additional</b>	Responsibility	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization should be able to take the leading role</li> <li>The employees should be substantively informed</li> </ul>
	Experience	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization should have good references</li> <li>The organization should have experienced employees</li> </ul>
	Customization	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization should be able to shape SCOM for SharePoint</li> <li>The monitoring tool should be a relative standard product</li> </ul>
	Expertise	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization should be a certified Microsoft partner</li> <li>The organization should be an expert in SharePoint administration</li> </ul>

Table 6: customer value results including quotes

Figure 9 shows the attributes and the times that the respondents mentioned them.

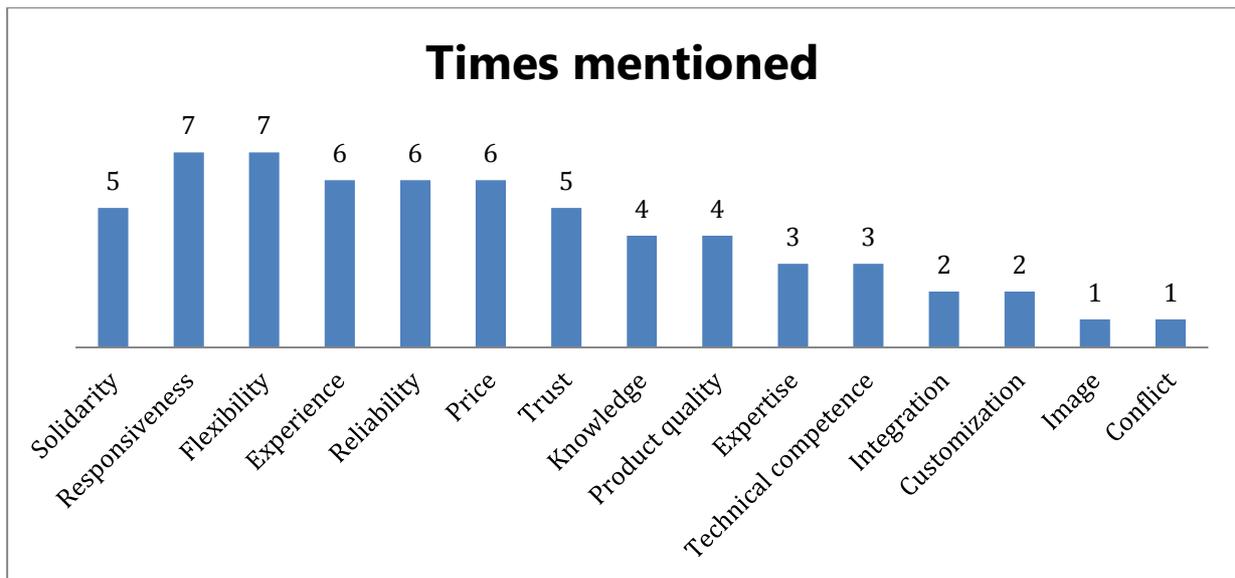


Figure 9: times mentioned

Figure 10 shows the same attributes, but this view shows the attributes that were weighted by the respondents. The respondents were asked in the interview to weight the mentioned attributes with 100 points in total. So the most important attribute got the most points and the less important got less points. The attributes with no score were mentioned during the interview but didn't get weighted.

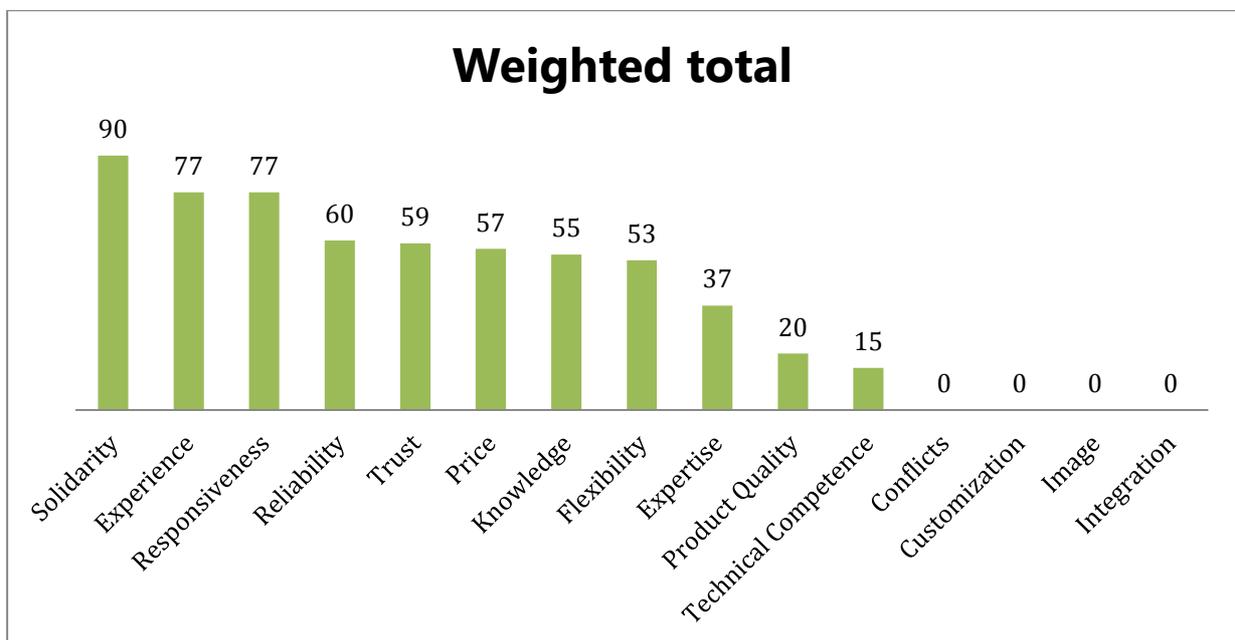


Figure 10: weighted total

The figures provide relevant insights in the most valued attributes by the respondents. It can be concluded that: solidarity, experience, responsiveness, reliability, and trust are five the most valued attributes by the customers. In the next section all the mentioned attributes will be discussed by dimension and explained with some quotes.

### 5.2.2.1 Product dimension:

#### Product quality

Product quality was mentioned by 4 of the 7 organizations. All organizations that mentioned this attribute meant that the monitoring tool should be able to provide alerts to arrange the ability to pro-actively administer their SharePoint environment. One organization also mentioned that 4Connection should show how they were able to monitor this, based on for example a POC (proof of concept) or a trial/demo version.

*"Frence Wawoe, Kennis Centrum Handel: The monitoring tool provided by the organization should be a pro-active one"*

#### Customization

Customization is mentioned by 2 of 7 organizations. The organizations that mentioned it, meant that the monitoring tool should be a relative standard product and that the tool only showed relevant information and no side issues. The other organization meant that 4Connection should be able to customize SCOM for their SharePoint farm.

*"Michiel Booij, Woningcorporatie Accolade: The organization should be able to shape SCOM for SharePoint"*

#### Price

From all the respondent 6 of them mentioned price as attribute. However, price was not weighted high. All organizations that mentioned price said it was an important attribute but was subordinate to the quality of the service. Subsequently the service quality was determined by the following attributes.

*"Patrick Schaller, Vereniging Eigenhuis: The price of the offering must be competitive"*

### 5.2.2.2 Service dimension:

#### Responsiveness

Responsiveness is mentioned by all organizations as an important attribute. Responsiveness can be determined as the time that 4Connection needed to solve problems. But also the time 4Connection needed to be on-site of the customer. Another important aspect of responsiveness was that 4Connection didn't silt in bureaucratic forms, and thus could react fast/flexible. One organization offer a tip that 4Connection could create categories. These categories could be A, B, and C and that problems that belong to category A will be solved for example within 4 hours. Problems belonging to category B within 8 hours etc. Responsiveness wasn't just the time 4Connection needed to solve problems but also the time she needed to act on requests. Where one organization said that she liked one contact person, because this person knew their environment and was able to react faster than an employee who first needed to get familiar with their environment.

*"Jeroen van Kuijk, Nederlandse Spoorwegen: The problem solving speed must be high"*

#### Flexibility

Flexibility was also mentioned by all of the organizations. Flexibility was the ability to do administration jobs after office hours and that the monitoring aspect was running 24\*7. One organization wanted that 4Connection was also available during weekends for administration problems. The respondent was aware of the fact that these hours were probably more expensive than the office hours. Flexibility however, is closely related to the attribute responsiveness. This will be illustrated by the following example: organization X has a SharePoint administration problem and wants this problem to be solved. If organization X has to fill in a form about the exact problem, precious time is flowing away. If organization X was able to call 4Connection and explained the problem, the problem could solved in a less time consuming way. 4Connection is also more flexible this way, because no bureaucratic forms have to be filled in. The on-site aspect is also playing a role here.

*"Peter Nieuwenburg, Arla Foods: The organization should be flexible in responding and solving problems"*

Reliability

Reliability is mentioned by 6 of the 7 organizations. Reliability is seen as the ability to provide a continuous level of the offered service. One organization said that a self-employed SharePoint administrator could deliver higher quality than a larger firm. However, they did not choose this self-employed person because when he is ill the service couldn't be guaranteed and they had a major problem. So they choose organizations with multiple SharePoint specialist so they were secure about the service level. Another important aspect of reliability was that they would like one contact person that was able to do things right the first time. For solving problems right the first time, it was also relevant to understand questions and request of the customer right the first time.

One organization also mentioned that in the pre-sales phase the communication of the sales person should be correct. The salesperson should provide the customer with relevant information and they should pay attention to their "business offer". This needed to be a professional offer.

*"Ron Filemon, Flamco: The organization should take the right steps to prevent further damage".*

Technical competence

The technical competence is a somewhat ambiguous attribute. (Lapierre J. , 2000) mentioned it in his paper but the research of (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008) is more specific about technical competence. (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008) defined three separate attributes covering the attribute technical competence: knowledge, experience and expertise. Most of the desires mentioned in the interview were aggregated to the specific attributes of (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008). However, this wasn't possible for all answers so technical competence is used for somewhat vague desires based on competences.

One organization mentioned that 4Connection should be able to solve problems that were affecting the second line support of the customer. Another organization mentioned that 4Connection should be able to combine functional- as well as technical related administration problems, and be able to solve the alert that the monitoring tool is providing. The largest company examined mentioned that it was important for a service provider to have the ability to transfer a functional request into a technical solution.

*"Frence Wawoe, Kennis Centrum Handel: The employees of the organization should be able to solve the signaled problems".*

### 5.2.2.3 Relationship dimension

Trust

Trust is mentioned by 5 of 7 organizations. The largest organization mentioned that communication is affecting trust. The respondent mentioned that the SharePoint administrator should communicate his progress of solving problems, extremely well. Because if the SharePoint professional doesn't communicate his progress well, the customer could lose trust in this person because they don't know what he's doing. Some smaller companies share this opinion, explaining that trust in an organization is affected by the service descriptions they provide and the available documents. Trust is also influenced by the ability of the sales person to convince the customer.

Organizations mention that trust is more or less a subjective feeling rather than an objective attribute.

*"Michiel Booij, Woningcorporatie Accolade: The organization should give me advices without a direct commercial intention".*

Solidarity

Solidarity is seen as the most important attribute. Solidarity is about that 4Connection is helping the customer outside the contract rules, having a good 'click', willing to invest in the customers, creating a good match between the internal administrators and 4Connections SharePoint specialists, being sympathetic, being a good partner for the customer, thinking in along partner, being involved with the

customer, serving the same purpose as the customer, and develop a personal relationship with the customer.

*"Tony Johnson, Provincie Fryslan: The organization should be a thinking along one".*

#### 5.2.2.4 Additional attributes

##### Knowledge

Knowledge is a well mentioned attribute by all organizations. Knowledge is about SharePoint monitoring and administration problems but also knowledge of other related Microsoft products. Knowledge should be used to convince the customer, but it was also about the knowledge of their business. The employees of 4Connection should have a higher level of knowledge than the administrators of the customer. Microsoft Certificates did play a role, but are also seen as marketing. One of the companies explicitly mentioned the knowledge of SCOM.

*"Frence Wawoe, Kennis Centrum Handel: The organization must have knowledge of both SharePoint as other applications".*

##### Experience

Experience is again a very important attribute for 6 of the 7 organizations. Experience is known as the relevant business cases or references in similar SharePoint environments. But also the performance of 4Connection will also be measured by references. References play a crucial role for selecting an IT-supplier. Organizations will visit these companies to check the experiences with 4Connection. 4Connection should be able to demonstrate, proven experience by other, preferably large, organizations. Experience is also measured by the amount of capable employees. One company also mentioned that 4Connection should be able to give a reasoned opinion about the customers SharePoint environment.

*"Ron Filemon, Flamco: The organization should contain a number of relevant references/business cases".*

##### Expertise

Expertise is mentioned by 3 of the 7 organizations. Expertise is more or less seen as knowledge but especially in the technology sphere like SCOM and SharePoint. It was also about being an expert in SharePoint administration jobs. This was somewhat tested by the Microsoft Certificates.

*"Tony Johnson, Provincie Fryslan: The organization should have employees with a lot of expertise".*

##### Integration

Integration is mentioned by 2 of the 7 respondents. It was seen as the ability of the organization to not only monitor the SharePoint environment but the entire chain on which SharePoint is depending. The entire SharePoint process should be monitored. 4Connection should monitor the entire chain of SharePoint dependencies such as: SQL Server, Windows Server, and the Active Directory. Because if a problem occurred in the SQL database, this would result in a failure of the SharePoint application.

*"Michiel Booij, Woningcorporatie Accolade: The organization should not only monitor SharePoint, but the entire chain of the process".*

##### Image

Image was only mentioned once and it was seen as the way how employees of 4Connection express themselves. This was associated with the expression of 4Connection on their website.

*"Ron Filemon, Flamco: The website of the organization should address the IT-manager but also system administrators"*

##### Conflict

Conflict is only mentioned once. Conflict is interpreted in a positive way. Theory shows that conflict is seen as the frequent argument between customer and supplier. The organization who mentioned

conflict said that the contact between the employees of the supplying firm and their own personnel should be nice.

*"Patrick Schaller, Vereniging Eigenhuis: The personal contact should be nice"*

### 5.3 Trust and references

The results of the interview showed that trust is one of the important attributes. As discussed in the theoretical framework, references play a role in the purchase process because it provided some proof of delivery. The interview already showed that trust was indicated as an important customer value. In this section we elaborate on the attribute trust and show how trust is expressed, tested and why it is so important.

#### 5.3.1 Role of trust

Almost every organization mentioned trust as an important customer value. Trust was influencing the purchase process. Trust was indicated as important because when the supplier was contracted the organization had access to a lot of secure information. But trust was also important because the organization wanted to know if the supplying firm is able to keep their promises. One organization indicated that trust was more or less a process. During the purchase process there were a lot of encounters between the supplying firm and the customer. If all the promises made during these encounters were fulfilled then trust in the organization increased.

Some of the respondents also mentioned that trust could only be built up after the purchase process. One of the organization said that trust played a more important role than the price. Overall the respondents 'used' trust to determine if the supplying firm was able to keep their promises or could fulfill their service offering.

#### 5.3.2 Expression of trust

Trust was expressed during the contact moments with the sales personnel of the supplying firm. Although customers find it hard to determine trust, each of the respondents indicated trust more or less as a subjective feeling. They mentioned that the first contact between them and the supplier is crucial. *"the organization should give me the feeling that everything is well managed and controlled, Michiel Booij of Woningcorporatie Accolade.* Trust was seen as the ability to fulfill the promises made by the supplying organization. The respondents also indicated that they could depend on an advice of the supplying organization without wondering if there was any commercial intension. Terms as customer intimacy and good communication all covered the term trust.

Trust is seen as speaking the same language. Because general IT-administration, and thus SharePoint administration is still a human job it is relevant that the communication between the people is correct. Trust is a dimension that has to grow. The feeling has to be right the first time and the feeling is strongly based on the communication in the pre-sales trajectory.

#### 5.3.3 Testing trust

Respondents find it hard to determine "trust". Trust was more or less a subjective feeling, but they used several methods to check if the organizations can be trusted. First of all colleagues were asked if they had experiences with the supplying firm. This option was most of the time used at the larger organizations because they were part of a larger holding structure. Another testing method was a POC also known as Proof of Concept. The customers asked the supplying firm to demonstrate the service offering for, for example about one month. During this month the customer could check if the supplying firm was able to keep his promises. But the most mentioned testing method was the reference. The supplying firm needed some relevant references. And customers valued it if these references were at large organization like for example Unilever. They made the link: if Unilever thinks it is a good service then it probably is. Some customers also visited organization that were already customer of the supplying firm to check the service up and running.

Trust in the supplying firm was most of the time checked by the relevant references provided.

## 5.4 Competitor analysis

### 5.4.1 Competitor identification

The competitor identification part of the interview provided a list of 19 competitors, identified by the respondents. Some of these competitors were mentioned twice. In table 7 an overview of the competitors is given.

### 5.4.2 Competitor analysis

The respondents were asked what kind of services and specializations the identified competitors offered. The respondent find these questions hard to answer because they did not check continuously the services of the identified competitors. They only knew that they offered SharePoint services, and not specifically what kind of services. One of the respondents did mention some specializations of Atos, Wortell, Capgemini, KPN Consulting and Sogeti. Wortell offered SharePoint development, migrations and configuration. Sogeti, Atos and Capgemini offered administration services. KPN Consulting offered migrations, configurations as well as development. Another respondent mentioned that Wortell was a Microsoft partner with specific knowledge SharePoint knowledge in custom solutions (development). QS Solutions was mentioned as a small company offering administration services.

Not all of the respondent could mention the specific services and specializations of the competitors, and therefore a website check was conducted. The website was checked on offered services and the specializations they communicated on their websites. The website of the identified competitors provided lots of information. One conclusion can be drawn based on the website check. Almost all of the identified competitors, offered a range of services. They offered not just SharePoint services but also other general IT services such as general IT-infrastructure. In table 8 an overview of the provided services is given. The website was checked on their SharePoint services and especially on which attributes they differentiated their SharePoint service on. Table 9 shows the results.

Competitors	
Detron	Square DMS
Ilionx	i-Collaborate
Atos ( <i>mentioned twice</i> )	CRM Resultants
Delta-N	i-Office
Capgemini ( <i>mentioned twice</i> )	InfoSupport
Nobel	Curious
OneFox	KPN Consulting
Master-IT	Sogeti
Wortell ( <i>mentioned twice</i> )	The Triple A Company
QS Solutions	

Table 7: competitor identification

Organization	Implementation	Migration	Administration	Office 365	Development web parts	Configuration	Enterprise Project Management	General IT-services
<b>Detron</b>	X			X				X
<b>Ilionx</b>	X					X		X
<b>Atos</b>	X		X			X		X
<b>Delta-N</b>	X		X		X	X		X
<b>Capgemini</b>	X				X	X		
<b>Nobel</b>	X					X		X
<b>Onefox</b>							X	
<b>Wortell</b>	X			X		X		X
<b>QS Solutions</b>	X				X	X	X	X
<b>SquareDMS</b>					X	X		
<b>i-Collaborate</b>	X			X		X		
<b>CRM-resultants</b>								
<b>i-Office</b>	X			X	X			X
<b>InfoSupport</b>	X	X	X					X
<b>KPN consulting</b>	X		X	X		X		X
<b>Sogeti</b>	X					X		X
<b>The triple A company</b>	X			X		X		

Table 8: competitor analysis

Organization	Service differentiated on the following attributes:	References on website
<b>Detron</b>	Continuity, availability	Yes
<b>Ilionx</b>	Reliability, secure, independent, flexibility and experience	Yes
<b>Atos</b>	Experience, knowledge (branches/product/process)	No
<b>Delta-N</b>	-	Yes
<b>Capgemini</b>	Microsoft Gold Partner, 2000 SharePoint specialists, experiences, references at large customers	Yes
<b>Nobel</b>	Microsoft Partner	Yes
<b>OneFox</b>	Quality of employees, expertise in problem solving, experience,	Yes
<b>Wortell</b>	Experience, Microsoft Partner	Yes
<b>QS Solutions</b>	Experience, SharePoint experts,	
<b>i-Collaborate</b>	-	No
<b>SquareDMS</b>	Knowledge (market, product), Microsoft Partner	Yes
<b>CRM-Resultants</b>	-	Yes
<b>i-Office</b>	Microsoft knowledge, Microsoft Gold Partner, experience, reliability, security, specialists	Yes
<b>InfoSupport</b>	Expertise, fast, experience	Yes
<b>KPN consulting</b>	Certified specialists, experience, knowledge,	Yes
<b>Sogeti</b>	Strategic partner of Microsoft, experience, independent, Microsoft specialists, knowledge,	No
<b>The Triple A company</b>	Certified Microsoft specialists, Microsoft Gold Partner	Yes
<b>Master-IT</b>	Gold Certified Partner, , 100% quality assurance, the best trainers, flexibility	Yes

**Table 9: service attributes of competitors**

Based on table 9 it can be concluded that the identified competitors generally differentiate their SharePoint services based on 4 attributes: experience, being a Microsoft partner, knowledge and their specialists (employees). Some of the identified competitors didn't mentioned any attributes at all. Table 9 excludes Curious because no such company was found.

## 6 Conclusion and discussion

This chapter will provide the conclusion and the solution for the posing problem of 4Connection. For a good understanding the main research question will be repeated.

*How should 4Connection position their new introduced services to improve the attraction of potential customers in the target segment?*

In the theoretical framework chapter the relevant constructs for designing the right service position are discussed and the purpose of this chapter is to provide the right service position based on the results of the empirical study.

### 6.1 Conclusion

The chosen target segment of 4Connection primarily used SharePoint for document management and intranet. Because the respondents did not use all the features of SharePoint and actually only use a very limited amount of features, the SharePoint application wasn't mentioned as a business critical one. The respondents also experienced the SharePoint application stable, and did not notice many administration problems at all. Based on these findings one can conclude that the target segment was not seeking for a monitoring and administration service. However, almost all the respondents mentioned that in the future SharePoint would become a business critical application. The respondent said that over time, more and more functionalities of SharePoint will be used. This finding provides possibilities for the "SharePoint Connect & Connect Services" services. One important remark must be made. All of the organizations already had a partner for the SharePoint application. These partners helped the respondents with the implementation of SharePoint but also with technical and functional SharePoint issues. Because the respondents built a strong trusted relationship, they wouldn't end these relationships very quickly. *If 4Connection wants to play a role in this area they have to concur it (Jeroen van Kuijk, 2012)*

Based on these results it was concluded that the determined target segment has not a high sales potential for the services of 4Connection on the short run.

Based on the results it was concluded that there is not a high sales potential for the "SharePoint Connect & SharePoint Connect Services" services. If 4Connection decides to continue the service offerings and attract potential customers she has to differentiate on some specific attributes. The respondents mentioned several attributes, but the best way for 4Connection is to differentiate it service based on the highest ranked attributes. These attributes were: solidarity, experience, responsiveness, reliability, and trust.

4Connection should communicate clearly that they are highly experienced in Microsoft SharePoint and SCOM. They also should communicate that their problem solving (response) time is high. Based on the response time they should also clearly state that they want to be a good partner, meaning that they want to operate outside the SLA scope. But probably the most important thing for 4Connection is, to build relevant references. Based on the empirical results it can be concluded that customers check the supplying firm, in this case 4Connection, on previous delivered services. They take this very seriously because it provides some evidence on the service operations at other customers.

4Connection should differentiate it service based upon the following attributes: solidarity, experience, responsiveness, reliability, and trust.

The next thing to take into consideration is the service position of the services offered by competitors. The respondents mentioned 19 competitors from which they weren't able to identify the exact services and strong and weak points. After a close website check it can be concluded that 4 of them offered SharePoint administration services and none of them offered administration services in combination with state of the art monitoring. The identified organizations generally tried to differentiate their services on four specific attributes: experience, knowledge, being a Microsoft partner and the specialist they employed.

Positioning statement for 4Connection:

*For SME's the SharePoint Connect and SharePoint Connect services are administrations services that offers quick solutions from an experienced Microsoft Gold status partner. The services includes a state of the art monitoring tool covering all the SharePoint dependencies.*

Another interesting conclusion can be pulled from the results. The focus group participants weighted 'price' as the most important attribute. Price was mentioned by almost all respondents but none of them weighted price as the most important. The price of the service offering should be competitive but it wasn't determined that the supplier offering the cheapest price got the contract. This information could change the mindset of the sales personnel and give them more insight in their potential customers.

## 6.2 Discussion

The research started with two purposes: determine the right service position for 4Connection's new introduced services (practical contribution) and determine if references are used by potential customers to check the trust of the supplying firm in the information technology sector (scientific contribution).

Based on the results the practical contribution, and for 4Connection the most important part of this research, the right service positioning could be determined. Based on the results it could also be determined that organizations in the information technology sector are using references to check if the supplying firm is trusted.

This research also has some limitations. First of all a small sample of respondents is used. Based on this sample it hard to generalize the findings. Another remark on the research is that decision makers were asked about their desires. The thing is that the DMU most of time consist of more than 1 employee, so more desires/expectation could come up. Because of time restrictions it wasn't possible to interview all the members of the DMU.

A new research has to be started to determine the desires of an entire DMU. It would be interesting to see how DMU members would or wouldn't complement other members of the DMU. The next thing is that the weighted attributes could be ranked differently because of the different influences.

## 6.3 Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions it was possible to come up with some recommendations for the management of 4Connection. The recommendations will be presented in this paragraph

### **Recommendation #1: build strong references cases**

The respondents showed that it is necessary to provide information on previous work called references. This is quite difficult for 4Connection given the fact that there is only one customer. The marketing and sales personnel should create a reference case of the current customer and emphasize the attributes mentioned by the respondents. It would also help if 4Connection and the current customer could agree upon visits of potential customers.

### **Recommendation #2: earn a Microsoft partnership status**

A Microsoft partnership status would be beneficial for 4Connection because it opens another communication/sales channel called "Pinpoint". Pinpoint is a marketplace where all Microsoft Partners, gold and silver stated, can present themselves and show which services/products they offer. For 4Connection it wouldn't be an expensive or time consuming job to achieve a silver status and thus become one of the Microsoft partners on Pinpoint.

**Recommendation #3: consider the target segment**

This research was based upon a pre-defined target segment. For 4Connection is relevant to discover the segment characteristics of, for example the larger organizations (>1000 employees).

Short run, no sales potential for the introduced services but 4Connection needs to check the market for changes in used features in SharePoint. The more features the more chance of success.

**Recommendation #4: offer a free trial**

Based on a POC, Proof of Concept, a potential customer could be convinced about the benefits of the offered service. This POC will create a lot of service encounters in which 4Connection can prove to be a trusted organization which in turn will lead to an administration contract.

**Recommendation #5: build awareness with the important customer values in mind**

The results of the empirical study showed that the respondents were able to identify organizations offering SharePoint services. What they weren't able to do is telling what exact services they offered and if they offered quality services. 4Connection should establish the service position in the mind of the potential customer. Some possibilities are frequent newsletters, frequent sales contacts, exposure on events. 4Connection should clearly communicate the important customer values in these customer encounters, direct and indirect.

**Recommendation #6: explore the trend of SharePoint implementation (on-premise/hosted)**

It is extremely important for 4Connection to find out, if organizations are more and more taking a hosted SharePoint environment. If this is the case then the administration problems won't occur at the customer but at the hosted SharePoint supplier.

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## Appendixes

### A) Attributes for customer value

Attributes provided by (Lapierre J. , 2000).

<b>Alternative solutions</b>
The range of alternatives offered by the supplier
The supplier's capability to tailor their offerings to match your needs
The supplier's helpfulness in terms of assisting you in solving your problems
<b>Product quality</b>
The durability of products you buy
The reliability of the products you buy over the years
The performance of the products you buy
The consistent improvement in product quality over the years
<b>Product customization</b>
The customization of product for your firm
The ability to meet unique specifications for products not offered by your IT supplier's competitors
The supplier's ability to offer different products from (not similar to) many of their customer
The ability to provide custom-built product for your firm
<b>Responsiveness</b>
Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems
Listen to your problems
Visit your locations to better understand your business
<b>Flexibility</b>
Their flexibility in responding to your requests
Their ability to adjust their products and services to meet unforeseen needs
The way they handle change
Their ability to provide emergency product and service deliveries
<b>Reliability</b>
The accuracy and clarity of the billing
Their ability to do things right the first time
The overall competence of employees with whom you do not have face to face contact
Their ability to keep promises
The accuracy of transactions
<b>Technical competence</b>
Their creativity
Their specialized expertise in your activity sector
Their ability to demonstrate comprehensive process knowledge of your business
The way they use new technology to generate solutions
Their ability to provide system solutions in response to your problems
<b>Image</b>
Its reputation
Its credibility
<b>Trust</b>
Your confidence that the supplier is telling the truth, even when your supplier gives you a rather unlikely explanation
The accuracy of the information provided by your major supplier
The supplier's fulfillment of promises made to your organization
The judgment or advice on your business operations that your supplier is sharing with you
The sincerity of your supplier

<b>Solidarity</b>
The help provided by your major supplier when you run into problems
The supplier's problems sharing that arise in the course of your relationship with them
The supplier's commitment to improvements which may benefit your overall relationship with them (not only of benefit for their own sakes)
The supplier's willingness to meet your needs beyond the contract terms
<b>Price</b>
Offers attractive prices for product and/or service bundles
Offers competitive prices for ICT professional services
Offers competitive prices for business solutions
Offers competitive prices to loyal customers
<b>Time/effort/energy</b>
The number of meetings with the supplier's staff
The bargaining effort with the supplier's staff in reaching an agreement
Your time and effort spent for training a number of your employees
Your time and effort spent in developing a working business relationship with your major IT supplier
Your energy invested with your major IT supplier
<b>Conflict</b>
The frequent arguments you have with your supplier about business issues
The controversial arguments you have with your supplier
The disagreements you have with your supplier about how you can best achieve your respective goals

Additional attributes provided by (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008):

<b>Integration</b>
Offers compatible products/services/technologies
Offers integrated business solutions
Offers ICT products as well as professional services (one-stop shopping)
Offers end-to-end integration
<b>Knowledge</b>
Knowledgeable about business environment of your firm
Knowledgeable about needs and trends of your industry
Knowledgeable about needs of your firm
<b>Responsibility</b>
Assumes responsibility for its actions and results
Assumes responsibility for its subcontractors and partners involved in your projects
Is accountable
<b>Experience</b>
Highly experienced in ICT professional services
Proposes experienced resources/consultants
Has broad experience
<b>Customization</b>
Offers products/services customized to you needs
Offers business solutions customized to your needs
Offers your firm personalized attentions

<b>Expertise</b>
Has leading-edge expertise
Has state-of-the art technology
Has expertise in emerging fields of technology

Consequences provided by (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008)

<b>Productivity Improvement</b>
Streamline your operations
Improve productivity of your firm
Improve effectiveness of your firm
Improve efficiency of your firm
<b>Innovation Improvement</b>
Market new products and services
Develop new technological processes
Identify and develop new markets
Spearhead technological innovation
<b>Risk Reduction</b>
Manage overall risks of your ICT projects
Reduce technological risks of your ICT projects
Reduce financial risks of your ICT projects
Reduce failure probability of your ICT projects
<b>Non-Monetary Cost Reduction</b>
Reduce your energy and effort investment in ICT projects
Reduce your time investment in ICT projects
Reduce time loss through administrative delays
<b>Monetary Cost Reduction</b>
Cut your operating costs
Cut your ICT costs
Cut total costs of ownership

End States provided by (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008):

<b>Profitability</b>
Increase your operating profits
Increase profitability of your new projects
Increase your profit on sales ratio
Increase your cash flow from operations
Increase your return on investment
Increase your return on assets
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>
Reduce the number of customer complaints
Make your customers happy
Help your customers solve problems
Provide benefits for your customers
Improve the satisfaction of your customers
<b>Security</b>
Reassure customers using your ICT systems
Protect customers against fraud when using your systems
Protect customers against financial losses when using your systems
Protect customers' personal information stored in your systems

Table of (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008):

## B) Interview template

- Introduce myself (Student Master of Business Administration, University of Twente)
- Explain the purpose of the interview and the goal of this research
- Ask if the respondent is ok with the recording of the interview

Date:	
Time:	
Name:	
Firm:	
Job:	

Start with a general open question about their company (can you tell me something about the firm?)

[Create a comfortable atmosphere]

### Part I: Segmentation

Main question	Additional questions	Clarifying questions
<b>For what purpose do you use SharePoint?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long do you already use it?</li> <li>• How many people are using it? And not?</li> <li>• With which people (roles) did you made the decision for the SharePoint platform?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>• Can you tell me anything else?</li> <li>• Can you give me some examples?</li> </ul>
<b>Was SharePoint implemented by yourself or with help of a third party?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What purchasing criteria did you use before selecting the right company who implemented SharePoint??</li> </ul>	
<b>Are you experiencing any administration problems in your SharePoint environment?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which?</li> </ul>	

## Part II: Customer Values

Main question	Additional questions	Clarifying questions
<b>What do you expect from an IT-supplier, offering a SharePoint monitoring and administration service?</b>	<p><i>[If not mentioned:]</i></p> <p><i>What do you think of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Attributes provided by the focus group session</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>Can you tell me anything else?</li> <li>Can you give me some examples?</li> </ul>
<b>The literature provides three dimensions for expectations/desires: product/service/relationship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you expect in the product dimension?</li> <li>What do you expect in the offered service?</li> <li>What do you desire in the relationship with the IT-supplier?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Which <i>attributes</i> do you think are the most important?</b></p> <p><b>(Sum up the attributes provided by the respondent and weight them with 100 points)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why?</li> </ul>	

## Part III: Trust

Main question	Additional questions	Clarifying questions
<b>What is the role of trust by selecting an IT-supplier offering a SharePoint monitoring and administration service?</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>Can you tell me anything else?</li> <li>Can you give me some examples?</li> </ul>
<b>What does trust mean for you?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does trust expresses?</li> </ul>	
<b>Why is trust important for selecting an IT-supplier offering a SharePoint monitoring and administration service?</b>		

## Part IV: Competitor Identification

Main question	Additional Questions	Clarifying questions
<b>Which companies do you consider as competitors? (Related to the company, offering the service where we talked about)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why?</li> <li>• Which of them do you think is best?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>• Can you tell me anything else?</li> <li>• Can you give me some examples?</li> </ul>
<b>How will you search for a company that can solves SharePoint issues?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why?</li> <li>• Which keywords would u use?</li> </ul>	
<b>If two companies meet your purchasing criteria, what will be decisive?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why?</li> </ul>	

### Finalizing

Thank the respondent for his time and ask if he/she wants to receive a summary of the research.

### C) Focus group session

**Attendees:**

Manager, Managing Consultant, Account manager, Trainer

**Purpose:**

Determining what 4Connection thinks a potential customer will expect, and thinks is important in a SharePoint monitoring and administration service. Generate a list of purchasing criteria.

**Starting question:**

What are, according to 4Connection, (important) criteria that are affecting the purchase of a SharePoint monitoring and administration service by a potential customer? And why?

Introduce the dimensions of (Lapierre J. , 2000) (Lapierre, Tran-Khanh, & Skelling, 2008). Ask the participants, if not already mentioned, what they think a potential customer would desire based on these dimensions.

Create definitions of the provided attributes/criteria!

Which criteria do you think is most important and which is less important? Ranking them with 100 points.

For example:

Criteria/attribute A = 50

Criteria/attribute B = 23

Criteria/attribute C = 17

Criteria/attribute D = 10

*These criteria/attributes will be used in the in-depth interview.*

### D) Mentioned attributes by respondents

## Dataverwerkingset

## Respondent #1: Kennis Centrum Handel

Data	attribute (theorie)	Uitleg (theorie)	Score
The monitoring tool should be pro-active	Product quality	The performance of the products you buy	Product quality
They party should arrange that the end-user isn't affected with any SharePoint problems	Product quality	The reliability of the products you buy over the years	
They should provide a trial-version	Product quality	The performance of the products you buy	
The price must be competitive	Price	Offers competitive prices for ICT professional services	Price
The party should react quickly to requests	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	Responsiveness
The party must be able to react flexible	Flexibility	Their flexibility in responding to your requests	Flexibility
The employees need to perform well on technical problems	Technical competence	The way they use new technology to generate solutions	Technical competence
They party must be able to combine functional- and technical administration.	Technical competence	Their ability to provide system solutions in response to your problems	
The party must be able to solve the signaled problems	Technical competence	Their ability to provide system solutions in response to your problems	
The employees should have a high level of technical knowledge	Technical competence	Their specialized expertise in your activity sector	
The party must be able to give me clear advices, related to SharePoint issues	Trust	The supplier's commitment to improvements which may benefit your overall relationship with them (not only of benefit for their own sakes)	Trust
The party must have knowledge of both SharePoint as other applications	Knowledge	Knowledgeable about business environment of your firm	Knowledge
The party should provide capable employees	Experience	Proposes experienced resources/consultants	Experience

## Respondent #2: Woningcorporatie Acolade

Data	attribute (theorie)	Uitleg (theorie)	Score
The monitoring tool should provide alert to arrange pro-active monitoring	Product quality	The performance of the products you buy	Product quality
The party should offer a cheap support contract	Price	Offers attractive prices for product and/or service bundles	Price
The price of the offering should be acceptable, lower than arranging it ourselves	Price	Offers competitive prices for ICT professional services	
Based on the support contract, the party should react quickly (solve the issue)	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	Responsiveness
A party that is able to do administration jobs after office hours.	Flexibility	Their flexibility in responding to your requests	Flexibility
The service should be 24*7 hours, and thus available in weekends	Flexibility	Their ability to provide emergency product and service deliveries	
The party should be a reliable one	Reliability	The overall competence of employees with whom you do not have face to face contact	Reliability
A party that takes away problems from our second line support	Technical competence	Their ability to provide system solutions in response to your problems	Technical competence
The party should have a combination of knowledge in SharePoint and SCOM	Technical competence	The way they use new technology to generate solutions	
The sales person should be convincing	Trust	Your confidence that the supplier is telling the truth, even when your supplier gives you a rather unlikely explanation	Trust
The feeling it is well managed and controlled	Trust	The sincerity of your supplier	
They party must give advices without a direct commercial intension	Trust	The help provided by your major supplier when you run into problems	
The party should have SCOM knowledge	Expertise	Knowledgeable about needs and trends of your industry	Expertise
The party should have experience in the SCOM and SharePoint	Experience	Highly experienced in ICT professional services	Experience
The party should have references of the service offering, preferably by large organizations	Experience	Has leading-edge expertise	
The party should know where the focus for monitoring SharePoint	Experience	Has broad experience	
The party should be able to shape SCOM for SharePoint	Customization	Offers products/services customized to you needs	Customization
The party should not monitor only SharePoint but the entire chain of the process	Integration	The supplier's capability to tailor their offerings to match your needs	Integration
The flexibility of monitoring also other IT systems	Integration	The range of alternatives offered by the supplier	

Respondent #3: Vereniging Eigenhuis			
Data	attribute (theorie)	Uitleg (theorie)	score
The occurring problems needs to be solved quickly	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	Responsiveness
The speed for problem solving must be high	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	
The party should be able to provide quick answers to questions	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	
The party must be able to act on site	Flexibility	Their ability to provide emergency product and service deliveries	Flexibility
They party shouldn't be bureaucratic	Flexibility	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	
The result of the solution must be good at once	Reliability	Their ability to do things right the first time	Reliability
They always have to propose a solution	Reliability	Their ability to do things right the first time	
The quality of the solution must be good	Reliability	Their ability to do things right the first time	
The size of the organizations needs to suit our size	Reliability	The overall competence of employees with whom you do not have face to face contact	
The organization must be a mature one	Reliability	The overall competence of employees with whom you do not have face to face contact	
The price must be competitive	Price	Offers competitive prices for ICT professional services	Price
The party should give us a trusty feeling	Trust	Your confidence that the supplier is telling the truth, even when your supplier gives you a rather unlikely explanation	Trust
The party must be able to give advices without any commercial intension	Trust	The judgment or advice on your business operations that your supplier is sharing with you	
It must be a good partner	Solidarity	The supplier's commitment to improvements which may benefit your overall relationship with them (not only of benefit for their own sakes)	Solidarity
It must be a thinking along partner	Solidarity	The supplier's commitment to improvements which may benefit your overall relationship with them (not only of benefit for their own sakes)	
The personal contact must be nice	Conflict	The supplier's willingness to meet your needs beyond the contract terms	Conflict
The external employees must be along with our internal employees	Conflict	The supplier's willingness to meet your needs beyond the contract terms	
The party should know our business	Knowledge	Knowledgeable about needs and trends of your industry	Knowledge
The knowledge of the employees must be of a higher level than our internal employees	Experience	Knowledgeable about needs and trends of your industry	Experience
The party should be able to give a reasoned opinion about the quality of our environment	Experience	Proposes experienced resources/consultants	
The level of employee quality must be high	Experience	Proposes experienced resources/consultants	
Respondent #4: Nederlandse Spoorwegen			
Data	attribute (theorie)	Uitleg (theorie)	Score
The value for money ratio must be good	Price	Offers attractive prices for product and/or service bundles	Price
They party should provide functional support on site	Responsiveness	Visit your locations to better understand your business	Responsiveness
The party should be able to help our employees quickly	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	
The problem solving speed must be high	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	
The working speed must be high	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	
The party should be able to quickly respond to asked questions	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	
The party should have proactive attitude	Flexibility	Their flexibility in responding to your requests	Flexibility
The party should be able to prove its continuity	Reliability	The overall competence of employees with whom you do not have face to face contact	Reliability
The employees need to be able to transfer a functional question into a technical solution	Technical competence	Their ability to provide system solutions in response to your problems	Technical competence
They party should communicate their progress really good	Trust	The accuracy of the information provided by your major supplier	Trust
The party must be able to give good advices	Trust	The sincerity of your supplier	
The party should have one contact person who my employees trust	Trust	Their ability to do things right the first time	
They personal contact with the IT-supplier must be good	Solidarity	The supplier's commitment to improvements which may benefit your overall relationship with them (not only of benefit for their own sakes)	Solidarity
The human relationship with the employee is must be good	Solidarity	The supplier's commitment to improvements which may benefit your overall relationship with them (not only of benefit for their own sakes)	
The party should have the same purpose as us	Solidarity	The help provided by your major supplier when you run into problems	
The party should be involved in NS	Solidarity	The supplier's willingness to meet your needs beyond the contract terms	
The employee needs to be substantively informed	Knowledge	Proposes experienced resources/consultants	Knowledge
The party should be able to convince us based on knowledge	Knowledge	Proposes experienced resources/consultants	Knowledge

Respondent #5: Arla Foods			
Data	attribute (theorie)	Uitleg (theorie)	score
The quality of the solutions they provide must be of high quality	Product quality	The performance of the products you buy	Product quality
The party must deliver solutions of high quality	Product quality	The performance of the products you buy	
The party must be able to show us how they are monitoring our SharePoint environment	Product quality	The reliability of the products you buy over the years	
The party should provide me with some examples about SharePoint monitoring	Product quality	The durability of products you buy	
The party should provide a demo version or a POC of the service offering	Product quality	The reliability of the products you buy over the years	
The party should ask an acceptable price for their service offering	Price	Offers competitive prices for ICT professional services	Price
The party should have the ability to react quickly	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	Responsiveness
There must be one external employee helping us, not different people all the time	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	
The party should react quick before filling in all bureaucratic forms	Responsiveness	Their ability to provide emergency product and service deliveries	
The party should be flexible in responding and solving problems	Flexibility	Their flexibility in responding to your requests	Flexibility
The SLA's they create must be of good quality	Reliability	Their ability to do things right the first time	Reliability
The communication in the pre-sales trajectory must be good	Reliability	Their ability to keep promises	
The quotation must be clear and they party should have paid attention to it.	Reliability	The accuracy and clarity of the billing	
The party should have some continuity	Reliability	The overall competence of employees with whom you do not have face to face contact	
The party should provide customer intimacy	Trust	Your confidence that the supplier is telling the truth, even when your supplier gives you a rather unlikely explanation	Trust
The party must be trusted	Trust	The supplier's fulfillment of promises made to your organization	
The party should have clear service descriptions	Trust	The accuracy of the information provided by your major supplier	
The party should have clear documentation about their offering	Trust	The accuracy of the information provided by your major supplier	
The party must be willing to help outside of the SLA scope	Solidarity	The supplier's willingness to meet your needs beyond the contract terms	Solidarity
There must be a good "click" between us and the party	Solidarity	The supplier's commitment to improvements which may benefit your overall relationship with them (not only of benefit for their own sakes)	
The party must give us a good feeling (subjective)	Solidarity	The supplier's commitment to improvements which may benefit your overall relationship with them (not only of benefit for their own sakes)	
The party should be able to pro-actively advise us about SharePoint issues	Solidarity	Your time and effort spent for training a number of your employees	
The party must be willing the invest in us as a customer	Solidarity	Offers attractive prices for product and/or service bundles	
Should not just offer SharePoint monitoring alone	Integration	The range of alternatives offered by the supplier	Integration
The party should know our business	Knowledge	Knowledgeable about business environment of your firm	Knowledge
The party should have good references	Experience	Has broad experience	Experience
They party must have employed experienced employees	Experience	Highly experienced in ICT professional services	

Respondent #6: Flamco			
Data	attribute (theorie)	Uitleg (theorie)	score
The party should offer pro-active monitoring	Product quality	The performance of the products you buy	Product quality
The party should offer competitive prices for their offering	Price	Offers competitive prices for ICT professional services	Price
The party should solve problem before they get worse	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	Responsiveness
The party should be located closely	Responsiveness	Visit your locations to better understand your business	
The party should be able to solve business critical problems fast	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	
The party should be able to solve problem flexible	Flexibility	Their flexibility in responding to your requests	Flexibility
The party should take the right steps to prevent further damage	Reliability	Their ability to do things right the first time	Reliability
The party should arrange their project well	Reliability	The overall competence of employees with whom you do not have face to face contact	
The party should be able to understand problem or questions the first time	Reliability	Their ability to do things right the first time	
They party should be able to take a leading role	Reliability	Is accountable	
The party should have a clear website	Image	Its reputation	Image
The website of the party should address IT-managers but also system administrators	Image	Its reputation	
The employees of the party should expose their self's in the good way	Image	Its reputation	
The party should be able to communicate good with my internal IT employees	Solidarity	The supplier's commitment to improvements which may benefit your overall relationship with them (not only of benefit for their own sakes)	Solidarity
The party should have a sympathetic way of communicating	Solidarity	The supplier's commitment to improvements which may benefit your overall relationship with them (not only of benefit for their own sakes)	
The party should be able to communicate clearly	Solidarity	The supplier's commitment to improvements which may benefit your overall relationship with them (not only of benefit for their own sakes)	
There must be a "fit" between us and the external IT-supplier	Solidarity	The supplier's commitment to improvements which may benefit your overall relationship with them (not only of benefit for their own sakes)	
The party should contain employees with superior knowledge with respect to competitors	Expertise	Has leading-edge expertise	Expertise
The party should have a high level of technical knowledge	Expertise	Has leading-edge expertise	
The party should have knowledge of Microsoft products	Expertise	Has leading-edge expertise	
The party should be a certified partner	Expertise	Has leading-edge expertise	
The party should be an expert in SharePoint administration	Expertise	Has leading-edge expertise	
The party should contain a number of relevant references	Experience	Proposes experienced resources/consultants	Experience
The party should have experience in related cases	Experience	Has broad experience	
The performance of the party must be of a high level	Experience	Highly experienced in ICT professional services	
The monitoring tool should be a relatively standard product	Customization	The customization of product for your firm	Customization
The monitoring tool should provide relevant information, no side issues	Customization	The customization of product for your firm	
Respondent #7: Provincie Fryslan			
Data	attribute (theorie)	Uitleg (theorie)	Score
The employees of the organization need to be at the location	Responsiveness	Visit your locations to better understand your business	Responsiveness
The organization should be available "all" the time	Responsiveness	Is accountable	
The employees should act quickly on occurring issues	Responsiveness	Provide quick answers and solutions to your problems	
The employees should act flexible on occurring issues	Flexibility	Their flexibility in responding to your requests	Flexibility
The organization needs to be flexible, no long change procedures	Flexibility	The way they handle change	
The organization should have relevant references	Experience	Proposes experienced resources/consultants	Experience
The organization should have experienced employees	Experience	Proposes experienced resources/consultants	
The organizations should have employees with a lot of expertise	Expertise	Has leading-edge expertise	Expertise
The organization should be a thinking along one	Solidarity	The supplier's problems sharing that arise in the course of your relationship with them	Solidarity
The organization should offer a continuous service	Reliability	The overall competence of employees with whom you do not have face to face contact	Reliability

## E) Results segmentation part

	Industry	Company size	Location	Technology	User-Nonuser Status	Customer Capabilities (financial)
#1: Kennis Centrum Handel	Education, service of educational institutions (BI85.6)	170 FTE	Ede, Gelderland	SharePoint 2010	170 of 170	Some employees were trained in SharePoint. Most of them attended a SharePoint end-user training. No financial information available.
#2: Woningcorporatie Accolade	housing corporation (BI68.20.1)	200 FTE	Heerenveen, Leeuwarden	SharePoint 2007 and SharePoint 201	200 of 200	None of the employees had attended a SharePoint training. No financial information available.
#3: Vereniging Eigenhuis	other services (BI94,99,7)	190 FTE	Amersfoort, Utrecht	Microsoft SharePoint 2010 and SCOM	190 FTE and additionally 100 ZZP'ers	\
#4: Flamco	Production of metal parts (BI25.9)	270 FTE in Holland, 47,000 globally	Bunschoten & Zuthphen, Utrecht	SharePoint 2007 MOSS	100 FTE of the 270FTE made use of SharePoint. The other were primarily production workers.	None of the employees had attended a SharePoint training. No financial information available.
#5: Arla Foods	industrial, production of dairy products	400FTE in Holland, 16,000 globally	Nijkerk, Utrecht	SharePoint 2007 MOSS	250 FTE of the 400 FTE made use of SharePoint.	Global turnover is about 7/8 billion
#6: Provincie Fryslan	Government, county	900FTE	Leeuwarden, Friesland	SharePoint Enterprise 2010	900FTE and additionally 200 to 500 external users	
#7: Nederlandse Spoorwegen	transport and storage on rail, transport of civilians (BI49,1)	26500 FTE (divided in several BU)	Utrecht, Utrecht	SharePoint 2007 server and at the moment they are implementing SharePoint 2010 server/enterprise. Both environment were hosted by KPN. So no on-premise installations. They also made use of Office 365 in the cloud.	Every PC with an internet connection is able to connect to the SharePoint environment, thus all employees can.	Explained that there was some financial capacity to explore new features in SharePoint.

	Organization of DMSU	Purchasing policies	Purchasing criteria	urgency	application
#1: Kennis Centrum Handel	The financial controller and the IT-manager.	No formal purchasing policies	Mentioned in the CV part	High. SharePoint was noticed as a critical business application. If a problem occurred they have to solve it quickly because otherwise the entire organization will notice it. End-user probably aren't able to work any more then. Functional- and technical administration was really important but was outsourced.	They used SharePoint for document management, post-order registration, and my-sites for personal employee information.
#2: Woningcorporatie Accolade	Head of the IT department with his IT-advisor	There were no explicit purchasing policies, but because they are a corporation they have to make use of public tenders. The only recognized policy they used was that they were Microsoft minded.	Mentioned in the CV part	At the moment SharePoint isn't a business critical application, but with the new development in the SharePoint 2010 environment it will be.	At the moment the SharePoint 2007 environment is used for intranet. Employees can view and download forms, from for example the P&O department. Next year they are trying to apply SharePoint in a broader way. They want to replace the network shares for SharePoint. They also use the MySite of SharePoint. And at the moment they are developing a knowledge center in SharePoint for questions and answers for employees. They also used a DMS product that was developed by a third party but the basis for this DMS was SharePoint.
#3: Vereniging Eigenhuis	Information manager the the team manager ICT and the IT architects	They only bought Microsoft products	Moved to customer values	They outsourced the monitoring and administration of SharePoint. An external organization administered their SharePoint environment. It wasn't seen as business critical.	On-premise. SharePoint for intranet. They also developed a "nieuwbouw coach" in SharePoint, where a buyers pool was arranged. This pool created a strong viewpoint on the contractor. At the moment they were developing a portal for engineers. It could be seen as a communication portal for external parties such as the ZZP'ers. Those people could see their agenda in it, enter there information (about houses) and check their finances. Wanted a project site, but failed!
#4: Flamco	The IT-manager has a certain amount of freedom but for large IT-decisions he had to contact his superior of the Voestalpine Polynorm Group. Decisions were made with IT-system admins.	IT was deployed by the holding. Flamco still made use of local IT-suppliers	Moved to customer values	Did not really value the administration part. Although the R&D, HRM and IT departments were using SharePoint, and for R&D SharePoint was almost business critical.	Sharing information, one document with version control, os Document Management. For R&D it is also used as a project management system, with workflows.
#5: Arla Foods	The IT-manager and his 2 colleagues of the IT-department.	The policy for purchasing IT products was determined in the headquarters in Denmark. Before the acquisition Arla was able to manage and create their own IT products.	Mentioned in the CV part	SharePoint isn't seen as a business critical application. Applications that were critical were affecting the production and SharePoint wasn't. Although recopies of milk product were stored in SharePoint so in some aspect it was critical, although not business critical.	SharePoint was deployed primarily for document management. The entry page of the DMS system was designed as an Intranet portal with information about new colleagues and leaving colleagues. There was also a web part about Arla news. For the R&D department a workflow was created to manage their development process.
#6: Provincie Fryslan		Using public tenders. Their SharePoint implementation trajectory was an European Public Tender	Mentioned in the CV part	SharePoint is seen as a business critical application. The technical administration of SharePoint was outsourced but Provincie Fryslan had an employee who was responsible for the technical application problems. Prov. Fryslan made a clear distinction in their administration policy. There was a clear line, based on SQL level where technical administration ends and where technical application starts.	Document sharing (internal and external) and knowledge sharing (wiki sites) and for Business Intelligence
#7: Nederlandse Spoorwegen	All people who were affecting during the public tenders. IT manager, Product Manager, Financial experts.	They followed a clear Microsoft 'unless' policy	Moved to customer values	SharePoint wasn't determined as business critical. However, one department/business unit called "the crisis team" used SharePoint and this environment could be seen as business critical.	Primarily use for document management. Exploring the functionality of SharePoint for their intranet

	<i>size of order</i>	<i>motivation</i>	<i>buyer-seller: 1 to 1 relationship</i>	<i>risk perceptions</i>
#1: Kennis Centrum Handel	-	Flexible document management system. No need to send attachments in email, just the link to the location.	This was a very personal relationship. France knew i-Collaborate from an individual contact. I-Collaborate helped Kennis Centrum Handel to migrate from an on-premise SharePoint installation to servers of KPN (in the cloud).	-
#2: Woningcorporatie Accolade		They choose SharePoint because it was a relative cheap solution to build an intranet and it was a flexible platform.	They have 2 external parties helping them with SharePoint related issues. Qss and Wortell. Qss is known as a small but relative good party, and Wortell as an experienced one. The relationship with both parties was good. However they didn't contact Qss that much because the knowledge level equaled.	
#3: Vereniging Eigenhuis	The company fulfilling the SharePoint administration has one employee one day a week at Vereniging Eigen Huis.	In first place, SharePoint administration was organized by employees of Vereniging Eigen Huis. But because of the complexity of SharePoint and the frequency of problems we decided to outsource it.	\	
#4: Flamco	They made use of an external party solving SharePoint administration issues.	Because it was a standard application with a perfect integration of other Microsoft products	The relationship between Delta-N and Flamco was good, and can be determined as personal.	Primarily choosing standard products.
#5: Arla Foods	\	Before SharePoint they had LifeLink for DMS and SharePoint offered more functionalities	They had two external parties helping them with general IT administration problems (Illionix and Detron). For SharePoint they made use of a freelancer called Ronald Bruinsma. This relationship was experienced as good.	\
#6: Provincie Fryslan	They used an external organization administering their infrastructure (till SQL server level). From SQL level to end-user level was administered by their own employee. They used SCOM for the monitoring parts.	They wanted to share easily document without having to share them by email.	They used an external partner for their IT-infrastructure	They knew that real SharePoint knowledge is rare in the Netherlands. And that's why they employed one skilled SharePoint professional. They saw a lot of amateurs and didn't want them doing work for the county.
#7: Nederlandse Spoorwegen	KPN Consultant provides the administration part for 2 or 3 days a week	They had a major contract with Microsoft, and SharePoint was part of this	At the moment this is personal, but KPN Consulting won the public tender. They scored highest on the determined criteria.	They have some risk perceptions based on the Office 365 environment. Their data in the Office 365 environment is hosted in Europe, this is agreed by Microsoft.