The Model of Client Relationship Management of a Knowledge Intensive Business Services Organization

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Abstract

In the rapidly changing environment business organizations face information and knowledge transformation, abundance or deficiency, their validity, incapacity to find a way out when problems emerge, etc. In such a situation, providers of knowledge intensive business services help organizations. Knowledge intensive business services distinguish themselves in knowledge accumulation and production as well as diffusion, corporate learning of a provider and a customer, strong involvement of a customer into the process of service creation. These features distinguish knowledge intensive business services among the other and determine the importance of long-term relationship. The article addresses the following research problem: how to manage customer relationship of organizations of knowledge intensive business services in attaining corporate benefit? Having disclosed features and functions of knowledge intensive business services as well as the process of development of customer relationship of an organization rendering a standard product, the model of an organization of knowledge intensive business services and customer relationship management is presented. It consists of five stages: self-analysis, beginning, development, commitments and ending. The model elaborates activities characteristic for each of the stages.

Keywords: business services, knowledge intensive business services, client relationship of knowledge intensive business service organizations.

Introduction

In the fast changing environment business companies face difficulties of information receiving and analysis, its transformation into knowledge as well as its application into practice. Knowledge intensive business services (KIBS), possessing specific competence, have already occupied this niche for several decades. These services are specific because 1) knowledge is important input of a service, 2) services are based on professional competence and knowledge, 3) services are the source of knowledge for a consumer or they help to develop consumer’s knowledge, 4) diffusion of possessed or newly produced knowledge, which is possible due to a close interaction of service providers and a consumer that are characteristic for these services and 5) services are rendered not to physical but to juridical bodies (Kemppila and Mettanen, 2004). As Bettencourt, Ostrom and Brown (2005) note, KIBS companies are those that create surplus value by accumulating, producing and diffusing the knowledge to individualise the solution of a consumer’s problem. The aims of KIBS activity are very different – to help customers to decrease their activity expenditure or to increase their activity income, to improve the quality of production (goods and/or services), to find new markets, to transform business processes, to create new products (goods and/or services), etc. Rajala and Westerlund (2005) assume that KIBS perform information, diagnostic, advisory, assuasive, turnkey and managerial functions.

The unquestioned importance of these services determines researchers’ increasing interest in their development. The topics of research on knowledge intensive business services can be divided into two groups. The first group aims to investigate macro problems and analyse the contribution of KIBS into economies of countries or regions (Co, 2007; Toivonen, 2007), separate sectors of economy (for example, the influence of KIBS upon a public sector is analysed by Anmari and Kuusisto, 2006), innovations (Toivonen, Tuominen and Brax, 2007; Muller and Zenker, 2001), territorial aspects of KIBS development – Smedlund and Toivonen, 2007; Aslesen (2007) analysed the importance of KIBS for intellectual capital development in regions, Zenker and Doloreux (2008) – environment of KIBS and regions’ innovation) and so on. A thorough analysis of the sector of these services and their development scenarios was made in the study of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions Sector futures (2005). The attention of researchers of the second group is focused on the processes that take place at a company, i.e. a micro level: KIBS importance and knowledge transformation into services were analysed by Hipp (1999), the influence of proximity dimension upon the relationship of KIBS providers and clients – Hyypia and Kautonen (2005), the importance of relationship marketing upon competitiveness of organizations rendering KIBS – Bagdoniene, Kunigeliene and Jakstaite (2007). However and Miles (2003) notes that KIBS deserve special attention, not only as sources of innovation and agents of knowledge transfer, but also as being dynamic and rapidly growing sectors.

Rendering of knowledge intensive business services is a complex and individualised process. For this reason consumers of these services have to actively participate and to perform co-create and co-productions roles of the
knowledge-based solutions obligatory for them (Bettencourt, Ostrom and Brown, 2005). Consumer’s contribution in rendering KIBS is miscellaneous; however, it is of utmost importance that consumers are equal partners because they possess the competences without which a provider of KIBS would not be able to present a problem’s solution. In other words, in rendering KIBS close inter-dependence of a provider and a customer exists as in no other services. This means that the ability to affiliate and to develop relationship beneficial for both parties becomes an important premise for rendering of these services and their result. In research literature customer relationship management (CRM), which involves human capital, business processes and application of information technologies, is analysed through the prism of 1) relationship marketing (Ward and Daggter, 2007), 2) information systems (IS) aimed at customers’ service (Bose, 2002) as well as 3) coherence of relationship marketing and IS (Payne and Frow, 2005). However, it is necessary to note that researchers get deeper only into one aspect of relationship development (for example, Aarikka-Stenroos and Halinen (2007) analyse how third actors as relationship promoters influence affiliation of the relationship; Lian and Laing (2007) focus their attention on the role of the professional service providers as boundary spanners in the formation of personal relationship; Edvardsson, Holmlunbd and Strandvik (2008) analyse the dynamics in the relationship initiation process) or emphasise controlled activities (Thakur, Summe and Balasubramanian, 2006; Dawson, 2005; Parvatiiyar and Sheth, 2001).

As mentioned above, for KIBS it is characteristic strong involvement of a consumer into service rendering, exchange of information and knowledge. In addition, every participant of relationship development process have their own strategy, on the implementation of which depends whether the relationship will be long-term, whether needs and expectations of a consumer and a service provider will be met. Thus, in the group of knowledge intensive business services, management of relationship development gains special importance. However, the analysis of research literature shows that researchers pay much more attention to the functions of knowledge intensive business services than to the peculiarities of rendering these services, including customer relationship start and development as well as management. Thus the article addresses the problem how, when striving for mutual benefit, client relationship should be managed at organizations of knowledge intensive business services.

The aim of the article is to provide rationale for the model of client relationship management at organizations of knowledge intensive business services.

The research methods are analysis of research literature and theoretical modelling.

The article consists of three parts. The first part reveals features and functions of knowledge intensive business services that influence relationship with clients; the second part is a comparative analysis of viewpoints to company’s relationship with customers; the third part provides rationale for the model of client relationship management at an organization of knowledge intensive business services.

**Features and functions of knowledge intensive business services**

In the chain of creation of modern companies’ value the specialised knowledge and competences, which providers of knowledge intensive business services have at their disposition, play a great role.

Knowledge intensive business services are a subset of business services (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions [EFILWC], 2005). According to Statistical Classification of Economic Activities (NACE), three groups of knowledge intensive business services are distinguished 1) computer-related services, 2) R&D and 3) other business-related services (Figure 1).

Muller and Doloreux (2007) define KIBS as services closely related to professional knowledge. This means that providers of these services are experts and specialists of various fields. The peculiarity of KIBS, according to Muller and Doloreux (2007), Hipp (1999), is determined so that when rendering them specific knowledge, which are integrated into processes of new knowledge production and diffusion, is used. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that these services (e.g., management consultations) could be hardly identified and evaluated (Grimshaw and Miozzo, 2006). Another feature of knowledge intensive business services is that they require close mutual participation of parties and their effective communication. In addition, exchange of knowledge and information is impossible (Grimshaw and Miozzo, 2006). Miles (2003) points out that the nature of many KIBS services also requires long-term relationship (e.g. it takes time to establish trust; there are steep learning curves in understanding the customer organization, etc.).

One more important feature of knowledge intensive business services is that their providers have to guarantee confidentiality of customers’ information (Hyypia and Kautonen, 2005). This determines that in rendering KIBS commitments and trust of a service provider and a customer are especially important.

Functions of knowledge intensive business services are summarised in Table 1. As it is seen in the table, providers of knowledge intensive business services perform functions of information and knowledge accumulation, production and diffusion; as well as their contribution to solving customers’ problems innovatively creates a premise for the increase of their competitiveness.

**Variety of viewpoints to customer relationship management**

In research literature there are a lot of explanations what customer relationship management is. Zablah, Belenger and Johnston (2004) identified 45 definitions of customer relationship management. According to the researchers, they treat customer relationship management as process, strategy, philosophy, capabilities and
Payne and Frow (2005), having analysed 35 definitions, state that there are three possible approaches of customer relationship management: 1) narrowly and tactical, which limits in attention to only technological aspect of customer relationship, 2) wide-ranging technology, according to which customer relationship management is compared to wide extent customer-oriented decisions of information technologies and the Internet and 3) strategic/holistic, referring to which customer relationship management is the process value creation for shareholders. Gebert et al. (2003) assume that customer relationship management is relationship marketing and the result of synthesis of viewpoints to customer-oriented information systems aimed at management of sales. As Payne and Frow (2005) note, customer relationship management is inter-functional strategic viewpoint directed to creation of a greater value for shareholders through the development of customer relationship and their segments. Usually customer relationship management involves identification of customers’ strategy and appropriate activity, gathering of knowledge from customers and its diffusion, management of value creation for a customer, strategies of development of integrated channels as well as ingenious application of data and technologies in order to create better experience of customers.


It is directed towards the increase of a value for customers and strengthening of organization’s competitiveness. The researchers present the seven-step model of implementation of customer relationship management strategy. Thus, in managing relationship of an organization and its customers, it is necessary:

1) to focus attention on customers. This means that an organization priorities on customers but not products or their geography. The authors of the model point out the importance of involvement of top-level managers to the process of customer relationship management. For example, on them depends whether contact employees will have the access to information about the most profitable customers. Contact personnel, in its turn, must have a possibility to warn managers about the aspects of interaction with customers unacceptable for their organization. In other words, it is necessary to guarantee free and real-time circulation within an organization so that every employee would know about the most profitable customers.

2) to classify customers according to their importance/lifetime value for an organization, for example, top, middle, and low categories. This is necessary for an organization not to flounce about and not to waste resources in order to meet all customers’ needs. It is possible to classify customers according to their engagement in transactions and their being relationship-oriented. Such distribution helps to foresee loyalty of customers. Transaction-oriented clients give priority to brand thus their loyalty for an organization is low.
The loyalty of those who give priority to relationship with an organization is stronger than of the first. Thus the main idea of customer relationship management is to detect those customers, on which the growth of an organization depends;

3) to offer value for priority customers. Offering of the value for customers as well as its experience that formed due to this is the basic factor of the success of customer relationship management. Only a customer decides whether what an organization offers is the value. This perception of the value forms within processes of service rendering and consumption; thus an organization must estimate the experience of a customer within all interactions with the organization. An organization that renders services can maximize the offered value if it well knows the customers of all identified groups. Thus individual and corporate customers have different needs;

4) to focus attention to strategic potentials/powers. An organization has to clearly define its possibilities for its activity related to knowledge, personnel, technology and internal business processes. It is especially important that what an organization plans strategically would fit with its possessed powers/potentials;

5) to develop customer-oriented strategies. In this stage an organization together with customers should find win-win possibilities useful for both parties. The authors of the model point out that an organization should pay its attention not to what it can offer but to what a customer wants and it has to more hear a customer than force him/her to hear what the organization says. When an organization defines customer-oriented business strategy, it can switch to a technological decision;

6) to choose a package of customer relationship management. The software package has to support, to facilitate and to optimise processes of sale, marketing and service rendering for customers. The choice has to be based not on price but on whether the software can be easily integrated into the existing technology;

7) to implement the system of customer relationship management strategy. Here competitive personnel, a properly organised process and a reliable technology are necessary.

Thus the implementation of customer relationship management as strategy, according to the authors of the model, creates the basis for offering a value for a customer by applying purposeful business processes, software and supporting information technologies. The strategy identifies goals, segments and customers, as well as it defines how organization’s resources will be used in the interaction with a customer.

Donaldson and O’Toole (2007) also emphasises the strategic aspect of customer relationship. The researchers also point out that customer relationship management is the collection of business decisions but not of technologies. Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001) consider customer relationship management as the strategy of organization’s activity and they state that it helps to create a greater value for an organization and its customers as well as to increase marketing productivity.

Peppers and Rogers (2007) also explain customer relationship management as business strategy. They explain its essence in a very simple way – an organization must serve different customers differently. Thus it is necessary to identify, differentiate, interact and customize (IDIC) its customers. According to the researchers, in the IDIC process two phases – analysis and activity – should be distinguished. An organization performs the first two tasks – to identify and to differentiate – without customers; this is a phase of analysis. Other two tasks – to interact and to customize service – make a phase of activity; it is carried out with customers. Interaction and service individualisation are two possibilities to stimulate a customer to start relationship. What strategy in relationship

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with customers – mass, niche, databases or one-to-one marketing it chooses depends on how these possibilities will be used.

Chen and Popovich (2003) emphasize the role of personnel in customer relationship management. According to the authors, customer relationship management is combination of employees, processes and technology. It helps to understand clients, retain them and develop the relationships.

In research literature, however, the most frequent explanation of customer relationship management is given through the process prism (Dwyer and Tanner, 2006; Dawson, 2005; Sin, Tse and Yim, 2005; Parvatiyar and Sheth, 2001). One has to point out that models of customer relationship reveal different aspects of this process, for example, Dwyer and Tanner (2006), Dawson (2005) get deeper into relationship evolution, Thakur, Summe and Balasubramanian (2006), Sin, Tse and Yim (2005) – analyse structural components of the process and so on.

The model by Dwyer and Tanner (2006) reflects the dynamics of organisation’s customer relationship. Organization’s customer relationship goes through the stages of awareness, exploration, expansion and commitment. In the stage of awareness an organization advertises its services, collects information about the process of service order, service specifications. At the same time a customer analyses the supply, searches for a service provider and a customer coordinate their goals, a commitment guarantees which protects relationship of both parties – if they have compatible goals and understand the future of their relationship in a similar way – share time, material, human and other resources. Commitment is a guarantee, which protects relationship of both parties against negative changes of environment and the mess. In our opinion, a possibility of relationship break always exists in the process of organization’s customer relationship development. This is conditioned by unfulfilled expectations or too great expectations, wishes or needs, the changed character of its activity, etc. the relationship break can be initiated by both an organization that renders services and a customer. According to Lovelock (2001), relationship with customers breaks when an organization understands that customer relationship maintenance costs much more than obtained benefit. This means that every service organization would have to regularly revise customers’ portfolio and break unprofitable relationship.

According to Dawson (2005), relationship never is static, it develops and at a certain moment it can be either positive or negative. The author distinguishes four stage of relationship of service providers and their customers: engaging, aligning, deepening and partnering. In the first stage – engaging – both customers and service providers show initiative to start relationship and at the same time they investigate what benefit could be attained. Usually this survey takes place by starting first contacts, discussing offers, etc. In the second stage – aligning – a service provider and a customer coordinate their goals, a relationship style, and processes. Knowledge about customers serves for interaction and individualisation of service rendering. In the third stage – deepening – both a service provider and a customer focus their attention not only on relationship deepening but also on its expansion. This means that relationship overpasses borders, localisation, and functions of a subdivision and involves an organisation of both a provider and a customer. In the stage of partnering the parties maintaining relationship create a value and share it. This is sought by integrating business processes, sharing exceptional information, developing common programmes of intellectual property marketing, by establishing corporate enterprises. Dawson (2005) assumes that a small part of relationship business-to-business starts before partnership.

In the model by Sin, Tse and Yim (2005) customer relationship management as process consists of four components:

- orientation to clients. It manifests through marketing activity, through cooperation of an organization and its customers in creating new services/goods, through their adaptation to customers’ needs. It is especially important for an organization to consider customer’s needs, wishes; but not less it is important to assess the customers possessing strategic importance because not every customer is attractive and brings benefit for an organization. Due to great variety of needs and wishes as well as the variety of the customers, it is hard to coordinate different interests. Thus the interface, which is possible in forms of cooperation, collaboration, communication at processes of product design, production and alike, is necessary. All this helps to start closer relationship, facilitates searches for individual decisions, and strengthens customers’ loyalty;
- organization of customer relationship management. Neciuniene (2008) states that it is not enough only to buy software in order to manager customer relationship. Success cannot be anticipated if an organization is not ready for transformation of culture, changes in an organizational structure, designation of certain resources for customer relationship management and suitable for human capital management;
- knowledge management. As Gao, Li and Clarke (2008) state, the most important aim of knowledge management – is to help business organizations to form unique abilities, which would produce knowledge determining competitiveness and would transform it into goods and services. According to Gebert et al. (2003), in the process of customer relationship management the flows
of knowledge can be divided into three groups (Gebert et al., 2003):
- knowledge for customers (for example, about a service, specifications, etc.);
- knowledge about customers (in order that an organization would better understand customer’s motives);
- knowledge from customers (for example, about faced difficulties, applied technology, etc.).

Management of knowledge for customers and knowledge from them is one of essential goals of customer relationship management. The aspect of knowledge management is especially important for organizations rendering knowledge intensive business services. As it is above-mentioned, knowledge intensive business services are directly related to knowledge, thus their management is not only important but also complicated. First of all, the very customer presents an inconsiderable part of knowledge; thus it is necessary to know how to take it, knowledge diffusion proceeds in different directions; in striving for customer’s trust the confidentiality of knowledge has to be guaranteed. Peppers and Rogers (2007) state that customer’s information is economic asset; it can increase organization’s productivity and costs per piece/unit;
- technological basis, i.e. information technologies, software, the Internet, call centres and alike. Good information system allows collecting, saving, proceeding of information; thus customers’ needs are better and fast met, services are not only more qualitative but also cheaper.

The model by Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001) explains the process of customer relationship management as the entirety of four sub-processes. According to the researchers, the process of customer relationship management consists of:
1) customer relationship formation;
2) relationship management and governance;
3) relational performance evaluation;
4) customer relationship development or strengthening.

In the stage of customer relationship formation an organization defines the mission and aims of customer relationship management; following selection criteria, chooses customers and, subject to what their group strives to start relationship with them, as well as creates programmes of continuity marketing, one-to-one marketing or partnering.

Having created programmes of customer relationship management, the stage of relationship management and governance emerges. In this stage both parties must participate and on their involvement depends how close the relationship will be in the future. In the process of coordination and management, first of all, a group of people responsible for customer relationship management is formed. The more complex programme of relationship with customers is, the more complex is the structure of the group of people. Effective communication to develop relationship with a customer determines their trust, creates premises for information and knowledge exchange in mutual activities. Communication also helps to define corporate commitments of the parties as well. In addition, planning and involvement of customers into it is also important because on this depends whether plans will be implemented and the aims achieved. Appropriate monitoring of customer relationship helps to protect an organization from failures and conflicts, which strike the relationship. In the stage of result assessment it is sought to assess whether programmes of relationship with customers serve the purpose, whether they will be useful in long-term perspective. In the last stage of the process of relationship development/strengthening the satisfaction of the parties maintaining the relationship is important. When organization’s activity gives benefit for both parties and influences their satisfaction, they are motivated to continue cooperation. Otherwise, customers can break relationships or modify them.

In summarising viewpoints to organizations’ customer relationship management, it should be stressed that so far researchers have concentrated on the market of business-to-customer and most frequently they analysed standard relationship of a seller and a buyer. Relationship of knowledge intensive business services providers and their customers are specific; thus, when researching it, it is necessary to assess aspects of functions, roles, corporate dependence, etc.

Reasoning of the model of client relationship management at an organization of knowledge intensive business services

The model of providers and customers of knowledge intensive business services is developed referring to the insights of Dwyer and Tanner (2006), Thakur, Summe and Balasubramanian (2006), Dawson (2005), Payne and Frow (2005), Peppers and Rogers (2007) as well as Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001) to client relationship management (Figure 2). Differently from the works of the above-mentioned authors, five stages of relationship development are distinguished in the model suggested by us, i.e. self-analysis, beginning, development and support, obligation and relationship ending.

The stage of self-analysis considers which competences chosen for service rendering an organization possesses and which are lacking, whether it is necessary to form new channels for service rendering, etc. it should be pointed out that in this stage an organization not yet strives to start a contact with customers, it only analyses their possibilities. When making a decision on relationship with clients, an organization has to understand that the character of services but not the frequency and duration of transactions determines relationship cohesion (Ward and Dagger, 2007). In other words, relationship of providers of complex services requiring clients’ involvement is closer than of the organizations offering standard services. For example, the relationship of the advertising agency that creates advertising campaign for a client is always closer than the relationship of wholesale and retail sale organizations. This means that an organization of knowledge intensive business services has to well
Figure 2. KIBS organization and clients’ relationship management model
understand not only what advantages but also what difficulties it will face due to close relationship with clients. In rendering knowledge intensive business services the attention to effective solution of client’s problems and equal partnership with clients are prerequisites for their loyalty and mutually beneficial relationship. It is also important for an organization to consider technical solutions (i.e. hardware and software), which would guarantee maintenance of internal processes. One of the prerequisites for successful client relationship management is the warrant for continuous information flow and modern database of clients’ information (Buttile, 1996).

The analysis of clients (present and potential) is also performed at the stage of self-analysis. It is necessary to set who are and who are not organization’s clients, as well as to formulate criteria of clients attractive for an organization. Having the right clients is essential financial, image building and others reasons. Therefore the choice of clients is an issue of strategic significance. Later the conception of the values offered for a client should be considered. An offered value is in fact a promise for clients. It is implemented when a client uses knowledge intensive business services. The value offered by KIBS providers can be qualitative identification of problems, their fast and/or qualitative solution, time saving, etc.

Only when an organization of knowledge intensive business services creates strong strategic and technical basis for relationship with clients, it can start relationship with they.

In the stage of relationship beginning an organization of KIBS has to function in two directions:

- to start contacts with clients, to collect and to accumulate information about them in databases, to analyse and use it in its activity, as well as to communicate a value offered to a client. If an organization of knowledge intensive business services is able to offer a client his/her entered solution of a problem and makes a good impression, there is a great probability that a client will be subject to continue cooperation;

- to guarantee irreproachable rendering of services, to form positive image and to care for its reputation in the market, to guarantee quality of services, to choose appropriate pricing, etc.

The stage of relationship development should be called legitimisation/validation of relationship. The relationship of KIBS providers and clients are implemented by rendering/using a service, thus it is important to effectively communicate, to negotiate and to carry out other activities to achieve the win-win. The longer the rendering of a service lasts, the larger necessity to systemically inform a client about its process (for example, a client of recovery services wants to know what actions are carried out in order to have financial obligations implemented), to warn about possible interferences in time if organizational, technical or other character non-facilities emerge in an organization. It is important for relationship succession that an organization rendering knowledge intensive business services would maintain the relationship with the client when he/she has already used the service. Suppose that the enterprise creating bookkeeping software packages created and implemented/installed the specialised bookkeeping programme for a client. In order to keep a client and to develop further relationship with him/her, this organization offers improved modules of accounting programme. Efforts of KIBS to individualise services offered for clients has a positive impulse. However a KIBS organization can implement this only by cooperating with its clients. A client is not only a KIBS co-producer but also a possessor of resources (information, knowledge, technology, etc.). Thus without functions performed by a client and resources a knowledge intensive business service is impossible. This means that an organization of knowledge intensive business services and a client become inter-dependent, thus each of them has to recognise the necessity to invest into the relationship with another party. This is not only finance but also time, adaptation, for example, reorganization of the process of service rendering and so on. During the process of knowledge intensive business service rendering the two-way learning of a customer and a provider takes place. The frequent result of this process is innovations. It is necessary to note that not only technological but also social innovations are considered.

It refers to new strategies, concepts, ideas and organizations that meet social needs of all kinds – from working conditions and education to community development and health – and that extends and strengthens society. The stage of relationship development and maintenance should be considered successful if it ends in oral or written agreement for further cooperation.

The stage of commitment in relationship – is the level of relationship with a client that should be sought by every organization. Commitment is a key construct determining relationship outcomes – especially in B2B relationship (Tsiros, Ross and Mittal, 2009). According to Gronroos (2001), commitment is such a situation when one party of relationship maintenance feels motivated enough to develop business relationship with another party. In the stage of commitment both parties understand that relationship maintenance is useful and it is worth to invest time, financial, material, human and other resources. The investments in relationship development (it can be the adaptation of products, processes and organization) tend to be made only if the outcomes within the relationship are perceived to be satisfactory (either now or in the future) (Bagdoniene, Kunigeliene and Jakstaite, 2007). The larger investments of KIBS organizations and clients into relationship succession, the greater benefit from cooperation both parties anticipate. Relationship is based on principles of understanding, trust, and adaptation (Kasper, van Helsdingen and Gabbot, 2006, p. 149). In our model we emphasise the principle of co-creation as both a provider and a client create a knowledge intensive business service. Mutual trust and satisfaction of the parties are characteristic for the relationship that reached the stage of commitment. In order that both parties would trust in each other, it is necessary to guarantee information security and confidentiality. Greater trust in cooperation and maintained relationship determine stronger loyalty of clients (Payne et
al., 1998). Though loyalty of clients for an organization that renders services is usually pointed out, we however would assume that organization’s loyalty to a customer is not less important. Loyalty of a KIBS organization manifests in provided priority of service, suspension of payments, etc.

The ending of relationship, as well as logical end of relationship, is possible in any stage. In the presented model both situations are reflected. The solution to break relationship can be made by a customer, a service organization or both parties by mutual agreement (Hocutt, 1998). A KIBS organization should analyse the reasons that determine client’s decision to break cooperation. If those reasons are objective, for example, the client changes his/her activity character the services offered to him/her are unnecessary or cooperation ends when the project has finished, for example, having projected and having launched a technological process, the situation is not dangerous. The situation, when a client breaks relationship because he/she does not see any benefit of cooperation or it is too small in comparison to investment into relationship creation and development, because of differences of viewpoints to quality, terms and alike, is much more difficult for a KIBS organization in its outcomes. A KIBS provider can initiate relationship break as well. That takes place if it can be hard to establish the KIBS’ competence and experience in dealing with relevant problems or the client may not be able to accurately assess the kind or level of skills required to deal with the specific problems it faces, nor to match these to the KIBS’ offerings (de Bandt, 1995), when a client does not possess necessary competence for cooperation or allocates resources necessary for this, uses services of organizations with doubtful reputation or buys their goods (de Bandt, 1995).

The process of relationship between KIBS and their clients is multiplex and requires much more in-depth study. Future research might test the proposed model in different sub-sectors of KIBS and through longitudinal designs.

**Conclusions**

An exclusive competence of employees rendering knowledge intensive business services, the result of a service often being unique, processes of knowledge accumulation and production as well as diffusion, especially close cooperation of an organization rendering a service and a customer are the essential features of this group services, which determine the relationship of service providers and customers. Knowledge intensive business services, considering their importance for economy, have been especially intensively analysed for the latter decade. However the attention of researchers is missing when researching customer relationship management at an organization of knowledge intensive business services and the systemic approach when analysing this important process. We would assume that our attempt to substantiate the model of customer relationship management of a knowledge intensive business services organization will contribute to solution of this problem.

The model of client relationship management of a knowledge intensive business services organization is designed by referring to the insights of Dwyer and Tanner (2006), Thakur, Summe and Balasubramanian (2006), Dawson (2005), Payne and Frow (2005), Peppers and Rogers (2007) as well as Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001) into customer relationship management. Though none of these models reflects peculiarities of the development of client relationship management of an organization of knowledge intensive business services, the analysis of these models allowed us to identify essential stages of relationship development. Differently than the above-mentioned authors, we distinguish five stages of relationship development and disclose characteristic activities of every stage. In order to achieve mutual benefit of the development of relationship of a provider and a client, the stage of self-analysis that makes premises for appropriate preparation with relationship with clients is necessary. For this purpose organization’s resources (competences and alike) are identified, criteria of clients’ selection are indicated, the value offered for them is defined, etc. In the stage of beginning of relationship it is very important to communicate the offered value for clients. This can be an exclusive expertise field, activity experience, etc. The larger spectrum of the offered value is the greater probability that a client gives priority to this organization. Client’s choice is positively influenced not only by notoriety and reputation of the very service organization, but also notoriety of clients being served. Thus in this stage a significant role goes to marketing. It is necessary for relationship development that the parties maintaining relationship would adjust to each other. In knowledge intensive business services, where in achieving a result dependence of a provider and a client is particularly strong, this adjustment determines effectiveness of the process of service rendering, i.e. qualitative solution of client’s problems by accumulating knowledge of a provider and a client, information, technologies and other resources. In the relationship stage of commitments, when a provider and a client know one another well, know possibilities, as well as weaknesses, relationship is developed referring to trust, understanding, adjustment and other principles. In the stages of relationship development and commitments a client becomes an equal partner of service rendering. The stage of ending of relationship can be a natural result of the finish of a service-rendering project, especially long-term. However due to different reasons, which diminish or eliminate mutual benefit, the relationship of an organization of knowledge intensive business services and a client can break at any stage. In this situation both a provider and a customer become vulnerable due to possible leakage of confidential information.

The validity of the model should be checked by researching the development of client relationship management of different knowledge intensive business services organizations.
References


Žinios imlių verslo paslaugų įmonės santykių su klientais valdymo modelis

Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje išryškinamos žinioms imlių verslo paslaugų įmonės santykių su klientais valdymo aspektai, pasižymėjus įvairiausiuose verslo dirbtuvėse. Šis modelis pagrįstas technologiškai ir strategiškai nuostatais, remiantis technologinio vystymo teorijomis. Žinios imlių verslo paslaugų įmonės santykių su klientais valdymas yra vertingas, nes yra nuoseklus užtikrinti idealias klientų patirtis ir tapti konkurencingais partneriais. Žiūrėkite į tai, kaip veikia bendravimo modelius įvairių verslo paslaugų įmonių kontekstu.

Daugiau apie šią temą galima perskaityti įvairiose straipsniuose: Muller ir Doloreux (2007; Dawson, 2005; Sin, Tse ir Yim, 2005; Parvatiyar ir Sheth, 2001). Tačiau šiuo atžvilgiu mokslinėje literatūroje santykių su klientais valdymas aiškinamas per proceso prizmą (Dwyer ir Tanner, 2006; Parvatiyar ir Sheth, 2001). Mokslininkų pateikti santykių su klientais modeliai atskleidžia skirtinęs šio proceso aspektus: santykių evoliuciją (Dwyer ir Tanner, 2006; Parvatiyar, 2005), proceso struktūrines dalis (Thakur, Summe ir Balasubramanian, 2006; Sin, Tse ir Yim, 2005) ir kt.

Treičiojoje straipsnio dalyje pagrindžiamas ŽIVP įmonės santykių su klientais valdymo aspektas. Žiūrėkite į tai, kuo veikia santykių su klientais valdymo aspektas, kiek santuokų veikia, kiek santykių valdymo aspektų yra įvairių verslo paslaugų įmonių kontekste.

Parvatiyar ir Sheth (2001) tačiau bene dažniausiai mokslinėje literatūroje santykių su klientais valdymas aiškinamas per proceso prizmą (Dwyer ir Tanner, 2006; Parvatiyar ir Sheth, 2001). Mokslininkų pateikti santykių su klientais modeliai atskleidžia skirtinęs šio proceso aspektus: santykių evoliuciją (Dwyer ir Tanner, 2006; Parvatiyar, 2005), proceso struktūrines dalis (Thakur, Summe ir Balasubramanian, 2006; Sin, Tse ir Yim, 2005) ir kt.