

# **A pathway through customer values towards loyal B2B relationships** in IT outsourcing

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# Preface

Highly innovative environments with a lot of turbulence, dynamics, and a fast pace of problem-solving and idea generation have always attracted me. Where other people's passion is focused on a certain sector, like health or sustainability, I have a passion for change, for improvement, for keeping on going and not stopping before the goal is reached.

With this passion, I started my master's thesis at Schuberg Philis, an IT outsourcer. And when I started, I did not know what that meant. I had no experience in IT, nor did I know what the role of an outsourcer was and why organizations would collaborate with an outsourcer. But what I did know was that the IT sector is developing at a fast pace, more and more problems are solved with the use of IT and new innovative applications are surprising the world.

This highly innovative environment brings a lot of opportunities, I would even say maybe a bit too many opportunities sometimes. The start of this project was therefore the most challenging for me. I started with a broad scope; a lot of directions were possible and finding direction was my first obstacle. I experienced the difference between the design jargon I was used to and the technical jargon of Schuberg Philis. And finding common ground and direction for my project was not always easy. First, I needed to understand what information technology is, what the role of IT is within an organization, and what an IT outsourcer does, before I could start to understand Schuberg Philis and the way they work, the company culture and why their strategic direction is desired by them as well as their customers.

With every interview round I conducted, the literature I researched, and the brainstorming session I held, my project took shape. I can say from experience: that embracing uncertainty is scary but creates the biggest learning opportunities. And learning to separate the insecurities of the project from my own is not something I learned overnight. However, sparking conversations about the company strategy and customer values gave me insights into my growth. Where the first round of interviews the main objective was that I needed to learn and understand, the second round already sparked new insights and reflections on the interviewee side, and in the third round, I had the opportunity to test my work, adjust my literature framework to the context of Schuberg Philis, nuances and context-specific insights could be shared and my final research round showed how conducting interviews on the establishment of customer values already impacted the internal stakeholders and every interview round the more in-depth the insights and thoughts became.

I want to deeply thank Shahrokh, for guiding me through uncertainty, encouraging me to find my direction, and helping me to grow personally and professionally. And I want to thank Bart for keeping my eyes on the goal and supporting me to prioritize the important things.

At Schuberg Philis I experienced a very open organization where people were investing their time and effort into helping others. People motivated me by showing interest in the insights and knowledge I had gained. I want to thank all the people at Schuberg Philis for creating an environment where I have learned so much. With a special thanks to Ilja and Laurens for supporting me in finding direction.

# Executive Summary

## Purpose

This thesis examines the growing importance of loyal B2B relationships between an IT outsourcer and its customers, as a result of the increasing role of IT and an IT outsourcer within an organization. The specialized knowledge, expertise, resources, and agile way of working of IT outsourcers have become vital for the competitive advantage of their customers. As the influence of IT outsourcers increases, so does the importance of building and maintaining strong B2B relationships.

This research addresses the question:

*"How can an IT outsourcer establish a loyal B2B relationship to accelerate the transformation from IT-driven to business outcome-driven relationships?"*

This thesis is done in collaboration with Schuberg Philis (SBP), an IT outsourcer focused on mission-critical engineering. The research investigates how loyal B2B relationships between SBP and their customers are established and sustained to facilitate a transition towards business outcome-driven partnerships.

## Methodology

This research was conducted, using a qualitative approach based on Schuman's (1982) design. A series of three interview rounds was conducted, to allow the participants and the researcher to investigate the context of the interviewee's experience in-depth.

The first exploratory interview round was used to create an understanding of the context of SBP and its ambition for business outcome-driven partnerships. A second exploratory interview round focuses on four cases of B2B relationship establishment between SBP and its customers. The third round followed a semi-structured two-sided interview approach.

This approach provided the perspectives of SBP and the customer on important relationship values and events/interactions influencing the establishment of loyal B2B relationships. Simultaneously, a complementary literature review on IT developments, IT outsourcing, and B2B relationships was conducted.

## Key findings

- A detailed context-driven B2B value framework, showing the key values influencing loyal B2B relationships between SBP and their customers.
- An overview of events and interactions affecting the establishment of these loyal B2B relationships.
- The correlation between B2B values, events, and interactions that guide the establishment of loyal relationships.
- A comparison of internal and external stakeholders' views on trust, satisfaction, and commitment in building loyal B2B relationships.
- A shared future vision enables SBP to transition from loyal B2B relationships to business outcome-driven partnerships.

## Conclusion

The research combines insights from three rounds to understand how Schuberg Philis can establish loyal B2B relationships and accelerate the transition to business outcome-driven partnerships. The developed context-specific value framework shows the relationship values crucial for the establishment of loyal B2B relationships between SBB and its customers. This understanding is further detailed with an internal and external analysis of B2B values. Loyal B2B relationships enable SBP to transition to business outcome-driven relationships. By creating the foundation for a shared future vision. Together with the customer future goals and opportunities will be discovered. This future vision functions as the bridge that can accelerate the transition towards business outcome-driven partnerships.

## Design

The findings of this research are combined in a value playbook. The goal of this playbook is to guide SBP towards business outcome-driven partnerships. The playbook provides knowledge on B2B values, loyal B2B relationships, and how to build a shared future vision to create a bridge towards business outcome-driven partnerships. For sales directors and business consultants, the playbook provides guidance through the establishment of loyal B2B relationships and the steps toward business outcome-driven partnerships. Engineers can use the playbook to increase their knowledge of B2B relationships and their influence in establishing personal relationships, taking steps to increase the role of SBP, and nurturing high satisfaction of the customer. To create the foundation for a shared future vision and move towards business outcome-driven partnerships.

## Recommendations and implementation

- By integrating the B2B value framework into their organization, SBP will increase their understanding, establishment, and management of loyal relationships. The playbook developed from this study will guide SBP on this path towards the establishment of loyal B2B relationships, creating a shared future vision towards a business-driven outcome.
- Customers are encouraged to use the playbook to increase transparency and find shared goals in their relationship with SBP.
- The B2B value framework could serve as a basis for other IT outsourcers aiming to understand their own B2B relationships or develop their own playbook. It is especially beneficial when aiming to transition towards a new strategic direction.
- This study contributes to the existing literature by using a two-sided qualitative research approach, as a one-sided, hypothesis-testing approach is more common in B2B research.
- This study is a foundation for future studies aiming to enrich the current literature on B2B outsourcing relationships. The B2B framework could be complemented by researching other IT outsourcers or outsourcers in other sectors.

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# Project introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Today, digital innovations are embedded in every aspect of our lives: from public transport systems linked through digital networks, smart systems safeguarding our homes, cloud solutions replacing mountains of paperwork, and AI emerging as our personal assistant. However, it is not only technology aimed at customers that is developing, companies are also benefiting from technical innovations within their organizations. Since the early 1970s, companies across all sectors have started to recognize the possibilities IT fosters for their organization. Organizational strategies became influenced by IT possibilities and companies started to aim to align IT with business strategies. Currently, 90 percent of organizations are engaged in some form of digital transformation (McKinsey, 2024). Using IT as a catalyst for innovation, efficiency, and differentiation (Adegbite et al., 2023) to gain and maintain competitive advantage.

Although organizations have started recognizing the need to align their IT and business, changing their organization is not easy. Digital innovations are advancing at a different pace than traditional organizational structures, hierarchies, and employees. With disruptive technologies constantly emerging, companies must be agile to maintain their competitive advantage. Continuous innovation, adaptation, and attention are necessary to ensure IT capabilities remain aligned with evolving business needs and market dynamics (Adama et al., 2024).

As IT's role expands, the accountability and responsibility for the innovation, implementation, and management of IT systems and services increases. Many internal IT departments struggle to keep pace due to constraints in capacity, resources, or skills, fostering a growing reliance on IT outsourcers. Initially, outsourcing was mainly used to manage and reduce the overhead of secondary activities. Currently, companies increasingly use outsourcing to access competitive skills, enhance service levels, and navigate through dynamic business landscapes (Linder et al., 2002). These specialized outsourcers, known for their agile responses to technological change, play an essential role in this evolution and achieve significant economies of scale (Zika, 2014). Their expertise allows organizations to outsource their primary business functions, and for the outsourcer to become a vital part of the corporate strategy of the company.

Outsourcing changed from secondary activities into core, strategic business functions, and the importance of the relationship between the outsourcer and the customers grew. The B2B relationships evolve from transactional interactions into strategic partnerships, valued for their potential to significantly improve competitive advantage by encouraging innovation, decreasing time to market, and achieving sustainable growth (Linder et al., 2002).

But a good B2B partnership is not only influenced by the business success that is achieved, the quality of the relationship also plays a crucial role. The relationship can be characterized by a balance of the relationship values of trust, commitment, and satisfaction, with the aim of establishing a loyal B2B relationship. The balance of the relationship values is influenced by events and interactions between the outsourcer and the customer. Events or interactions include e.g. network events, workshops, or personal interactions between stakeholders. Due to the growing role of an IT outsourcer, the influence of the events and interactions on the relationship increased together with the importance of maintaining a loyal B2B relationship to achieve mutual success.

To understand the impact of loyal B2B relationships on the changing role of IT outsourcers, this research is focused on answering the research question:

***"How can an IT outsourcer establish a loyal B2B relationship to accelerate the transformation from IT-driven to business outcome-driven relationships?"***

This research will use a two-sided qualitative research approach. By applying an emic perspective this research aims to explore the viewpoints of both the company and the customer, enriching the current literature on the establishment of B2B relationships. This approach facilitates the development of two frameworks: one value framework derived from existing literature on B2B relationships and one context-specific value framework. Together these frameworks provide detailed guidance and insights into relationship values and the path towards establishing loyal relationships between an IT outsourcer and their customers to move towards a business outcome-driven partnership.



# 1.2 The company

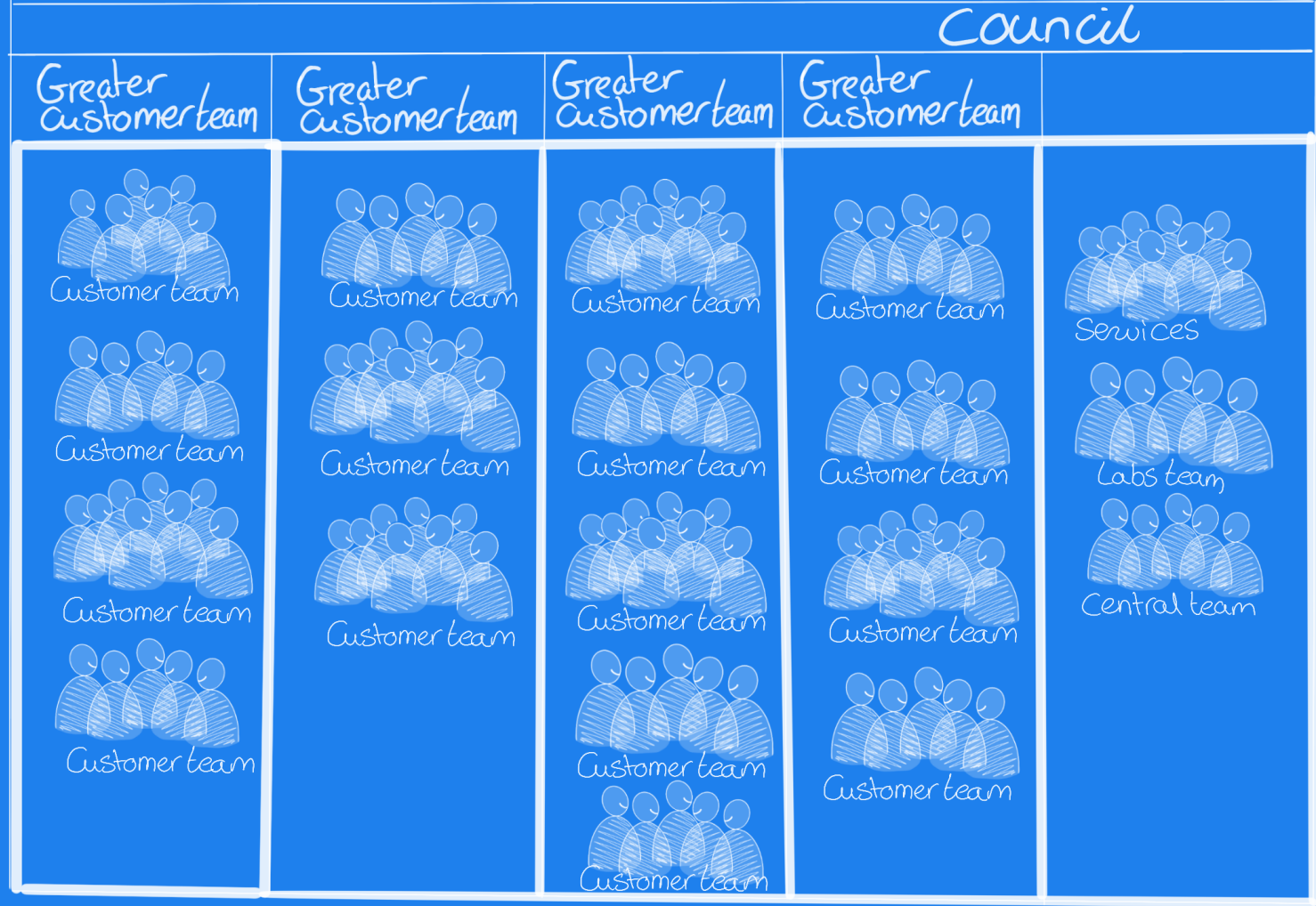


Figure 1: Organizational structure of Schuberg Philis

## Introduction

This master thesis was done in collaboration with Schuberg Philis, creating the opportunity to explore the B2B relationships between an IT outsourcer and its customers. This section describes Schuberg Philis’ business context, organizational structure, and way of working.

Schuberg Philis (SBP) is an IT outsourcer focused solely on managing applications where any downtime directly impacts the organization’s results. At Schuberg Philis they call this “mission-critical engineering” (Schuberg Philis, 2021). Founded in 2003, SBP hosted dedicated and shared infrastructures of their customers (software, hardware, service & IT resources) and maintained their own data center. But over the years the market changed, private and public cloud emerged, and IT developments started to facilitate competitive advantage. Together with these evolutions in the market and technological innovations, SBP expanded its service towards cloud services, digital transformation, data analytics, software engineering, and business IT consulting. However, their focus remained: 100% customer satisfaction by 100% delivery (SBP, 2023).

Customer teams form the basis of the company structure of SBP. A customer team (CT) is a self-steering, multi- discipliner team. The CTs are responsible for the complete customer journey and satisfaction of one specific customer. Because these CTs are dedicated to one single customer, the amount of customer teams within SBP grows simultaneously with the expansion of the organization.

## Way of working

At Schuberg Philis, the way of working is influenced by their company structure with dedicated customer teams and the “experts in the lead”. This structure with dedicated customer teams asks for stability and continuity in the B2B relationship; see Figure 1 for a visualization. SBP aims to agree upon long-term contracts with a stable or growing customer team. A fixed cost model provides this stability for SBP and transparency and predictability for the customer. However, future changes or growth of the engagement are not constrained by financial issues. The pricing model is agreed upon in the contract to eliminate surprises and create the flexibility the customer might desire.

Within the customer teams, Schuberg Philis works with “experts in the lead”. Every member of a customer team is seen as an expert in her or his field/ work. These experts are involved in the whole customer journey. At Schuberg Philis this journey consists of the Plan-Build-Run phases of a project. During the plan phase, the project’s scope and objectives are defined with the customer to align with their goals and needs. In the build phase, the technical solutions are developed and implemented, with experts ensuring that the systems are robust and meet customer needs. Finally, in the run phase, the focus shifts to operational management, maintaining and optimizing systems to support ongoing customer operations. This comprehensive plan-build-run approach aims to establish long-term relationships with high satisfaction levels.

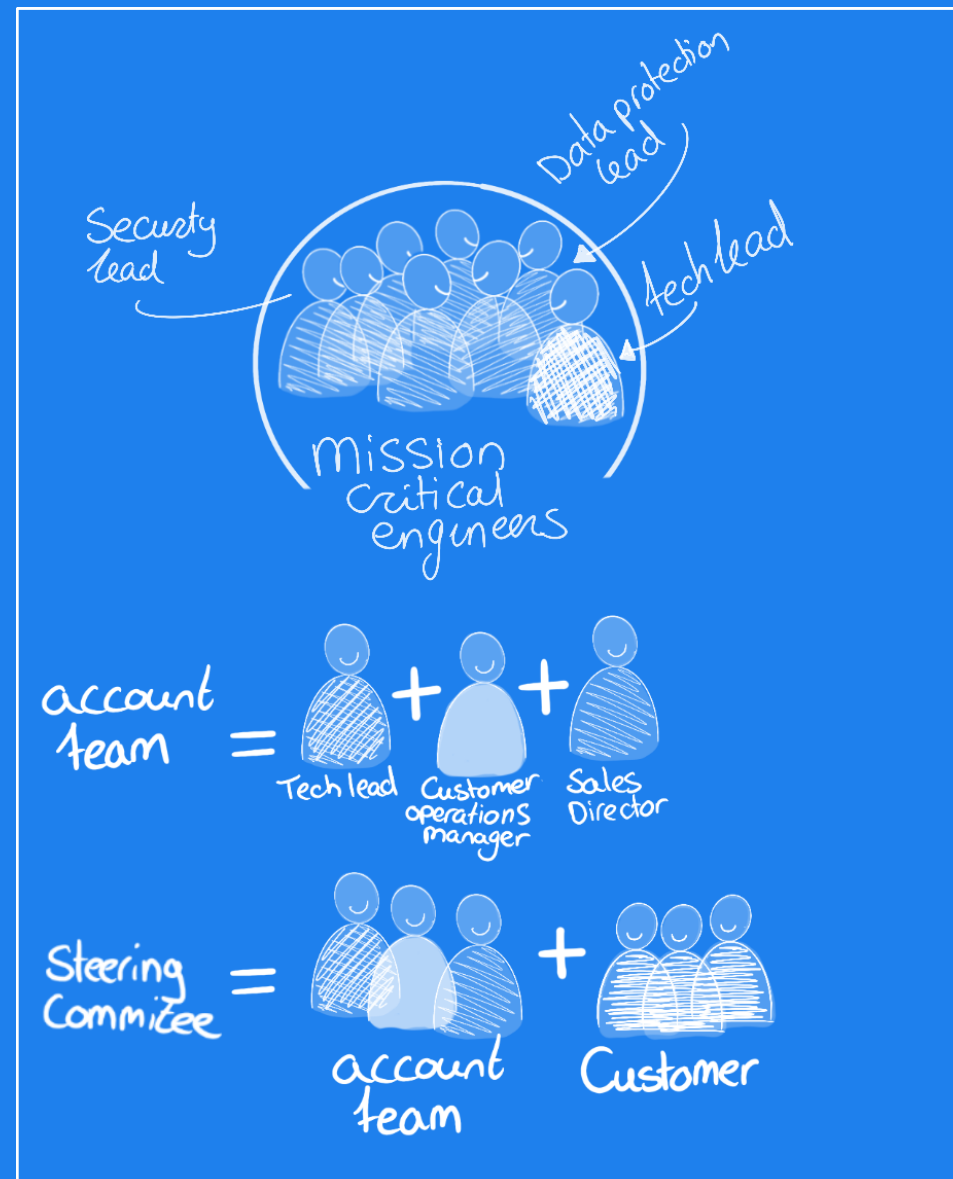


Figure 2: Company structure SBP

## Their Strategy



Figure 3: Purpose, vision & mission (Schuberg Philis, 2024)

### Purpose, mission, and vision

The purpose, mission, and vision of Schuberg Philis provide clear guidance for the company's strategic direction, see Figure 3.

To realize these ambitions, Schuberg Philis has outlined a strategic direction characterized by five bold moves. These bold moves define the company's path toward achieving its long-term goals, each addressing key aspects of business expansion, culture, innovation, and their role in the organization of the customer (Schuberg Philis, 2024).

Schuberg Philis aims to ignite growth by delivering cutting-edge services to business buyers, leveraging our teams, digital assets and legendary way of working.

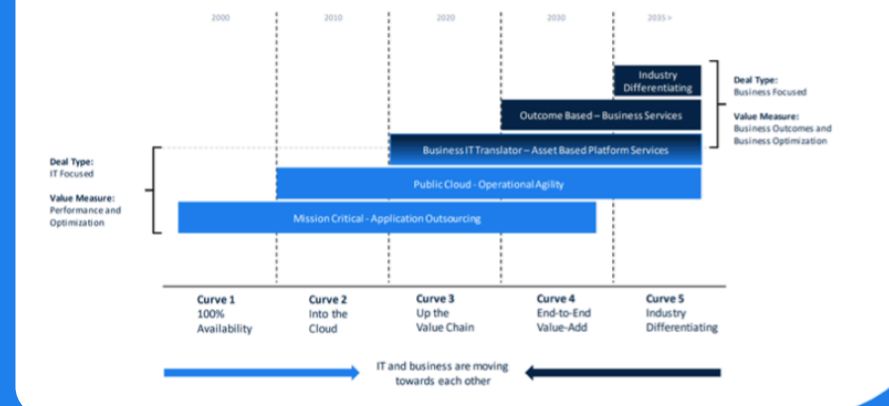


Figure 4: Strategic ambition (Schuberg Philis, 2024)

The five bold moves each have their focus on stimulating growth at SBP. Rapid technological innovations and the increasing role of IT as a catalyst for competitive advantage (Weiss & Anderson, 2004; Weiss & Thorogood, 2011) create the foundation for the third bold move: "Pioneer business transformations with our customers," is focused on increasing the role of SBP in the organization of the customer and establishing itself as a strategic business partner, see Figure 4.

By integrating transformation with IT modernization, SBP seeks to address IT challenges that affect customers' strategic goals and become deeply involved in the strategic and business operations of the customer. To take this step, SBP has changed its value proposition, hired business consultants, and introduced an innovation lab, see Appendix X for more information. Although these initiatives are a step in the right direction, SBP's aspiration to move closer to the core business activities of its customers and become a strategic business outcome-driven partner is not achieved.

### Market and competitors

As Schuberg Philis shifts its strategic direction towards business outcome-driven engagements, their direct competitors change. IT outsourcing companies that integrate consulting with IT services are becoming closer competitors. Initially, the main competition was from the customer's internal IT department or IT-focused outsourcers. However, by moving closer to IT consulting, competitors include e.g. Capgemini, Accenture, and Tata consultancy services.

Because this research is focused on the establishment of loyal B2B relationships with current customers of SBP, an in-depth overview of competitors in the establishment of a new B2B relationship will not be included in this research. However, it is important to note that the transition towards business outcome-driven engagements may result in different competitors, that are experienced with purely IT-driven customer engagements.





**Research question  
& research goals**



# Introduction

This section will provide the problem definition, assignment, research question, research goals and approach of this research.

## 2.1 Problem definition

Schuberg Philis has implemented several initiatives to engage in business outcome-driven partnerships, see appendix A.1 However, a general approach to transition towards this new strategic direction is missing. This thesis will investigate the steps towards business outcome-driven partnerships and provide guidance to enable SBP to transition its strategic direction.

## 2.2 Assignment

The first step in developing a general approach towards business outcome-driven partnerships is to define their ambition. By exploring the perspectives of various stakeholders on the concept of a business-driven outcome. Second, a literature review will be conducted to identify the key relationship values that are essential in building B2B relationships, which will form the basis of a value framework specified in the context of Schuberg Philis. Then this research will examine four specific B2B relationships, as well as the strategies of the business consultants and sales directors involved. Insights into important relationship values, interactions, and events will help create a strategic path to strengthen the loyalty between Schuberg Philis and its customers, resulting in the acceleration of the transition to business outcome-driven partnerships.

A third round of interviews with internal and external stakeholders will further uncover the essential relationship values and significant interactions during the establishment of the B2B relationship.

The main research question of this thesis:

***"How can an IT outsourcer establish a loyal B2B relationship to accelerate the transformation from IT-driven to business outcome-driven relationships?"***

These insights will help design a general approach to building loyal B2B relationships, complemented by strategies to accelerate this process and anticipate unexpected events. The result will be a playbook that provides clear guidance and an overview of the steps to a loyal B2B relationship. It will enable users to accelerate the establishment of loyal B2B relationships and create a shared future vision towards business outcome-driven partnerships.

In addition to accelerating the establishment of loyal B2B relationships, this tool is also a way to communicate the Schuberg Philis culture to new employees or offices, fostering alignment and understanding to establish and maintain loyal B2B relationships.

## 2.3 Research method

This thesis will use a double-diamond approach. Dividing the project into two sections: a problem space and a solution space.

The problem space will be researched using a qualitative approach, three interview rounds will be conducted. Two interview rounds will be exploratory, and a third round will have a semi-structured approach. The first interview round will help to gain knowledge and understanding of the company structure, way of working, and culture as well as gaining knowledge on the role of an IT outsourcer and their B2B relationships by conducting exploratory interviews with internal stakeholders.

After this first round, a second interview round will be conducted. This interview round will be focused on the establishment of B2B relationships between Schuberg Philis and four of their customers. These case studies will focus on customers in different markets and will vary in the duration of the B2B relationship.

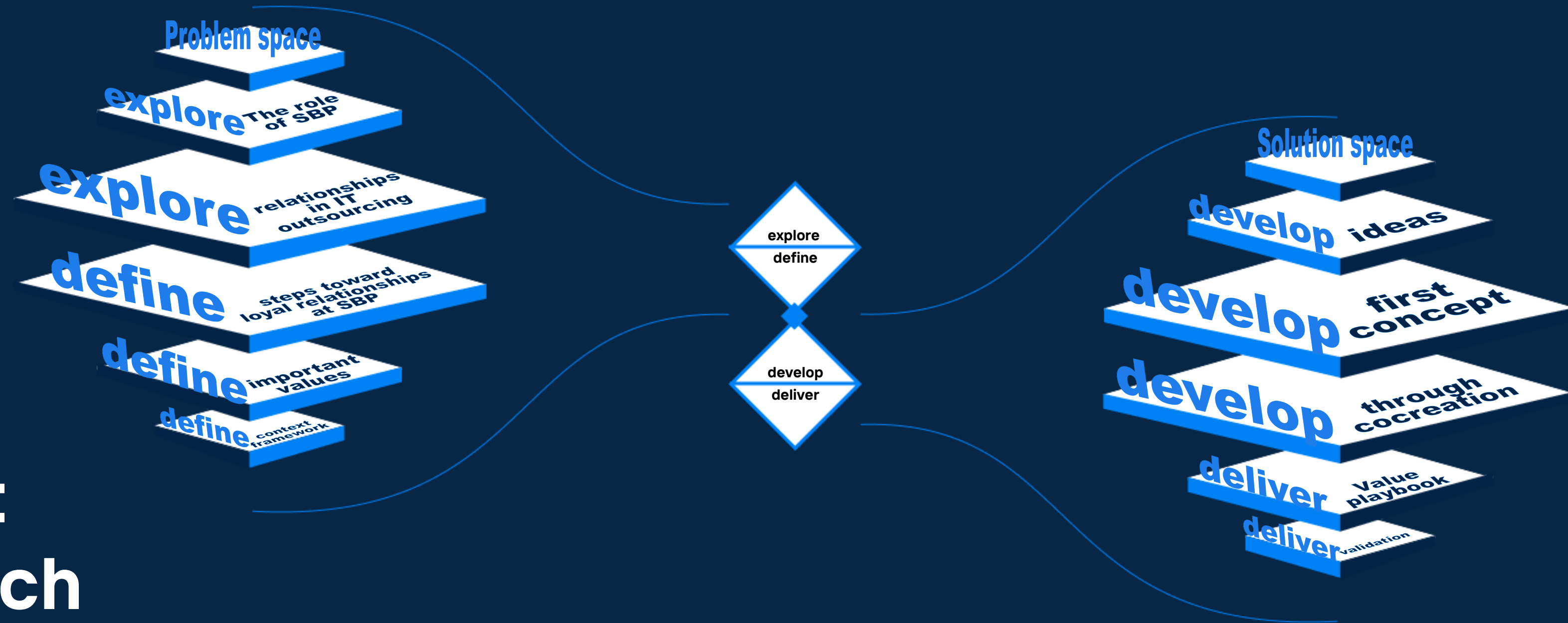
Simultaneously with these interview rounds, literature research will be conducted. Research into IT development, IT outsourcing, and B2B relationships will help to understand the context of Schuberg Philis and the establishment of their B2B relationships. From researching B2B relationship literature, a value framework will be made. This framework combines literature on the establishment of B2B relationships, values influencing these relationship,s and strategies to establish successful B2B relationships into one value framework.

This framework will be validated and adjusted to the context of Schuberg Philis B2B relationships by conducting a third interview round. This last interview round will be with internal and external stakeholders involved in the four B2B relationships, researched during the second interview round. This interview structure differs from the first two rounds. Interview rounds one and two will be exploratory and non-structured, and the last interview round will be semi-structured.

This interview round will provide insights into important relationship values and the interaction and correlation between these values. With the goal of adjusting the framework to provide guidance for the solution space.

The solution space will begin with a brainstorming session with a fellow strategic product design student. This will be the start of several ideation rounds. Ideas will be structured into tackling different aspects of the establishment of a B2B relationship. A cocreation session with internal stakeholders will provide guidance and insights into this process and will help to optimize the design. Last, a validation session with an internal stakeholder who has not been involved in the process will be conducted. These insights will be used for the last optimization of the design.

# Project approach





**Literature review**

# Introduction

This chapter presents a literature review that addresses three interrelated themes: the alignment of IT and business, the evolving role of IT outsourcers, and the influence of the quality of the relationship between the outsourcer and its customers on the partnership and business success.

Initially, the review focuses on understanding the current role of IT by creating an overview of the evolution of IT and how the role of IT within an organization has increased over the years. In relation to the increasing role of IT, the role of an IT outsourcer has evolved. The second research aims to understand why organizations increasingly rely on IT outsourcers and the value that Schuberg Philis can offer their customers.

While the role of an IT outsourcer shifted from non-critical IT functions to managing mission-critical IT services and applications, the impact of the B2B relationship between the outsourcer and the customers increased.

The final part of this literature review proposes a value framework of B2B relationship values. The values in this framework are derived from different existing strategies that aim to establish loyal B2B relationships. The researched strategies aim to provide insights into values that impact different phases and aspects of the relationship, from fostering emotional connections through meaningful interactions, shaping impressions and perceptions during these interactions, aligning with customer goals, to enhancing business performance through strategic engagements. By combining the values described in the strategies that are focused on different aspects of a loyal relationship, a complete value framework can be made. This framework aims to give insights into the values influencing every step in the establishment of a loyal relationship, from the interactions that aim to create an emotional connection, the impressions and perceptions formed during interactions, the effort to understand customers' goals, and increasing business performance.

This structured research helps to understand how the establishment of value-driven events and interactions contributes to long-term loyal B2B relationships, and the relationship values involved in this establishment.

## 3.1 Business and IT alignment

The impact an IT outsourcer can have on the customer's organization is influenced by the role of IT within the customer's organization. The role of IT within the organization of the customer is influenced by the customer's perception of the added value of IT and the alignment of the customer's IT with their business strategies and interests. When a business outcome-driven partnership between the IT outsourcer and the customer is desired, understanding the level of alignment is crucial because it can indicate the willingness to use IT as a catalyst for establishing and maintaining competitive advantage (Weiss & Anderson, 2004; Weiss & Thorogood, 2011).

Over the years, the alignment between business and IT has grown significantly, evolving from a supportive role to a strategic partnership. Initially, IT was viewed primarily as creating functional benefits. However, as organizations realized the potential of IT to drive innovation and transform business models, this perspective shifted. The work of Henderson and Venkatraman (1989), along with later studies by Weill and Broadbent (1998) and Raymond et al. (1995), highlighted the need to align IT with business strategies to maximize operational efficiency, improve customer service and gain competitive advantage. This strategic alignment has been identified as a key factor for organizations seeking to maximize their IT investments and adapt to rapid market changes. Continuous evolution requires IT to not only support but also drive business strategies, making it a fundamental component in achieving competitive advantage. For an in-depth overview of the growing role of IT over time, see Appendix B.1

As IT becomes further integrated with business strategies, new roles and responsibilities have naturally emerged for IT and business leaders, focusing increasingly on alignment and driving innovation. Weiss & Anderson (2004) and Weiss & Thorogood (2011) highlight that these leaders now act as strategic partners, negotiators, and catalysts for change. They align IT capabilities with business objectives to enhance organizational performance. Effective leadership in IT isn't just about overseeing technology—it's about proactively aligning IT investments with business priorities to ensure that IT initiatives are central to strategic business outcomes. This active role demands continued adaptation and a responsive approach to both changing market conditions and organizational needs, highlighting the growing strategic significance of IT projects. See appendix B.1 for more information about the evolving roles and strategic responsibilities of IT and business leaders.

The influence of IT on business varies significantly across different industries due to industry-specific factors. Each sector has its unique IT requirements, driven by operational needs and strategic objectives. They also differ in the strategic use of IT, which often affects not only internal processes but also competitive dynamics and market position. A company's ability to innovate and sustain competitive advantage by aligning IT and business strategies also depends on the specific market context (Pesce & Neirotti, 2023). Industries that are rapidly adopting technological innovations, are often at the forefront of innovation, changing traditional business models and strategies to take advantage of the new opportunities these technologies offer. Industry-specific examples and more detailed discussions of the impact of IT in different sectors are presented in Appendix B.1.

## 3.2 The changing role of an IT outsourcer

This literature provides insight into the role of an IT outsourcer. By understanding the history of the services provided by an outsourcer and the role of an IT outsourcer, the future perspectives of an IT outsourcer's growing role towards business outcome-driven partnerships can be better understood.

Outsourcing is defined as the practice by which an organization receives service activities from an external provider (Chandra, 1999). In its early stages, outsourcing was mainly used to manage and reduce the overhead of secondary activities through economies of scale and strategic sourcing (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2000). By outsourcing only secondary functions, direct resources were focused on the core activities of the organization.

However, over the years, the practice of outsourcing has changed significantly into becoming a vital part of the corporate strategy of the customer. Outsourcers have been used to access competitive skills, enhance service levels, and navigate dynamic business landscapes (Linder et al., 2002). This strategic shift highlights the potential of outsourcers to transform important business processes and drive innovative capabilities.

IT outsourcers began to play a crucial role in this transformation. IT outsourcers were known for their agility in adapting to technological change and achieving significant economies of scale (Zika, 2014). Customers could not keep up with the capabilities of IT outsourcers, and the reliance on IT outsourcers shifted from simply outsourcing secondary tasks to using outsourcing as a strategic asset.

Core business processes began to be outsourced, and outsourcers became integrated into the core business of the customers, despite the initial uncertainty of managers (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2003). Now partnerships with outsourcing companies are valued for their potential to significantly improve organizational performance by encouraging innovation, decreasing time to market, and achieving sustainable advantage (Linder et al., 2002). These partnerships are not merely transactional but aim to transform business capabilities to better compete in the market while enabling organizations to maintain control over vital areas while maximizing the benefits of outsourcing.

The success of strategic outsourcing partnerships relies heavily on trust, effective relationship management, and alignment with strategic objectives (Linder et al., 2002). This includes carefully crafted contracts, ongoing performance assessments, executive involvement, and fostering personal relationships between partners. These elements ensure that outsourcing relationships extend beyond operational support and become integrated into broader business strategies. This resulted in the evolution of the outsourcing industry from a focus on operational efficiency to a central role in strategic business transformation.



## 3.3 B2B relationships

### Introduction

The central role of IT outsourcers in strategic business transformation is not only influenced by the potential of gaining a competitive advantage. With the increasing role of an IT outsourcer within the organization of the customer, the influence of good B2B relationships increased simultaneously.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a value framework of the interaction, hierarchy, and relation of values influencing the B2B relationship. To understand the relationship between an IT outsourcer and its customers different strategies and theories on B2B relationships are reviewed. Literature theories on B2B relationships are often focused on one element of the relationship. To create a comprehensive value framework of relationship values influencing the full length of a relationship, literature on customer experience, customer success, and customer engagement theories were combined and used as the foundation for this research.

### Customer engagement

The first theory that was researched was customer engagement. Which refers to the direct and indirect customer-provider interactions (Kumar et al., 2010; Pansari & Kumar, 2017). It is seen as a strategic requirement for improving business performance, including revenue growth (Neff 2007), superior competitive advantage (Sedley 2008), and profitability (Voyles 2007); Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, (2011).

### Relationship management

Secondly, Relationship management was investigated. Relationship management highlights the importance of fostering rich, personal connections within B2B relationships. It is described as the interaction in relationship networks (Gummesson, 2008) and focuses on maintaining and strengthening connections with existing customers by developing strong, enduring relationships and prioritizing emotional commitments (Berry, 1983; Kumar, 2020). Satisfaction, commitment, and trust significantly influence relationship management outcomes in service settings (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002).

### Customer experience

Because, relationship management does not fully address how value-in-use influences product engagement (Baker & Hart, 2008), customer experience is focused on this aspect of a B2B relationship. By focusing on the impressions and perceptions formed during interactions between the stakeholders. Effective management of Customer Experience ensures that both cognitive and emotional interactions are positive, creating satisfaction and loyalty and thereby establishing overall relationship quality (Verhoef et al., 2009; Palmatier et al., 2008). Customer Experience Management is key due to its relationship with 'value' (Abbott, 1955). This focus is consistent with the understanding that customer value includes social and psychological benefits in addition to financial or functional benefits (Grönroos, 1984; Doyle, 2000; Macdonald et al., 2016).

### Customer success

Customer success is focused on understanding these benefits as it ensures that customers' goals are fully understood and achieved, emphasizing the value derived from product usage (Madruga, 2021). This proactive approach aligns with satisfaction and commitment principles, ensuring the organization's offerings meet customer needs (Hilton et al., 2020). When customers perceive their success as a priority, it strengthens their commitment and trust, thus increasing relationship quality.

### Insights from researched theories

Researching these theories created a deeper understanding and by integrating these insights into a B2B value framework, an enriched perspective on values in business contexts is established. A literature review of the relationship values was conducted.

This research was focused on values influenced by person-to-person interactions, as B2B relationships are fundamentally built on these individual connections. Such relationships are best described by the dimensions of time, structure, process, substance, and value (Žilionė, 2009).

In the context of B2B relationships, the involved stakeholders play a significant role in engaging and managing customers. Their collaborative efforts focus on understanding customer needs and establishing long-term, profitable relationships. This stakeholder involvement is essential for developing sustainable partnerships that create mutual benefits beyond simple transactions (Palmatier, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 2007).

Different types of B2B relationships include a variety of stakeholders e.g. seller-buyer, supplier-distributor, manufacturer-dealer, and provider-consumer (Zilione & Bagdoniene, 2009). However, the outsourcing relationship that Schuberg Philis establishes does not fit well into any of these categories. Their plan-build-run strategy leads to an overlap of these traditional categories. As a result, the value framework is built on relationship values from multiple relationship categories and perspectives. This holistic approach ensures that the framework captures the unique dynamics and interactions that are present in the relationships that Schuberg Philis has built.

Throughout this literature review on B2B relationship values, there has been a growing understanding in the literature of these values and the aspects that influence B2B relationships over time. Recent literature offers a more nuanced perspective, differentiating and organizing different relationship values to capture complex dynamics. Earlier research on relationship values often combined values that were later seen as separately influencing the relationship.

An example of this is Czepiel mentioning in 1990 that a relationship is not just a single exchange but a continuation of past interactions likely extending into the future. Although this perspective aligns with the later broader understanding that customer value involves not only financial or functional benefits but also social and psychological benefits derived from interactions (Gronroos, 1984; Doyle, 2000; Macdonald et al., 2016). That shows that even though the perspectives on B2B relationship values have not changed, the insights and knowledge have become more in-depth and sophisticated.

## Relationships values

The theories of customer experience, customer success, and customer engagement theories, that formed the basis for this framework, have different focus points on B2B relationships. Which results into different the addition of different values to the framework. Together with the research into relationship theories, B2B values were also separately reviewed. Values that were often mentioned as being influenced by other values were loyalty, relationship atmosphere, cooperation, quality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment. To be able to create a compressive value framework, it is important to understand these values and their connection.

### Loyalty

Loyalty is widely acknowledged as the most important value in B2B relationships (Oliver, 1999; Samuelsen & Sandvik, 1997; Howard & Sheth, 1969). It is influenced by lower-order values such as relationship atmosphere, cooperation, and quality. Within quality, values like satisfaction, trust, and commitment also significantly impact customer loyalty (Chumpitaz Caceres & Paparoidamis, 2007). Additionally, the loyalty of customers is positively correlated with profit gains, as a loyal customer base is vital for sustaining competitive advantage and achieving long-term success (Reichheld, 1996).

### Relationship atmosphere

Relationship atmosphere refers to the overall emotional and relational context in which business interactions occur, defined by Williamson (1975) as encompassing six specific dimensions: (1) power/dependence balance; (2) cooperativeness/competitiveness; (3) trust/opportunism; (4) understanding; (5) closeness/distance; and (6) commitment. Trust and commitment, influences the relationship atmosphere, which in turn boost loyalty (Williamson, 1975; Hällén & Sandström, 1991; Chumpitaz Caceres & Paparoidamis, 2007). A positive atmosphere fosters mutual respect, goal alignment, flexibility, and effective communication, laying the foundation for collaborative and mutually beneficial interactions.

### Cooperation

Cooperation is essential for sustaining strong business relationships and is critical for success in the B2B context (Lussier & Hall, 2017; Yen & Barnes, 2011; Palmatier et al., 2006; Anderson & Narus, 1990; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Yen and Barnes (2011) find a linear correlation between the duration of a relationship and the level of cooperation. Cooperation contributes to improving relationship quality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction (Palmatier et al., 2006; Payan et al., 2016). Perceptions of cooperation are also important; Lussier and Hall (2017) highlight that factors such as customer orientation, long-term relationships, and salesperson characteristics can positively influence perceived cooperation. Dwyer et al. (1987) emphasize that customers who perceive salespeople as cooperative are more likely to engage in cooperative efforts that are mutually beneficial and complementary. Thus, perceived cooperation significantly strengthens the relationship and ensures continued commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

### Relationship Quality

Relationship quality serves as a general measure of the strength of a relationship between two firms and is often viewed as a relationship outcome (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Smith, 1998; Chumpitaz Caceres & Paparoidamis, 2007). It includes key components such as satisfaction, trust, and commitment, the importance of which has been emphasized in numerous studies (Crosby et al., 1990; Dwyer et al., 1987; Shamdasani & Balakrishnan, 2000; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001). Satisfaction and trust are particularly emphasized as indicators of this higher-order relationship value. Together, these elements significantly enhance overall relationship quality, which in turn leads to greater loyalty (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Crosby et al., 1990). In addition, the relationship marketing literature views relationship quality as a critical determinant of the durability and intensity of the relationship, which contributes directly to the success of relationship marketing efforts (Chumpitaz Caceres & Paparoidamis, 2007).

### Trust, satisfaction, and commitment influence relationship quality

In the context of B2B relationships, satisfaction, trust, and commitment emerge as the fundamental pillars that influence relationship quality. De Wulf et al. (2001) observed that better relationship quality is typically associated with higher levels of these three dimensions. Despite their distinct characteristics, consumers often perceive them as a unified whole (Crosby et al., 1990; de Wulf et al., 2001).

The importance of satisfaction and trust as indicators of relationship quality has been emphasized by numerous authors (Crosby et al., 1990; Dwyer et al., 1987; Shamdasani & Balakrishnan, 2000; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2001), with commitment also recognized as a crucial component (Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997; Leuthesser, 1997; Dorsch et al., 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Roberts et al., 2003; Hewett et al., 2002).

By analyzing these key values, the framework provides a deeper understanding of how to build loyal B2B relationships.

### Trust

Trust in a B2B relationship is fundamentally about having confidence in a partner's integrity and reliability. Influenced by various factors such as salesperson characteristics, safety, transparency, as well as emotional and rational aspects of the interactions (Andersen & Kumar, 2005; Anderson & Narus, 1990; Spekman et al., 1996), trust is crucial for reducing the necessity for extensive monitoring and contractual safeguards. Instead, it promotes flexibility and adaptability in professional dealings (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Das & Teng, 1998; Arino, dela Torre, & Ring, 2001).

Trust is associated with a higher level of psychological commitment to the relationship (Kumar & NTi, 1998), indicating that when trust is established, partners are more likely to be deeply committed to the alliance. This commitment enhances the relationship's resilience and operational efficacy. Furthermore, the emotional dimension plays a significant role in trust dynamics. Positive emotions contribute to perceived trustworthiness, while negative emotions may impair it (Kumar, 1997). This emotional influence underscores the complexity of trust and its impact on the stability and success of B2B relationships.

Commitment

Relationship commitment is defined as the ongoing desire to maintain a valued relationship (Moorman et al., 1992). Research has shown that commitment affects various aspects of organizational interactions (Hennig-Thurau and Klee, 1997; Leuthesser, 1997; Dorsch et al., 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Roberts et al., 2003; Hewett et al., 2002).

In the area of organizational buying behavior, the importance of commitment is especially clear. It is associated with important outcomes such as reduced customer turnover and increased motivation, both of which are critical to maintaining competitive advantage and sustainability (Porter et al., 1974; Farrell and Rusbult, 1981). In addition, the distinction between commitment and loyalty provides a deeper insight into the dynamics of B2B relationships. While loyalty often refers to an overall positive attitude toward a brand, commitment involves a deeper, more robust engagement. It stabilizes customer behavior over time and across a variety of circumstances and has been found to be fundamental not only to short-term interactions but also to securing long-term loyalty (Goala, 2003; Scholl, 1981; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Commitment involves efforts and behaviors aimed at maintaining relationships, such as fulfilling promises, ensuring consistent interaction, and maintaining personal connections (Das, 2009; Andersen & Kumar, 2005; Goala, 2003; Scholl, 1981). Ongoing interaction and communication further strengthen this commitment and underscore its role as the foundation for successful and enduring business relationships (Gummesson, 2008). By recognizing these nuances, companies can better strategize their customer engagement approaches to support the development of loyal partnerships.

Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction refers to the overall satisfaction with various aspects of the relationship, such as meeting objectives, fulfilling promises, and staying within budget (Madruga, 2021; Cheng, 2006; Bagdoniene & Zilione, 2009). Numerous studies have highlighted the central role of customer orientation in fostering strong B2B relationships (Wright, 2004; Lussier & Hall, 2017; Homburg & Jensen, 2007; Brennan et al., 2003; La et al., 2009; Das, 2009; Gronroos, 1990a; 1990b; 1994; Harker, 1999; Ivanković, 2008; Kumar, 2020; Madruga, 2021; Hilton et al., 2020). High levels of satisfaction contribute to customer loyalty (Chumpitaz Caceres & Paparoidamis, 2007). And factors including meeting objectives, and staying within budget (Gounaris, 2005) influence the perceived satisfaction.

Value framework

This value framework is built from the literature research on B2B relationship values. It shows different hierarchy levels and correlations between relationship values. Loyalty is the highest level of the relationship, influenced by atmosphere, quality, and cooperation. Which are influenced by satisfaction, commitment, and trust. By understanding and strategically managing satisfaction, commitment, and trust, to create cooperation, quality, and atmosphere, organizations can establish long-term B2B loyalty. This framework provides a structured approach to examine and establish the relationship values. By strategically using events and interactions to influence B2B relationships, ultimately leading to sustained competitive advantage and mutual success.

See appendix B.2 for an overview table of literature connected to support this framework

Loyalty		
Relationship atmosphere		
Cooperation		
Quality		
Satisfaction	Commitment	Trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delivering quality service</li><li>• Distance/power imbalance</li><li>• Efficient service</li><li>• Get an important job done</li><li>• Knowledge determines performance</li><li>• Longevity</li><li>• Meet deadlines</li><li>• Meeting objects of all parties</li><li>• Mutual benefit</li><li>• Mutual goals</li><li>• Objectives are met</li><li>• Skills contact person</li><li>• Stay within budget</li><li>• Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication</li><li>• Creativity</li><li>• Customer orientation</li><li>• Effort</li><li>• Extensive person to person contact</li><li>• Financial issues</li><li>• Flexibility</li><li>• Frequency of contact</li><li>• fulfilling promises</li><li>• Interaction</li><li>• Involvement</li><li>• Joint working</li><li>• Knowledge exchange</li><li>• Long-term salesperson-customer relationship</li><li>• Motivation</li><li>• Mutual exchange and fulfilling promises</li><li>• Offerings that align with customers goals</li><li>• Openness</li><li>• Stability</li><li>• Uncover expressed and unexpressed needs and align with customers goals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actors' perception of each other</li><li>• Behavior</li><li>• Comparison level of alternatives</li><li>• Competence</li><li>• Cultural fit in relationships</li><li>• Emotional connection/bond</li><li>• Emotions</li><li>• Experience</li><li>• Expertise</li><li>• Interpersonal dynamics</li><li>• Interpersonal trust</li><li>• Knowledge exchange</li><li>• Level of self-efficiency of salesperson</li><li>• Openness</li><li>• Personal chemistry</li><li>• Personal interactions</li><li>• Risk sharing</li><li>• Safety</li><li>• Salesperson characteristics</li><li>• Transparency</li></ul>

Table 1: Value framework



## 3.4 Conclusion of literature review

### Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the findings from the literature review, focusing on understanding the increasing role of an IT outsourcer within the organization of the customer and the influence of loyal B2B relationships in creating business outcome driven partnerships. And it the first step into answering the research question: “How can an IT outsourcer establish a loyal B2B relationship to accelerate the transition from IT-driven to business outcome-driven relationships?”

### Business and IT alignment

The first part of the literature highlights the changes that IT has brought to organizations aiming to drive innovation, transform business models, and gain a competitive advantage. Research by Henderson and Venkatraman (1989), followed by studies from Weill and Broadbent (1998) and Raymond et al. (1995), emphasizes the necessity of aligning IT with business strategies to maximize operational efficiency, improve customer service, and secure competitive advantage. This strategic alignment is crucial for organizations seeking to optimize their IT investments and adapt rapidly to market changes.

### Changing rol of IT outsourcers

Following this, the literature section explores the value of involving an IT outsourcer and the benefits they offer. IT outsourcers have become known for their agility in adapting to new technological changes and achieving significant economies of scale (Zika, 2014). Companies became unable to keep up with the capabilities that IT outsourcers developed, leading to a shift from outsourcing secondary tasks to using outsourcing as a strategic asset. As a result, core business processes began to be outsourced, integrating outsourcers into companies' primary operations despite initial uncertainties of managers (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2003). Partnerships with outsourcing companies are now valued for significantly improving organizational performance through encouraging innovation, decreasing time to market, and achieving sustainable advantage (Linder et al., 2002). These relationships are not only transactional but instead aim to transform business capabilities for better competition in the market while allowing organizations to maintain control over critical areas and maximize outsourcing benefits.

The success of outsourcing partnerships depends heavily effective relationship management, and alignment with strategic objectives (Linder et al., 2002). Essential elements include contract considerations, ongoing performance assessments, executive involvement, and fostering personal relationships between partners. These components ensure outsourcing relationships go beyond operational support and integrate into broader business strategies, driving the evolution of the industry from a focus on operational efficiency to a strategic business transformation role.

### IT-driven to business outcome driven

The final literature focuses on understanding how an IT outsourcer's role can evolve from IT-driven to business outcome-driven partnerships by establishing loyal B2B relationships. The central role of IT outsourcers in strategic business transformation is shaped not only by the potential to gain a competitive advantage. As the role of an IT outsourcer increases within the organization of the customer, the impact of loyal B2B relationships also grows.

A literature on B2B relationship values provides a value framework of the interaction, hierarchy, and relation between values influencing B2B relationships. Different strategies and theories on B2B relationships are researched to understand the relationship between an IT outsourcer and its customers. Literature theories often focus on single elements of the relationship. By researching customer experience, customer success, and customer engagement theories, a general value framework of relationship values influencing the entire engagement was created.

### Value framework

The value framework built from literature research on B2B relationship values shows different hierarchy levels and correlations between values. Loyalty stands as the highest relationship level, influenced by atmosphere, quality, and cooperation. Relationship quality is influenced by satisfaction, commitment, and trust. By strategically managing satisfaction, commitment, and trust to establish quality organizations can establish long-term B2B loyalty. The value framework offers a structured approach to examine and establish relationship values, strategically using events and interactions to influence B2B relationships, ultimately leading to sustained competitive advantage and mutual success.

The value framework provided combines theories and literature to illustrate how relationship values influence B2B relationships. However, the relationship between an IT outsourcer and its customers is different from typical B2B relationships. Currently, literature specifically focused on B2B relationships involving IT outsourcers and their customers is lacking. Therefore, this framework serves as the foundation for qualitative research focusing on the establishment of B2B relationships and the values influencing the relationships between an IT outsourcer and its customers. The goal is to refine and adjust the framework to better fit the context of B2B relationships between an IT outsourcer and its customers.

A large, bold, blue number '4' is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image, serving as a background for the text.

# **Method for data collection**

# Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology used to answer the research question.

*“How can an IT outsourcer establish a loyal B2B relationship to accelerate the transformation from IT-driven to business outcome-driven relationships?”*

This includes the research design; a qualitative approach to study Schuberg Philis’s strategies for establishing and developing B2B relationships, data collection and analysis methods. The research also aims to test the theoretical framework, first introduced in chapter three, in the context of the B2B relationship between SBP and four customers.

Hunt (2002) argues that B2B research tends to use scientific methods that are one-sided and deductive, focusing heavily on a hypothesis-testing approach. To enrich and broaden the current research on B2B relationships, this study adopts a two-sided inductive approach, incorporating perspectives from both the company and the customer. Utilizing an emic perspective, which seeks to understand phenomena from the point of view of the participants themselves (Sułkowski, 2012), the sampling framework was tested and refined through empirical research.

## 4.1 Interview guide

Schuman (1982) designed a series of three interview rounds, based on Seidman’s model of in-depth phenomenological interviewing. In-depth interviewing leads to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the intricacies and coherence of people's experiences, and a more conscious awareness of environmental context (Granot et al., 2012). Phenomenological interviewing questions are “based on themes of experience contextualization, apprehending the phenomenon and its clarification” (Bevan, 2014).

This research following Schuman’s (1982) method, involves conducting a series of three separate interviews with each participant, allowing the interviewee and the researcher to investigate the context of the interviewee's experience in-depth. The first round is aimed at establishing the context of the participant's experience. The second round allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context of the phenomenon. The third round of interviews is conducted to enable participants to reflect on the meaning associated with their experience.

### In the context of this research:

- The first interview round will be used to understand the organization of SBP, the role of the interviewee in the organization, and their personal view on the growth strategy and gaining competitive advantage of the organization.
- The second round of interviews will be conducted to reconstruct the evolution of the B2B relationship between Schuberg Philis and their customers.

The first two rounds will be exploratory non-structured interviews, aiming at establishing an in-depth insight into the context of the interviewee, without a predetermined line of inquiry. The third round of interviews will be conducted to reflect on the meaning that the interviewee associates with the events that were crucial in the development of the B2B relationship and the relationship elements that were affected by these events.

### Purpose of the third interview round:

- To enable participants to reflect on the meaning associated with key events identified in the second interview round.
- To understand how these events influenced the B2B relationship's development and to identify the relationship elements impacted by these events.
- To validate and test the framework by connecting participant reflections on the events that influenced the B2B relationship to the relationship elements of the framework.

### Interview guide for the third round:

**Setting:** Interviews will be conducted in the natural setting at SBP

**Timing:** Approximately 60 min.

Each time schedule is agreed upon prior to the interview to prevent undue anxiety. Seidman (1998) highlighted the importance of a pre-defined timing, especially in a B2B study due to the tight schedules of the interviewees.

**Structure:** The semi-structured nature of the interview depends on an interview guide (Yow, 1994). A preset line of inquiry was formulated to provide the basic structure of the interview (Granot et al., 2012). Prompts and follow-up questions were asked based on the responses of the interviewee.

## 4.2 Participant selection

In this research, both internal and external stakeholders will be interviewed to explore the establishment of B2B relationships with Schuberg Philis.

### First interview round

The first round will consist of exploratory, non-structured interviews aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the organization of SBP. Participants in this round will be exclusively internal stakeholders, chosen based on their roles and involvement in developing the strategy and organizational structure of SBP. Initially, this selection will include two sales directors, three business consultants, and two strategy consultants. The number of participants may be expanded depending on the variety of roles within the organization. Additional interviews might be conducted if needed to achieve research saturation and ensure a comprehensive understanding of SBP.

### Second interview round

The second round will involve six participants, selected based on their involvement in various B2B relationships. This round aims to capture a diverse range of insights and experiences, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of B2B relationship establishment. Relationships with customers from three distinct industries will be chosen to incorporate varied perspectives and mitigate the risk of misidentifying industry-specific factors as universal. During the selection of B2B relationships, the position of Schuberg Philis in the organization of the customer will also be taken into consideration. Three of the four relationships will be achieving SBP strategic goal of a business-driven outcome B2B relationship. One of the four relationships that will be selected does not meet this objective.

### Third interview round

During the third round, the same six internal stakeholders from the second round will participate in semi-structured interviews. This last interview round aims to reflect on the meaning that the interviewee associates with the events that were crucial in the development of the B2B relationship and the relationship elements the events have affected. Together with the six internal stakeholders, three external stakeholders will also participate. The inclusion of external stakeholders in this round is crucial, as it provides an outside perspective that enriches the understanding of the relationships and the importance of relationship elements. Three external participants, who are directly engaged in the B2B relationships explored in the second round, will be selected.

Before the interview will be conducted, a pilot interview will be conducted with a strategic product design student, to test the flow and clarity of the questions. Each participant will sign a consent form before the interview will be conducted, see appendix C.1 for an example of this form.

## Participant profiles

### Internal participants

- **Participant 1: Business consultant PUR**
- **Participant 2: Sales director**
- **Participant 3: Sales director at Schuberg Philis**
- **Participant 4: Business consultant FS**
- **Participant 5: Sales director**
- **Participant 6: Business consultant FS**

### External participants

- **Participant 1, Customer A:**

Managed multi-chain and contract owner of, among seven others, SBP. Involved in the relationship with SBP since 2018, then as head of transaction management.

- **Participant 2, Customer C:**

Platform owner of AWS, involved in the relationship with SBP since 2022, first contact with SBP was when the building of the AWS platform was not going as desired and was put into a steering group to fix this.

- **Participant 3, Customer D:**

Function of global firm lead responsible for supply chain processes. Involved in the relationship with SBP since 2023, the start of the B2B relationship between SBP and Customer D.

## 4.3 Line of inquiry

The interview questions can be found in Appendix C.2 & C.3



## 4.4 Data analyse

The interviews of this research were conducted either face-to-face or via MS Teams meeting. Face-to-face interviews were recorded with a cellphone and then transcribed with the use of Adobe Premiere Pro. Interviews conducted via MS Teams were also recorded and transcribed by this program.

The analysis of interview data was conducted in three phases, corresponding to the aims of each interview round.

### First Round: Gathering Initial Insights

During the first round, the approach focused on collecting quotes and preliminary insights without employing a structured coding method. The main objective is to identify broad themes and gather stakeholder perspectives to gain an initial understanding of the organizational context and the establishment of B2B relationships. These insights and understanding will be used as the basis for the second and third interview rounds.

### Second Round: Chronological Event Organization

In the second round, the data will be analyzed to map the evolution of the B2B relationships. This phase will be concentrated on selecting and mapping out information that illustrates the sequence of activities that are critical to the establishment of the B2B relationship. Here, key events and interactions will be leading in the data analysis and structuring. The analyzed data of the four different B2B relationships will be summarized and structured into four chronically ordered relationship tables.

### Third Round: Framework-Guided Analysis

The use of a deductive coding strategy formed the foundation for the coding list. The initial coding list consisted of 58 codes, extracted out of the value framework. The literature is used as guidance for the interpretation of the codes and to provide a structured way to connect the data to the value framework.

Coding groups were created based on the different levels of the value framework. Loyalty was the highest order, and every other value affected the perceived loyalty of a relationship. The level underneath loyalty consists of the three individual codes: cooperation, relationship quality, and relationship atmosphere. And is impacted by the coding groups of satisfaction, trust, and commitment. All the remaining codes were grouped into one of these three groups, according to their position in the framework.

An inductive coding strategy was used to complement the deductive strategy. Although a hybrid coding strategy was used, the focus and strategy were to code de data deductive. The complementary role of an inductive coding strategy was aimed at validating the value framework. An inductive coding strategy was only used when the deductive codes did not comply with the quotation and when this quotation was valuable to the understanding of the context and could be adding value to be implemented into the l value framework. Additional codes will be added to the coding list if: they occurred with a high frequency and the definition of the value differs from the initial coding list or when the value was mentioned explicitly.

By using a content data analysis, the frequency of the use of the codes will be analyzed. Together with the frequency of the simultaneous use of the codes and the correlation between the different codes. Specific patterns in the data will be analyzed by the quantifying frequencies of codes and characteristics in the coding.

By using content data analysis, the frequency of code usage will be analyzed, along with the simultaneous use and correlations between different codes. This approach will systematically identify patterns and themes within the data by quantifying the frequencies and characteristics of the codes. The aim of this analysis is to uncover important correlations, opinions, and insights on the establishment of loyal B2B relationships. And aims to ensure that the data is correctly interpreted, and conclusions are in line with the collected data. Together with the analysis of the frequency and correlation of the used codes, a summary for each interviewee will be produced. With the aim to provide a more in-depth overview of the gathered data and the various insights obtained during the interviews.

## 4.5 Validity and Reliability

Different methods of reliability and validity are used to ensure the findings of this research are accurate and can be applied to different contexts within the IT outsourcing and B2B relationship establishment.

### Data triangulation

By interviewing internal and external stakeholders involved in the establishment of loyal B2B relationships, different perspectives from stakeholders with different functions and roles provide data triangulation in the research. Researching these different perspectives reduces researchers' bias and ensures that the insights from this research can be generalized and applied to other situations by reflecting a variety of experiences and viewpoints.

### Member checking

The research setup involves multiple interview rounds with the same participants. Insights and conclusions from the first round are validated in the next round by using the insights in the next research round and gaining feedback and more in-depth information on the topics earlier discussed. By member checking, this research increases in credibility of the results. In addition to confirming the consistency of the data across the different stages, the iterative process allows participants to clarify and extend their previous answers, thereby enhancing the accuracy and richness of the data.

### Longitudinal reliability

By conducting three interview rounds the longitudinal reliability of the research also increases. By observing changes over time and revisiting themes to confirm the findings across different stages of the relationship establishment. This method provides a clearer view of how perceptions and strategies change over time, improving our understanding of how B2B relationships develop and evolve.

### Thick description

Thick description provides more rigor in the study by detailed capturing of the data. The data is recorded, and notes are made during the interviews. The transcripts are adjusted to the actual text and notes on the nuance of the research are provided. To give more detailed information on the perspectives of the interviewees. Insights from the research are illustrated by examples of quotes from the interviewee. This approach helps to capture the experiences of the interviewees and ensures that their interpretations are reflected in the specific context and data.

**Results**

5

# Introduction

In this chapter, the insights and findings of the research are presented. The main objective of this research was to investigate how Schuberg Philis establishes loyal B2B relationships to facilitate the transition from being IT-driven to business outcome-driven. This result chapter will present insights and quotations collected from three rounds of interviews with both external and internal stakeholders.

The first interview round had as its main objective to gain a deeper understanding of the context within Schuberg Philis. By interviewing various internal stakeholders about their views on the strategic direction of the company, the main objectives, and activities needed to support this strategic direction. These interviews provided valuable insights. Especially due to the structure of SBP, where self-steering dedicated customer teams can act upon the best interests of their customers. Which resulted in specific insights and actions of different internal stakeholders. Although a general definition of the strategic direction was found among the participants, it is essential to also understand the differing roles of consultants and salespeople, who develop these strategies, and the engineers, who often hold direct and ongoing contact with the customers. Aside from these insights, crucial takeaways from this first round included meaningful quotes from internal stakeholders to enhance the understanding of SBP's operational dynamics, and a collective definition of 'business outcome-driven' as it is perceived across various departments.

During the second interview round, a case study analysis of four B2B relationships between Schuberg Philis and their customers was conducted. The aim was to gather insights into the formation of loyal B2B relationships. This exploratory interview round provided crucial information on the initiatives, evolution, and significant events and insights within these relationships. By examining these four cases collectively, an overview of potential steps toward loyal B2B relationships was formulated, combining different insights and steps into a generalized view of relationship establishment at SBP.

The third interview round involved internal and external stakeholders and resulted in more in-depth insights, based on the knowledge gained in the earlier rounds. The results were analyzed using a content analysis. By consulting both internal and external stakeholders, comparisons could be made between the important relationship values of loyal relationships and the events or interactions that the stakeholders identified as impactful. It is worth mentioning that although the values were regarded similarly in terms of importance, the perspectives of internal and external stakeholders involved in the same cases showed consistent agreement on the most important relationship values. Additional insights included an understanding of the key relationship values in this context through a combination of deductive and inductive coding methods, refining the framework based on significant values identified by the stakeholders. Furthermore, this round resulted in a contextual value framework relevant to B2B relationships at SBP, highlighting the most impactful events and interactions that were previously identified in the second interview round but further discussed by internal and external stakeholders in this third interview round.

This chapter provides detailed insights from these three rounds of interviews. The findings are categorized into specific findings per round of interviews to provide a clear understanding of the processes, interactions, and values that lead to loyal B2B relationships. In addition to addressing the main research question, this structured presentation of findings contributes valuable perspectives to the academic study of business relationship management and practical guidance for professionals in the field.

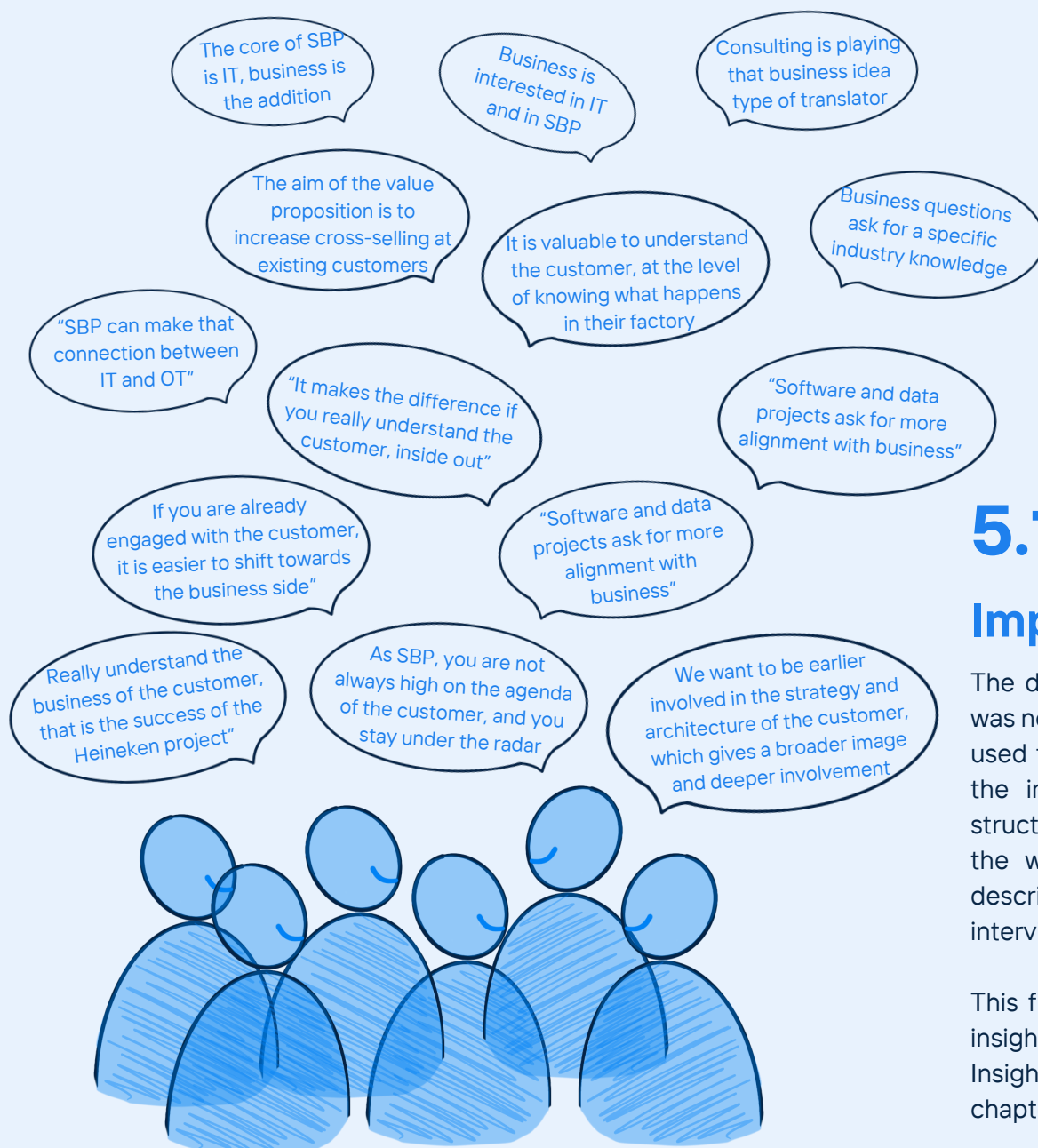


Figure 5: Visualization interview quotes

## 5.1 Understanding SBP

### Important quotes and take aways

The data from the first, exploratory non-structured interview round was not structural analyzed. Key findings, quotes and knowledge were used to gain understanding about the context and company. During the interviews information about the organizational culture and structure of SBP, interviewees point of view on customer relations, the way of working at SBP, tools and workshops, different job descriptions and functions, strategic goal of SBP and the interviewees view on a business-driven outcome.

This first interview round formed the basis to be able to gain deep insights on the context in the second and third interview round. Insight from the first round of interviews is implemented in the chapters about the context, the company and the problem space.

## Business driven outcome

The ambition of the "business-driven outcome" does not have a clearly formulated definition. This leads to varied interpretations across the company. When asked about their understanding of the term, interviewees highlighted the influence of their personal interpretations on their definition of the term and/or sought clarification on the intended definition when mentioning the term business-driven outcome.

### General definition

Although the interviewees highlighted their own perspectives and insights on the definition, a general definition can be formulated from the similarities in their answers.

**Business outcome-driven involves developing solutions that arise from business needs, prioritizing strategic goals, driving business progress, and sustaining competitive advantage. The outcome is characterized by having business objectives at its core while leveraging IT as an enabler. Success in this area requires a cooperative effort between business and IT stakeholders, working together to uncover future possibilities and challenges.**

### Differences in Perspectives:

The perspectives on business outcome-driven partnerships show a difference in nuances. One viewpoint emphasizes engaging primary stakeholders on the business side, rather than IT, with a focus on solutions that use IT as an enabler for solving business problems and addressing business needs and users directly.

Another perspective highlights the importance of creating headspace within existing relationships, allowing conversations about ambitions and future directions. This approach focuses on maintaining control over current issues to create opportunities for discussing tomorrow's possibilities. Lastly, another view stresses the challenge of aligning different silos within an organization to ensure that varied stakeholders can converge on common goals. Facilitating workshops and concept sprints are highlighted as effective means to navigate these organizational complexities, encouraging a unified commitment to shared business outcomes.

These perspectives all demonstrate a commitment to driving strategic growth, yet each emphasizes different elements: using IT to directly solve business problems, creating the headspace needed to explore future possibilities, or bringing together different silos within the organization to align on shared goals.

A detailed overview of the interview quotes that shaped the definition and outlined the nuanced differences of the ambition of business-driven outcome can be found in Appendix D.1



**Understanding SBP position within the organization of the customer**

The position of Schuberg Philis (SBP) within the customer's organization can vary depending on the main stakeholders SBP is involved with. This can vary from the customer's IT department, the business department, or both. Three main models of SBP's involvement with their customers are visualized in, Figures 6, 7 & 8. These models illustrate the importance of understanding the alignment between IT and business within the customer's organization. This alignment not only influences SBP's role but also affects how the business department perceives the role of an IT outsourcer within the organization. Additionally, the alignment of IT and business is also influencing the ease at which SBP can change or increase their role at the customer and can move from one involvement model into another involvement model.

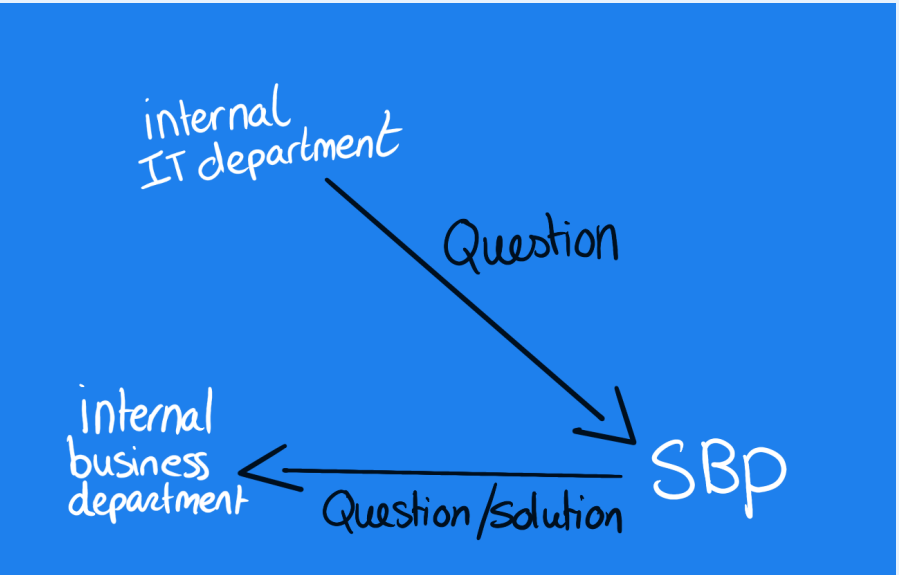


Figure 6: SBP and IT department

**1. Engagement with the internal IT department of the customer**

If SBP's involvement is initiated through the customer's internal IT department, the focus typically remains on supporting IT-specific tasks that the internal department does not have the resources to do themselves. Here, SBP primarily addresses the IT solution while keeping the added business value in mind.

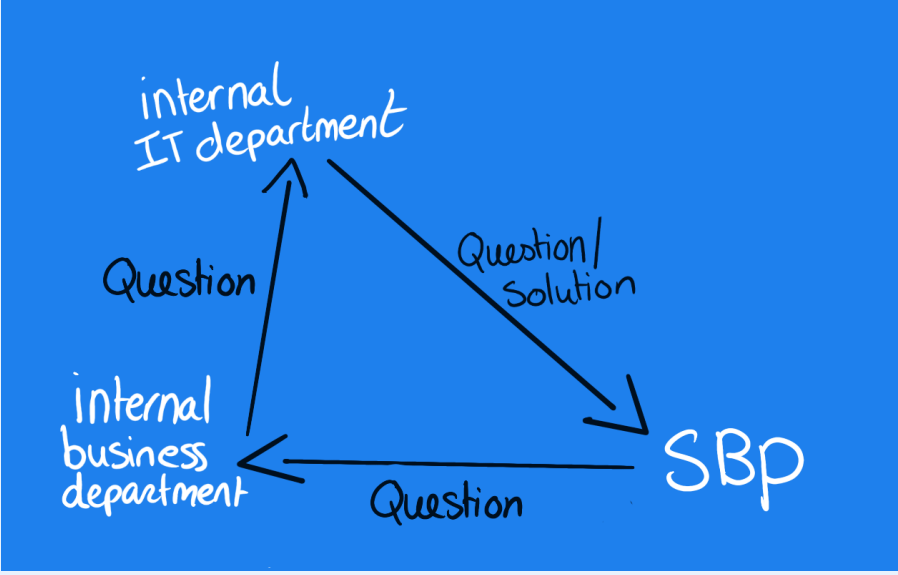


Figure 7: SBP and business & IT department

**2. Engagement with the internal business and IT department of the customer, introduced by IT department**

The second option at which a customer involves SBP is when the business department of the customer has a request for the internal IT department of the customer which they are unable to successfully deliver. SBP provides a solution for this IT problem with a direct connection to the generated business value and the business department.

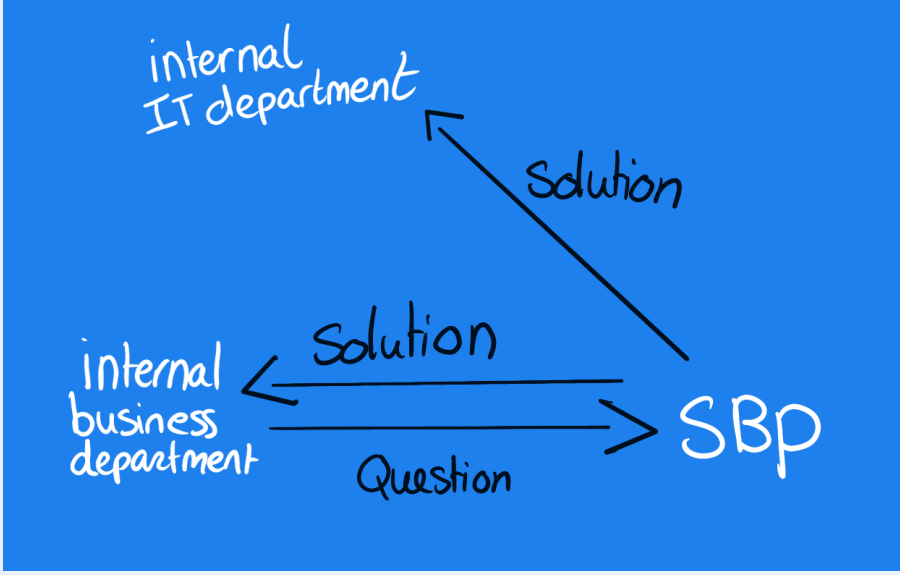


Figure 8: SBP and business & IT Department

**3. Engagement with the internal business and IT department of the customer, introduced by the business department**

The third route at which SBP becomes involved with the customer. When the business department of the customer is not satisfied with the work of their internal IT department or the internal IT department does not have the resources for this project, the internal business department could involve SBP. Then SBP is directly in contact with external stakeholders at the business department but because the solution that SBP builds must be migrated into the internal IT, SBP will aim to work together with the internal IT department.

## 5.2 Understanding the establishment of B2B relationships at SBP

In the second interview round, the goal was to create an overview of the establishment of B2B relationships between Schuberg Philis and its customers. Case research into four different B2B relationships between SBP and a customer was conducted with a round of exploratory non-structured interviews.

The insights of these four cases were structured into chronologically ordered event tables (see Appendix D.2).

The impact of different events, tools, and interactions can be understood by creating insights into the different routes that can lead to an established loyal B2B relationship. The insights on the steps towards establishing loyal B2B relationships are combined into one overview of the influential events and interactions, see Table 2.

The four different cases gave an insight into a general approach towards the establishment of B2B relationships. Although a general approach, overview, or strategy was not formulated or communicated inside the organization of Schuberg Philis, similarities in the approach were found. Events, interactions, and tools were often used with a similar goal in mind and the internal reactions to external impactful events were often similar between the cases.

Different events can serve different purposes, like the execution of a project. Even though the main goal of the relationship between an outsourcer and their customers is to execute projects for their customers and generate revenue. Other values or purposes can also be served at the same time. The execution of a short project can also act as a means to create trust, show expertise, and create a personal connection. Which, if successful, can lead to being a partner for projects of a larger scale or longer duration.

### Introduction to. the B2B relationships

First, the necessary background information, with an introduction into the sector of the customer, the status of the organization of the customer, involved stakeholders, and the personal relationship between employees of Schuberg Philis and the customer is provided to create an understanding of the context of each relationship. Second, a combined event table with an overview of the events, interactions, or tools that were impactful in the establishment of the four cases is provided.

#### B2B relationship A

Schuberg Philis has been engaged in this B2B relationship for eight years. During this period multiple projects in the business domain are executed by SBP.

The relationship was initiated by a personal relation of an employee of SBP, who introduced SBP to the customer. Because the current outsourcer could not deliver the quality that the customer required. SBP started with a small IT-driven project to stabilize the current situation and resolve the problems. Over the years, SBP has become more and more engaged with business and has planned, built, and run several business outcome-driven projects. The relationship between the customer and SBP grew towards becoming a business partner of the customer. Now, SBP advises the customer on the IT direction of the company and develops innovation directions together with the customer. To establish this relationship, multiple workshops were done together with this customer: inspiration days, concept sprints, vision workshops, and business model canvas workshops.

During this, the organization of the customer changed. The role of the CIO became a part of the role of the COO. The COO became responsible for the IT department as well as the management of the organization. The organization of the customer also changed into a network organization. SBP treated this new direction as a completely new customer. Certain workshop rounds were repeated with the new direction. This new group of people gave new directions and insights, while SBP could build upon their knowledge gained in earlier events. This established partnership evolved into an advising role for SBP. During the downsizing of the company and when they needed to let go of certain partners, SBP took on an advising role during this process.

#### Important stakeholders in relationship A

**SBP:** sales director, business consultant, customer operations manager, tech leads, mission-critical engineers, Lab271 (facilitating workshops)

**Customer A:** CEO, internal IT department, CIO, COO, competitors/ other outsourcing companies (in other services), external trend research company

## B2B relationship B

The B2B relationship with customer B started five years ago. First SBP was mainly engaged with the internal IT department at the customer. SBP was already working on an IT project with this customer and being physically present at the office before the step towards more business-driven engagement was initiated. Delivering quality and working at the office of the customer influenced the relationship positively. The tender process before SBP ran a small business project for this customer took a long time. 1.5 years before the first small project in the business domain was executed. Although the initial relationship was built via the IT department, this small business project was the first step towards an engagement with business.

Inspiration workshops, efforts to understand the business of the customer, and regular evaluation/progress meetings (important to be able to freely express yourself).

### Important stakeholders in relationship B

**SBP:** sales director, business consultant, customer operations manager, tech leads, mission-critical engineers (working at the office of the customer), Lab271 (facilitating workshops)

**Customer A:** CTO, IT department, CEO, business department



Sales director SBP

Figure 9: Visualization interview insights

## B2B relationship C

The relationship was initiated by a personal relationship between a stakeholder at SBP and the customer, four years ago. At that time the customer had an RFP in the market for a small IT project. This project opened the doors to building a B2B relationship with the customer. SBP had an agile approach for this project, first the basis was built. Upon this basis, use cases were added and implemented. Simultaneously with the implementation of new use cases, the network of SBP at the customer grew, and the role of SBP at the customer increased.

The new use case started with a kick-off workshop and a technical design session. However, although the objective of the workshops was mainly technical, this also affected the relationship. During the relationship, there were multiple stakeholders changes on the side of the customer and a big reorganization and business cuts at the company of the customer.

### Important stakeholders in relationship C

**SBP:** Sales director, customer operations manager, tech leads, mission-critical engineers, lab271

**Customer C:** Product owner, employees at different departments where use cases were implemented, technical architects, IT director primary stakeholder

## B2B relationship D

The relationship with this customer started when the customer split off from a company, they were initially a part of. The customers' internal IT department got a big IT challenge to rebuild the whole internal IT. The solution the internal IT department built was not 100% working and SBP got involved in building an IT solution. Although the solution SBP build was very IT-driven, the gain of the solution was for the business department of the customer.



Business consultant SBP

Figure 10: Visualization interview insights

During the relationship, a second IT-driven project was successfully executed. And a relationship with the IT department and the CIO was built. During the relationship, the sales director of SBP saw an opportunity for cross-selling. SBP conducted desk research into the customer and asked the CIO to get introduced to the supply chain manager.

By having conversations with different key stakeholders at the customer, common ground was found, and an inspiration workshop was proposed. Together with the customer, an agenda for the day was made. SBP prepared use cases to "showcase the expertise of SBP" and selected a team of experts to join the inspiration day.

After this first inspiration day, two more inspiration days were held with two other stakeholders. One with a very open approach and one where the stakeholder had a very clear idea. Two proposals were written, and the second proposal was executed. The first stakeholder was also very enthusiastic about the proposal but after another Inspiration day, SBP got the feeling this stakeholder was not qualified to make the final decision. They reacted by putting more effort into the proposal. However, due to budget constraints inside the company of the customer, it did not come to a project.

### Important stakeholders in relationship D

**SBP:** sales director, business consultant, customer operations manager, tech leads, mission-critical engineers, Lab271

**Customer D:** CTO, IT department, CEO, business department

## Impactful events, interactions and tools in the establishment of B2B relationship.

The findings from this case research are combined into one overview, see Table 2. This overview combines the recurring events, tools, and interactions and provides an explanation of the situation, the requirements, the goal, and the values that can be created.

An overview of the findings per case, which is the basis for this overview, is structured into a chronological event table and can be found in Appendix D.2.

Event	Action	Goal	Requirements/ Adaptations	Values
Workshop (inspiration day)	Preparation	to be on the same level about the goal of the workshop and have the same expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Customer orientation</li><li>• Understand goals and expectations of the customer</li><li>• Quickly adapt and adjust the plan to the customers desire</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals</li><li>• Offerings that align with customers goals</li><li>• Actors' perception of each other</li><li>• Future vision</li><li>• Creativity</li><li>• Customer orientation</li><li>• Knowledge exchange</li></ul>
Inspiration day	During the workshop	Find new use cases, inspire the customer to work together with SBP. Show other use cases that might be interesting for the customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the customers goals and needs</li><li>• Customer orientation</li><li>• Joined working</li><li>• Openness &amp; transparency</li><li>• Interaction</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Joined working</li><li>• Personal Bond</li><li>• Competence</li><li>• Cultural fit</li><li>• Transparency</li></ul>
Design workshops	Design workshops, to get technical insights and understanding.	Understand customers project requirements and set goals for the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Solved current/ acute problems</li><li>• Understand and adapt to customers' needs and goals</li><li>• Mutual goals</li><li>• Meeting objectives of all parties</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shared future vision</li><li>• Cultural fit</li><li>• Uncover expressed and unexpressed needs and align with customer goals</li><li>• Transparency</li><li>• Personal bond</li><li>• competence</li></ul>
Network event	Attend an network event	Connect with customers. Put effort in contact and interact in a informal way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shared goal of joining the event</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connection</li><li>• Effort</li><li>• Personal bond</li></ul>
Reports	Show updates/ developments	Send annual/monthly reports to show objective are met and delivering quality		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transparency</li><li>• Competence</li><li>• Delivering quality</li></ul>
Work at office customer	Be physically present, connect and interact with the customer	Being more visible, increase the network and personal bond with the customer. Easier to arrange meetings. Having friendly conversations during work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be physically present</li><li>• Interact with customer in a professional and unprofessional way</li><li>• Attitude</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Joined working</li><li>• Interaction</li><li>• Personal bond</li><li>• Transparency</li><li>• Cultural fit</li><li>• Partnership</li></ul>
Stakeholder change	Change of stakeholder	Reestablish the relationship as fast as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Network plan (how to grow personal relationships and awareness within the organization of the customer)</li><li>• Time from the new stakeholder</li><li>• Understanding of mutual goals</li><li>• Customer orientation</li><li>• Delivering quality</li><li>• Fulfilling promises</li><li>• Know the perception the new stakeholder might have/has of SBP</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reach out to new stakeholder</li><li>• To re-establish relationship as quickly as possible</li><li>• Understand perceptions of new stakeholder about SBP, positive, negative or does not know SBP</li><li>• Actors' perception of each other</li><li>• Personal bond</li><li>• Interpersonal trust</li><li>• Knowledge exchange</li><li>• interaction</li></ul>
Stakeholder change	Reach out to new stakeholder	To re-establish relationship as quickly as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand perceptions of new stakeholder about SBP, positive, negative or does not know SBP</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actors' perception of each other</li><li>• Personal bond</li><li>• Interpersonal trust</li><li>• Knowledge exchange</li><li>• interaction</li></ul>

Table 2: Impactful events and interactions



Event	Action	Goal	Requirements/ Adaptations	Values
IT driven project	Execution, deliver quality	To expand the relationship into more projects (in the business domain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understand and adapt to customers' needs and goals</li><li>Meeting objectives of all parties</li><li>Delivering quality</li><li>Customer orientation</li><li>Joined working</li><li>Competence</li><li>Transparency</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Delivering quality service</li><li>Product/ service quality</li><li>Objectives are met</li><li>Competence</li><li>Experience</li><li>Customer orientation</li><li>Cultural fit</li><li>Joined working</li></ul>
Brand image	How is SBP positioned? Show business examples, explain SBP does more than solely IT	To also make customers understand it is not just about IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Customer must be open to change its perception of SBP</li><li>Customer must see value into expanding the role of SBP/ doing more with SBP</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Actors' perception of each other</li><li>Future vision</li></ul>
Desk research	Research and find as much information about the customer and their customers and sector.	Gain insights on the customers' mission, vision, purpose, norm and values of the customer. Search for pains, gains and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Customer orientation</li><li>Market understanding</li><li>Trend research</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understand the customer's market</li><li>Understand the customer's culture</li><li>Understand customers pains and gains</li><li>Uncover expressed and unexpressed needs and align with customers goals</li></ul>
External event	Change of organization structure	Reestablish/ keep position of SBP in the organization of the customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understand organizational changes at customer</li><li>Customer orientation</li><li>Change in goals and needs</li><li>Time from the new stakeholder</li><li>Understanding of mutual goals</li><li>Customer orientation</li><li>Delivering quality</li><li>Fulfilling promises</li><li>Know the perception the new stakeholder might have/has of SBP</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Exchange knowledge</li><li>Competence</li><li>Personal bond</li><li>Actor's perception of each other</li><li>Interaction</li><li>Transparency</li><li>Attitude</li></ul>
External event	Budget limitations	Reestablish/ keep position of SBP in the organization of the customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understand changes at the customer</li><li>Offerings that align with customers' needs and goals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Personal bond</li><li>Transparency</li><li>Meeting objectives of all parties</li></ul>
External event	Contract negotiations	Find shared future vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Stability for SBP and flexibility for customer</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understand and align with customer's needs and goals</li><li>Transparency</li><li>Mutual exchange and fulfilling promises</li></ul>

Event	Action	Goal	Requirements/ Adaptations	Values
Tender process	Find a fit in offerings and question of the customer	Participate in a new engagement with (new) customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Customer orientation</li><li>Also affected by point system or non-relationship requirements like number of certificates</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cultural fit</li><li>Customer orientation</li><li>Personal bond</li><li>Competence</li><li>interaction</li></ul>
Invite at SBP (lunch, tour etc.)	Show the office and connect with the customer in an informal way	Establish a more nonprofessional relationship with an open and friendly conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understand customers interests</li><li>Interaction with the customer</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cultural fit</li><li>Personal bond</li><li>Way of working</li><li>Openness</li></ul>
Business model canvas workshop	Future vision	Create a future vision together with the customer. Have shared objectives and work together towards the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understand and align with customer's needs and goals</li><li>Shared objectives</li><li>Fulfilling promises</li><li>Delivering quality</li><li>Customer orientation</li><li>Cultural fit</li><li>Transparency</li><li>Meeting objectives of all parties</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Future vision</li><li>Shared objectives</li><li>Competence</li><li>Personal bond</li><li>Transparency</li><li>Fulfilling promises</li><li>Partnership</li></ul>
Workshops Concept sprints	Work together on creating a concept for a possible gain or a pain of the customer	Show competence through working together on delivering a solution for a problem or customer goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understand the customers goals and needs</li><li>Customer orientation</li><li>Joined working</li><li>Openness &amp; transparency</li><li>Interaction</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Future vision</li><li>Competence</li><li>Joined working</li><li>Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals</li><li>Offerings that align with customers goals</li><li>Actors' perception of each other</li><li>Customer orientation</li><li>Knowledge exchange</li></ul>
Projects for different departments	Expand network at the customer	Use personal connections to get introduced to new stakeholder. Show use cases that might be interesting to new stakeholder. Show competence of SBP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Make sure you understand customers pains and gains</li><li>Offerings that align with customers' needs and goals</li><li>Customer orientation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Personal bond</li><li>Competence</li><li>Interaction</li><li>Exchange knowledge</li><li>Customer orientation</li></ul>
Presenting internal for customer	Get asked to present at an internal event at the customer, maybe propose to do these type of things	Be more visible at the customer, brand awareness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>When asked to show/ speak for internal events at customer</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cultural fit</li><li>Competence</li><li>Customer goals</li><li>Fulfilling promises</li><li>Interaction</li></ul>
Opportunity	To cress-selling	Stay aware of customer goals and keep a creative future vision to be able to propose new ideas at the right time to the right person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understand the customers goals</li><li>Cultural fit (innovation level of customer)</li><li>Customer orientation</li><li>Customer goals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Competence</li><li>Personal bond</li><li>Transparency</li><li>Customer orientation</li></ul>

## 5.3 Deep dive into relationship values

The aim of this last interview round was to create a deeper understanding of the important relationship values during the establishment of loyal B2B relationships between SBP and their customers. The results of the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using a content analysis. To identify the themes and patterns, one overview of internal stakeholders' insights and important quotes is made, and one overview of the insights and important quotations of the external stakeholders is made. Comparing the results from internal stakeholders and external stakeholders gives extra insights into the important relationship values of loyal relationships, the events or interactions that the stakeholders identified as impactful, and if this differs for internal or external stakeholders.

The second part of the results is based on the quantifying frequencies of the values. The number of times that values are mentioned by internal vs/and external provided knowledge on the importance of the value in this context.

## Insights internal interviews

### Alignment with Customer Expectations in Workshops

Workshops are crucial interactions where SBP can find common ground with the customer and align their service with customers' specific needs. Participants highlighted the importance of understanding customers' needs and expectations before an inspiration day.

Participant 1 mentioned being surprised by the request of a customer *"OK, this is not what I expected. That it will be so detailed and so focused on one use case. I expected something bit more high level."* highlighting the need for flexibility and adaptability in these interactions.

More participants highlighted the importance of importance of clear and effective communication prior to a workshop. Participant 6 mentioned: *"Design workshops provide a clearer picture of our situation to the customer."*

### Sustaining and Building Trust

Trust is mentioned as a requirement of successful B2B relationships. The participants showed that trust is not just established through a single interaction but sustained through continuous, reliable engagement. Participant 2's focus on investing in relationships highlights that building trust is an ongoing effort, not a one-time achievement. Trust is often associated with delivering quality. Participant 3 *"Well, I think they will ultimately respect it if you explain it well and also build the trust that if we do say yes to something, we will truly deliver on it because it falls within our expertise."*

### Building Personal Bonds

The central role of personal bonds in SBP's strategy is mentioned by every participant. Participant 2 highlights that personal bonds formed through regular interactions and informal settings significantly boost stakeholder engagement and trust. Similarly, participant 4 shared insights that personal bonds and interactions open the door to talk about other topics and show your expertise.

*"I don't know, uh, mentioning the basics of that at the coffee machine, like, hey, we did this for [customer]. Might it be interesting for you? When you know someone personally, you naturally try to spark interest by asking if this is relevant or appealing to them or not. So, based on existing relationships, you try to gauge if there is interest in a specific topic."* – participant 4.

### Managing Organizational Changes in Customer Companies

Frequent organizational changes among customers present challenges in maintaining steady relationships.

Participant 1 shared insights into the complexities of stakeholder changes, stating the need to *"build that relationship from scratch."* This reflects the ongoing necessity for a proactive attitude.

Participant 3: *"We have an account plan in which we say we want to engage with certain areas within [customer organization]. We identify who is there, who we need to reach out to, and what would be a good reason to start a conversation with them. Who is the best person to do that? In this way, we can get an introduction through someone we already know."*

With this account plan, they strategically plan the network they built for the customer to ensure that the change of one stakeholder does not influence the relationship.

### Impact of perceptions

Participants discussed the impact of SBP's market perception on customer engagement.

Participant 1 highlighted how varying perceptions can affect stakeholder openness towards engagement: *"I think Schuberg Philis also has a very good brand reputation in the market, but it also has a bad reputation. Ho, they are very expensive or oh, when you hire Schuberg Philis, you just overpay, you know?"*

Participant 2 mentions the importance of investing in the relationship to change this brand perception: *"First everyone that comes will take that with a pinch of salt, they first say like Schuberg is very expensive, that is the first expectation of people. So how do you act upon that first though? You need to invest in the relationship, have a lot of conversations, show a lot of what you do, show trust, transparency and tenacity."*

### Future vision

A vision for the future of the relationship is mentioned as an important value by internal stakeholders. The importance of thinking and talking about the future and not only about today is mentioned by Participant 5: *"That's usually the case. It's hardly discussed further, so to speak. You deliver the management summary, and then it's done because it's no longer a problem. And that's just it. When you look at them, they came from a problem situation, which you resolved, and that naturally affects the relationship. Yes, and while it's good that the problem is solved, you really want to take further steps."*

Participant 3 mentions the need to come closer together with the customer and not be hesitant to invest in the future: *We have grown closer together and become more involved in their business and business innovation. We even set up our own data center for this purpose, so we haven't hesitated to say, "This isn't right for you; we need to look at a different path."*

### Quality Execution

Maintaining high quality is seen as vital for establishing loyal B2B relationships between SBP and their customers.

Participant 4 mentioned that by delivering quality, the relationship can grow. *"This led to additional or new interesting topics that we can potentially follow up on. So, you can see that we are trying to do more cross-selling and upselling of other services alongside our existing services"*.

Other participants also see delivering quality as a requirement for establishing long-term relationships. But also, the quality must keep on improving, otherwise it is seen as less valuable over time. As Participant 6 mentioned: *"And you also know that if you continue doing what you do well today, it will eventually become less valuable. Yes, so if you start well, you might eventually perceive..."*

## Insights external interviews

### Building Trust through Personal Relationships and Transparency

Trust is mentioned as an important value by every external participant. Trust is heavily influenced by personal relationships and transparency.

Participant 1 expresses the importance of establishing a personal relationship early on *"For me personally, I first focus on the establishment of a personal relationship,"* and highlights the role of transparency in establishing mutual trust: *"That creates mutual trust. Together with making promises and living up to them."* He highlights that a relationship is not about formal interactions but that informal, open communication, and simple interactions, such as a spontaneous phone call or a message, can deepen the relationship.

Participant 2 mentions trusting each other as the most important thing in a relationship, along with working together: *"That is important in a relationship, work together, trust each other."*

Participant 3 mentions the importance of a personal relationship to deepen the relationship and ask for help: *"But when I do have a personal connection I would go to that person or organization when I have questions or ask if they could help us. I would less likely do that when I do not have that personal connection."*

### Impact of Company Culture on Partnerships

Differing company cultures can impact the relationship.

Participant 3 mentions the importance of a cultural match between the two companies: *"Because we were both flexible, honest, transparent and transparent communication it has been a good relationship."*

Participant 1 points to the alignment or clash of cultures impacting the relationship: *"SBP is a company that has a 'Let's go get them!' mentality, while we need our time to think about it."*

This cultural difference can sometimes be complicated in an engagement, especially when management styles don't adapt well to these differences. The need for both parties to make compromises and show flexibility is crucial, as Participant 1's expressed in his experience in managing through these cultural differences.

### Networking and Informal Interactions

Networking events are important in strengthening relationships. Participant 1 mentions a connection made during a networking event that was the foundation for a personal bond and was later relied upon during contract negotiations: *"The most important element of that event was that [stakeholder SBP] and me literally went to a shopping mall, drank a cup of coffee and had an open conversation, playing with open cards. We see that certain things are not going as we want them to, and we see that there are interesting for SBP to be a part of and there are internal things happening we should know about. We talked about that, based upon our personal relationship."*



Impact of perceptions

The delivery of high-quality results is important for sustaining long-term relationships. Participant 3 stresses the importance of quality, connecting quality and trust together to build loyal relationships: *“Results, openness, respect, and informality are the four most important factors”* Participant 2 also mentions that quality influences the longevity of the B2B relationship *“We just want the best...Ultimately, we chose to proceed with Schuberg”*.

Future vision

The importance of creating a shared future vision is mentioned by Participant 3: *“In what context does the organization find itself, and how can you develop that for the future, given the fact that you want to become something? But what that actually is, we will figure out together.”* He emphasizes figuring out together which direction to go, the steps to take, and helping each other to achieve these goals.

Effort

The effort that SBP puts into the relationship is mentioned as an important aspect of the B2B relationship. Participant 3 mentions: *“And in that way, if you look at the effort that SBP puts in it, to make it right every time. They go above and beyond to call it like that. And then you know it is good”*.

Most important values

**Participant 1:**  
*“Humor is also important, that you have that bond that you can make jokes and meanwhile work hard. Have and open and transparent relationship and deliver results and quality.” “Results, openness, respect and informality are the four most important factors.”*

**Participant 2:**  
*“Expertise, continuity, transparency, and I think demonstrating that Schuberg is willing to make sacrifices”*

**Participant 3:**  
*“In the perfect world you will have all three: all the norms and values, quality and personal relationship. But that is not always realistic, or possible. So which relationship values are depending on the situation.” “Core values that you find personally important are also important in a b2b relationship”*

Coding results

**Content analysis: Frequency of codes**  
A frequency analysis was conducted as the second step in the content analysis. The aim was to identify patterns of importance and meaning within the participants' responses. This approach aimed to highlight key values within SBP's B2B relationships that are perceived as most important. Based upon these insights, the initial literature framework can be adapted to create a context-specific framework illustrating SBP’s B2B relationships.

Following the coding process, a comprehensive set of 62 codes was established, capturing a broad spectrum of insights across the data. See Appendix D.3 for the complete code table. The codes used during this analysis are grouped into three primary categories: trust, commitment, and satisfaction, similar to the framework introduced in Chapter 3.3. Analyzing the presence of the three primary coding categories showed that these categories were very influential in the research. Codes connected to the category trust were frequently used. This demonstrates the importance of trust in the context of B2B relationships. Similarly, codes connected to commitment were also frequently used, showing their crucial role in establishing loyal relationships. The codes connected to the category satisfaction were mentioned less frequently, suggesting further analysis of the data.

For a further comparison of stakeholder insights, the analysis compared the most frequently mentioned values among both external and internal stakeholders. The value of “understanding and adapting to customer’s needs and goals” was most frequently connected to external data, followed by “openness”, “meeting objectives of all parties”, “actors’ perception of each other”, “cultural fit”, “personal interactions”, and “transparency”.

Although most values were connected to the data of each external stakeholder, differences were observed in which value was prioritized most by individual participants. Despite these differences, codes connected to the category trust were most frequently mentioned by all external participants.

Internal stakeholder data similarly showed frequent connections to the value of “understanding and adapting to customer’s needs and goals,” followed by “actors’ perception of each other”, “personal interactions”, “extensive person-to-person contact”, “communication”, “involvement”, “customer orientation”, “cultural fit in a relationship”, and “emotional connection/bond”. The differences in the frequencies of connected values per internal stakeholder were minimal, presenting a consistent pattern across interviews. Like the external data, codes connected to the category trust were most frequently mentioned by internal stakeholders. This indicates a shared focus on values related to trust across internal and external stakeholders, while still addressing values related to all three value groups.

See Appendix D.3 for an overview of the overall frequencies of codes, the frequencies of codes divided into internal versus external data, and the frequencies of codes divided into the coding categories trust, satisfaction, and commitment in internal versus external data.

Often one piece of data, collected during the internal and external interviews, was coded with multiple codes simultaneously. This frequent overlapping of codes shows the complexity and interconnectedness of the categories and values discussed during the interviews.



### Value networks

To analyze this overlap and interconnectedness of codes and categories, quantifying the frequency of co-occurrence of the codes was used. To give insights into how analyzing the data combines and connects codes to capture insights from the participants.

This co-occurrence is visualized as a network, illustrating the relationships between values in the data (see figure 11). The lines in the network show the co-occurrence between the two codes. Codes that occurred the most with other codes show that these codes have the most connections with other codes. The codes that were frequently used in combination with other codes were: understand and adapt to customer needs and goals, personal interaction, involvement, extensive person-to-person contact, and emotional bond.

This analysis gives insights into the process of the establishment of B2B values, as it shows how participants view the connection or order of this process.

To gain further insights into the B2B relationships, a contextual analysis of the patterns is performed, see figures 12 & 13. These networks complement each other to visualize the co-occurrence and relationships between values.

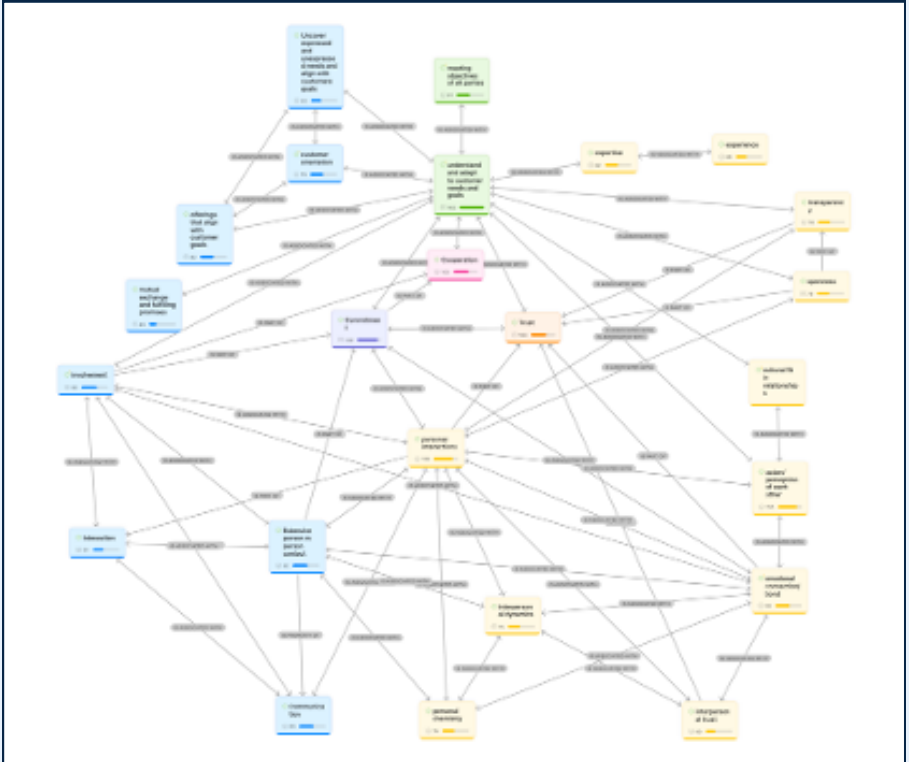


Figure 11: Co-occurrence network

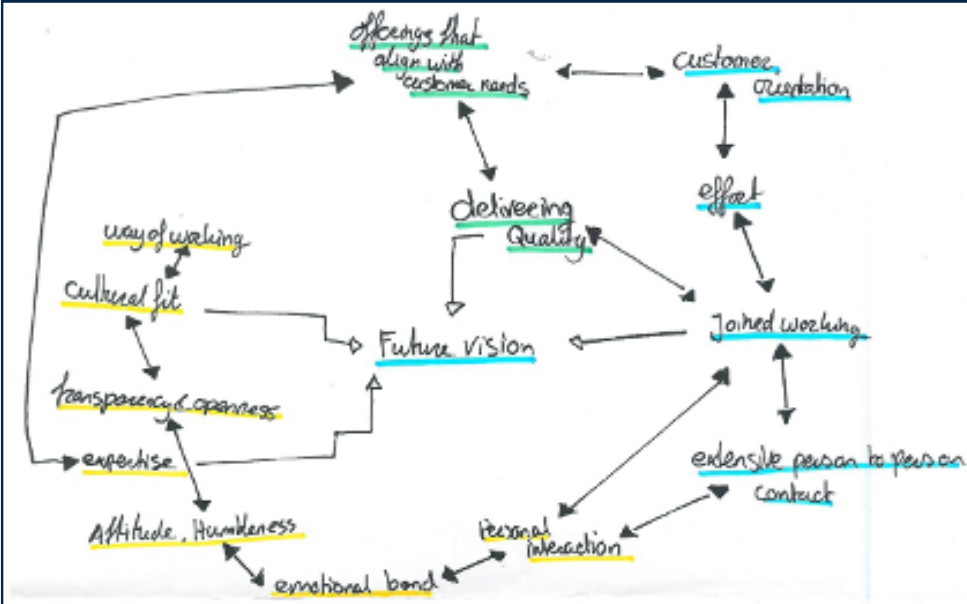


Figure 12: Contextual network based on external interviews

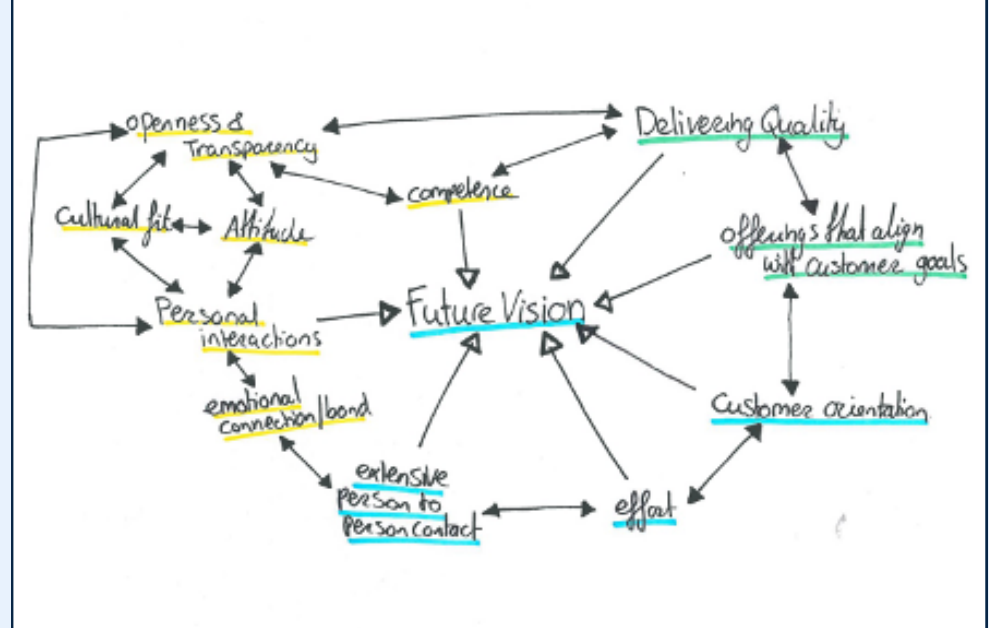


Figure 13: Contextual network based on internal interviews

## 5.4 Research conclusions

### Values in B2B relationships of SBP

During the mixed coding strategy, inductive coding was used to code values mentioned by participants that were not part of the value framework. These codes were analyzed and categorized using thematic analysis into the value groups of trust, satisfaction, or commitment, enriching the framework with context-specific insights.

During the first coding round, thirteen extra codes were used to code the data.

Four codes were added to the value framework: future vision, product quality, attitude, and honesty.



Figure 14: Visualization interview insights

#### Future vision

Mentioned frequently in relation to "understand and adapt to customer needs and goals" and "offerings that align with customers' goals," this value is placed within the commitment group. Interviewees highlighted the importance of future vision/growth and expressed the value in the continuance of the relationship and the establishment of a future vision or growth mentality by interactions and communication between the internal and external stakeholders.

#### Product Quality

This value emerged as an important value because of its strong association with providing quality service, expertise, and meeting common goals. Initially left out of the framework due to its technical focus, the interview narratives revealed its significant influence on customer satisfaction. Participants consistently emphasized how service/product quality differed from broader service delivery or expertise and highlighted its impact on satisfaction by focusing specifically on the inherent quality of the product or service. This perspective is consistent with the broader understanding that customer value includes not only financial or practical benefits, but also social and psychological benefits derived from interactions with a supplier (Grönroos, 1984, Doyle, 2000, Macdonald et al., 2016). The inclusion of service/product quality in the framework underscores its role in establishing and maintaining B2B relationships. It influences satisfaction and illustrates how product and relationship quality together form a holistic view of customer value. By including service/product quality, the framework now reflects the various ways in which the quality of the deliverable enhances customer satisfaction in B2B relationships.

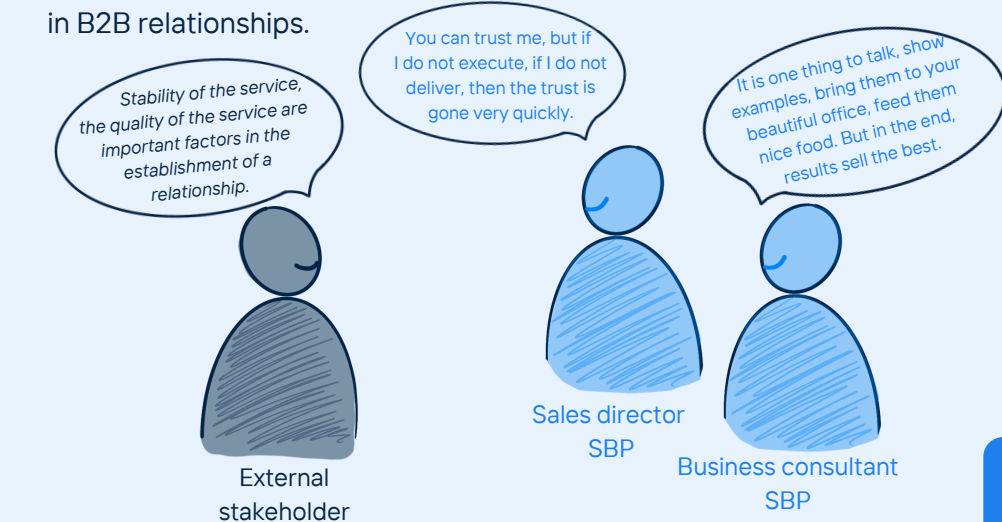


Figure 15: Visualization interview insights

### Attitude

During the interviews, stakeholder attitudes emerged as a significant factor influencing relationships. Characteristics such as humbleness, vulnerability, and tenacity were highlighted for their positive impact on the relationship. These attitudes not only reflect the broader culture at SBP but also serve as a means by which stakeholders communicate company culture, ways of working, and understanding the values of the person with whom they are trying to build a relationship.

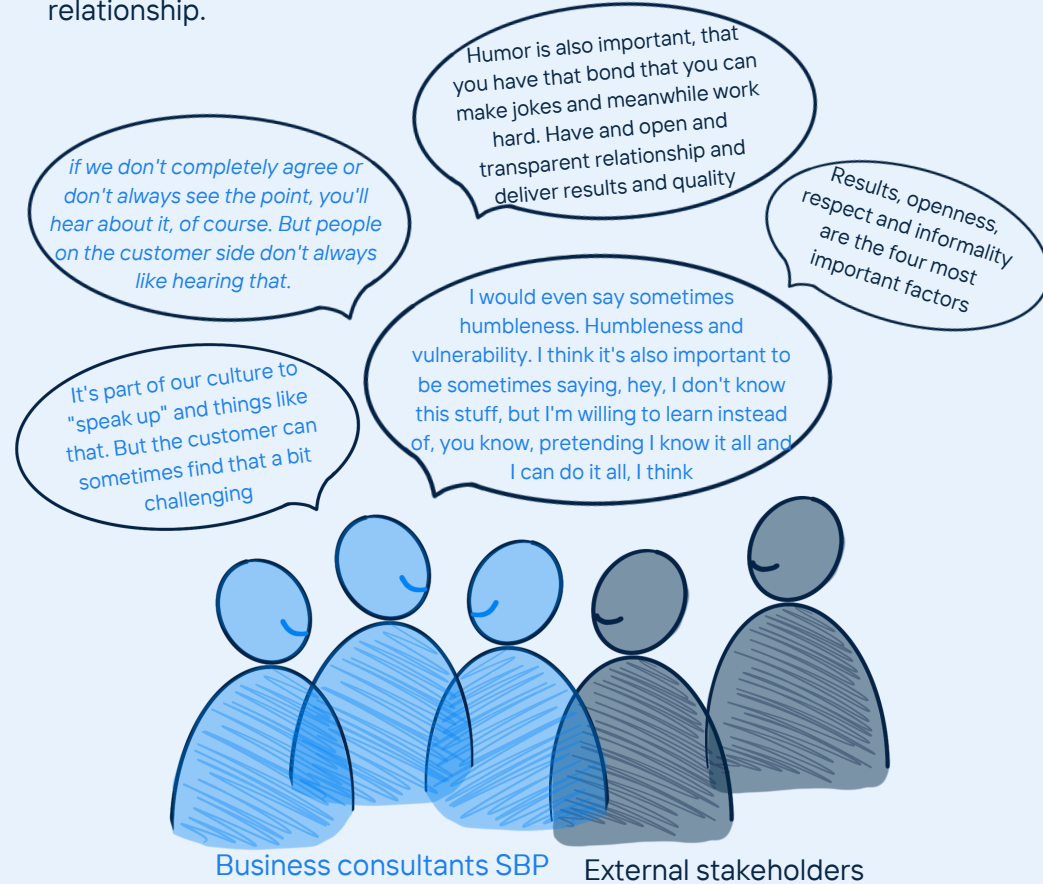


Figure 16: Visualization interview insights

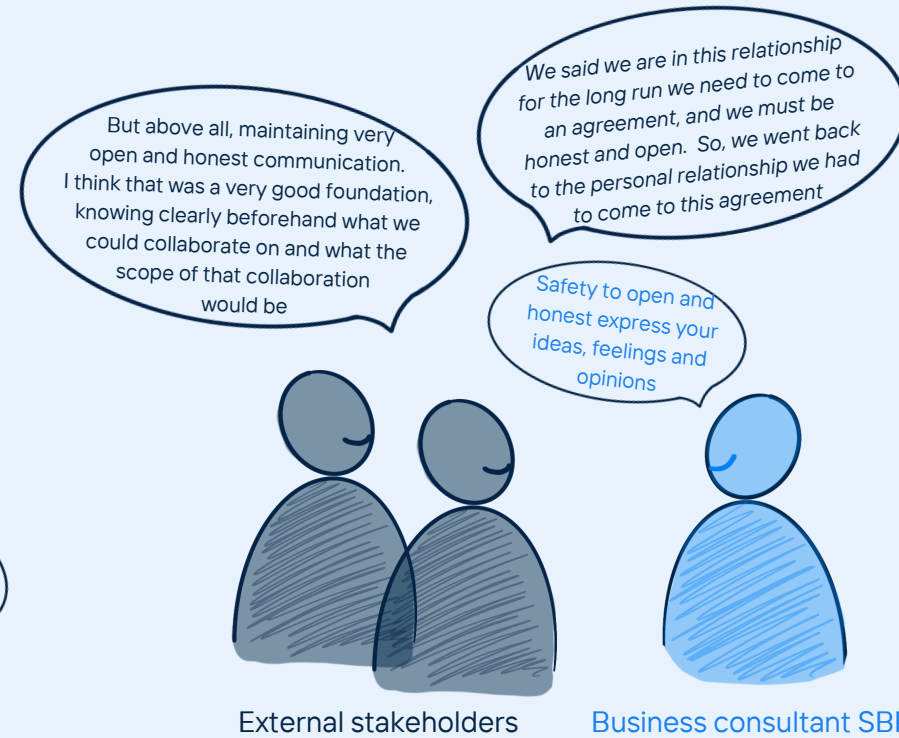


Figure 17: Visualization interview insights

### Honesty

Honesty is often mentioned together with trust, openness or transparency. Honesty is not mentioned often, but this value is mentioned very explicit. And described as a characteristic of conversations or as having good intentions or being honest about your attentions. This definition attached to this value comes close to openness and transparency and is often linked to these two values. Which is why honesty is added to the value group Trust. Because the explicit mentioning of the value of honesty it is worth mentioning this value and adding this value to the framework.

## Adjustments to value framework

The remaining nine values were integrated into the existing value from the value framework if their definitions closely matched these values. When these values showed a high co-occurrence and shared meaning, they rarely appeared on their own in the analysis. Thus, they were incorporated into the definitions of related values. Specifically, comfort was merged with safety, conflicting goals with meeting objectives of all parties, continuity with longevity, customer intimacy with customer orientation, empathy with emotional bond, impact with future vision, mutual understanding with understand and adapt to customers' needs and goals, way of working with cultural fit, and respect was included in the value safety.

Respect is incorporated into the value of Safety, given its role as a crucial element in establishing secure relationships. Even though it is not a standalone value in the framework, respect is explicitly mentioned due to the significant importance participants attributed to it.



Figure 18: Visualization interview insights

## Coding categories

Based upon the shared definition participants attached to the values, and the co-occurrence between the values, 11 coding categories were formed. These categories were used to give a better overview and order of the values that influence the three different values pillars of trust, satisfaction, and commitment.

The co-occurrence and in-depth textual networks were used to give insight into the connection between the values and guide the creation of value categories within the three categories of trust commitment and satisfaction. See Table 3 for the context-driven value framework and overview of the coding categories.

### Trust

The value trust is influenced by the following four values categories:

#### Cultural fit

This value group consists of values that are influenced by perceptions, norms, values, and feelings. The values in this group influence the perceived trust in stakeholders' behaviors and attitudes. The group consists of the following values: Actors' perception of each other, cultural fit in relationships, and attitude.

#### Competence

This value group is focused on the trust that stakeholders have in the quality that can be delivered. Trust in the competence, expertise, and experience of the company. This value is not based upon the fulfilling of this trust, but on the values that influence the expectations of the delivered quality.



### Personal bond

This value group consists of the values: emotional connection/bond, interpersonal trust, interpersonal interactions, and personal chemistry. These values influence the trust and connection between two stakeholders. This values group is focused on the personal bond that is formed and the trust that is established by this personal bond.

### Transparency

This value group combines the values of openness, safety, honesty, and transparency. These values influence the perception of stakeholders and their feelings towards trusting the relationship that is built, the communication, and trusting the other enough to express feelings and share pains or possibilities.

### Commitment

The value commitment is influenced by the following four values categories:

#### Interaction

The values in the value group interaction express the commitment of the stakeholders by putting time and energy into the interaction with the stakeholder, by being involved, communicating, interacting, having extensive person-to-person contact, having frequent contact, joined working, and putting effort into the relationship.

#### Customer orientation

Customer orientation, uncover expressed and unexpressed needs, and align with customer goals & knowledge exchange are the values in the value group customer orientation. These values have a shared focus on the goals and needs of the customer and the commitment of the stakeholders to understand and know the customer.

### Future vision

This value category future vision consists of the values of creativity and future vision. This value group is focused on the values that are directly influencing a future vision. Creativity is an important factor when a future vision is made. Creativity influences the path toward a future vision, as well as the future vision itself, creativity methods like design thinking or a vision workshop are used to create a future vision.

When the opportunities of the relationship play an important role in creating your future vision, a shared future vision can be made together. The value group of future vision is focused on the value of the vision itself. However, creating a shared future vision is influenced by almost every value from the framework. Before stakeholders come to the point of creating a shared future vision, a loyal B2B relationship with trust, satisfaction, and commitment from both sides is crucial.

### Fulfilling promises

Values that influence the commitment between stakeholders by values influencing the time and duration of the relationship form this value category. These values are: stability, longevity, and the mutual exchange and fulfilling promises between stakeholders.

### Satisfaction

The value categorie satisfaction is influenced by the following three values categories:

#### Delivering quality

The value category of delivering quality combines the values influencing the satisfaction of the relationship established by the product, service, or function it fulfills. The values: delivering quality service, the quality of the product/service, efficiency of the service & getting an important job done are combined in this group.

#### Customer goals

Understanding and adapting to customer needs and goals & offerings that align with customer goals are part of the value group Customer goals. This value group combines the values that influence the satisfaction that customers perceive from understating and aligning with their goals and needs.

#### Shared objectives

The values category: Shared objectives consist of values that influence the satisfaction of both parties. This value group is focused on the benefits, goals, and objectives of all parties. Values in this value group are: Mutual benefits, mutual goals, and meeting objectives of all parties

### Coding categories and co-occurrence

The coding categories are also visible in the co-occurrence network, first introduced in chapter 5.3.

Figure 19 shows the connections between the values in the value categories.

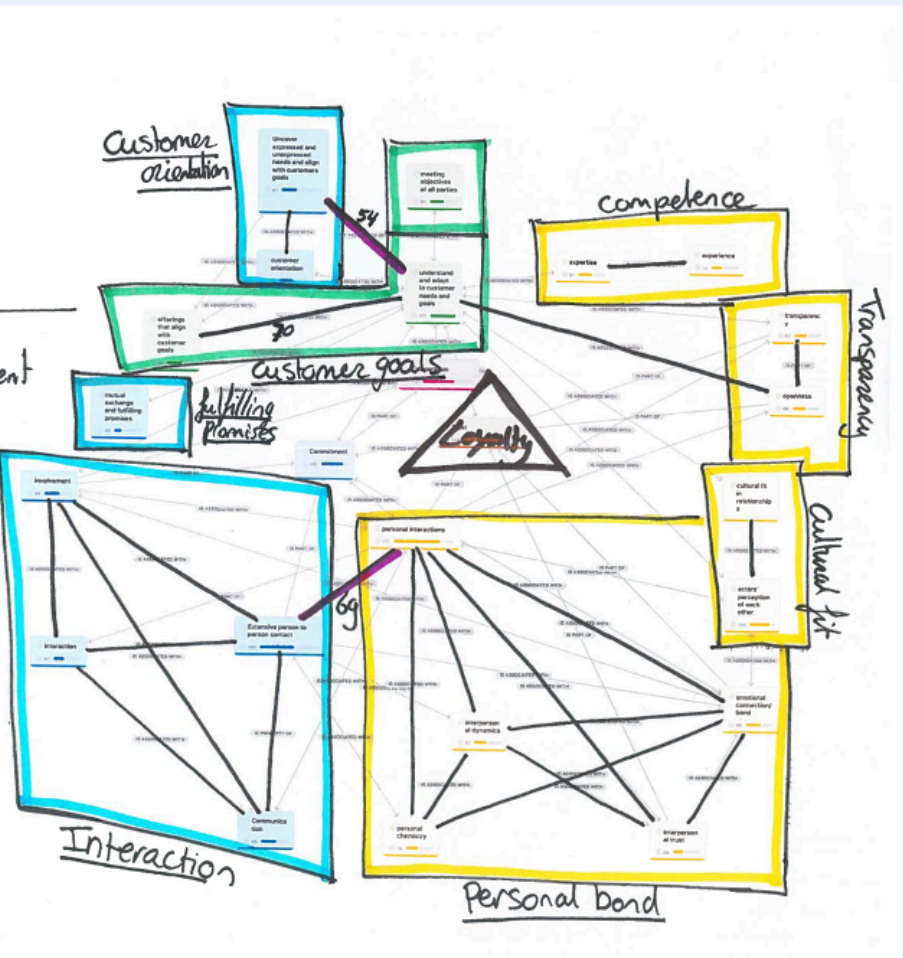


Figure 19: Visualization coding categories

# Contextual value framework

Based upon the earlier discussed changes, additions, and value themes, the value framework is adjusted to fit the context of Schuberg Philis B2B relationships, see Table 3.

The framework is focused on the three pillars of Satisfaction, Commitment, and Trust to influence the relationship quality, cooperation, and atmosphere leading to the establishment of a loyal B2B relationship between Schuberg Philis and its customers.

Loyalty		
Relationship atmosphere		
Cooperation		
Quality		
Satisfaction	Commitment	Trust
<div><div><u>Delivering Quality</u></div><div>Delivering quality service &amp; Product/service quality &amp; efficient service &amp; get an important job done</div></div> <div><div><u>Customer goals</u></div><div>Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals &amp; Offerings that align with customers goals &amp; Objectives are met</div></div> <div><div><u>Shared objectives</u></div><div>Mutual benefits &amp; Mutual goals &amp; Meeting objects of all parties</div></div>	<div><div><u>Interaction</u></div><div>Communication &amp; Interaction &amp; Involvement &amp; Extensive person to person contact &amp; Frequency of contact &amp; Joined working &amp; Effort</div></div> <div><div><u>Future vision</u></div><div>Future vision &amp; Creativity</div></div> <div><div><u>Customer orientation</u></div><div>Customer orientation &amp; Uncover expressed and unexpressed needs and align with customers goals &amp; Knowledge exchange</div></div> <div><div><u>Fulfilling promises</u></div><div>Mutual exchange and fulfilling promises &amp; Longevity &amp; Stability</div></div>	<div><div><u>Cultural fit</u></div><div>Actors' perception of each other &amp; Cultural fit in relationships &amp; Attitude</div></div> <div><div><u>Competence</u></div><div>Competence &amp; Expertise &amp; Experience</div></div> <div><div><u>Personal bond</u></div><div>Emotional connection/bond &amp; Interpersonal dynamics &amp; Interpersonal trust &amp; Personal interactions &amp; Personal chemistry</div></div> <div><div><u>Transparency</u></div><div>Transparency &amp; Openness &amp; Honesty &amp; Safetyyy</div></div>

Table 3: Contextual value framework

# Other takeaways

## Business driven outcome

In the first round of interviews, each participant provided their own definition of a business-driven outcome or the strategic direction of the company. They perceived it as a growth strategy aimed at expanding the role and impact Schuberg Philis can have on their customers. The main service remains focused on IT while engaging more with business. One participant stated that the focus would remain on IT, and not on fulfilling a role as a consulting company. Another participant noted:

*"You can only talk about business driven-outcome, evolving from an existing relationship when there is room in their head to think about tomorrow. In B2B relationships, it is more about today or yesterday, and what went wrong yesterday that needs to be fixed today."*

## Establishment of B2B relationships

The second round highlighted several challenges in reconstructing the establishment of B2B relationships. The longer the engagement was, the harder it was to reconstruct the relationship. Despite similar approaches among stakeholders, there was no standardized method or general approach. Much of the collected data relied on the stakeholders' memory, as there was no documentation specific to relationship values. Existing project documentation focuses on business, engineering services, or platform services, and does not include the path to establishing relationship values. This makes it more difficult for internal stakeholders during internal stakeholder changes to maintain and develop these relationships effectively.

## Stakeholder changes

The establishment of B2B relationships mainly focused on delivering quality service and building trust through a personal bond. By building a loyal relationship with a focus on a personal bond between the stakeholders, changes in stakeholders are very impactful. Stakeholder changes occurred during each relationship establishment and brought significant challenges. A focus of Schuberg Philis on long-term engagements further increases the likelihood of such stakeholder changes. Internal stakeholder changes occurred less frequently than external stakeholder changes. The dynamic nature of the customer's organizational culture affects stakeholder stability, with more frequent changes in dynamic environments.

When a stakeholder changes, understanding the new stakeholder's perception of Schuberg Philis becomes important. Internal stakeholders recognized the challenge of needing to "rebuild the relationship from scratch" without insight into the new stakeholder's perception of SBP. New external stakeholders may have different perceptions, ranging from positive recognition of SBP's market position to negative or uninformed perceptions. Internal interviews have reported experiences where new stakeholders view SBP as "expensive, you just overpay" or they simply do not know SBP. Thus, perceptions can range from recognizing the value of the brand to viewing it as expensive or uninformed before the new engagement. It is also important to understand the role of IT within the customer's organization before a new engagement. The organizational structure and the integration of IT within the organization and the level of innovation impact the role of SBP, as an IT-outsourcer within the organization of the customer.

## Workshops

Additionally, while stakeholders put effort into custom workshops and adjustments for customers, these changes were not systematically documented or shared within the organization, leading to wasting efforts. As an illustration, such workshops can provide in-depth insights into organizational processes, offering a well-documented overview, including business process mapping and system design ready for future implementation. Stakeholders also often associate multiple values with a single event, showing no focus on the establishment of specific values.

## Relationships values

During the third and final round, interviewees often did not differentiate between the various values or value groups. There was no clear emphasis on understanding how different values influenced the value groups of Trust, Satisfaction, and Commitment. Trust was generally perceived as a higher-order value, while satisfaction and commitment were not as identified. Instead, Satisfaction and Commitment were often considered either as part of Trust or as equally important as the values within these value groups in influencing Loyalty. Although interviewees did not make a clear distinction between the values and value groups, they did identify that values were more impactful or influencing other values when asked.



Figure 20: Visualization interview insights

## A shared future vision

A shared future vision creates the bridge between a loyal relationship and a business outcome-driven partnership. When trust, commitment, and satisfaction are established, resulting in a loyal relationship with the customer, the step towards a shared future can be made. A loyal B2B relationship brings the opportunity to become more involved in the business and business innovations of the customer and have the possibility to move forward together. As defined in chapter 5.1 the success of a business outcome-driven partnership depends on "the cooperative effort between business and IT stakeholders, working together to uncover future possibilities and challenges".

The connection between the contextual loyalty framework to the strategic direction of SBP towards business outcome-driven partnerships, is creating a future vision with the customer. This shared future vision, creates the bridge that accelerates the transition into this new strategic direction.





**Design steps**

# Introduction

The first step toward the final design was to translate the research's key findings and conclusions into various design elements. Each element focuses on different aspects and their potential contributions to the establishment of loyal relationships and the transition to business outcome-driven relationships. These defined elements influenced different phases or moments in the establishment of a loyal relationship. From these phases and moments, three potential design directions were further explored. The direction with the most potential was selected, the criteria defined for this selection are described in Chapter 6.2.

After the design direction was chosen, a brainstorming session together with another SPD student started the ideation process. Followed by a second brainstorming session. From these brainstorming sessions, one idea was selected and further explored. A prototype was used as the foundation for a co-creation session with internal stakeholders. The participants from this cocreation session have been involved in the three interview rounds leading up to the design phase. Ideas and feedback from this cocreation session were explored and resulted in the final design.

This chapter will focus on the development of the final design, the Value Compass Playbook. For a detailed overview of the ideation steps leading to the final design, see Appendix E.

## 6.1 Design elements

The conclusions from research formed the basis for five design elements. These elements focus on different aspects of the path to loyal B2B relationships and provide direction for potential designs.

### Element 1:

Events, interactions and stakeholders' perception of B2B relationships were mostly focused on the value level of trust, satisfaction and commitment and the values that are influencing this value level. Higher levels of the value framework were more abstract and were not directly mentioned by internal and external stakeholders or directly influenced by the events and interactions during the establishment of loyal B2B relationships.

Values that were perceived as important by internal and external stakeholders were always indirect influencing relationship quality, relationship atmosphere or the perceived cooperation.

- ***Design will be focused on the value level of trust, satisfaction and commitment and the values that are influencing these value groups.***

### Element 2:

When talking to internal stakeholders, recalling the relationship establishment relied upon their memory of the events and interactions during the engagement with the customer.

Stakeholders did not recall the establishment of B2B relationships in chronological order or/and were not able to give a complete overview of the interactions and events that led up to the establishment of the relationship.

From these insights the following design elements were defined:

- ***Design to enable internal stakeholders to share personalized content with colleagues***
- ***Design to stimulate re-use and innovations of customized events and interactions***

### Element 3:

Stakeholders were not differentiating the different levels of relationship values from each other and were not conscious about the influences of actions or interactions on the establishment of customer values.

- ***Design to provide insights and gain knowledge on customer values***
- ***Design to understand the connection between customer values and their connection to events and interactions***
- ***Design to understand the history of the establishment of B2B relationships***
- ***Design to guide internal stakeholders through the path towards loyal B2B relationships***
- ***Design to anticipate on common pitfalls and unintentional events***

### Element 4:

Different external stakeholders desired different balances in satisfaction, trust and commitment leading to a loyal B2B relationship.

- ***Personalized customer overview that gives insights into the desired balance between trust, satisfaction and commitment***
- ***Personalized insights on the stakeholders involved***
- ***Keeping track of organizational culture***

### Element 5:

Difference in projects characteristics lead to different desired values balances in satisfaction, trust and commitment leading to a loyal B2B relationship. Depending on the length and importance of the project.

- ***Design to gain insights in the specific value balances of the B2B relationship.***

## 6.2 Design directions

Three design directions were identified based on different moments and phases that are influenced by the five design elements. These directions were identified to create a clear overview of the influence of each design element on the establishment of loyal B2B relationships and the transition towards business outcome driven partnerships. Each design direction is influenced differently (by a combination of) the design elements and impacts the establishment of loyal relationships differently.

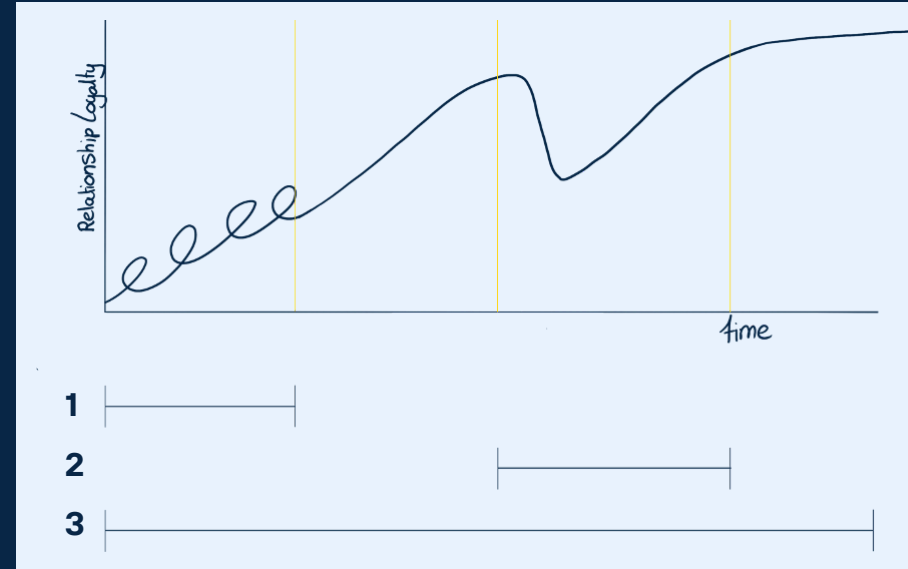


Figure 21: Visualization design directions

### Direction 1: The Fuzzy Front End

The first design direction focuses on the "fuzzy front end" of establishing a B2B relationship, see figure 21. This term, often used by designers to describe the first phase of a design process, is also an appropriate term for the first phase of new customer engagement. Both stages are characterized by uncertainty and a search for direction for the next steps in the process.

The focus of this first stage is to understand the new stakeholder. It involves knowing what they consider important, understanding their perception of SBP, and coming to a mutual understanding of the opportunities that the new engagement can bring. This engagement can be with a new stakeholder at a customer who is already engaged with SBP, or with a completely new customer. Since the focus of this research is on existing B2B relationships, the first situation will be explored.

The first possible design direction aims to accelerate this process of understanding the stakeholder's own values and perspectives and to understand the possibilities of new engagement and shared relationship values. In this first stage of customer engagement, the focus is on customer orientation, understanding the new stakeholder's perception of Schuberg Philis, and creating a personal bond with the new stakeholder.

Once these aspects have been unraveled and a mutual understanding has been established, the engagement can grow based on this shared perception, understanding and path to the establishment of the important relationship values.

### Direction 2: Pitfalls

The second possible design direction is focused on the impact of unintended or externally controlled events, see figure 21. The study of four Schuberg Philis B2B relationships (interview round two) and stakeholders' perspectives on impactful events (interview round three) showed that the change of a stakeholder is a common and impactful pitfall during the establishment of B2B relationships.

An internal stakeholder change can be managed and planned but an external stakeholder change can have a big influence on the loyalty of the B2B relationship.

Both internal and external stakeholders value a personal bond between stakeholders in a B2B relationship. When a stakeholder changes, the trust in the B2B relationship is affected. Values of the value group satisfaction and commitment are less affected or more easily re-established. These value categories are more impacted by past events or experiences and less by the personal relationship between two stakeholders.

Rebuilding this personal bond as quickly as possible, or minimizing the impact of a stakeholder change, accelerates the path toward a loyal B2B relationship.

### Direction 3: Establishment

The aim of the third design direction is to increase Schuberg Philis's understanding of establishing B2B relationships, see figure 21. It aims to increase stakeholders' knowledge of key relationship values and the impact of interactions and events on these values. By providing insight into the timing and sequencing of value creation, this direction helps stakeholders identify which events and interactions can effectively increase these values. Such insights enable internal stakeholders to better manage their B2B relationships, understand the actions and events that can accelerate this process, and maintain loyal B2B relationships.

### Selection of design direction

After a short brainstorming session with an internal stakeholder, the third design direction was chosen. This selection was made based on the expected influence on the establishment of a loyal relationship in each direction, with an emphasis on the practical implementation and usability within the context of Schuberg Philis and its B2B relationships.

To guide this selection, a list of three criteria was formalized:

#### **1. Less or minimal involvement from the customer**

Involvement of the customer in the process makes the establishment of loyal relationships depend on the available time, effort, and commitment of the customer. Research showed that external suppliers, like SBP, are not the priority of customers. "Talking to an external supplier is not their priority."

#### **2. Fitting in the busy B2B environment of the user**

Time is valuable in a B2B context, minimal time-consuming or time-dependent designs are desired.

#### **3. Ability to guide users through the establishment of loyal B2B relationships.**

At SBP guidance in the establishment of loyal relationships to transition towards a business outcome-driven relationship is desired. Providing clear and useful insights into this establishment creates better guidance.



# 6.3 Steps towards the value playbook

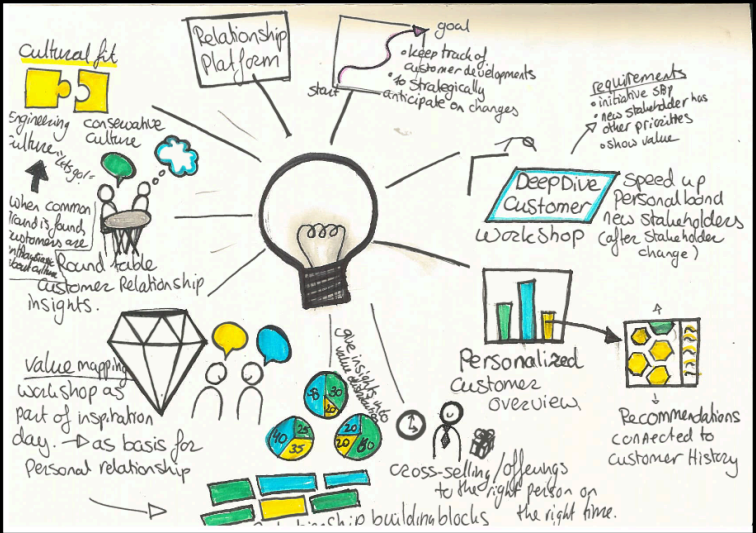


Figure 22: Brainstorming

## Brainstorming

A second brainstorming session was used to generate new ideas. The focus of this session was to think outside the box and explore other design directions, see Figure 22. After this brainstorming session, two ideas were further explored. The main objective of the ideas was focused on providing insights into the path towards establishing loyal B2B relationships and how to understand the current relationship as well as how to influence the establishment of these relationships by understanding the different customer values of a loyal B2B relationship, see Table 3. Based upon the criteria defined in 6.2, one idea was selected and further developed into a concept.

During multiple iteration rounds, different options to share the knowledge and guide SBP towards business outcome-driven partnerships were explored.

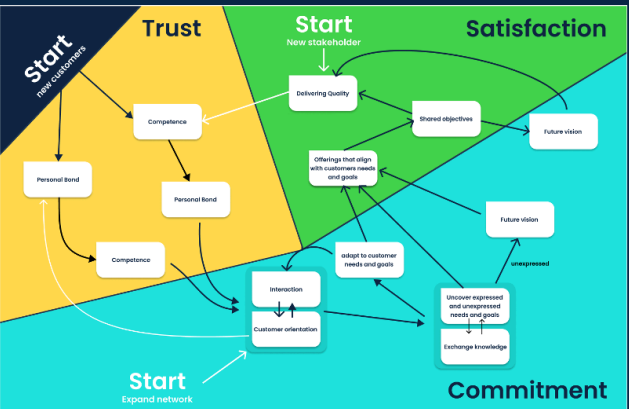


Figure 23: First concept

## First concept

The first concept that was explored was a value dashboard. The main objective of the dashboard was to provide an interactive tool for internal stakeholders to gain knowledge and understanding on the establishment of customer values and to give insights into the path towards loyal customer engagements between Schuberg Philis and the customers. The dashboard would have several functions to provide knowledge on the values that influence the establishment of loyal customer relationships, provide a path towards loyal B2B relationships, and give insights into the history of the B2B relationship. See Appendix E.3 for the design of the value dashboard.

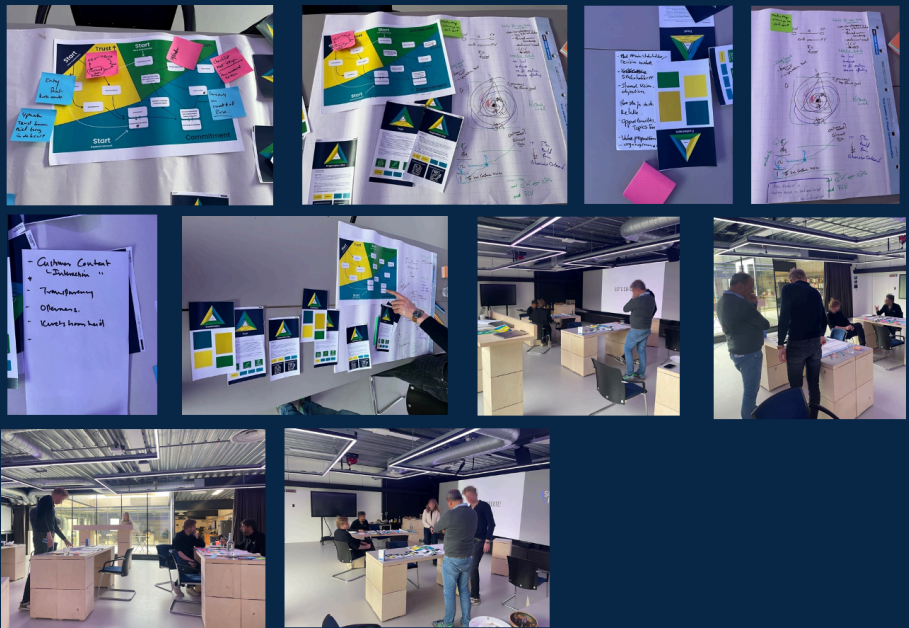


Figure 24: Co creation session

## Cocreation session

A cocreation session with internal stakeholders gave insights into the possible use of the dashboard and shifted the focus of the design. Different iterations followed this cocreation session and an alternative design was tested, see Appendix E.6 & E.7. These iterations resulted into changing the interactive dashboard focused on tracking the establishment of the relationships into a playbook focused on sharing gained knowledge and providing guidance in this process. Appendix E.4 provides insights into the co-creation session.

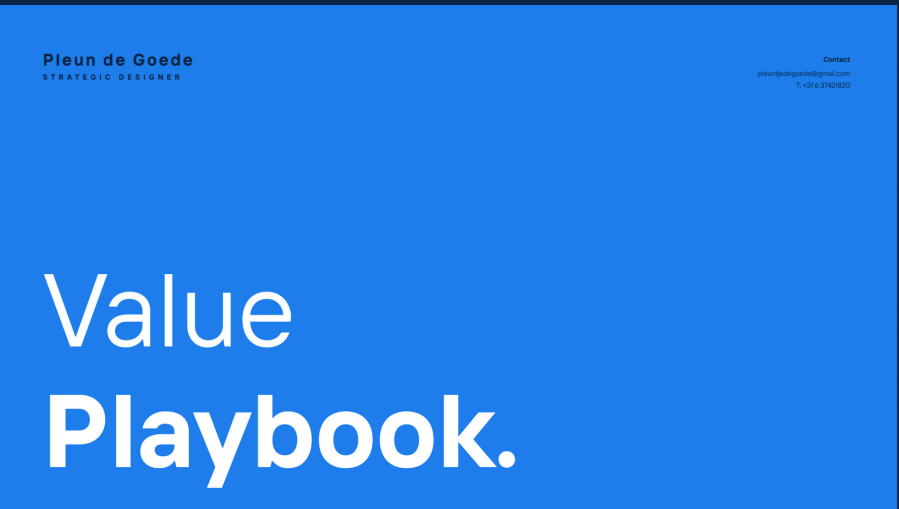


Figure 25: Value Playbook

## The playbook

Feedback and insights from the co-creation session were the basis for a new idea: designing a playbook to guide SBP towards the establishment of loyal B2B relationships and transition towards business outcome-driven partnerships. The playbook guides its users through the establishment of business outcome-driven partnerships. the playbook provides insights and knowledge on the values influencing the establishment of loyal relationships and guides the creation of a shared future vision. This shared future vision functions as the bridge between a loyal customer relationship and a business outcome-driven partnership.

The different steps, ideas, and iterations leading to the final design are shown in Appendix E.

### Validation session

A validation session with a business consultant of SBP was conducted to test the playbook. To test the playbook without knowledge of the research or goal of the design, the participant had not been involved in the research leading up to the design or in the co-creation session. The playbook was shown digitally during an MS Teams meeting. The goal was to gain insights into the clarity of the playbook, its potential use, and the added value of the playbook to transition towards business outcome-driven partnerships. See Appendix E.4 for the set-up and questions of the validation session.

This validation session resulted in two main feedback areas:

**Storyline:** To show where the reader is in the story, explain the structure of the model and help the reader with color cues and a ruler.

**Use of the book:** A conversation about the potential users of the playbook broadened the scope from a focus on the business consultants and sales department of SBP to include also the engineers in the CTs.

### Implementation

The playbook will be printed and placed in the library of the Lab's department of SBP next to other design and strategy books. SBP has a lot of places in the office where employees have time to sit down, rest, or get a cup of coffee. The playbook will be placed here so that people can get a look and spark their interest. At the office, there are multiple places to have a break, get a coffee, and sit down.

A presentation during the weekly meeting of the complete sales department will be the first step to implementing the playbook. A presentation about the research leading to the playbook and an explanation of the playbook will introduce the sales directors to the playbook. The presentation will focus on the added of playbook value during the implementation of the new value proposition and the cross-selling of services.

The network established during this research will be used to introduce the playbook to the business consultants at SBP. The business consultants involved in the research will receive a copy of the playbook and will be invited for an informal meeting explaining the playbook. This network will also be used to introduce the playbook to the other interested people working at SBP.

Through the position of management role of the business consultants and sales directors, the playbook will be introduced to the engineers at the customer teams. Their direct connection with the engineers and the lead tech engineer will spread the value playbook through the organization.

## 6.4 The Playbook

### Design brief

Design a playbook for SBP to gain knowledge on the establishment of loyal B2B relationships and create guidance enable SBP to build the bridge towards business outcome driven relationships.

### The user

The playbook is designed to be used internally by employees of SBP who aim to increase their understanding of their relationship with the customer.

#### Sales directors

For the sales department, this playbook can help them to connect the newly introduced value proposition of SBP with the relationships they have established with their customers. The new value approach of SBP is introduced to increase cross-selling, the selling of additional services to customers that they are already engaged with. The playbook will be especially valuable to create the connection between their concrete goal of more cross-selling of the services of SBP and how to develop the relationship towards a loyal relationship where a growing role of SBP is also desired by the customer.

#### Business consultants

For business consultants within SBP, this playbook gives an overview of the steps to take with the customer. It helps to guide the path they are taking with the customer and to be aware of the established values, as well as the values that are not (yet) established or might be missed. And it helps them to give a clear overview of how they could take the next step with their customer, and what is required to be able to take this step. This playbook provides a cohesive approach to building the bridge toward a business outcome-driven partnership.

#### Engineers at the Customer teams

For the engineers in the customer teams, this playbook gives insights into their role in the establishment of a shared future vision. How their work at the office of the customer is important for the growing role of SBP within the organization of the customer. Because they can establish personal bonds with the employees of the customer and should be aware of possible opportunities for SBP within the same department or for other departments of the customers. It also helps them to understand the value they deliver besides the technical service. By understanding the function of IT for the business of the customer. And how they can help to build the bridge towards a business outcome-driven partnership with the customer they are working for.





Figure 26: The Ideal route

## The playbook

The playbook shows how SBP can establish loyal B2B relationships, to create a shared future vision towards business outcome-driven partnerships, see Figure 26. The information is divided into four different sections and can be read from front to back or each section can be read separately. For the full content of the playbook, see the Value playbook, handed in separately.

**The first section** is focused on providing information about relationship values. The section will provide information on the values of trust, commitment, and satisfaction and their role during the establishment of loyal B2B relationships.

**The second section** of the playbook will build upon this knowledge by providing the Value Compass. This compass will guide the user through the different relationship values to establish a loyal relationship and create a shared future vision toward business outcome-driven relationships. Each step of this path is explained separately. This provides insights into the different stages and enables users to understand their relationships and take the right steps to establish loyalty and create a shared future vision.

**The third section** of the playbook gives more insights into the ambition of SBP to establish business outcome-driven relationships. An overview and explanation of the workshops that can help to create a loyal relationship and establish a shared future vision.

**The last section** provides more in-depth information on the value categories of trust, commitment, and satisfaction. Together with a list of impactful events and interactions, and a case example of the path toward a business outcome-driven partnership. This section can be used as a reference that readers can browse through or gain more in-depth knowledge.

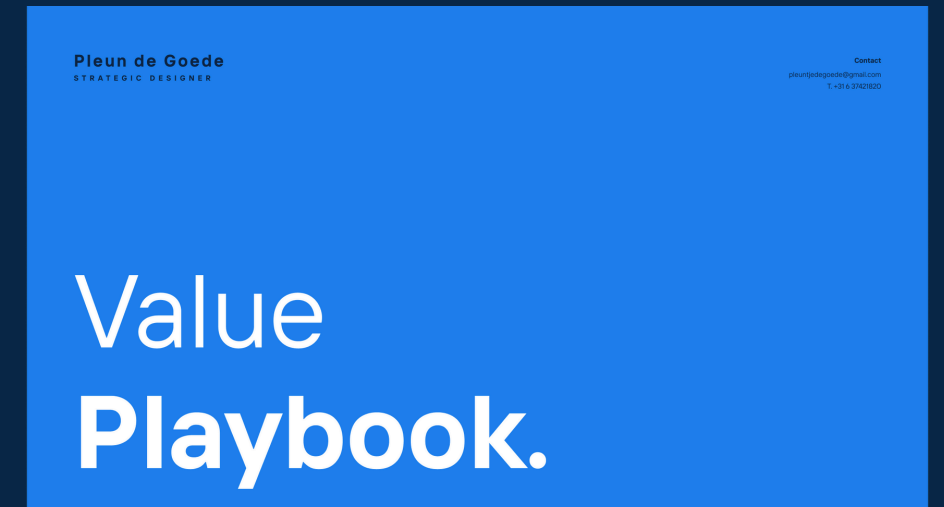


Figure 27: The playbook

A large, light blue number 7 is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the slide, serving as a background element for the title.

# Conclusion & Discussion

## 7.1 Project Conclusion

The insights from the three research rounds are combined in this section to answer the research question: “How can SBP establish loyal customer relationships to accelerate the transition towards business outcome-driven partnerships”.

Research into the establishment of loyal B2B relationships resulted in a context-specific value framework. This context-specific value framework is proposed in Chapter 5.4 shows the relationship values influencing the establishment of a loyal B2B relationship between SBP and its customers.

The insights from the four cases researched (see Chapter 5.2) provide guidance to establish the values introduced in the context framework. The researched cases resulted in an overview of the events and interactions that influence the establishment of the relationship values. By influencing these values the establishment of loyal customer relationships is influenced. Providing SBP insights into the values that are influenced by the events and interactions guides them on the path towards the establishment of loyal customer relationships.

By creating insights into the establishment of loyal B2B relationships and how SBP can influence the establishment of loyal B2B relationships the foundation for the transition towards business outcome-driven partnerships is made. By conducting interviews with internal stakeholders, the definition of this ambition is generalized to create a clear understanding of the desired strategic direction.

Resulting in the definition of business outcome-driven partnerships: A "business-driven outcome" involves developing solutions that arise from business needs, prioritizing strategic goals, driving business progress, and sustaining competitive advantage. The outcome is characterized by having business objectives at its core while leveraging IT as an enabler. Success in this area requires a cooperative effort between business and IT stakeholders, working together to uncover future possibilities and challenges.

The foundation for the transition of SBP to business outcome-driven partnerships was to create a general definition for this ambition. Loyal B2B relationships are required to enable the transition to this desired strategic direction. Creating a shared future vision can build the bridge between the loyal customer relationship and the desired business-driven outcome partnership. The context frameworks resulting from the textual analysis of the internal and external data show the central role of a future vision in the B2B relationships of SBP and its customers, as shown in Figure 11 & 12 .

When a loyal B2B relationship is established, the next step is to create a future vision together, a shared future vision between SBP and the customer. As defined in chapter 5.1 the success of a business outcome-driven partnership depends on “the cooperative effort between business and IT stakeholders, working together to uncover future possibilities and challenges”. By connecting the contextual loyalty framework to the strategic direction of SBP towards business outcome-driven partnerships, a shared future vision together with the customer creates the bridge that accelerates the transition into this new strategic direction.

The playbook designed for SBP creates insights into the establishment of loyal B2B relationships and accelerates the transformation towards business outcome-driven relationships by providing guidance in creating a shared future vision.

## 7.2 Implications

By integrating the B2B value framework into their organization, SBP will increase their understanding, establishment, and management of loyal relationships.

The playbook developed from this study will guide SBP on this path towards the establishment of loyal B2B relationships, creating a shared future vision towards a business-driven outcome. Customers are encouraged to use the playbook to increase transparency and find shared goals in their relationship with SBP.

The B2B value framework could serve as a basis for other IT outsourcers aiming to understand their own B2B relationships or develop their own playbook. It is especially beneficial when aiming to transition towards a new strategic direction.

This study contributes to the existing literature by using a two-sided qualitative research approach, as a one-sided, hypothesis-testing approach is more common in B2B research. This study is a foundation for future studies aiming to enrich the current literature on B2B outsourcing relationships. The B2B framework could be complemented by researching other IT outsourcers or outsourcers in other sectors.

## 7.3 limitations

This project is focused on the B2B relationships of SBP. Four relationships formed the basis for the creation of a general approach to establish loyal B2B relationships and transition towards business outcome-driven partnerships.

The first limitation of this study is the focus of the study on B2B relationships with customers of different industries.

The focus of this study was on the similarities of the B2B relationships and identifying the steps leading to the establishment of loyal B2B relationships. Sector-specific elements needed for the creation of loyal B2B relationships within an industry could be missed or falsely identified as not influential.

A second limitation is the focus of SBP on mission-critical outsourcing. Because mission-critical outsourcing is focused on managing the core applications of the customer, the relationships with their customers could be different from other IT outsourcers not focused on the core applications of the customer. This could ask for extra steps or another starting position to transition towards business outcome-driven partnerships with their customers.

The proposed path towards the establishment of loyal customer relationships and transition towards business outcome-driven relationships is based upon the research into four B2B relationships of SBP. The proposed context-specific framework to establish loyal B2B relationships should be further tested with other relationships of SBP to generalize the values in the framework for broader implementation.

The use of a shared future vision between SBP and their customers to transition toward business outcome-driven partnerships is shown by this study. However, the identified enabler of the creation of a shared future vision to transition from loyal B2B relationships towards business outcome-driven partnerships should be further researched before implementation by other IT outsourcers.

## 7.4 Recommendations

This research was focused on four B2B relationships of SBP. These cases were selected based on their IT-driven or Business outcome-driven relationship. Although these four cases give insights into the establishment of loyal B2B relationships at SBP, the differences between the relationship goals and the sectors of the cases were also visible. This research was focused on finding common values and general approaches. Further research into B2B relationships of SBP could create more in-depth insights into the variables responsible for the different relationships.

This research has created a general approach to transition towards business outcome-driven partnerships by establishing loyal B2B relationships and creating a shared future vision. The focus of this research was on the establishment of loyal B2B relationships, which is fundamental for the transition. This research identifies a shared future vision as a bridge between the current situation and the desired situation. Further research into the establishment of this shared future vision in the context of IT outsourcing could possibly further accelerate the transition towards business outcome driven partnerships.



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# Appendix

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# A: Company

## A.1 Company structure

Customer teams range in size from five to twenty-five employees working on the same project for a customer. Some customers have multiple customer teams working on different projects, then customer teams can increase up to 35-40 people. The whole customer team operates as one team as well as separate teams, with frequent separate meetings and a monthly team meeting with the whole customer team.

The mission-critical engineer forms the core of the customer team. There are different responsibilities in the customer team, from tech lead to security lead or data protection lead. A customer team also has non-engineering roles with a specific function, like a consultant or data scientist, called subject matter experts. A customer operations manager (COM) is responsible for the satisfaction of the customer as well as the employees in the customer team (CT). A COM is also responsible for the recruitment of the customer team and the future perspective of the team. Together with the tech lead and the sales director, the COM forms the account team for one customer.

The account team (AT) discusses tactical, strategic, and commercial topics relevant to the customer. The people in the AT (or a subset) participate in the steering committee meetings with the customer and are the primary point of contact for the steering committee. The AT takes the lead in a rolling year plan to deliver on the customer team's promise to the customer, innovation plan and new opportunities, customer satisfaction, team satisfaction and dynamics, risk assessment, and financial performance.

The customer teams are structured into greater customer teams (GCT), categorized per sector/market of the customer or the office location of SBP. The customer will be a part of a GCT that is geographically closest to the customer and then categorized into a GCT that is closest to the customer's business. The reason for this is that SBP wants to combine their expertise around the markets of their customers to better serve their needs, especially when they aim to climb on the value chain from infrastructure to software and business processes. These greater teams have the goal to drive entrepreneurial spirit and growth: GCTs have a lot of autonomy on how to define and reach their goals and make it easier to onboard new customers and team members.

SBP has four GCTs: asset management, financial service, public utilities and retail, and Rotterdam.

Asset management serves customers involved in payments, pensions, and asset management. Financial service has customers in banking and insurance, public utilities and retail in utilities, retail and food& beverage. The GCT of Rotterdam serves customers in the transport and logistics market and the public sector.

Every GCT has a managing director, a member of the overall sales council, a member of the overall customer operations manager council, and a member of the overall technology council.

Other pillars of the company structure of SBP are the Services team, Labs team, and Central team.

Services facilitate the colloques of SBP with IT solutions and processes to run the business, together with facilitating new scalable solutions that are used by customer teams to serve their customers.

The innovative projects within SBP are driven by or with the help of the Labs team. By combining design thinking, innovation, and business-oriented problem-solving with IT, the development of new

capabilities within SBP is accelerated. The labs team aims to facilitate the company's transition into the role of an innovation partner and further develop b2b relationships.

The central team consists of four to ten colleagues that do not directly serve the customer but support all the teams and colleagues at SBP.

The highest decision-making body of SBP is the Council. This is the link between the different pillars of SBP. They represent the entire company and make changes or decisions that influence the whole company.

## A.2 Wat is already done?

SBP has taken multiple steps to accelerate this transformation. By concentrating their existing relationships on achieving business-driven outcomes, Schuberg Philis aims to deepen engagement with their customers. Conversations, ideas, and proposals are strategically aligned towards business-driven outcomes, marking the initial step in this strategic direction.

Hiring Business Consultants

By hiring business consultants, SBP has strengthened its ability to translate business questions into IT solutions and gained deeper expertise in uncovering the underlying business questions behind IT requests. These additional capabilities enable SBP to engage more effectively with the core business needs of their customers, moving closer to achieving business-driven outcomes. Together with sales directors, business consultants actively seek ways to steer engagements towards a business-driven outcome.

Innovation Lab

The Labs team at SBP organizes inspiration days to stimulate discussions and uncover customers' problems, needs, and objectives, initiating conversations about future opportunities and demonstrating the potential of business-driven engagements. Additionally, the Labs team facilitates concept sprints, involving co-creation with customers to explore and develop collaborative solutions. Beyond workshops, Lab271 conducts experiments with evolving technologies, ensuring SBP remains at the forefront of innovation. They aim to inspire customers towards innovative ideas and collaborations by showcasing the potential of technological advancements.

Value proposition

SBP seeks to accelerate its business transformation by enhancing the cross-selling of applications and use cases. By developing a value proposition that categorizes and visualizes all SBP's technological values, the company aims to broaden understanding and engagement for both customers and employees. This strategy focuses on expanding SBP's role and influence with customers by providing a clear overview of potential future customer engagements and opportunities.

# B: Literature

## B.1 The evolution toward business and IT alignment

This literature review examines the increasing significance of information technology (IT) over time to gain insight into the evolution of IT's importance within a customer's organization. The degree of alignment between the IT and business functions within an organization affects the customer's perception of the role of an IT outsourcer in gaining or sustaining a competitive advantage. An essential element in this process is the alignment of the interests and strategies of the IT department and the business within the organization. This alignment is critical to enable Schuberg Philis to pursue a strategic direction towards a business-driven outcome.

### The Evolution of Business and IT Alignment

Since the 1970s, extensive research has been conducted on the alignment of business and IT, as well as the roles of executives in this alignment (Luftman, 2001). In 1989, Henderson and Venkatraman discussed the concept of recognizing IT as a catalyst for innovation, strategic alignment, and business transformation. They underscored the necessity of aligning IT as a strategic partner for organizations to fully capitalize on market dynamics and innovation potential (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1989). Weill and Broadbent (1998) additionally asserted that aligning IT investments and initiatives with the overarching strategic vision of the organization enables businesses to optimize operations, enhance customer experiences, and capitalize on emerging market opportunities.

In 1995, Raymond, Pare, and Bergeron highlighted the significance of aligning IT with organizational structure, positing it as a crucial enabler of success. Their empirical study of 108 small and medium-sized manufacturing firms revealed that effective IT usage has a positive impact on organizational performance. Furthermore, high-performing firms demonstrated a stronger relationship between IT and management, as well as structural sophistication (Raymond et al., 1995). Despite that during that period, the role of IT was still primarily defined by its role in maintaining infrastructure and providing technical assistance (Adama, Popoola, Okeke, & Akinoso, 2024) IT had already become an essential enabler of business strategies, fostering mass customization, competitive differentiation, quality improvements, and process automation (Bruce, 1998).

However, significant innovations in computer hardware, software, and networks have transformed the role of IT (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2012). These rapid technological developments resulted in the current business environment, where technological disruption has become the norm (Ezeigweneme et al., 2024). Company officers who have integrated IT with business strategies argue that this alignment is crucial for the firm's continued viability and success (Weiss & Anderson, 2004) and essential for leveraging IT as a strategic asset (Weiss & Thorogood, 2011). Consequently, organizations that fail to align their IT capabilities risk falling behind their competitors. In contrast, those that prioritize alignment can leverage technology to achieve strategic objectives, adapt to market dynamics, and deliver superior value to customers (Ezeigweneme et al., 2024). Prominent IT experts posit that chief information officers (CIOs) are under pressure to align IT for strategic purposes due to competitive market forces (Weiss & Thorogood, 2011).

An IT strategy outlines how technology will support and enable the achievement of business objectives. This involves the identification of IT investments, initiatives, capabilities, and governance structures that are necessary to align IT with business priorities. Such considerations may include digital transformation, optimization of IT infrastructure, management of application portfolios, cybersecurity, and data analytics (Adama et al., 2024). The term "organizational infrastructure" refers to the structural, cultural, and managerial elements that shape how work is organized, executed, and governed within an organization. These elements influence the organization's ability to execute its business and IT strategies and adapt to changes in its environment (Adama et al., 2024).

Companies typically experience stages ranging from foundational integration, where basic IT processes support business functions, to advanced strategic alignment, where IT is fully integrated and drives business innovation. The intermediate stages often involve partial integration, where IT supports some strategic goals but lacks a comprehensive approach. This progression is crucial as businesses strive to leverage technology for competitive advantage and market responsiveness (Luftman, 2008; El Sawy, 2003). The process of aligning IT with business strategy entails the formulation, integration, and implementation of decisions between the business and IT sectors (David, 2003; as cited in Reynolds, 2015). Effective alignment is conducive to innovation, efficiency, and differentiation (Adegbite et al., 2023).

The evolution model for the strategic alignment of IT and business, as proposed by Wang et al. (2015), describes four stages of alignment. In the Pre-era, there was no correlation between business strategy and IT strategy. In the Former era, the business strategy served as the primary driver of the IT strategy, with the alignment concept

facilitating this process. In the competitive era, business strategy is influenced by IT strategy, which is used as a competitive weapon. In the complex system era, the business strategy and IT strategy are both in play at the same time, functioning as a complex adaptive system (Wang et al., 2015).

By aligning IT investments with strategic priorities, organizations can transform technology into a competitive advantage that drives business success and reinforces IT's strategic importance. This process requires continuous innovation, adaptation, and diligence to ensure IT capabilities remain aligned with evolving business needs and market dynamics (Adama et al., 2024). Dynamic capabilities support this alignment by enabling organizations to identify and respond to emerging opportunities and threats (Teece, 2007). Additionally, these capabilities allow organizations to reconfigure their IT infrastructure, processes, and structures to adapt to changing business requirements (Daraojimba et al., 2024).

The achievement of sustained competitive advantage through the alignment of IT and business strategy requires a comprehensive approach that considers strategic planning, technology adoption, organizational change, and continuous improvement. It is essential that organizations concentrate their alignment efforts on strategic objectives and market dynamics, focusing on areas with the greatest potential for value creation and differentiation (Adama et al., 2024).



### Challenges and dynamics of IT-Business alignment

Despite the significance of this issue, there is a shortage of guidance on the establishment and maintenance of alignment between business and IT strategies (Avison et al., 2004). To meet the challenges of the digital age, managers and decision-makers must transform organizational routines and structures. This is particularly important given that many companies are struggling to adapt to disruptive changes affecting all industries (Berghaus & Back, 2016). Information systems (IS) research has primarily concentrated on the adoption and diffusion of information technology (IT) rather than on the development of novel concepts for leveraging IT to drive business innovation. The factors influencing business innovation with IT have been identified as proactiveness, leadership, creativity, organizational vision, mindfulness, top management support, experience, organizational climate, organizational structure, and competitive advantage (Zaman & Fielt, 2016).

### Industry-Specific Dynamics

The impact of IT on business dynamics and structural changes is dependent on the industry in question (Pesce & Neirotti, 2023). The characteristics of an industry serve to determine the type of IT that is needed, its application, the value that is created, and the firm's ability to capture this value through specific business strategies. Aligning a firm's strategy with its industry environment is crucial for success (Pesce & Neirotti, 2023). The emergence of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, is driving the implementation of novel actions and innovative approaches (Pesce & Neirotti, 2023). The performance of a firm is contingent upon the implementation of a business strategy, whether that be differentiation, cost leadership, or a combination thereof. The impact that IT has on a firm's performance is dependent upon the varying strategic roles that IT plays across a range of industries (Pesce & Neirotti, 2023).

Organizations are undergoing a transformation from a single-line-of-business structure to a multi-business organizational structure (MBO), becoming more digitized and integrating information technology more deeply into their strategies to create new business models. This evolution requires an increased capacity for flexibility in response to environmental changes and developments within the industry (El Sawy, 2003; Orlikowski, 2009; as cited in Reynolds, 2015). However, MBOs are confronted with unique challenges regarding alignment, given that business strategies are developed at both the corporate and the individual strategic business unit (SBU) levels. In this context, functional, structural, and dynamic alignments coexist, with IT enabling the development of new business models, competing across SBUs, and shaping subsequent strategy choices (Sabherwal et al., 2001; Reynolds, 2015).

### New Roles and Strategies for IT and Business Leaders

The alignment of IT and business strategies has led to the emergence of new roles within both IT and business, including political and cultural negotiators, business problem-solvers, project sellers, and cross-functional communicators (Weiss & Anderson, 2004). Recent developments have concentrated on aligning leaders and resources with business strategy and objectives at the project level, thereby underscoring the strategic significance of IT projects (Weiss & Thorogood, 2011). By aligning IT investments with strategic priorities, organizations can transform technology into a competitive advantage that drives business success and reinforces IT's strategic importance. This process requires continuous innovation, adaptation, and vigilance to ensure IT capabilities remain aligned with evolving business needs and market dynamics (Adama et al., 2024). Dynamic capabilities support this alignment by enabling organizations to identify and respond to emerging opportunities and threats (Teece, 2007).

Additionally, these capabilities allow organizations to reconfigure their IT infrastructure, processes, and structures to adapt to changing business requirements (Daraojimba et al., 2024).

### Continuous Alignment and Adaptation

The achievement of alignment requires the collaboration and integration of business and IT departments, the dissolving of internal organizational silos, the fostering of cross-functional teamwork, and the alignment of incentives and goals. This ongoing process necessitates continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment to guarantee that IT investments and initiatives remain aligned with evolving business needs and priorities. The inability to maintain internal and external business/IT relationships, difficulty implementing change, lack of senior management support, and a resistant organizational culture are significant factors contributing to alignment failure (Atwell & Rule, 1991; Gummesson, 2000). In a survey of CIOs and other executives, IT and business alignment was identified as the primary concern (Luftman, 2008). Luftman and McLean (2004) underscored the importance of IT executives acquiring a comprehensive understanding of the businesses in which they operate and working towards achieving alignment between IT activities and business goals. It is essential that organizations engage suppliers and customers in the strategic development process. The success of IT-business alignment is contingent upon the support of senior executives, the involvement of IT in strategy development, the establishment of a robust business-IT partnership, the prioritization of IT projects, and the presence of effective IT leadership. Conversely, the lack of alignment can be attributed to poor IT-business relationships, inadequate prioritization, unmet commitments, and a lack of understanding of business needs (Weiss & Thorogood, 2011).

Henderson and Venkatraman (1990) argue that no organization can achieve perfect alignment due to the constant evolution of business and technology. However, alignment occurs most effectively in environments characterized by clear definition, commitment, communication, and cross-functional integration. This dynamic approach requires organizations to persistently reinvent themselves both strategically and technologically.

By directly linking IT initiatives to both external market performance and internal performance objectives of the firm, IT alignment can be used as a strategic weapon. This type of alignment necessitates the transformative integration of resources across the entire enterprise and requires leaders who possess both strategic business acumen and technological expertise. By leveraging IT in this way, organizations can drive significant competitive advantages that are deeply integrated with the firm's overall strategy. However, identifying and implementing these transformative IT-based initiatives remains a challenge for many CEOs and technology leaders (Weiss & Thorogood, 2011). A 2008 survey by McKinsey involving 548 executives found that 59% of companies developed multiyear IT plans, with 56% stating their IT strategies include technology-driven business innovations. Two-thirds of executives believe integrating business and IT strategy more closely is essential to achieving greater outcomes (Weiss & Thorogood, 2011).

B.2 Values in B2B relationships and their references

Value/factor	Literature reference
<b>Cooperation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- efforts &amp; behaviors less influential</li><li>- Salesperson characteristics and the relationship itself are more influential</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lussier &amp; Hall, 2017</li><li>- Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, &amp; Evans, 2006</li><li>- Anderson &amp; Narus, 1990</li><li>- Morgan &amp; Hunt, 1994</li><li>- Payan et al., 2016</li><li>- Yen &amp; Barnes, 2011</li><li>- Andersen &amp; Kumar (2005)</li><li>- Dwyer et al., 1987</li></ul>
Improving relationship quality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Hennig-Thurau et al.2002</li><li>- Crosby et al., 1990;</li><li>- Dwyer et al., 1987;</li><li>- Shandasani and Balakrishnan, 2000</li><li>- Chumpitaz Caceres &amp; Paparoidamis, 2007</li></ul>
<b>satisfaction, commitment and trust</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Madruga, 2021</li><li>- Cheng (2006)</li><li>- Bagdoniene &amp; Zilione (2009),</li><li>- Chumpitaz Caceres &amp; Paparoidamis, 2007</li></ul>
<b>Satisfaction</b>  <b>mutual value creation, trust, and commitment; the greater the level of customer satisfaction with the relationship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Andersen &amp; Kumar (2005)</li><li>- Anderson &amp; Narus, 1990;</li><li>- Spekman, Isabella, MacAvoy, &amp; Forbes, 1996</li><li>- Andersen, 2001;</li><li>- Cova &amp; Salle, 2000;</li><li>- Witkowski &amp; Thibodeau, 1999).</li><li>- Das &amp; Teng, 1998</li><li>- Kumar &amp; Nti, 1998</li><li>- Arino, dela Torre, &amp; Ring, 2001</li></ul>
Trustworthiness/ trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lussier &amp; Hall, 2017</li><li>- Yen &amp; Barnes, 2011</li><li>- Dwyer et al. 1987</li><li>- Yen&amp;Barnes, 2011</li><li>- Madruga, 2021</li></ul>
<b>Long-term salesperson-customer relationship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lussier &amp; Hall (2017)</li><li>- Homburg &amp; Jensen, 2007/</li></ul>
<u>Customer orientation</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Wright (2004)</li></ul>
<b>Strategic and cultural fit and knowledge exchange</b>  <b>ability to understand and adapt to the customer's needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Brennan et al., 2003,</li><li>- La et al., 2009</li><li>- Das, 2009</li><li>- Gronroos, 1990a; 1990b; 1994;</li><li>- Harker, 1999</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ivanković, 2008</li><li>- Kumar,2020</li><li>- Madruga, 2021</li><li>- Hilton et al., 2020</li></ul>
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Verbeke, Dietz, &amp; Verwaal, 2011</li><li>- Rapp, Bachrach, Panagopoulos, &amp; Ogilvie, 2014</li></ul>
<b>Salesperson possesses low levels of self-efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lussier &amp; Hall, 2017</li><li>- Ahearne, Mathieu, &amp; Rapp, 2005</li><li>- Brown, Jones, &amp; Leigh, 2005</li><li>- Richards, Hughes, &amp; Jones, 2010</li><li>- Sujan, Weitz, &amp; Kumar, 1994</li></ul>
<b>Salesperson as an expert</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lussier &amp; Hall, 2017</li><li>- Doney &amp; Cannon, 1997.</li><li>- Palmatier et al., 2006.</li><li>- Palmer &amp; Bejou, 1994</li></ul>
Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Chumpitaz Caceres &amp; Paparoidamis, 2007</li><li>- Goala, 2003</li><li>- Morgan and Hunt, 1994</li></ul>
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Chumpitaz Caceres &amp; Paparoidamis, 2007</li><li>- Parasuraman et al., 1985.</li><li>- Reichheld and Sasser, 1990.</li><li>- Zeithaml et al., 1990, 1996</li></ul>
<b>Commitment as dimension of Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Hennig-Thurau and Klee, 1997.</li><li>- Leuthesser, 1997.</li><li>- Dorsch et al., 1998.</li><li>- Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002.</li><li>- Roberts et al., 2003.</li><li>- Hewett et al., 2002).</li><li>- Chumpitaz Caceres &amp; Paparoidamis, 2007</li></ul>
<b>Commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Moorman et al. (1992)</li><li>- Porter et al., 1974</li><li>- Farrell and Rusbult, 1981</li><li>- Goala, 2003</li><li>- Scholl, 1981</li></ul>
<b>Better Quality results in greater satisfaction, trust and commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Wulf et al. (2001)</li><li>- Crosby et al., 1990.</li><li>- Chumpitaz Caceres &amp; Paparoidamis, 2007</li></ul>

<b>cooperation, adaptation and atmosphere as first-order constructs determining overall relationship quality.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Woo and Ennew (2004),</li><li>- Chumpitaz Caceres &amp; Paparoidamis, 2007</li></ul>
<b>ability to meet deadlines</b>	- Gounaris, 2005
<b>to stay within the customer's budget</b>	- Gounaris, 2005
<b>openness and creativity in exploring and finding solutions for the customer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Brennan et al. 2003</li><li>- La et al. 2019</li></ul>
<b>innovative market segmentation,</b>	- Madruga, 2021
<b>Safety associated with the choice of one supplier instead of another,</b>	- Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007
<b>transparency governing a (business) relationship</b>	- Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007
<b>fulfilling promises through mutual exchange,</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Das, 2009</li><li>- Gronroos, 1990a; 1990b; 1994</li><li>- Harker, 1999</li><li>- Ivanković, 2008</li><li>- kumar,2020</li></ul>
<b>objectives of all stakeholders are met</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Das, 2009</li><li>- Gronroos, 1990a; 1990b; 1994</li><li>- Harker, 1999</li><li>- Ivanković, 2008</li><li>- kumar,2020</li></ul>
<b>Emotions emotions play a crucial role in the initiation, the development and the sustenance of relationships over time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Crosby et al., 1990</li><li>- Crosby &amp; Stephens, 1987</li><li>- Gronroos (1990a, 1990b)</li><li>- Geyskens, Steenkamp, &amp; Kumar, 1998</li><li>- Kumar, 1997</li><li>- Lawler, 2001</li><li>- Ben ZèEv, 2001</li><li>- Carnevale &amp; Isen, 1986</li><li>- Isen, Shalker, Clark, &amp; Karp, 1978</li><li>- Greenhalgh &amp; Chapman, 1999</li><li>- Lussier &amp; Hall, 2018</li><li>- Kidwell et al., 2011</li><li>- Lussier, Grégoire, &amp; Vachon, 2017</li></ul>
<u>Rationality (and emotions)</u>	- Gronroos (1990a, 1990b)
<b>Interaction Maintaining solid links with customers Multiple contact points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Gummesson, 2008</li><li>- Kumar, 2020</li><li>- Madruga, 2021</li><li>- Peck et al., 1999</li><li>- Andersen &amp; Kumar (2005)</li><li>- Nielson (1998).</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Crosby and Stevens 1987</li></ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Grimes-Rose, Zboja, &amp; Laird (2024)</li><li>- Lanning (2019)</li><li>- Madruga, 2021</li><li>- Baker &amp; Hart, 2008</li></ul>
<b>Personalized and two-way “get an important job done”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Johnson, Christensen, &amp; Kagermann, 2008</li><li>- Lanning (2019).</li><li>- Gronroos (1990a, 1990b)</li></ul>
<b>Prove of good job Objectives are met</b>	
<b>be profit-oriented, with mutual exchange and fulfilling promises</b>	- Gronroos (1990a, 1990b)
<b>Decentralized organizational structure, Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Madruga, 2021</li><li>- Varki &amp; Wong, 2003</li></ul>
<b>Personal relations Interpersonal dynamics.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Andersen &amp; Kumar (2005)</li><li>- Cheng (2006)</li><li>- Brierty, Eckles, &amp; Reeder, 1998;</li><li>- Coviello, Brodie, &amp; Munro, 2000;</li><li>- Geyskens &amp; Steenkamp, 2000;</li><li>- Keillor, Parker, &amp; Petijohn, 2000</li></ul>
<b>Personal chemistry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Bruner &amp; Spekman, 1998</li><li>- Tully, 1996</li><li>- Cheng 2006</li></ul>
<b>Frequency of contact Relationship atmosphere</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Hallén &amp; Sandström, 1991;</li><li>- Sandström, 1992</li></ul>
<b>Relationship atmosphere is defined by Williamson (1975) as: (1) power/dependence balance; (2) cooperativeness/competitiveness; (3) trust/opportunism; (4) understanding; (5) closeness/distance; and (6) commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Williamson 1975</li><li>- Chumpitaz Caceres &amp; Paparoidamis, 2007</li></ul>
<b>longevity, frequency of contact, efficient and satisfactory service</b>	- Cheng (2006)



# C: Research

## C.1 Consent form

### Informed Consent Form

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled “Accelerating the transition from an IT driven relationship to a Business outcome driven relationship by increasing the customer Loyalty”. This study is being done by Pleun de Goede from the TU Delft and Schuberg Philis.

The purpose of this research study is gaining insights on the key events in the establishment of an B2B relationship and will take you approximately 30 minutes to complete. The data will be used for a master thesis. We will be asking you to talk about your experiences and insights during this process.

As with any online activity the risk of a breach is always possible. To the best of our ability your answers in this study will remain confidential. We will minimize any risks by storing the data in the Schuberg Philis SharePoint and anonymizing the data.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You are free to omit any questions.  
Personal research data will be destroyed after the end of the research project. |

Signatures

Name of participant.

Signature

Date

I, as researcher, have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

\_\_\_\_Pleun de Goede\_\_\_\_

Researcher name

\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_

Date

Contact details for further information:

## C.2 Line of inquiry internal interview round 3

Introduction:  
Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to gain insights into “the evaluation of the B2B relationship between SBP and the customer discussed in the previous interview” based on your experiences and perspectives. Your input is highly valuable and will contribute to “gain insights into the values behind various events and aspects that influence the establishment of successful B2B relationships”

Please note that this conversation will be kept confidential, and any information you provide will be anonymized in our analysis and reporting. With your permission, I would like to record this interview to ensure accuracy. The interview should take approximately 60 minutes, and you are welcome to pause or skip any question you are not comfortable answering.  
Do you have any questions before we begin?

Questions:

Theme 1: Reflection on Key events:

- In our previous conversation you mentioned description of event A/B/C/...,
  - What were the expectations from SBP prior to the event?
  - and from the customer?
  - What was the purpose of event A/B/C/...?
  - Could you walk me through how event A/B/C/... unfolded?
  - What was the outcome of event A/B/C/...?
  - Was this a significant outcome?

- How did this influence the relationship between SBP and the customer?
  - If Yes: What was the influence of this on the relationship?
  - If No: Why did it not impact the relationship?
- Were there long-term effects of this event on the relationship
  - What were these effects?

Theme 2: Relationship elements:

- From your perspective, what are significant factors in establishing a strong relationship with the customer?
  - Can you give an example how you try to establish such relationships?
  - Reflecting on successful projects, what actions or behaviors from SBP were crucial to achieve positive outcomes?
  - Did these actions influence your own perceptions of the customer?
    - How?
- What are the factors of a B2B relationship that are the most likely to have a negative impact on the relationship? Please provide some examples

Theme 3: Ideal situation

- Can you describe the ideal route of establishing the desired B2B relationship?

## C.3 Line of inquiry External interview round 3

1.Introduction:  
Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. My name is Pleun de Goede, and I am conducting research on “the evaluation of the B2B relationship between SBP and the customer” based on your experiences and perspectives. Your input is highly valuable and will contribute to “gain two-sided insights into the values behind various events and aspects that influence the establishment of successful B2B relationships”

Please note that this conversation will be kept confidential, and any information you provide will be anonymized in our analysis and reporting. With your permission, I would like to record this interview to ensure accuracy. The interview should take approximately 30 minutes, and you are welcome to pause or skip any question you are not comfortable answering.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Theme 1: Introduction Questions

- Can you tell me a little about you and your role at [Company]?
- How long have you been involved with the [Company]?

Theme 2: Involvement SBP Questions

- How long have you been involved with SBP?
- Can you describe your involvement in the establishment of the B2B relationships with SBP?

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### Theme 3: Experience-Based Questions

- From your experiences, what were key moment or events that contributed to the establishment of the relationship with SBP?
  - Why was this an important [event/moment/interaction]?
  - What were your expectations prior/leading to this [event/moment/interaction]?
  - What was the role of [Customer Company] in this [event/moment/interaction]?
  - And the role of SBP in this [event/moment/interaction]?
  - What was the desired outcome of this event/moment/interaction?
  - Did this [event/moment/interaction] result in the desired outcome?
  - Did this event influence the relationship between [company] and SBP?
    - How?
    - Was there a long-term effect on the relationship?

### Theme 4: Relationship elements:

- From your perspective, what are significant factors in establishing a strong B2B relationships?
  - Can you give an example how you try to establish such a relationship?
  - Are there also negative factors that can influence a B2B relationship?
    - Yes: which? Can you please provide some examples?
    - No: why?

### Theme 5: Future perspective:

- Can you describe the ideal route of the establishment of a strong B2B relationship?

### Closing Questions:

- Is there anything else you think is important for me to know about establishing successful and strong B2B relationships?

### Conclusion

- Is there anything else you would like to add or think I should know about topic?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you again for sharing your thoughts and experiences. Your input is extremely helpful for my research.

# D: Results

## D.1 Business driven outcome

An overview of the different quotes and visions on the term “business-driven-outcome”. Similarities in these perspectives will be the basis for a general definition.

### Quotes and insights from first round of interviews

- “I have my own definition”
- “Business driven engagement is when your primary stakeholders, whom you are engaging at the customers’ side is not IT, it is rather business”.
- “A true business outcome we get and then it becomes very simple if you are talking to them.”
- “Goal is Business, but solution is IT. They merge at seeing IT as solution for business problem”
- “It is business because IT is always enabling business, supporting them. So SBP build that solution with a certain business logic”
- “What SBP develops is directly intended to be used by the business user and not for the IT department or engineers etc.”
- “Creating space to not only talk about the things we do right but also talk about ambitions of [company name customer]”
- “Because you are excellent in the things you are doing (for the customer) today, you can talk to you customer and ask, “where shall we go tomorrow?”
- “You can only talk about business outcome-driven, when this evaluates from an existing relationship where you get the headspace to think about tomorrow”
- “In B2B relationships, a lot of talk is about the problems of yesterday and today”
- “In our industry there is a lot of talk about the pain of today, and less about the gain of tomorrow”

- “You need to make sure everything of today is under control, so spend minimum time on the problems of today, then you can see the opportunities (and get that opportunity) to talk about tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. That is what we try to do here.”
- “Service creation, a business outcome. And we firmly believe that we get that space/ opportunity to be good at the things you do today. That is the opening to talk to your relation and say he good what we are doing now, but what direction do we want to take tomorrow? And put yourself in the shoes and perceptions of the customer”
- “Customers will then also come to you with their problems of opportunities”
- “First you must really understand the business of your customer, the dynamic of the industry also outside the Netherlands. Then when you have everything under control, and the customer knows you live up to your promises and do even a bit more than you have promised. Then you get the chance to talk about tomorrow”
- “Generally speaking, 50% of the time you are busy with today. 25% of your time you are working on tomorrow and 25% percent on the day after tomorrow. Or that is what people think. Reality is that most the time you are working on fixing yesterday’s problems, then today and then tomorrow.”
- “Getting the chance to talk about tomorrow. Creating the headspace”
- “Freedom to look ahead”
- “We really need to open the eyes of the customer that we do more than hosting”
- “You always try to expand towards business”
- “We try to get to the customers’ side where we can talk about ideas and possible projects”

- “Strategy meetings, tactical meetings, operational meetings”
- “Strategic alignment, to be able to make new plans”
- “Easier when business and IT have the same manager”
- “Explore together with the customer what their actual problem is”
- Defining the problem before thinking about a solution
- “Think about where you want to be, what is the best route you can take towards there.
- “Thinking about where you want to be in the future”
- “Zoom out”
- Headspace
- At [company name customer] we were in the second part of the B2B2C.
- The concrete business question comes from the internal department, but the functionality or the improvement is focused on the consumer.
- Business Driven outcome can come from the market, the consumer, an internal department
- A vision workshop could deliver added value to strengthen the relationship between [customer company name] and SBP (further), because you make that commitment for the future together
- Concept sprint is a beautiful way to get every stakeholder from the different silos around the table and result into a solution.
- Because what often goes wrong in these organizations is that the different departments act as different silos, and it takes a lot of effort to put everyone on the same line.
- At [company name customer] they are treated as different organization departments, at a lower level this does come closer together, but the biggest problem is at the management level. And OT people talk a different language that IT people and in the end they all need to come together.

D.2 Event tables B2B relationships  
Customer A

	Event	Description	Initiative	Involved	Resulted in	Value
Start Case	External event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Geld service Nederland was not satisfied with the outsourcer: service they got from Simac (concurrent/ colleague)</li></ul>	Customer	Customer	Customer wanted to start a tender process for a new outsourcer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Objectives are met</li><li>- Expertise</li><li>- Competence</li><li>- Delivering quality service</li><li>- Product/service quality</li><li>- efficient service</li><li>- get an important job done</li></ul>
2017	Personal relationship /connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- SBP was in contact with the CEO and a program manager (who was not working on the IT but Capability and taking over the job of the 3 different banks)</li><li>- CEO knew the reputation of SBP as a great executor</li></ul>	Customer	Customer & SBP	CEO and program manager advised to involve SBP. CEO of Customer thought that SBP would be a good partner, that could really help them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Expertise,</li><li>- Personal relations</li><li>- Actors' perception of each other</li><li>- Personal interactions</li></ul>
2017	Customer Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- SBP started with understanding the customer and not with the solution of the problem. (Business model, (international) market, trends)</li><li>- Desk research (mission, vision, etc.)</li></ul>	SBP	SBP & Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Use a method and approach to understand the customer</li><li>- Understanding customer, talking to colleagues to increase understanding</li><li>- Understand the struggles of the customer, market trends and their customer</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Customer orientation,</li><li>- Effort</li><li>- Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals</li><li>- Uncover expressed and unexpressed needs and align with customers goals</li><li>- Knowledge exchange</li></ul>
2017	Customer research	SBP shows Customer that they have done market research.	SBP	SBP & Customer	Customer was surprised, SBP had done this. SBP searched how to connect with the customers of Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- commitment,</li><li>- customer research,</li><li>- effort</li><li>- actors' perception of each other</li></ul>
2017	First round of workshops  <i>Possible to dive deeper in the workshop</i>	First round of 8 workshops: 1. Executive workshop 2. Application architecture workshop 3. Workplace workshop 4. Security and compliance workshop 5. Non-functional workshop	SBP	SBP & Customer	"This approach works both ways; after the workshops Geldservice Nederland knows how to move from the Current Mode of Operations to the Future Mode of Operations, also detailing timing and investments. All tailored to the Geldservice Nederland business strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Expertise,</li><li>- trust,</li><li>- commitment,</li><li>- personal interactions</li><li>- emotional connection/ bond</li></ul>
	<i>Intend and materials</i>	<div>6. Target operating workshop</div> <div>7. Transition project planning workshop</div> <div>8. Solution validation workshop</div> <div>To explore the best solution for IT and business challenges &amp; the future digital ambitions</div> <div>To understand their business question, the technical role and interpretation, and to draw a vision. Create a program on how to go from the current situation (in 2017) to the improved situation in 2018.</div>			<div>On the other hand, these workshops allow Schuberg Philis to look under the hood at Geldservice Nederland, primarily to understand the organization, its current business processes and its ambitions, so we can provide Geldservice Nederland with a fitted 100% service role in the development of your company.</div> <div>The overall result of these workshops is a valuable, well documented overview of Geldservice Nederland, including business process/system mapping, advice on the Target Operation Model. Based on the premise of gaining speed while remaining in control, an application and systems landscape design is delivered which is ready for the future."</div> <div>(Schuberg Philis, 2017)</div> <div>As written in the document (Best practice workshop setup)</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Customer orientation</li><li>- Openness</li><li>- Creativity</li><li>- Future vision</li><li>- Uncover expressed and unexpressed needs and align with customers goals</li><li>- Joined working</li><li>- Cultural fit</li></ul>
	Workshop	To understand their business model, the changes that are about to happen at Customer	SBP	SBP & Customer	Created space to talk about this kind of developments. And to understand how SBP can help Customer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Customer orientation</li><li>- Experience</li><li>- Competence</li><li>- Knowledge exchange</li><li>- Extensive person to person contact</li><li>- Joined working</li><li>- Personal interactions</li></ul>
	Conversations	Business model workshop?	SBP	SBP & Customer	Talking about Mission, vision, industry trends, Business model canvas, EU ambitions, future perspectives, trend research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Customer orientation</li><li>- Interactions</li><li>- Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals</li><li>- Future vision</li></ul>
Execution in 2018	Execute the project	Big project to take over the tasks that Simac used to do. Migration	SBP & Customer	SBP, Semic & Customer		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Objectives are met</li><li>- Meet deadlines</li><li>- Expertise</li></ul>
	Conversation & reports	Monthly reports with overview of the work SBP does for Customer	SBP	SBP	Proof of work and service delivery. Creates stability and fundament for service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Stability</li><li>- Expertise</li></ul>

	Delivering	Delivered the service that was promised	SBP		Customer started to believe that SBP was able to live up to the promise they made in migrating the service to the public cloud.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Objectives are met</li> <li>- Meet deadlines</li> <li>- Expertise</li> <li>- Competence</li> <li>- Delivering quality service</li> <li>- Product/service quality</li> <li>- Get an important job done</li> <li>- Objectives are met</li> <li>- Offerings that align with customers goals</li> <li>- Mutual exchange and fulfilling promises</li> </ul>
	Thought	We went from the old situation to an improved situation	SBP	SBP	Mindset of SBP, nice work but we are not there yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effort</li> </ul>
	Execute the project	We improved more and made the application more stable than it had ever been	SBP	SBP	Even the software supplier did not think it was possible, but SBP was able to deliver and improve the application. We understood the software better than the supplier themselves. This resulted in conversations about how to continue the relationship	
	Conversation	About the next steps, after the migration from Simac to SBP. The situation was stabilized, and the "problems" were solved	SBP	SBP & Customer	Creating room to talk about what is next with the customer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Objectives are met</li> <li>- Meet deadlines</li> <li>- Communication</li> <li>- Interaction</li> <li>- Future vision &amp; growth</li> <li>- Personal interaction</li> <li>- Interpersonal trust</li> </ul>
	Conversation	About service creation, business driven outcome.	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	Because you have proven your value and expertise, you get the trust to talk about the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creativity</li> <li>- Transparency</li> <li>- Safety</li> <li>- Personal interactions</li> <li>- Expertise</li> </ul>
	Delivering	You get that space because you are excellent in the things you do today.			Workshop about service creation, business outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trust</li> <li>- Efforts</li> <li>- Expertise</li> <li>- Transparency</li> </ul>
2019	Conversations and Projects	Because in the first contract there is the governance that SBP is a strategic and operational conversation partner	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	Small projects next to the IT-business translator: Data capability to public cloud, batchwise integration with the involved banks, event driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trust</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
2019	Technology office	Geldservice Nederland became Customer so there was a need for new capabilities and applications	Customer	Customer & SBP	Dynamic technology office equipped to continuously develop new services and capabilities to make big changes in the ecosystem of Customer. Capacity based development. To support the banks and the development of Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Openness</li> <li>- Effort</li> <li>- Involvement</li> </ul>
	Workshop	Business model canvas	SBP	SBP & Customer	What is the business model you want and what is the role of IT to make this as flexible as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer orientation</li> </ul>
	Workshop (vision workshop & concept sprints)	Vision workshop. How do you go from an idea towards the realization of an idea (concept sprints).	SBP	SBP & Customer		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creativity</li> <li>- Long term relationship</li> <li>- Interaction</li> <li>- Communication</li> <li>- Safety</li> </ul>
2020	Change in ask from Customer	Customer wanted to migrate to the public cloud	Customer	Customer & SBP	SBP service: hosting their private cloud would not be needed anymore. SBP helped Customer with this migration even though a part of their business would go to another party. SBP stimulating this innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expertise</li> <li>- Adaptation</li> <li>- Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals</li> <li>- Involvement</li> <li>- Perception of each other</li> <li>- Information exchange</li> <li>- Openness</li> <li>- Showing Customer, SBP was willing to do what is best for the customer.</li> </ul>
	Insight in relationship	Customer did not know about the 100% service and the public cloud service of SBP	Customer & SBP	Customer & SBP		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication</li> <li>- Knowledge</li> <li>- Comparison</li> </ul>
	Phone conversation	About the public cloud	SBP	Customer & SBP	A mutual agreement to increase the role and partnership of SBP and Customer into other domains outside hosting the private cloud. Opened the door to talk about increasing the role and extending the partnership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal interactions</li> <li>- Personal perception</li> <li>- Emotional bond</li> <li>- Openness</li> <li>- Transparency</li> <li>- Communication</li> <li>- Involvement</li> </ul>
Continuous	Relationship	SBP is intently known as IT partner, but SBP wanted to evolve the relationship towards business.	SBP	SBP	Need to open the eyes of the customer for the other services that SBP offers. SBP wanted to be involved in the business journey of the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Actors' perception of each other</li> </ul>

	External event	Tender public cloud	SBP	SBP & Customer	SBP needed to show Customer that their role could be increased and SBP was also a partner in other domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal relation</li> <li>- Experience</li> <li>- Competence</li> <li>- Comparison</li> <li>- Expertise</li> </ul>
2021	Customer 2.0					
	External event	Change in management	Customer	Customer & SBP	SBP treated the new management new B2B relationship. But expertise and credibility can be proven by the service and relationship between Customer and SBP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expertise</li> <li>- Involvement</li> <li>- Interpersonal dynamics</li> <li>- Interpersonal trust</li> <li>- Emotional connection/ bond</li> <li>- Actors' perception of each other</li> <li>- Salesperson characteristics</li> </ul>
2021	External Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New CEO management, there was a shift in a whole organization department and the COO became responsible for the IT and the management of Customer, there was one key stakeholder.</li> <li>- Shift in CEO at Customer and the IT organization of Customer is abolished</li> <li>- New management organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer &amp; SBP</li> <li>- Customer &amp; SBP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer &amp; SBP</li> <li>- Customer &amp; SBP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Because SBP treated the relationship new partner, and the old contract consisted of more service and partnership that was done. There was an opening for SBP to start talking with a business outcome driven perspective. Before this change in management SBP tried to move towards a business-driven outcome, but this was not really succeeded.</li> <li>- SBP acted upon this change in treating the relationship new partner. Because all the stakeholders that SBP had a regular contact with were leaving the company. The relationship and the contact that SBP had at Customer were all IT driven contacts</li> <li>- SBP acted upon this change in treating the relationship new partner. Because all the stakeholders that SBP had a regular contact with were leaving the company. The relationship and the contact that SBP had at Customer were all IT driven contacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal relationship</li> <li>- Mutual benefits</li> <li>- Understand and adapt to customer goals</li> <li>- Quality service</li> <li>- Transparency</li> <li>- Interpersonal dynamics</li> <li>- Interpersonal trust</li> <li>- Emotional connection/ bond</li> <li>- Actors' perception of each other</li> <li>- Salesperson characteristics</li> </ul>
2022	External Event	New management made workshops of	SBP &	Customer &	But it was not, because SBP had learned a lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knowledge exchange</li> </ul>
					translator SBP learned how the dynamic of the market of Customer worked.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Actors' perception of each other</li> <li>- Cultural fit</li> <li>- Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals</li> <li>- Offerings that align with customers goals</li> <li>- Customer orientation</li> <li>- Joined working</li> </ul>
2022 workshops	External event	New management	SBP	SBP & Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New management treated as new relationship:</li> <li>- <b>IT-business translator, Technology office, business case and the business model canvas.</b></li> <li>- <b>The benefit of SBP was that they had done these workshops already with Customer. But the whole new team had a new vision (changes was done for a reason)</b></li> <li>- Change from CIO, where SBP was put in the domain of IT to the COO. Where the link towards business was established by having the Chief operation officer as key stakeholder and IT manager.</li> <li>- Business was smaller so both roles were done by the COO, she was responsible for the IT as well as the Business</li> <li>- Opening to talk to business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal relationship</li> <li>- Mutual benefits</li> <li>- Understand and adapt to customer goals</li> <li>- Quality service</li> <li>- Transparency</li> <li>- Interpersonal dynamics</li> <li>- Interpersonal trust</li> <li>- Emotional connection/ bond</li> <li>- Actors' perception of each other</li> <li>- Salesperson characteristics</li> <li>- Easier step towards alignment of business and IT.</li> <li>- Clear who makes the decisions and who is in charge</li> </ul>
	New management	Opening to talk to business	SBP	SBP & Customer	Expand business of SBP towards a Business-driven outcome relationship. Selling points were: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contract where there was more room to ask sbp for more service</li> <li>2. Business case made with the former CEO about the public cloud</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connection between both was solid</li> </ul>	
	Relationship reestablishment (Workshop?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lunches, invited Customer at the office of SBP, showing references (Inspiration day2)</li> </ul>	SBP	SBP & Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Finding balance between too much effort (and money) in the customer research and workshops etc. and not too little. Taks of sales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expertise,</li> <li>- trust,</li> <li>- commitment</li> <li>- knowledge</li> </ul>



		- Searching for strategic alignment to be able to make plans with the customer			- Understanding of the organization of the customer and their sales business development. Being able to propose ideas and innovations for the customer	- emotional connection /bond - Customer orientation - Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals -
	Planned Conversations	Agreements in information exchange. Regularly having: Tactical consultations, Strategic consultations and operational consultations  To also talk about external changes (organizational, market change, external factors)	SBP	SBP & Customer	SBP gains insights in the organization and their vision, goals etc. These insights make that SBP is involved in the innovation of Customer and can show their expertise by delivering innovative ideas  Get on the same strategic page	- Commitment - Communication - Uncover expressed and unexpressed needs and align with customers goals - Knowledge exchange - Interaction - Involvement - Stability
	Contract negotiations	Strategy of Customer, what is the role of SBP to support that. Talk about what was already contracted within the old contract & what else SBP could offer	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	- Because SBP is output driven, SBP advised Customer to give them more responsibility and a bigger role. While keeping the flexibility for Customer to decrease the role of SBP in a clause. And make the price flexible if the service that SBP offers becomes smaller - Benchmark clause's added to the new contract.	- Flexibility, SBP wanted stability in earnings
	New contract conversations & Workshops	Service integration and new management came for the workshops.	SBP	SBP & Customer		- Commitment - Openness - Creativity -
	Bigger role for SBP	Because of the new organization role of Customer, SBP increased their role in the business	SBP	SBP & Customer	SBP becomes part of the core process and organization of Customer. SBP can see the problems and opportunities in the other parts of Customer, which were outsourced at other partners of Customer SBP also takes responsibility for Service integration and management party alongside their role of IT outsourcer.	- Experience - Expertise - Trust - Longevity -
	Workshops	Concept sprints, testing propositions, field testing	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	Further development of Customer. Mobile Customer application, Digital store assistant. Development of the playground, the possibilities of innovation at Customer	- Customer orientation - Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals

						- Uncover needs - Knowledge exchange -
	Relationship	SBP is asked to talk to another partner of Customer	Customer	SBP, Customer & Brink's	SBP acts as trusted partner of Customer to talk to another partner and help to increase the quality of the service that the other partner is delivering. SBP has a established role as key partner of Customer	- Trust, - cooperation, - Expertise - Partnership - Comparison - Experience
	External event	Customer needed to reduce its costs; the company became smaller (less employees)	SBP & Customer	competitor, Customer & SBP	SBP advised to stop the IT service from COMPETITOR, an IT company that develops and manages applications. SBP advised this because Customer was not big and interesting enough for a big partner like COMPETITOR.	- Expertise
	Conversation	Advice to stop partnership with competitor	SBP	SBP & Customer	Customer was a management organization that had outsourced at a couple key partners. It is an output driven relationship between Customer and its partners.	- Expertise - Experience - Personal relation
2022	Workshop	Business model canvas	SBP	SBP & Customer	Customer wanted to reformulate their question	- Creativity - Openness - Uncover needs - Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals
	Workshop (Concept sprint / use case)	A concept sprint for a use case	SBP	SBP & Customer	Digital store assistants that provide information to the customers. It is easily adjusted and a low barrier to connect with the customer	Expertise
Start of 2023	Workshops	Concept sprint Mobile Customer application	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer		
End of 2023	Workshop	Concept sprint Digital store assistant	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer		
	Business case	Public cloud	Customer	Customer	Regaining the budget and support for this plan took multiple meetings and time	- Expertise - Meeting deadlines - Meeting objectives - Delivering quality service
Duration 1 year	Involve Independent party	to guide the tender process of the business case to migrate to the public cloud	Customer & Gartner	Customer & Gartner		
	New partnership	Customer asked Gartner to do new market research. (Gartner is a big	Customer	Customer & Gartner	Gartner reformulated the business question of Customer	-

## Customer B

		research company that conducts for trend research and market analysis)				
Becoming management organization	Workshops	To find out how to develop the service, integration and management.	SBP & Gartner	SBP & Gartner		
	Business Case	Gartner defined question for Customer	Gartner	Gartner & SBP	Resulted in a solely IT question, SBP was pushed towards the IT domain by this independent party.	
	Business Case; conversation	SBP gave a push back to Customer to include SBP in the problem definition and solution space	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	SBP involved in the problem definition, Customer could not explain and solidify the request that Gartner had defined. SBP was pushed back to a IT driven outcome partnership. This opened the conversation, Customer and SBP took a step back to understand and define the problem together so a fitting solution could be created	- Mutual goals - Mutual benefits - Understanding customer needs - Uncover needs
	Conversations & workshops	Convince Customer to not conduct an open tender but partner with SBP. Without talking to competitors.	SBP	SBP & Customer & Gartner		- Trust - Experience - Expertise - Personal relationship - Cultural fit - Openness - Competence - Information exchange - Comparison - Customer orientation - Frequency of contact - Stability - Meeting objective
2024	Execution & Migration of business case	Of the public cloud	SBP	SBP & Customer	Due to the changes internal at Customer (the new management team) this plan was formulated, and the business case was ready for execution in 2020.	- Expertise - Meeting objective - Experience - Involvement - Fulfilling promises
	Established relationship	Business developer of SBP does not change and is the full 6 years involved in the project	SBP	SBP		Credibility and trust and expertise

	Event	Description	Initiative	Involved	Resulted in	Value
Start	Initial contract	The initial contract was via the IT department	Customer & SBP	SBP & Customer	Now SBP is more at the business side of the company	
Start (first 1.5 y)	Relationship	Conscious choice to first focus on one part of the tender. Make sure you deliver quality	SBP	Customer & SBP	And then after one part is successful, you can expand to other parts of the organization and hunt for other opportunities	Building trust by showing expertise
First 1.5 y	Relationship	Building the relationship with NS by doing what you say you will do and deliver	SBP	Customer & SBP		Building trust and relationship
	Relationship	The stakeholder who gave the order in the IT domain is a stakeholder in the Business domain			The key stakeholders at the customer in the business domain knew SBP form the IT domain.	Expertise, trust
	Relationship	SBP employees were physical present at the IT department of Customer	Customer	SBP & Customer	SBP could show their expertise and show other ways to solve the problems. SBP people became tech leads in the NS teams	Show expertise, gain trust
	Relationship	NS also asked questions/ projects which SBP declined	Customer & SBP	Customer & SBP	By declining projects/ work that could be better done by another party SBP build their trustworthiness at NS	Trust, expertise, trustworthiness
Start	Execution	First small project in the domain of business	Customer	Customer & SBP		
	Project	Small consultancy project, in the business domain.	Customer	Customer & SBP	SBP wanted to do this smaller project, which was different from the approach in which they would normally operate (so not a whole dedicated customer team). But this project gave insights in the organization and was a step into the direction of business. And this project was a opening towards the problem definition and solution of the bigger project behind this smaller project	Important information about the organization for SBP.
	One pager & conversations	SBP went with one expert to Customer, had a conversation and SBP made a one pager for this project	SBP	SBP & Customer	This resulted in an agreement on this small project.	Expertise, cooperation, fixed fee
4 years to win the tender	Case, Building the relationship	On board information System, software development. Showing expertise by working with and at the Customer office. Showing expertise in the Inspiration Day by showing the Heineken case	SBP	SBP & Customer	SBP team was working in the teams of Customer, SBP tech leads were taking the lead in the internal IT department of Customer. Earlier experience and knowledge were important business value	Building the relationship
	Execution	Execution of the small consultancy project	SBP	SBP & Customer	Resulted in a proposal to solve the bigger problem behind this first project.	
	Customer research?	For the inspiration day, cases are selected to be shown based on the connection with the problems/ opportunities of Customer. This was IT/OT, and the case.	SBP	SBP	Finding a connection between value SBP could offer NS and problems/ opportunities for Customer. Examples where the Heineken and the PostNL case.	
	Workshop	Inspiration session. Not connected to a particular project but with an open approach. Mostly showing other projects that SBP has done for other customers where they aligned IT & OT.			Getting to know the new stakeholders at NS. Showing the case of Heineken was the starting position for the "waste side platform"	Showing expertise

		Gave the possibility to sit around the table with the business department of NS  Involving stakeholders at a higher level on the Business department of NS  Not involving the IT department			This inspiration day was with people from the business department, who understood the business question & the organization  Stakeholders at a higher level are the decisionmakers and oversee the budget	Gaining insights in the problem/ opportunities from the business perspective  Insights on the culture of the organization
	Conversation	After the inspiration day the conversations about the definition of the "big business project" continued	SBP & NS	SBP & Customer	Resulted in SBP proposing a solution to NS business department. NS business department was enthusiastic	
	External event	Project tender of the Waste side platform also needed to involve competitors/ other parties that would make a proposal for NS (regulations at the customer)	NS	Customer & SBP & competitit or	SBP made a proposal and won the tender	
	Workshops	Business of NS found out that there was a bit friction between the IT and Business department	SBP	SBP & Customer	SBP organized one or two workshops with the IT department. But NS is a hierarchic organization, one person is happy, and another person is not. Decision is on the higher level; between the different people the story becomes less clear/changes	
Ongoing	Customer understanding	Important that SBP understands the organization of the customer to be able to understand who takes which decisions, what is the dynamic of the organization.	SBP	SBP & Customer	To able to change the message/story you are telling, based on the person who is sitting across from you (at the NS side)	Important to understand the organization of the customer.
	Conversations	As reaction on the friction between the Business and IT department. SBP integrated in this process and started conversation with the CEO			CEO was convinced. Next two weeks there were conversations with enterprise architects, people on the business side, people on the IT side, the whole domain. SBP needed to think about the team they would present around the table. Getting all the stakeholders on the same page	
	Relationship	Agreement between business and IT and SBP	SBP	SBP & Customer	SBP took the responsibility to make the solution work, and made the promise to solve/ act upon changes	Trust expertise cooperation
Last project	Conversations	Project to make a platform	Customer	Customer & SBP	IT and business department did not speak the same language. First, we actively choose to not be a part of the conversation (not stand in the middle). But after a while we did take this role, and we could build the bridge between the two departments	Expertise, Not the most detailed OT knowledge but SBP has enough experience and context in these domains to able to build the bridge.
Continuou s	Planned conversation, Stake and Fry	Sessions where SBP and NS exchange thoughts and give their opinions and feedback	SBP	key stakehold er (who initiated the project) and the engineers of SBP	We do not have the	Trust, relationship, openness
					NS appreciates these open conversations/sessions to give feedback	

## Customer C

	Event	Description	Initiative	Involved	Resulted in
	Desire	Was to build a sustainable relationship with de Customer to help them pursue their 'Klant bank' ambitions, be relevant and to add business value.			SBP managed to assist the Bank in adopting and accelerating their migration to the cloud. This coupled with building data and enablement platforms, helped the workload (and business) teams to expedite their time to market and to reduce their total cost of ownership.
	Personal relation	Personal relationship of stakeholder at the Customer and stakeholder at SBP.	Customer	Customer & SBP	Resulted in SBP being introduced to the RFP process that the Customer initiated for the data platform
Start Case 2021	RFP Data platform ask	RFP in the market for building a data platform. With a technical data platform and business use cases of that platform.	Customer, Data/platform organization	Customer & SBP	Start RFP process with SBP and 7 competitors. It was a small project with the aim to open the doors and start the relationship between SBP and the Customer
	RFP process with conversations	Customer had this request. A RFP process with conversations between SBP and the Customer followed.			SBP won the project and could start Planning and building the Data platform (technical basis) And two business use cases. Agile, "just enough platform" "fit for purpose" platform. Incremental approach
Q2 2021	RFP Presentation?	Presenteren van hoe het platform eruit zou moeten zien			Omdat er engineers sales, com, hierbij waren was dit het beste omdat er eerlijkheid was in de verdeling van de rollen bij SBP en in het project/mogelijke samenwerking met VB
	Desk research	To understand Customer	SBP	SBP	
Q3/Q4 2021	Use Case design Workshops	Duration of 6 months of different workshops. With different design sessions of the technical cloud platform	SBP	SBP & Customer	Workshops to find out how the cloud platform would be looking, its functions and how to give form to the different features. Solution design, requirements and talking/coordinating the next steps.
	Execute Platform fundament	Building the Technical platform and working on the business use cases at the same time. SBP worked with building a "just good enough platform", an incremental approach to build the basis and keep on adding features.	SBP	Customer & SBP	Own IT team of Customer could not deliver this, because did not have the AWS cloud engineers to build. Customer thus searched for a partner that could build the technicalities and was able to do functional projects with the business
	Use case	Building use cases on top of the technical platform	SBP		Service agreement for more use cases. With subcontracts and sub projects for more use cases.
		Product owner is responsible for the cloud platform and to sit with the business units of the Customer to initiate and identify new use cases for the platform (from the side of the Customer) Is formally speaking the customer	Customer	Customer & SBP	
Ongoing	New use case	New workshops, new proposal, new contract	SBP	SBP & Customer	Try to use and inspire to new ideas and projects with the Customer
Ongoing	Weekly standups	In the build phase	SBP	SBP & Customer	With regular status update
Ongoing	Ask for new use case	From product owner/ architect (s) who got the request or identified new use cases.			
Ongoing	New workshops for the use case	Design workshops. Start of the plan-build-run  With new team from the Customer that is involved with this use case, the IT (incl. product owner) of the Customer and Schuberg			Defined problem and needs/wishes/Eisen
Ongoing	Inspiration day	AI inspiration day. With example of use case of the Rabo bank. With the businesspeople of the Customer			Do not really result in new use cases because partly because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Customer has a limited budget</li><li>- Sees Schuberg Philis as an IT executer</li><li>- Business does not see the extra value to include IT more in their business goals</li></ul>
Ongoing	Execution of new use case	Based on workshops.			New use cases a bit in between delivering IT for IT or IT for business value. Use cases do deliver business value, but SBP is not a strategic partner for the Customer (no conversations about their strategy)

Ongoing	Contact in Data platform project	Contact with Customer with the same stakeholder, the product owner			But the new use cases makes that the network and stakeholders of the Customer in contact with SBP grows with the time and execution of the use cases.
	Contact	IT/platform positions themselves in between business department and SBP			And sees their role as translator/ party in-between SBP and business. So, find it difficult when SBP talks directly with business.
Ongoing	External event	Changes in product owner at the Customer. Where not every person in			Relationship with product owners changes and evolves over time.
		the role of product owner delivers good work			Now, a difficult relationship with the product owner of Data but with the cloud product owner is the relationship good. Cloud product owner is good because: keeps on talking with business and thinking of new services/applications/features that the platform needs. "Is also an adult"
2021 Q4	Personal relation	On a relationship event, an engineer of SBP talked with a security engineer of the Customer	SBP	SBP & Customer	SBP heard about how the Cloud platform was secured and thought these needed updates/improvements. But most people in the IT/platform area.
	Conversation	SBP started a conversation about the security within the Customer and how to ensure that they protected their "Crown Jewels".	SBP	SBP & Customer	Personal relation was strong enough that SBP was trusted to do an assessment.
6 months	Security assessment / check	SBP did a security assessment for the Customer. With engineers, firewall owners, security dimensions etc.	SBP	SBP & Customer	Resulted in a big document with improvements. Resulted in building a new cloud enablement platform for the Customer
	Execution	Of a cloud platform that was secure and able to scale	SBP	SBP & Customer	
	Growing/ development	Wanting to keep on growing in the platform project			New use cases, security, more use cases
2022	No new business question	Developing of the current Data, Cloud and security question. Data platform has grown from 2 use cases to 15 use cases.			But not growing into a new domain/ other question outside a scope of 2022. Business use cases for all different business hubs at the Customer kept growing
	Repeated inspiration days	Goal to cross-sell with other services for the different business hubs, next to existing service	SBP	SBP & Customer	Repeated once in a year (estimation). Budget issue's biggest role to decline.
2021	External event	Leave of key stakeholder Before the reorganization the product owner (data) and data were actively involved with business to initiate use cases. With a continuous connection and ask for new use cases.	Customer	Customer	When the product owner left, partly due to the reorganization (he knew/saw it coming). Resulted in no one who filled that function
2022	External Event	No product owner. People at the business hub had also their own IT budget so were also allowed to make decisions on IT projects.	Customer	Customer & SBP	No new use cases, so SBP started looking for use cases themselves. By using the network at the Customer, they had built, and their own personal network.
2023 Q2	External Event	New product owner	Customer	Customer & SBP	PO wanted to initiate the new use cases, SBP needed to stop searching for them themselves. But

					the new PO did not initiate new use cases which made it harder for SBP.
Begin/mid 2022	External event	Reorganization of Customer executed. Where working on a reorganization for a year	Customer	Customer	Internal issues and tensions
Ongoing	Conversations	Ad hoc, directly with hub leads about what they are doing, what is relevant for them and potentially interesting.			To be more in Contact with business
	Personal relations	Use personal relations at Customer (from earlier jobs etc.)	SBP	SBP & Customer	For new use cases
2023 2.5 years	Use cases	Klant interface had bad relationship with IT. Multiple use cases for this business hub	Customer	Customer	But they had their own IT budget so went around the IT department of the Customer. Own SBP team for Klant interfaces with 5 engineers to build a business use case. Ended because there is no more budget.
After a couple years	Execution	After one year the internal IT team was able to manage the use case themselves	Customer & SBP	Customer & SBP	SBP helped to give this task back to the internal IT of the Customer. So, while building and running the use cases, the Customer was also training their own IT team (At Klant interface hub) Together with SBP they co created and simultaneously grew in capacity
Nov 2023	Network event	Network event in Vegas. To build personal relationship between stakeholders at the Customer and SBP	Customer & SBP	Customer & SBP	SBP went with the purpose to connect with the Customer and build the personal relationship with the stakeholders. Intensive contact in the days of the event formed a basis for the relationship. Which could be maintained and strengthened based on this intensive interaction
	External event	Big politics/management re-organization			Too much happening internal to talk about future goals and projects and gains. When the problems internally at the Customer, are solved SBP will try again to move more towards business.
Nov 2024	External event	New announcement of another reorganization. New CEO.	Customer	Customer	Will lay off 700/800 people. New reorganization of the CEO for a less complicated organization model. Sees that they are behind on their IT development, IT modernization is needed.
	Trend	Trends and big strategic themes in the market of finance			Data and IT are big themes in the financial sector
	Conversation	With the head of IT of the Customer about all these developments in the market as well as internally at the Customer.			SBP tries to be involved in the reorganization of the Customer so that it ends up on the good side of the reorganization and can help the Customer with the acceleration of the IT modernization.
		Presentation over the re-organization (Customer) presentation value proposition (SBP)			To also become more a business partner and help the head of IT to position him more successfully, so that he can help the business better. But there is tension there, so this depends on the relation you have and who brought you in the company (IT/Business)
Ongoing	Team growth	Started with 3/5 engineers from SBP	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	Now 18 engineers. Working in use cases in data, cloud platforms came along the way and has grown, foundation team has grown.

Customer D

	Event	Description	Initiative	Involved	Resulted in	Value
	Start Case	Customer split from Mother company	Mother company	Mother company & Customer	A new company: Customer	
	Customer building	Customer needed to build their own data platform, choose to do this with a SAP strategy.	Customer	Customer	Then realized that with SAP solutions they could not succeed certain business goals (like Amazone e-commerce)	- Get an important job done
	Project	Data Lake project. Own IT department of Customer could not deliver the solution for this business problem. So, the IT department came to SBP	Customer's IT department	Customer & SBP	SBP delivered IT solution, kept business outcome in mind. Contact person was the IT-department. "So SBP build that solution with a certain business logic in mind, but the whole project is very IT-driven" – Agne	- Expertise - Competence - Delivering quality service - Product/service quality - Get an important job done - Objectives are met - Offerings that align with customers goals - Mutual exchange and fulfilling promises
	Execution	Data lake project, intended to be directly used by business.	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	SBP delivered what was expected and learned a lot about Customer.	- Expertise, - Customer orientation, Actors' perception of each other
	Execution	But then once we started going into execution, exploring the data, connecting the sources	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	"We learned so many other things and the customer also. These phases and these motions and emotions you go through probably in every project."	- Actors' perception of each other - Joined working - Knowledge exchange
	Conversations	Discussions on how the project needs to be executed	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	Customer also learns a lot about their own formula. SBP discovers that Customer did not know their own formula as well as they say they do.	- Customer orientation, - Knowledge exchange, - Trust, - Expertise - Joined working
	Project	Software application for repair centers. A solution focused task that their own IT could not deliver. Business department asked SBP for this software application.	Customer's Business department	Customer & SBP	SBP formed a bridge between business and IT department at Customer. Expansion of relationship towards business.	- Expertise - Future vision/ growth - Meeting objectives of all parties
	External	Business department did not want to include own IT department because they were to slow	Customer's business department	Customer & SBP	SBP mainly engaged with business, but the IT solution needed to land on Customer's IT. SBP needed access and "certain handshake" from IT department.	- Cultural fit - Joined working - Emotional connection/bond - Involvement - Interpersonal trust - Transparency - Safety - Communication
	Opportunity	Sales saw potential for cross selling the Heineken solution.	SBP	SBP & CIO	Contacting relation from earlier projects to get introduced to the right person	- Future vision & growth - Creativity
	continuously	Desk research	SBP		SBP gains insights in the Customer: - Mission, vision, purpose Trends in the industry of the customer	- Customer orientation - Knowledge exchange - Uncover expressed and unexpressed needs and align with customers goals - Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals - Offerings that align with customers goals
	Getting introduced	Personal contact with the CIO established in earlier projects, introduced SBP Sales to Supply chain department	Sales SBP	Sales of SBP, CIO of Customer, Supply chain manager		- Personal interaction - Personal dynamics - Actors' perception of each other - Salesperson characteristics
	Conversations	With key stakeholders at Customer to find common ground	SBP	SBP & Customer	Finding pain or opportunity of customer	- Customer orientation - Uncover expressed and unexpressed needs and align with customers goals - Communication - Actors' perception of each other

	Propose inspiration day & office tour	When common ground was found an Inspiration Day was introduced			SBP finds possible projects and ideas and sees an opening for a successful collaboration and the actual execution of the project.	- Joined working - Creativity - Offerings that align with customers goals - Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals
	Preparation inspiration day	Selecting cases that "showcase the expertise of SBP"	SBP		Post NL and Heineken case were similar business cases and opportunities for Customer	- Communication - Personal interactions - Offerings that align with customers goals - Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals
	Preparation inspiration day	Creating an agenda	SBP	SBP & Customer	Working together on an agenda, sending back and forth between customer and SBP till both parties are satisfied	
	Preparation inspiration day	Getting a team of experts together for this inspiration day	SBP	SBP	A team of experts connected to the pain/gain of the customer	-
	Workshop: Inspiration day	Supply chain chief of Customer came Earlier business cases (including the Heineken case & Post NL) are shown. Brainstorm sessions.	SBP	SBP & Customer (Supply chain chief)	Finding common ground for an opportunity or solution for a problem to write a proposal. Supply chain chief was very inspired. And proposed two more days with person responsible for logistics and person responsible for D2C	- Expertise - Experience - Competence - Offerings that align with customers goals - Knowledge exchange - Extensive person to person contacts - Joined working - Personal interactions
	Proposal is written	Back and forth process. "Provided a proposal. We iterated on the proposal. We always iterate on proposals. Make the customer engaged in that process." – Agne	SBP	SBP & Customer	Proposal did not fully meet customer expectations	- Customer orientation - Offerings that align with customers goals - Offerings that align with customers goals - Objectives are met
	Organizing new inspiration day	Completely different approaches: Person responsible for logistics, was open, had no clue how digital would change his businesses only that it would	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	Wanted to gather his team to brainstorm for different ideas. Approach was the team would come up with an idea	- Effort - Meeting objectives of all parties - Creativity
	Organizing new inspiration day	Person responsible for D2C, had a specific idea	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	Was in the same team but a completely different approach	- Joined working - Cultural fit
						- Actors' perception of each other - Offerings that align with customers goals
	Present at Customer	SBP was asked to present internally (almost globally) at Customer their digital habits			Follow up, inspiration day	- Communication - Cultural fit - Actors' perception of each other - Expertise - Competence - Future vision
	Second inspiration day	To delve deeper into specific cases and solutions	SBP	SBP & Customer	Deeper understanding of the needs and wants of the customer. Searching for common ground where SBP can help Provided a couple ideas, selected one	- Understand and adapt to customer needs and goals & - Offerings that align with customers goals & - Objectives are met - Mutual benefits - Joined working - Personal interactions
	Conversations	To further discuss and refine the proposal	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	Selecting one strong use-case	- Joined working - Future vision - Personal interactions
	External event	Not sure if contact is in the position to make the decision	SBP & Customer	SBP & Customer	Putting extra effort in the proposal, making sure it is strong and more thought trough than some others.	- Effort - Expertise - Uncover expressed and unexpressed needs and align with customers goals - Objectives are met
	Writing second proposal	Conversations and consultation between SBP and Customer to write a proposal for a strong use case	SBP	SBP & Customer	Turn one idea into a strong business driven proposal.	- Conversations - Personal interactions
	External event	Senior leadership changes	Customer	Customer	Key stakeholder changed, SBP lost a high executive sponsor on their level	- Interpersonal dynamics - Interpersonal trust - Emotional connection/ bond - Actors' perception of each other - Salesperson characteristics



### D.3 Coding results

## Coding list of used codes and coding groups

[illegible]

## Coding frequencies Internal vs External participants

[illegible]

Insights into commitment, trust and satisfaction per internal or external stakeholders

	External Interviews 3 232		Internal Interviews 6 487		Totals
Commitment	21 445	127	318		445
Satisfaction	14 314	107	207		314
Trust	19 491	157	334		491
Totals		391	859		1250

		7 external 1 57	6 External 2 118	10 external 3 57	Totals	
Commitment	21 445	29,36% 32	34,46% 61	32,38% 34	32,48% 127	100 %
Satisfaction	14 314	28,44% 31	26,55% 47	27,62% 29	27,37% 107	100 %
Trust	19 491	42,20% 46	38,98% 69	40,00% 42	40,15% 157	100 %
Totals		100 % 109	100 % 177	100 % 105	100 % 391	100 %

		1 Internal 1 92	2 Internal 2 87	9 Internal 3 68	4 Internal 4 111	5 Internal 5 58	8 Internal 6 71	Totals	
Commitment	21 445	37,63% 61	37,84% 56	30,83% 41	42,62% 78	41,67% 40	30,66% 42	37,02% 318	100 %
Satisfaction	14 314	22,84% 37	24,32% 36	26,32% 35	19,67% 36	22,92% 22	29,93% 41	24,10% 207	100 %
Trust	19 491	39,51% 64	37,84% 56	42,56% 57	37,70% 69	35,42% 34	39,42% 54	38,88% 334	100 %
Totals		100 % 162	100 % 148	100 % 133	100 % 183	100 % 96	100 % 137	100 % 859	100 %

Internal and External coding groups

	External Interviews 3 232	Internal Interviews 6 487	Totals
Competence	3 130	95	130
costomers goals	3 243	160	243
Cultural fit	3 222	159	222
customer orientation	3 131	103	131
Delivering Quality	4 98	54	98
future vision	3 106	69	106
higher level	5 176	114	176
Interaction	6 248	173	248
Mutual exchange	2 82	59	82
Personal bond	7 224	159	224
Transparency	5 143	84	143
Totals	574	1229	1803

D.4 Key quotations Internal

Participant 1

Importance of understanding customers’ expectations and goals before a inspiration workshop:

- “OK, this is not what I expected. That it will be so detailed and so focused on one use case. I expected something bit more high level.”
- “He created this whole end user journey but event that was basically out and they said OK, this is not relevant.”
- “[it was a] Bit less but never the less. I think it was successful and that was actually the use case which we got to implement.
- “Yeah. I think you definitely helps to build relationship with a customer and it's because Icon now I'm repeating myself, it's more it becomes more alive. So one thing is to come and say, Oh yeah, we do this, we do this.
- But in those days, those workshops you kind of get to bit experience it.”
- “I think we also checked about his, you

Match/cultural fit between customers and SBP:

- “Yeah, it's more related, I would say to companies’ performance and the way they operate. They are extremely cost conscious, so like.”

Personal relations:

- “More like this. Personal relationships have like a very huge impact. Especially in that first step to get introduced and to talk to people so.”

Stakeholder changes:

- “So for example, when he left, so when you know that the chief supply chain officer is leaving, yeah, that's really impacts your relationship because basically you know that somebody else in his seats is going to come and you need to build that relationship from scratch and you do not know if they are a fan of Schuberg Philis, or maybe you need to build a relationship from scratch so these stakeholder changes are really big.”
- “So we definitely try to establish this relationship as soon as possible, but the reality is that sometimes some people are, hey, I just joined a new role talking to an external supplier is not my priority. So this is what happens often in reality and I think from this perspective, \*Customer D\* is a quite difficult account, because the stakeholders change quite often. So I think \*Sales person at SBP\* is doing a great job, but yeah, so it's, I would say this sales creativity.
- “ Yeah, like if you don't put any effort from our side, yeah, what can you expect that they will reach out to us? Not realistic I would say.”

#### Brand image:

- ""Yeah. So I think the brand image is also very important [when a contact person at the customers changes]
- "So you have certain type of companies which have certain type of brand image and it's the same with Schubert Philis I think Schuberg Philis is also has a very good brand reputation in the market but it also has a bad reputation. Ho they are very expensive or oh, when you hire Schuberg Philis, you just overpay, you know? So that are lots of and it and it differs. Yes, certain people have certain image and sometimes we know that image and we can break it. Sometimes we are not aware and that's why maybe we get ignored. Or actually very often, people just don't know us. They have never heard of Schuberg, Philis, Schuberg Philis. What is it? Is it an American law firm? You know, they check our website, maybe. Do they even understand what we actually do?

#### Attitude

- ""Also, I would even say sometimes humbleness. Humbleness and vulnerability. And when you go to customer. Like sometimes I hear some engine. Oh yeah. Now I know everything. Like I know a lot about warehousing processes. Yeah. You know a lot because you worked in one D2C project as engineer. Come on, you know, be humble. You are good at your engineers. Experts in the lead so. Sometimes, you know, show me versus tell me. So I think it's also important to be sometimes saying, hey, I don't know this stuff, but I'm willing to learn instead of, you know, pretending I know it all and I can do it all, I think."
- "The customer knows the business and they are not the idiots. We just we have very little context, let's be honest. And sometimes I think we go too much into proposing our way of working our approach instead of listening to a customer because it doesn't fit Schubert model."

#### Business outcome

- "So we are showing Heineken capabilities, all these customers to say, hey. Schuberg, Phillis is not just about IT. We really solve business problems."
- "Of course it depends per team. And what I also want to mention that certain customers we have for very long time like for 10-15 years and let's be honest, 10-15 years there was not much business talk. So it's also fair that customers like mainly, I think of us as mainly hosting party but for the newer customers, because this engagement was so fresh."
- Yes, we are doing IT, but we were immediately positioning ourselves that we also do data, AI and stuff like that. And it's not just about IT et cetera."
- So yeah, it it's it really depends. But I would I say we could do better? Yeah, for sure. I think it's also when I sometimes look, you know it's a bit of a, maybe even kind of marketing thing. And when you look at Schuberg, we don't have marketing. We have two people, so it's like, very yeah. It's also quite tight resources."
- "Yeah, it depends. Also per customer, but it it's not like it's impossible and I think we do a lot and we should do more. But yeah, I do see that with new customers, it's a bit easier. At least from what I have seen, because we have better story and we don't have that previous luggage, let's put it like that."

#### Results

- "I always say. Results quality. Your delivery sells the best. So there is one thing to talk about to show, to bring them to your beautiful office. Feed them nice food. That's all great, but invent I always say results. Sell the best. So if you really deliver exceptional quality. Exceptional results."

#### Participant 2

##### Match/cultural fit between customers and SBP:

- "We directly had a very good connection with this man, but that was also an external person. He, also had a different culture than the Customer X, that is an organization that is a bit behind, this person was more positive and innovative than the culture of the customer"
- "stability vs flexibility"

##### Quality

- Satisfaction survey
- "But the most important thing is this: look, you can have trust in me. However, if I don't execute or deliver, that trust will quickly disappear. You know, then you're relying on my, let's say, charm or charisma, but that only goes so far. If I can't deliver, or if we can't deliver, then there's an issue with trust, in this case trust from one person to another. Execution, on the other hand, is a team effort; it's a collective action where the team must execute well and deliver on promises."
- "So yes, transparency is key, and then success will follow. For me, maintaining trust with the customer starts with execution as the number one priority. If we execute consistently and satisfactorily, trust will come naturally, and maintaining that trust becomes a constant in the relationship. We must continue to exceed expectations with our execution every time, so that's it, those are my two main points."

##### Personal relations:

- The contact with the team at the customer really helped us to increase our role and impact.
- An extra assessment really put us on a podium and increased the awareness of SBP at the organization of the customer
- "With the ambition to grow our role and impact at the organization of the customer, we searched for an opportunity to contact people and create that personal connection with people, by just calling them, or getting introduced by other contact persons." [to not lose business cases, when the key stakeholder is not doing its job, or that position is not yet fulfilled]
- "Effort, a lot of contact moments, a lot of trust, sharing a lot cups of coffee and planning a lot of one on one conversations."
- "Last year, around this time we went to a network event. Which I only went to, to make a connection with the people from \*customers organization\*. We used that event as relationship building, building trust by showing effort, commitment and taking the time to build a personal bond."
- "We must invest this money, to invest in the relationship [with the stakeholders]"
- "for me, everything is incremental to trust"
- "but investing once into building trust is not how it works, you need to keep investing to maintain a trustful relationship"
- "the relationship I had, it just keeps getting stronger and stronger, right? Then it becomes much more of a friendship than just a professional relationship. So that helps, of course. It not only helps here but also in other conversations. For example, yesterday we were in contact again."



#### Workshops:

- “Design workshops are essentially about gathering requirements and understanding what you're looking for, what you want, and why you want to do that. That's important, right? Why are you seeking this? And based on that, building an appropriate solution. So, it's much more of a technical nature, and the entire workshop is very much within a technical framework. It's not just about talking technical details with all sorts of whiteboards, diagrams, etc.”
- “Along the way, you can also implicitly show your personal characteristics, right? Because you're committed, you show energy, you engage people—how are you going to do that? So that's also implicit.”
- “Many things happen in these kinds of workshops, and then people will say it was a very nice workshop you did. Yes, I really appreciate how you worked with... And then they thought, oh, that's very nice back then. How did you do all that?”
- “So, it's not just a technical workshop; there are also many personal elements involved. But the primary goal in the design workshop for use cases is to ensure that we have the technical requirements and translations well-understood.”
- “it is working together, back and forth, communication and not one way traffic to create the agenda and prepare for a workshop”
- “the more you communicate before a workshop, the better you can manage expectations”

#### Participant 3

##### Personal relations:

- -“You know, we are consciously working to broaden the scope of our network and relationships. This ensures that if someone indeed steps away, it doesn't put all your relationships at risk. Of course, it's always unfortunate when everything is working well and then someone leaves.”
- -“We have an account plan in which we say we want to engage with certain areas within \*organization of customer\*. We identify who is there, who we need to reach out to, and what would be a good reason to start a conversation with them. Who is the best person to do that? In this way, we can get an introduction through someone we already know.”
- -“Well then, I go referring back to the previous session, I'll take a look at which people are coming, what they are looking for, and what resonates with them. Based on that, I'll select people to present the customer cases we are working on, to ensure there is a good match.”

##### Contact moments:

- “because we work at the customer, there we have some important contact moments”

##### Contact person:

- Important to connect the right people with each other, to match personality as well as expertise

#### Match/cultural fit between customers and SBP:

- “And that is also related to the fact that \*customer\* is still a party that frequently asks for people on an hourly rate basis. Every time, I say that's not what we do. We provide a service, right? It helps immensely to put different people on the stage so that they also get that perception.”
- “Yes, I think so, because if we stray too far from our model and principles, it will be difficult to find engineers for this. And I think that both parties will end up being dissatisfied. So, it's ultimately better to collectively decide not to do it.”
- “Yes, and um, I think that we work much more in co-creation models with the customer, and in this case as well. So, as an engineer, you really need a certain level of social skills to be able to work effectively here.”

#### Quality

- “So essentially, it is about broadening the relationship beyond just being person-to-person. And also about steering it more towards services.”
- “And yes, I think it's positive because we put in a lot of work and effort to ultimately change a design, amend contracts, even though everything was already laid out on the table. And that's something we did, you know, in their interest. So, they greatly appreciated that, and I believe we've also built knowledge for the long term with this effort.”
- “Well, I think they will ultimately respect it if you explain it well and also build the trust that if we do say yes to something, we will truly deliver on it because it falls within our expertise.”

#### Customer goals

- “Uh, taking the time and understanding, context of \*the customer\*, but also, to the work. Because that is ultimately what delivers value. Yeah, and you have to balance between those, yeah. For me, I always look at someone and think—I sometimes just ask—what are the challenges? You know, what are your challenges? Because if you know that, then you understand how you can ultimately help someone or an organization. And in that sense, also being clear about what our challenges are.”
- “But I also noticed that they said, “Yeah, but we're not there yet. We need to start with the basics.” Well, that led to a bit of a discussion. “Yeah, but it's very hard to set a baseline, because you really need to start measuring and then track your progress. And maybe eventually you'll establish a baseline.”
- I still think this is something for him. So, I noticed that one person is kind of above-average interested, and the rest eventually lose interest. So, I let it go at that. But I do keep it in mind a little bit.”
- “Well, ultimately, it comes down to, and it is, of course, important what is delivered. So, it's really a combination of the relationship and, you know, solutions that solve their problems in the end. And, um, I think what works well in this case is that most people we deal with on the \*customers\* side are also transparent, which naturally makes it much easier.

#### Workshops:

- “Well, I think, um, I... I think that you literally build and strengthen your relationship [by sitting together on an inspiration day]. So, um... yeah, I think that with this, we might be able to withstand a bit more, so to speak. So, if there ever is, uh, a discussion or disagreement, I believe that these kinds of things help. Fundamentally, it ensures you have a good partnership.”



#### Participant 4

Discovering unmet needs:

- At one point, we conducted an assessment because, during an network event, we casually discovered that certain aspects within the \*organization\* were not in order. So, partly based on the relationships we had with the CEO at the time, we suggested that it might be wise to take a look at that.

Trust and quality:

- Uh, because these are additional services that we also provide to other customers, what's interesting is that from an existing trust relationship, you naturally have more room to discuss these kinds of additional services. So, a number of topics emerged from this.
- "This led to additional or new interesting topics that we can potentially follow up on. So, you can see that we are trying to do more cross-selling and upselling of other services alongside our existing services."

Frequency of contact:

- We have more periodic meetings, for example. Initially, it was somewhat ad hoc, so to speak. If you hire someone for two months, you don't need to be kept informed about everything. So now we are more aware of what's happening within the bank because we simply...

Shared working:

- And we also often try to have some team members physically present at the customer's location, so that we are on their side as well and can demonstrate our commitment, so to speak. Especially when working in a co-creation model, it helps to be physically present and participate directly with the customer.

Attitude

- Yes, if we don't completely agree or don't always see the point, you'll hear about it, of course. But people on the customer side don't always like hearing that. Even though our intentions are good. So it can occasionally be a very fine line in terms of how you handle it. Do you push back when you think the customer is making poor choices, or do you just go along and do everything they ask?
- "This depends on the customer relationship, and we are generally less inclined towards the latter, I think. It's somewhat part of our culture to "speak up" and things like that. But the customer can sometimes find that a bit challenging, of course."

Match/cultural fit between customers and SBP:

- "From Schuberg's standpoint, we prefer long-term contracts. Normally, at Schuberg, we have 3 to 5-year run contracts. So, we have naturally been pushing for this at \*customer\* as well, so to speak.
- "Reputation of Schuberg; So, if you have a good reputation and there are specific mission-critical, security-related issues, they'll think, yes, this is a company with a market reputation for being able to fix these issues. In this context, corporate reputation can be a part of the equation."
- By looking at what the common values are, such as culture and certain values, perhaps
- "So, what are your core values? What are our core values, and what are certain ways of working and cultural values? Where do we see a good match, and how can we reinforce each other in those areas?"
- "So, they also appreciate and find it beneficial to sit with the team, to get a sense of how the Schuberg team operates here. In that sense, we are also happy to invite customers here to get a feel for the atmosphere and how everything works."

Customer orientation

- However, \*customer\* was partly outside our influence and was under external supervision. This meant that they couldn't enter into long-term contracts until they had certain management processes and sourcing perspectives sorted out, which was completely beyond our control."
- "So, not so explicitly. We found out about it later. Because we had wanted a long-term contract from day one, the \*customer\* was a bit hesitant at the start. Um, and then later, we found out that this played a part in the reason for their initial hesitation."
- Round tables: discussions in the area of security or other topics. We try to bring together a number of CISO's from different sector customers to see what issues they are facing and to share our market insights, to determine how relevant this is for them. We also aim to create a networking or meet-and-greet setting around the table.

Continuity & future vision:

- "So on one hand, it's trust. And for us, it's also about the continuity of the team. This means we know that this is a team we can count on using in the coming year. Yes, it also has positive effects on the team itself, as they know what to expect."
- "Because we also have that long-term commitment, they see us more as a sort of strategic partner, I think. This allows them to share more with us in that context and be more open to the ideas we have. So, if we have new ideas about doing things a certain way, offering additional services, or implementing some innovation, they are now more receptive to that."
- Ideally, I would like to develop an advisory-type relationship or become a strategic partner.
- "working together at a shared future vision and strategy"

Personal contact:

- When our role became more strategically important [for the customer] we also gained more time and attention from the IT direction for the strategical impact.
- "Yes, so we also make sure to introduce who we are, how we work, what has already been done with other teams, what exists, and how we collaborate, especially when it's a new team. That's part of setting the scene and getting to know each other."
- " it's also about using our own network and reaching out to new teams and business units."
- "But of course, it's exciting to see what will happen and, following the reorganization, what the role of the platform will be, and whether the people we are currently working with will still be there or what their roles will be. So, there is some uncertainty in that regard, but at the same time, the long-term contract provides a solid foundation.
- "I don't know, uh, mentioning the basics of that at the coffee machine, like, hey, we did this for Customer A. Might it be interesting for you? When you know someone personally, you naturally try to spark interest by asking if this is relevant or appealing to them or not. So, based on existing relationships, you try to gauge if there is interest in a specific topic."

Workshops:

- ""mainly focus on inspiring and sharing knowledge about what we see and what we do."
- " Well, based on what we discuss there, it's thought leadership or however we want to call it. It reflects our vision on a particular subject, and if we think, hey, that's interesting or if there are specific issues or a need for more insight or support, then that could potentially lead to further follow-up."

## Participant 5

### Personal relations:

- In this case, we didn't really know enough people there. So, we found someone who had just left \*other related company\*, where they held a very good position, and had started their own business. We asked them to join us as an external advisor, and they positioned us at the right levels. This included, among others, the CIO.

### Customer orientation & Actors perception of each other

- They introduced us, and we presented our story, explaining that we are business outcome-focused and do what we believe, etc. We presented all our ideas, and they responded positively, saying, "This is great because \*competitor\* hasn't been able to address this area."
- We were introduced through informal channels, with them saying that this party is really needed to become successful.

### Customer orientation:

- And we also have this here, and it's kind of funny how you approach that. For example, we've had tests ordered a few times, and they just ordered something for shipment and thought, "Let's see what happens."
- We try to prepare for that, of course, by really putting ourselves in their shoes. What keeps them up at night, so to speak? Do you have something to contribute to that? If so, you try to guide the conversation towards what they really find important. What can you do? How can we help with this? How can we accelerate it? So yes, that's a part of your preparation.

### Match/cultural fit between customers and SBP:

- "They only work by hiring personnel on an hourly basis. We are truly the exception within the entire company, and that simply means we don't believe in that, and they generally have negative experiences with it. But their standard way of working is just hiring a party for a certain number of hours per month or week or so.
- It's quite turbulent there, so to speak. Uh, so they react a lot by replacing those top-level people.
- This is also a person who literally thinks that they could be let go at any moment, even next week. So, all the people we deal with, many of them are very short-term focused. Yes, it's very difficult to achieve something long-term, in my opinion. It keeps things very dynamic, so to speak. You do see nice things happening, but it's definitely a constant balancing act.
- We also try to educate and coach them in this regard, if I may say so, to encourage more of this thinking. It's also part of our role to continually challenge them and promote long-term thinking. We remind them, "Hey, you don't have to focus only on the short term. Let's also consider the vision for the future." For instance, what would make 2025 a success for you? Things like that.
- And you often see within Schuberg that we are very good at guiding customers who are stuck elsewhere, taking them by the hand and saying, "Okay," like a firefighter who goes above and beyond, and that's what we do well.

### Quality

- So, there's a genuine interest for us as well. It's not just about providing people, but also about the outcome. We get extra money for it or have money deducted if we don't do it well. The other component is everything we do in the run, maintaining everything we've built, which is really the foundation of the service. For that, there's a straightforward SLA.
- We believe that you can expect this and that from us. Yes, so that care is contracted.
- So that's one side, the revenue, which is great. But there also needs to be something where I always think, yes, this makes our people happy, this is fulfilling. You know, where we can add value? If we don't have that, we won't do it. So, that evaluation is ongoing. That's something you also discuss with the team—like, "Hey, how can we make it more enjoyable and better?"

### Stakeholders at customer IT/Business

- there were a number of people, primarily the CIO. There was also a Chief Digital Officer who has since left, but they were ultimately the ones who paid the bill, so to speak. So, we spoke a lot with the CDO, the CIO, the program director, and the owner of the data platform.
- Coincidentally, we had a session with the customer this morning, and we agreed to create a 2025 roadmap for the data platform, so to speak. Yes, with both operational goals, such as "Okay, these features and functions we are going to deliver," and also strategic goals.
- Just people from the relationship network. You never start with the CEO, always below them. And then eventually, you end up there—it's like a domino effect.

### Workshops:

- We conducted an inspiration session. Many people were allowed to participate, and from that, we rebuilt a relationship with the base supply chain. This triggered interest on that entire side, so it was important for us. And, of course, the initial conversations with the CIO about, "You have chosen this strategy?"
- Try to understand what is important to him and simply do what you promise. Be well-prepared, and it's not about specific things per se. It's about, when are you a good partner? If you do these basic things well: listen carefully, remain neutral, yet be an expert partner who demonstrates that you've done this before and understands what keeps these people up at night.
- In the next workshop, we focused on what keeps them up at night. We used design thinking, and came up with a full list of topics—maybe around twenty different issues like, "This isn't going well, that's not going smoothly," etc., such as, "We need to deliver this legally, but can't do it right now." Then, you start prioritizing those issues.
- During the workshop, together with him, we asked, "Okay, what are the top five issues?" and then tried to create concrete proposals for them. From that top five, two were specifically identified to start with as proofs of concept. That's how it works; you get a sort of assignments—a few projects to work on.
- Such a workshop is quite intensive, but very good. Without it, you just end up going in circles. And just like I said to my own people this morning—or no, last week—we first had one with our contact person to come to an agreement on how we'll develop a short- and long-term plan, so to speak

Joined working:

- Via working together and being physically present at their offices. We can easily plan meetings with people from the customer's company. And get their opinion on ideas.
- We've also typically done something like that where they were really stuck. Then you come to help, they become happy with us, and then we receive more and more questions.

### Participant 6

Workshops/ Customer orientation

- I can probably outline that we are usually above average. Workshops, for one, give us a clear understanding of the customer's situation. Yes, for the customer, it provides a clearer picture of our own situation. Because sometimes you think you know, but when you write it down and really map it out together, you often realize, "Oh, we never managed to do this ourselves," or something of that magnitude. The whole goal is to find a clear, well, as uniform a way as possible to have clarity on both sides about what it is we are going to do and how we are going to do it.
- There are also validation steps involved, such as "Is this everything we've gathered, and does it align with what we want to achieve together?" And that clarity is basically what you aim to achieve in those eight workshops. You also address different areas, so for top management, it's often about strategy, while for the CEO, it might be more about security and how we manage that.
- Ultimately, you explain the real context to the business regarding which applications will be affected and what needs to be done by the people involved. You want clarity on those kinds of questions. Additionally, in those workshops, particularly in steps six or seven, you also create a transition plan.
- Inspire and comfort the customer

- So, we conduct different types of workshops to continually stimulate and trigger the idea that you shouldn't stand still and need to keep moving forward. We do this to maintain a perfect score. Because if we just do what we say, we won't achieve higher marks. You need to over perform a bit.
- To feel/be connected. Our relationship model is based upon an intimate connection with the customer
- A lot of value, a lot of calm, clarity, and clear perceptions from the customer side were evident and could also be understood and accepted. That way, you could also help your organization align with that. Yes, so internally as well. In those workshops, you want openness, and you want to ensure that no one holds back or thinks, "I better not say this because there's another party or stakeholder present. And to create that safety, you need to understand each other's ideas.

Execution:

- But ultimately, the contract was signed with us, which we consider a success. Yes, and we see this quite often because this is how we typically start projects—by going through them thoroughly, almost like due diligence, but in such a way that it's done collaboratively. You explore various perspectives, addressing not only management's desires but also incorporating security, organizational, and planning aspects. This approach ensures you create a level of comfort for all your stakeholders.

Customer orientation/ actors perception of each other:

- Because the impression you want to leave with your customer is that you understand how to transition from an existing situation to a desired new situation. So, there's also an element of demonstrating that we truly know what we're talking about.
- Or simply that you feel the other person is doing everything possible to help you.

Stakeholders

- Because you create relationships on many levels, not everyone will automatically be a proponent of the party they're presented with. However, it gives you a great opportunity to create insight and develop relationships across many facets within the organization.

Attitude:

- I think it's quite humble to say, "Yes, actually, we are supposed to be doing that task for you, but you're doing it yourself now; I find that a bit of a waste." It's quite charming if you can express that vulnerability right away. So, I think we are quite supported here in being vulnerable with our customers—about what we do well, but also about what might slow us down, and being honest with each other.

Company Culture:

- That's a bit part of the mindset of this company. We prefer to bring in a team rather than something else.
- Our relationship model is based upon an intimate connection with the customer
- I wish for us to be more physically present at the customer's organization at all levels. Yes, because our employees are quite comfortable here, and we enjoy coming together. That's good because it ensures a certain level of knowledge sharing and quality harmonization. But at the same time, we miss that physical connection with our customers. Yes, so sometimes you hear about being at the customer one day a week. To me, that feels too little.

Change in stakeholder at the customer:

- It is a bit like if your partner at home changes, you spend quite a lot of time together here and, oddly enough, with the customer as well. At home, things have changed for us too. So you really need to get to know each other again and explain who you are, what beliefs you hold in life, what you like and dislike, and all those things. And you hope it clicks, of course. In a business relationship, however, whatever was agreed upon by their predecessor must also fit. Or it might be a great opportunity, like hitting the jackpot, with much more potential.
- Because we started approaching it from scratch and explaining, "Yes, this is what was agreed upon." Regardless of whether you agree with it, I want to make sure you know. I want to be certain that you're aware of it so you can form an opinion on it.
- Of course, there was some talk about us within the company. Yes, positive things, but also naturally some negative things, like "It's very expensive," or "Yes, it's good, but is it necessary?" Well, then you want to help generate some insight, at least from our perspective, about how we view the world, and then understand how they see it.
- And it was a bit of luck I think, because we agreed upon a bigger role for us, initially. We said that we were committed to doing much more for them than they allowed, which is a bit odd in outsourcing. It's about how you manage that because with the first setup of the contract, people had to get used to the new level of agreements and responsibilities that were handed over to us. We didn't fully get through that, and I was actually quite confrontational about it with him. We should have been doing more, but we were never allowed to. And he accepted that as a present.



Quality

- And you also know that if you continue doing what you do well today, it will eventually become less valuable. Yes, so if you start well, you might eventually perceive...
- Yes, you can't succeed if you don't have a solid foundation, so the foundation must be strong and in order. Then, there's the intrinsic motivation to want to delve into the customer's business and also the courage to seek out and engage in conversation with each other.

Future vision:

- That's usually the case. It's hardly discussed further, so to speak. You deliver the management summary, and then it's done because it's no longer a problem. And that's just it. When you look at them, they came from a problem situation, which you resolved, and that naturally affects the relationship. Yes, and while it's good that the problem is solved, you really want to take further steps.
- Yes, exactly. We have grown closer together and become more involved in their business and business innovation. We even set up our own data center for this purpose, so we haven't hesitated to say, "This isn't right for you; we need to look at a different path."

Business & IT:

- [difference In how connected/deep in the organization of the customer you are, business vs it projects] In principle, you don't need this if there's no business. So, we try to connect with the business side as much as possible. Yes, and then, in a service situation, it's crucial to have that relationship with the business. Because that's where change happens, and IT needs to support that. So, regardless, you need to be close to each other. Discuss what the latest trends and developments are. You don't have to do this on a daily basis, but the frequency should be regular.

Contact

- Frequently/daily contact with the customers
- Service rapport
- Be honest about your emotions and feel safe to express them. [involvement external partner] 'we were aggregated, why are you involving them?'"
- es, because there [on the work floor], you bump into each other and overhear things. It's different from being remote and having to pick up the phone or schedule a meeting. You see how much effort it takes to have more face-to-face time. So, it's preferable to just run into each other.

Involvement of an external partner:

- IT can be beneficial to have a external party involved, who can give independent advise. If they advise to collaborate it really helps to take big steps.

D.5 Key quotations External

Participant 1

Quality

- We took away the barriers at or side that prevented SBP to do their job well. And gave them the space to take the role they were supposed to have.

Personal relationship

- For me personally, I first focus on the establishment of a personal relationship.
- Conversations that made that we said, we understand each other, and we want to continue together.
- Transparency, openness, playing with open cards on the table. That creates mutual trust. Together with making promises and living up to them. Which results in the trust to talk about the future.
- There must be a personal connection with the team on the other side, and there should be some overlap in the values of the companies, but, above all, there must be a lot of transparency. So, when things are not going well, we don't wait for a formal steering group or anything like that. I expect a call, or even a WhatsApp message saying, "Got a moment?" This informal way of communicating ensures that the relationship deepens, as it were, and you build mutual trust, knowing that you will tackle things together. That's why I consciously talk about partners, not suppliers. Because when you think of customer-supplier... No, they are partners, and we have shared interests. And we reach our goals together.
- If everything is handled too strictly and professionally, down to the last detail, like saying, "You said this, but you meant that," then I'm done. But that's just purely personal. Then I'm done.

Most important aspects:

- Humor is also important, that you have that bond that you can make jokes and meanwhile work hard. Have and open and transparent relationship and deliver results and quality.
- Results, openness, respect and informality are the four most important factors.

Network event:

- The most important element of that event was that [stakeholder SBP] and me literally went to a shopping mall, drank a cup of coffee and had an open conversation, playing with open cards. We see that certain things are not going as we want them to, and we see that there are interesting for SBP to be a part of and there are internal things happening we should know about. We talked about that, based upon our personal relationship.
- Later, we still recall back to this moment, when we need to just sit together. One on one and figure things out.
- In the end this is also how we got an agreement on the contract negotiations, which was already going on for a long time. And we said we are in this relationship for the long run we need to come to an agreement and we must be honest and open. So we went back to the personal relationship we had to come to this agreement.

Transparency:

- It is also the transparency that SBP gives, that creates trust. To take away their salesperson and let the customer success director make this agreement. [with whom the personal relationship as established]



Company culture:

- Failing was not an option; we need to do this together. But we both needed to make some compromises. And we needed to have some understanding for each other's situation.
- SBP is a company that has a "Lets go get them!" mentality, while we have that less. We need our time to think about it.
- And that clashed, especially when management emerged that couldn't adapt to this new direction. For instance, when they fully align with the way Schuberg operates, we end up losing cooperation on our side. It becomes challenging for an external party to still influence what the customer wants. That was where things particularly went wrong.
- You can have an open conversation without it immediately becoming strictly business; like I mentioned earlier, not straight away discussing consequences such as increasing prices or incorporating risks. It's more about saying, "Hey, this is what we need to achieve together; how are we going to do that?" Then we can formalize that in a contract or set performance agreements. For me, this approach has made the relationship very successful.
- We are very happy with the way SBP works. We have a lot to learn from them. And their engineering culture is slowly spreading at [company of customer]. If there is a problem, you fix it and then later we think about things as documentation or company hierarchy.

Participant 2

Important elements:

- Expertise, continuity, transparency, and I think demonstrating that Schuberg is willing to make sacrifices.

Quality

- We just want the best. So at that time, we also had to consider which one is the best? Which do we currently have, and which do we want to continue with? Ultimately, we chose to proceed with Schuberg.
- First, let's just have a look together with a fresh pair of eyes and some people who are used to doing this, to go through it together with you. And where we can provide our input, purely from the fact that we know you.

Workshop:

- We did a workshop which resulted in a bit of road mapping
- You need to have trust before you attend such a meeting together. Otherwise you do not have the openness and transparency to say things the way they are.
- Such a process, such a workshop, is something you do perhaps once every ten or twelve years. It's not something where you can say in advance exactly what the outcome will be. It's really a process that you go through, where you are guided, and at a certain point, you have to decide whether you want to continue with it or if it ends there, or whatever the decision may be.

Customer intimacy:

- It's a beautiful term called customer intimacy, and it has everything to do with demonstrating how well you know your partner—so, in this case, how well Schuberg Philis knows [company customer]

Future vision:

- In what context does the organization find itself, and how can you develop that for the future, given the fact that you want to become something? But what that actually is, we will figure out together

Partnership:

- Of course, a partnership, so to speak. But yes, it really came not so much from a need on our part, but rather something identified by Schuberg, like, "Listen, you are now at a crossroads, and we see that you're finding it difficult to make a decision."

Partnership:

- And that was also the moment when we said we actually want to expect more from Schuberg. What do you say? Because previously it was still about us making requests and you executing them. We actually want to go a step further and say, okay, this is our IT department, but consider yourself part of [customers company].
- Well, I think it was exciting for everyone because certain interests are always affected during such a process, and it's always a matter of seeing who will ultimately represent which interest and in what way. And I think that if you...

Effort:

- And in that way, if you look at the effort that SBP puts in it, to make it right every time. They go above and beyond to call it like that. And then you know it is good.

Trust:

- That is important in a relationship, work together, trust each other

Participant 3

Expanding network

- It's also the case in such collaborations that internally, we are very enthusiastic about the results we've achieved, even within another sector at [company of customer]. We can point out what we've established and how Schuberg can assist with it. It's always been discussed openly and transparently with certain people who see the added value in tangible tools or robust analytics we have.
- You can see that the collaboration is expanding like an oil spill, gradually involving more people. This is something that, in the long term, prompts questions about where additional value can be found or if there are more people we could potentially engage with. It is certainly an exchange from both sides.

Company culture:

- Having an open and transparent company culture.
- Flexibility from both sides, if we would have been very precise maybe the relationship would have already ended. But because we were both flexible, honest, transparent and transparent communication it has been a good relationship.
- Yes, so let's say, when it comes to core values, it's important to know that with the partners you collaborate with, these are managed correctly from their side as well. If you don't have confidence in that, it is a fundamental reason for me to say I won't proceed with them. I wouldn't even start a partnership. So, I think from the company's perspective, in terms of how you manage certain business practices, you should be relatively aligned. Thus, in areas such as safety, responsible employment, and quality, all those aspects must be well-aligned. A collaboration can't diverge too much in these respects.

#### Workshops:

- Workshops to start the conversation about the use case. With experts we went more and more into depth and specific knowledge. It delivered good results.
- Workshops gave a broader insight in the services that SBP delivered. During knowledge sessions, they showed what they could deliver by showing other use cases.
- First the service offer must fit the question. And then you need to propose that to the right person. And must be proven to be working on the market. This is a combination that helps the relationship and is a situation in which we can conclude that there is a common ground and foundation for that relationship. Then I though this party can really deliver value to us.
- Showing results is better than a sales pitch, they can tell beautiful stories about the company and what they can deliver. They promise the moon, and it is hard to see though that.
- During that workshop we were finding out, together, which direction to take and what were the possibilities. That way we saw a bit what they had to offer, which was a nice refreshing approach. And then we saw they do not only say they can deliver. They really can!
- The core must be the added values and the trust that the other party can really deliver quality. And then if you also have a personal connection, this relationship is becoming easier.

- And afterwards, the workshop itself was about exploring and clarifying what exactly we wanted. That much was clear. It was also about understanding our business requirements and what Schuberg could deliver. I would say they were always very open about that, directly indicating, "This is where we're strong, and this is less of our focus." But above all, maintaining very open and honest communication. I think that was a very good foundation, knowing clearly beforehand what we could collaborate on and what the scope of that collaboration would be.

#### Personal bond:

- From a professional point of view, they initially had a lot of trust. We saw them collaborate with similar parties. We also just had trust that the party could deliver. Additionally, we had quite a few conversations on a personal level during workshops and meetings about the content. We conducted certain site visits and, on a personal level, but in practice, it turned out that this party couldn't deliver what they had promised. Many mistakes were made, agreements were not kept, and that's why we parted ways with them. Even though we might have gotten along personally, it became noticeable that they weren't the right partner for this. So, we eventually chose another partner. So yes, once again, I would say that even if it clicks personally, it doesn't automatically mean it will work professionally. Ultimately, delivering quality and keeping agreements are fundamental, right? A personal connection makes it easier to grow a relationship, but it's not necessary for a successful collaboration.
- I have also worked with consultants with whom I did not have a personal connection or click. But when they were good at what they did, then the relationship was very professional. Things went well, agreements were met, quality was delivered, and the right scope, etc., was accomplished.

- But when I do have a personal connection I would go to that person or organization when I have questions or ask if they could help us. I would less likely do that when I do not have that personal connection.
- But I think ultimately, through personal contact, you naturally get to know each other better beyond the professional sphere, and you notice there is always a lot of mutual interest, leading to enjoyable conversations. Lunches together are always pleasant. So yes, a personal connection is certainly important. If you have a strong professional connection but lack a personal one, it can lead to a difficult relationship. On the other hand, if both areas work well, it's even better. In fact, I think having a strong personal connection can occasionally allow for more flexibility professionally. In this case, that wasn't necessary, but it does strengthen each other, making conversations enjoyable. I believe it adds value when personal stories are interesting outside the professional topics.

#### Personal bond:

- In the perfect world you will have all three: all the norms and values, quality and personal relationship. But that is not always realistic, or possible. So which relationship values are depending on the situation
- Core values that you find personally important are also important in a B2B relationship.
- Per project you can have different priorities, 100% quality is less important when it is very urgent. Or when it is all about money, you are also having a different attitude towards the relationship.
- Duration of the engagement is also very influencing the relationship. With SBP it is a long-term relationship, but with smaller projects you can have lower standards or requirements or when you have a smaller budget. Then the personal relationship is also less important. When you have a project of 2/3 months that does not require 100% quality, you also invest less in the relationship

#### Quality

- We had also weekly check-ups on the project.
- There were clear challenges, and the relationship was immediately put to the test when certain aspects fell behind schedule due to increased complexity on Schuberg's side as well as resource issues on our side. I think both sides openly discussed this flexibility. As a result, the project was delivered later than initially planned. However, I believe we have always been very open and honest about where we stood and what we could expect from each other and when. I am certain that the flexibility from Schuberg's side really helped to make this a successful collaboration.

# E: Design Steps

## E.1 Chosen Design Direction

The first design direction focuses on customer orientation and finding common ground between the customer and Schuberg Philis. Schuberg Philis serves customers in different markets, each with their own organizational structure and culture. Creating a universal design or interaction for all of Schuberg Philis' B2B relationships would be less effective. Internal and external stakeholders have stated that the importance and balance of relationship values are context-specific, and stakeholders have expressed different preferences in the importance of the relationship's values. An additional consideration for not focusing on the fuzzy front end is that internal and external stakeholders did not express a need for more certainty or direction in this phase. Instead, it is described as a phase in which Schuberg Philis and its customers explore possibilities and develop mutual understanding. Thus, although influencing this phase of the B2B relationship has the potential to positively impact the B2B relationship, the current context does not ask for interference or a universal approach.

The second design direction has been further explored. The change of an external stakeholder has the biggest impact on the pillar of trust, especially the value group of a personal bond. Thus, a design influencing the personal bond between the two stakeholders would influence this design direction the most positively. Creating a personal bond between two stakeholders can only be established by an interaction between the people who must create this bond.

Schuberg Philis has multiple workshops that facilitate the establishment of a personal bond. Internal stakeholders have also expressed their concerns to get involved with a new stakeholder and identified the lack of priority that is given to an outsourcing partner as biggest obstacle to create this bond. A solution to minimize the impact of a stakeholder change should thus have an internal focus and not ask for engagement of the external stakeholder.

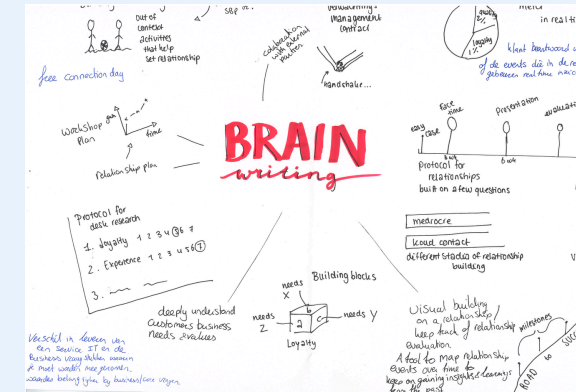
The focus of the third design direction is on internal change. By enhancing internal knowledge and influencing internal stakeholders, the positive impact on the establishment of B2B relationships becomes independent of customer cooperation. This approach involves increasing awareness of current events and interactions, as well as deepening the understanding of key relationship values between Schuberg Philis and their customers. By gaining insight into the current situation and understanding the most effective next steps based on the current path to a loyal B2B relationship, the establishment of current B2B relationships can be influenced, accelerated and guide the establishment of future B2B relationships.

## E.2 Iterations

The third design direction formed the basis for developing different ideas.

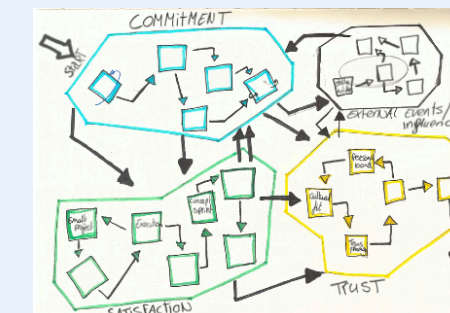
The first idea focused on providing insights into the establishment of loyal B2B relationships by connecting the different events and interactions during this process with the values they influence. By offering a path towards loyal B2B relationships based on the order of value creation and events/interactions, this dual-sided map aims to help internal stakeholders understand their current B2B relationships. It provides guidance for maintaining and establishing loyal B2B relationships by connecting the events, actions, and interactions that influence this establishment.

A second brainstorming session was used to generate new ideas. The focus of this session was to think outside the box and explore other design directions.

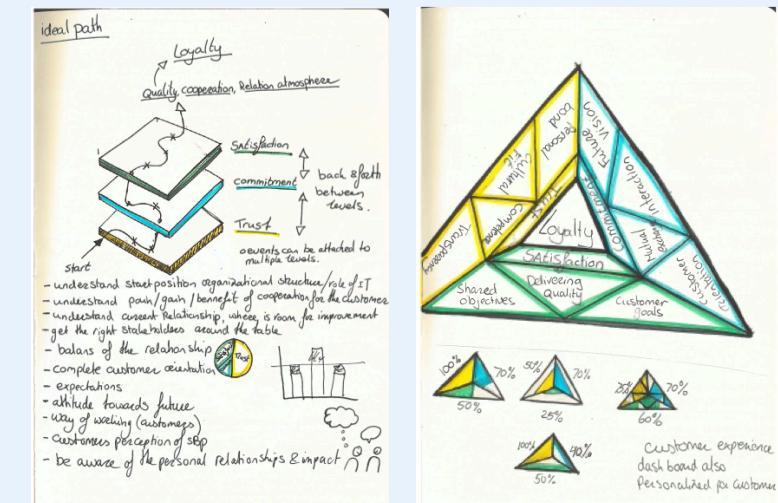
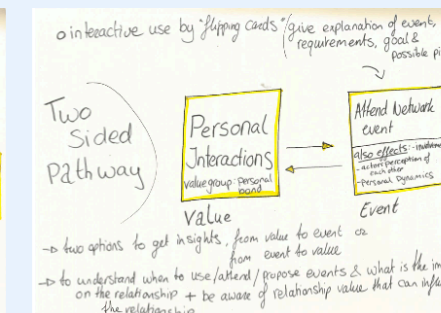


Brainstorming session

After this brainstorming session, two ideas were further explored. The main objective of the ideas was focused on providing insights into the path towards establishing loyal B2B relationships and how to understand the current relationship as well as how to influence the establishment of these relationships by understanding the different customer values of a loyal B2B relationship



First Iteration: a value& events map



First Iteration: Visualization of value groups



### E.3 Concept 1: Value Dashboard

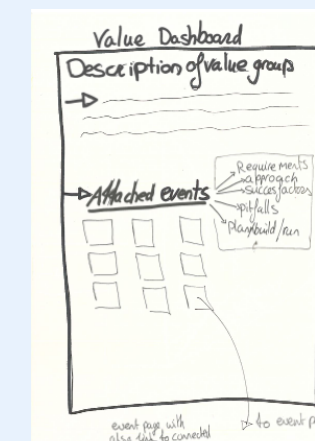
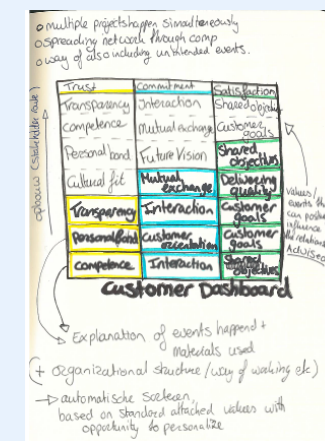
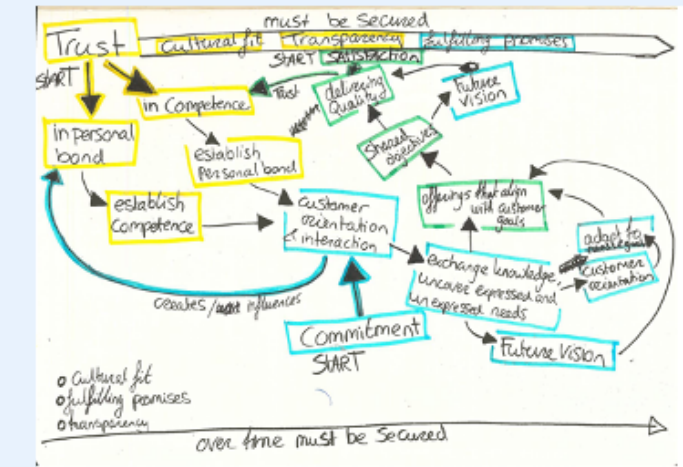
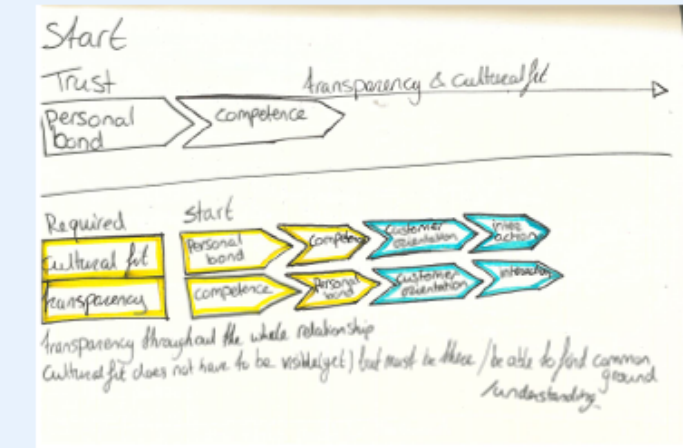
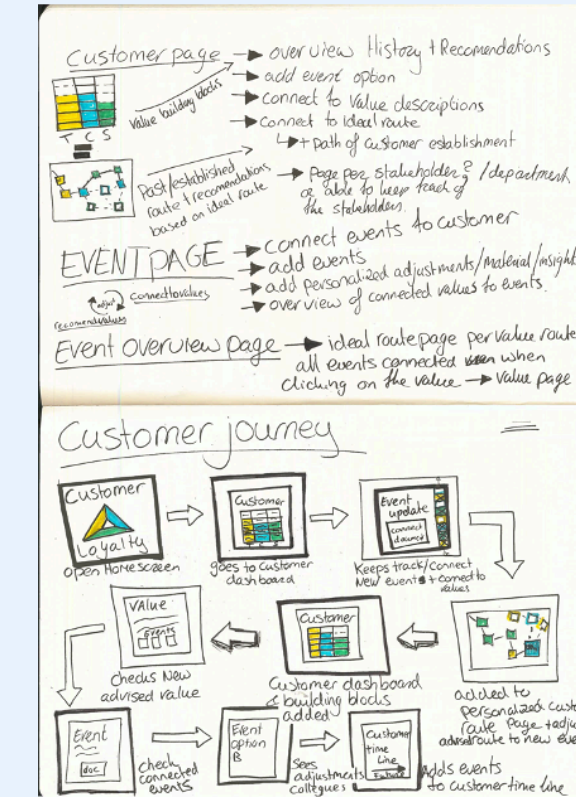
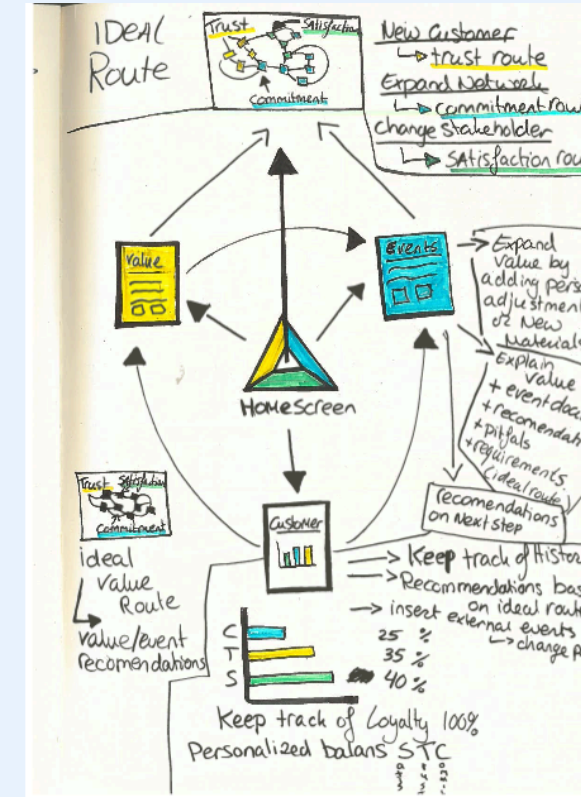
From these different brainstorming sessions and design directions a value dashboard was developed. The dashboard has the main objective of providing an interactive tool for internal stakeholders to gain knowledge and understanding on the establishment of customer values and to give insights into the path towards loyal customer engagements between Schuberg Philis and the customers.

This dashboard will have several functions:

1. Gaining knowledge on customer values that influence the establishment of loyal relationships
2. Providing a path towards loyal B2B relationships
  - a. To gain insights into the current B2B relationships
  - b. To help current B2B relationships to accelerate their path towards loyal B2B relationships
  - c. To understand possible pitfalls
  - d. To understand the requirements of establishing a customer value
3. Give insights in the history of a B2B relationship
  - a. To better understand the relationship specific value balance
  - b. To provide insights to minimize the impact of internal stakeholder changes

These functions will be divided into four different dashboard pages.

- The value pages will provide knowledge and create understanding of the values and value groups influencing the establishment of loyal B2B relationships.
- An interactive customer page will give insights into the established values and the events/interactions that lead to the establishment of these values.
- This interactive customer page will also provide the opportunity to storage specific value information, e.g. personal preferences of the external stakeholder, organizational structures or important future events or developments.
- The event pages will provide insights into the requirements and preparation of events. And will share personalized documents or adjustments to the event, to stimulate the re-use and sharing of customized events between internal stakeholders.
- A idea path page will guide the user between the different values and will function as home page to provide insights into the current position of relationships as well as a clear overview of future steps and events.



## Sketches Value Dashboard





Concept 1: Value Dashboard

## E.4 Cocreation session

The most promising idea was further explored in a co-creation session with internal stakeholders. This approach was used to validate the first concept and provide feedback to iterate and improve the concept. Features from the first concept were removed and a focus was placed on the core concept. These adjustments and improvements were made based on the feedback of the internal stakeholders. The iterated concept was then further developed into a prototype that was validated by an internal stakeholder who was not involved in the project.

### Introduction and goal of the session

The goal of the cocreation session was to gain insights from internal stakeholders on the possible use of a customer dashboard. By gaining insights on the user journey of the dashboard, insights into the possible use and connection between the different elements can guide possible improvements of the concept.

The aim of the cocreation session was also to get feedback on the idea of a user dashboard and stimulate the conversation between different internal stakeholders about their experiences. By dividing the participants into two groups, first a one-on-one conversation is stimulated. The next step then is to present their insights to the other group stimulate the debate and combine feedback and ideas.

### Participants during session

Four internal stakeholders participated in this cocreation session, holding different positions within Schuberg Philis. A sales director, business consultant, innovation specialist, and the CIO participated.

### Set-up:

Screen, two tables for 2 people, 2x A2 paper, colored markers, tape, sticky notes

### Agenda:

#### Introduction: 10 min

- Brief introduction/ catch-up on the topic
- Conclusions from the research + explanation on design direction
- Explain goal of the session

#### Dashboard walk though: 15min

- Provide sticky notes, pens and papers
- Encourages participants to write down comments, ideas, feedback and ask questions
- Walk though dashboard set up
- Home page – value group – event page – customer page – ideal route page

#### Co-creation session: 40 min (15 per round, 10 min extra)

Gather input and insights from participants in the following areas:

Round 1: Usability how intuitive is the use?

- Design the connections of the dashboard.
- Print the different pages in small size, provide A2 paper and pens
- Participants can order and connect the pages, position the pages and draw arrows to visualize desired re -directs/ connections between the dashboard pages
- Ask for feedback on navigating through the dashboard
- Brainstorm: what can be done to increase the ease of use?

Round two: Features additions/ feedback

What are additional features to make the dashboard more useful?

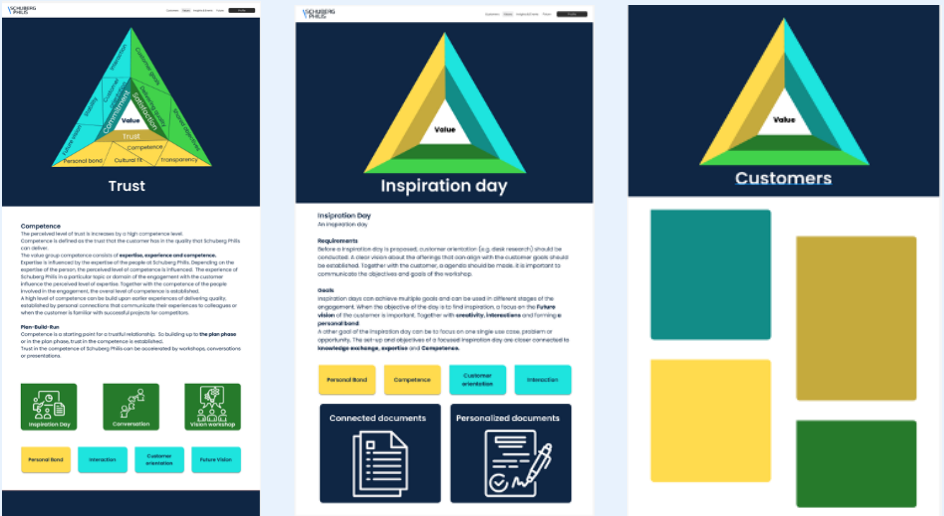
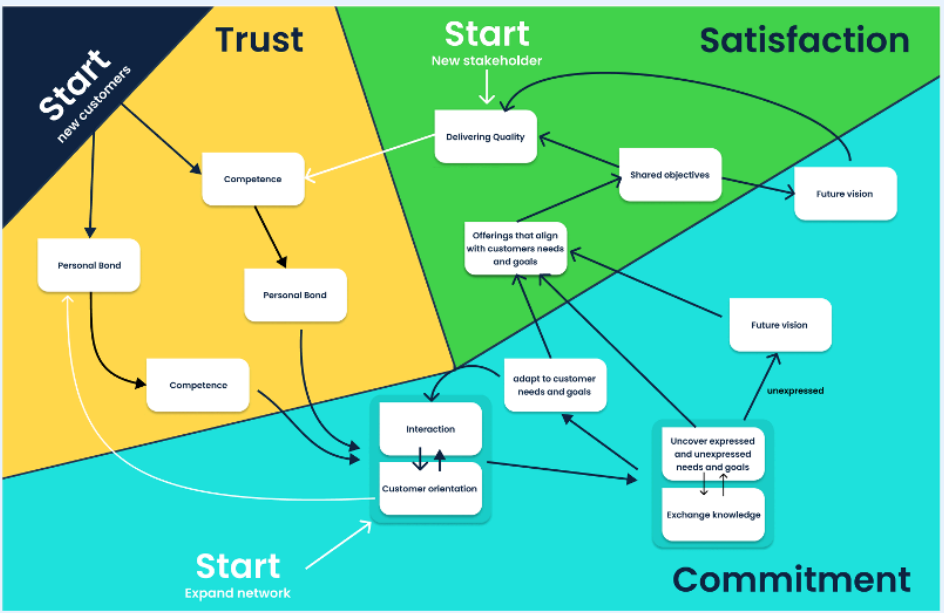
- Are there features missing that should be prioritized?
- Use sticky notes to add information/ dashboard pages to the A2
- Connect the additional information/pages to the desired walk though (made in round 1)

Present insights and ideas: 15 min (5min presentation, 2min questioning)

- Use the A2 paper as presentation slide and explain insights and ideas of the co-creation rounds
- Encourage other group to give feedback and ask questions

Closing: 10 min

## Co creation materials

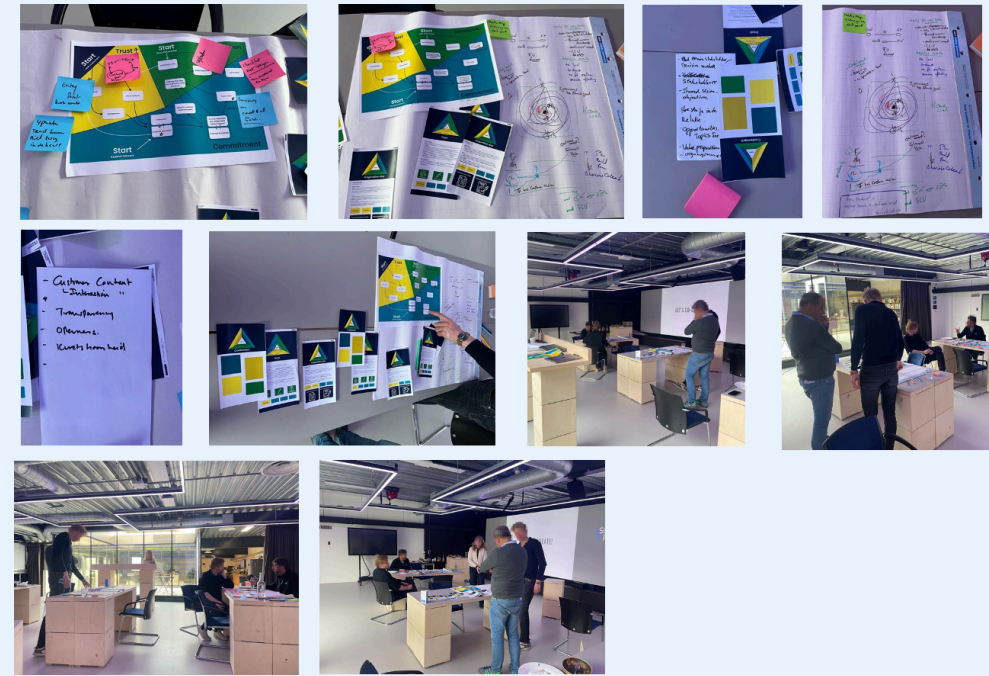


Co creation materials

## E.5 Co creation results

Insights of co-creation session

- Focus on the main functions of the dashboard:
- Provide insights into the current position of a B2B relationship and provide insights into the path towards loyal B2B relationships
- Provide information and knowledge on customer values and how these values can be established
- A learning tool for the customer teams within Schuberg Philis
- A learning tool for new colleagues or offices to learn and understand the company culture of Schuberg Philis
- Keeping track of the evolvments of a B2B relationship will not be used
- Insights on the requirements, steps or personalized information of events and workshops is not needed. "I know what to do and how to prepare for it"
- More interested is when an event or interaction is the most impactful and which values should be establish before the event can be valuable.
- Design feedback points:
  - not all values in the triangle are in the route
  - duplicated of values in the map is confusing
  - combining the use of value groups and values is confusing
  - a more coherent design
  - commitment area is bigger than trust and satisfaction but not more important



Co creation session results and pictures



## E.6 Iteration round 2

The feedback and ideas from the co-creation session formed the basis for a new iteration round. Together with exploring one alternative design, see appendix E.7 the value dashboard was improved, adjusted, and further developed.

A focus on the main function of the design remained; to provide a learning tool for internal stakeholders to gain knowledge and understanding of the establishment of customer values and to give insights into the path towards loyal customer engagements between Schuberg Philis and the customers, formed the basis for further developing the dashboard towards a learning tool.

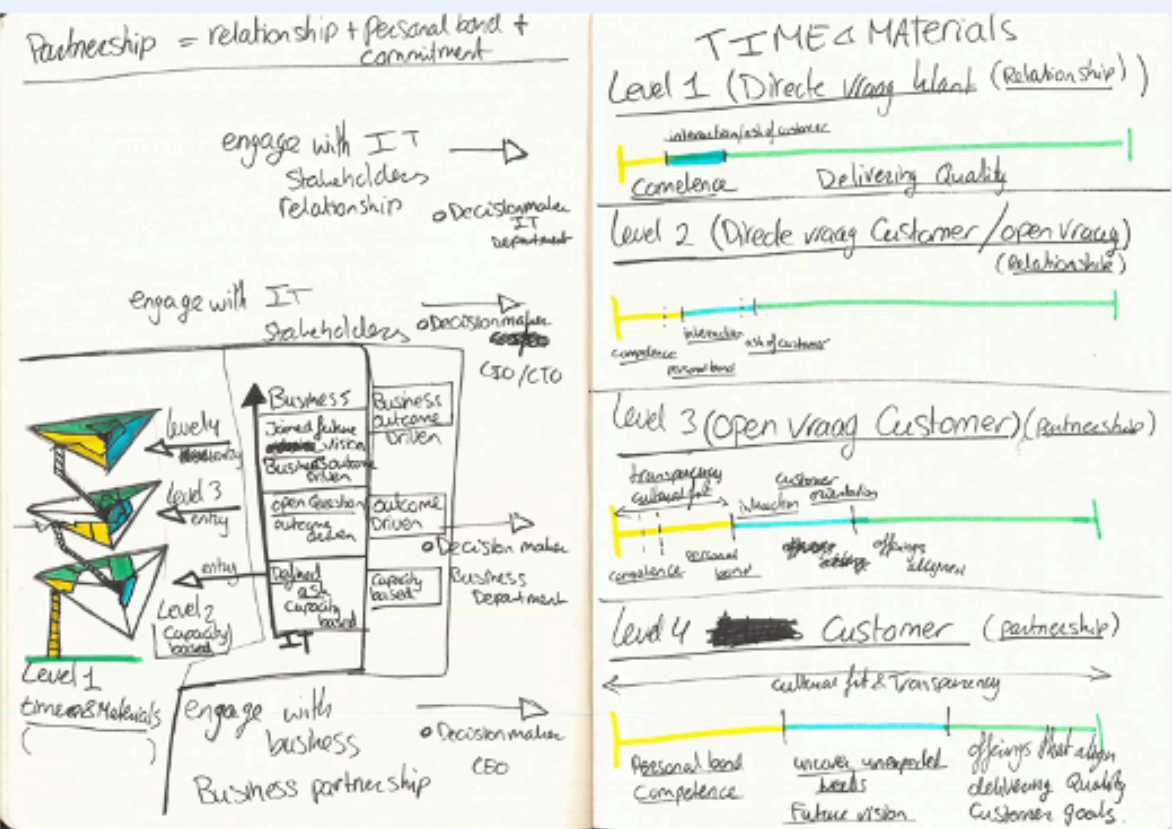
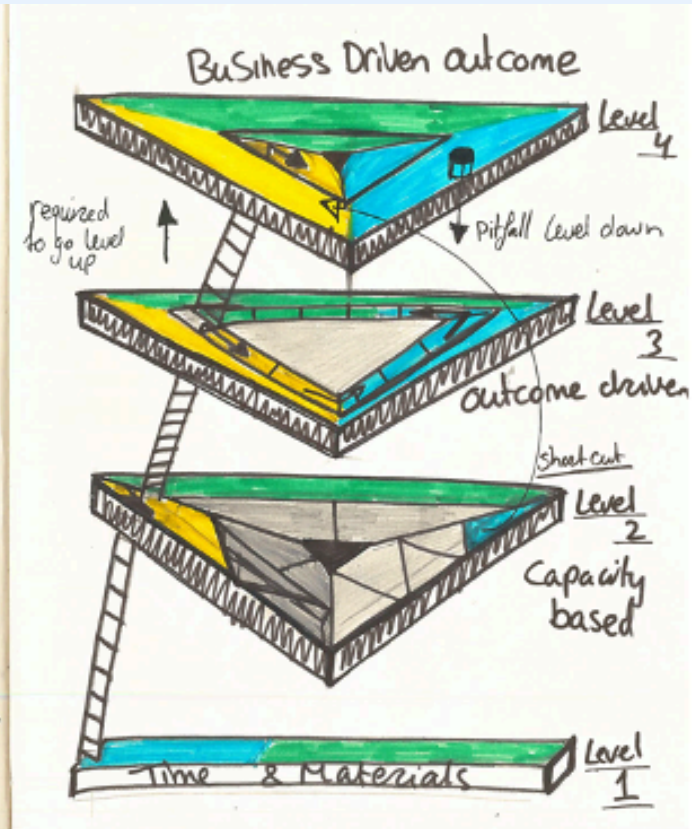
To improve the ideal path towards loyal customer engagement, an in-depth overview of the interview data was made. Two networks, one based upon internal quotes and insights, and one based upon external quotes and insights were made. These networks provided the basis for improving the ideal path, see Chapter 5.4. The created networks helped to understand the interconnected steps of loyal B2B relationship establishment.

Different visualization alternatives, connection structures, and ideas were generated. With the aim of providing a learning tool and helping internal stakeholders to understand and establish loyal B2B relationships.

## E.7 Alternative Design

Feedback and ideas during the co-creation session formed the basis for exploring an alternative design. This design shared the same main objective: to provide a learning tool for internal stakeholders to gain knowledge and understanding of the establishment of customer values and to give insights into the path towards loyal customer engagements between Schuberg Philis and its customers. Although the focus shifted towards the idea of various levels of engagement between Schuberg Philis and its customers, these levels symbolized steps along the path to establishing a loyal B2B relationship. This idea was supported by an external stakeholder who highlighted that the ideal balance of relationship values varies depending on the project's specific characteristics. Furthermore, it aligns with design consideration five, as it seeks to connect project-specific values with the different phases Schuberg Philis experiences with their customers. Often, these engagements begin with an IT-driven focus and evolve towards a business outcome-driven engagement. By examining the transition from IT-driven to business outcome-driven stages and the interplay of Trust, Satisfaction, and Commitment in these layers, an alternative design was developed based on these insights.

During experimentation with this design direction, an information gap was found in the definition of the different steps as well as the desired value balances of the different levels. Although this direction created more in-depth insights into specific value balances and the steps towards business-driven engagements, the initial step towards gaining more insights into the development of B2B relationships and their connection to different steps towards a business-driven outcome must be established first.



Sketches alternative design

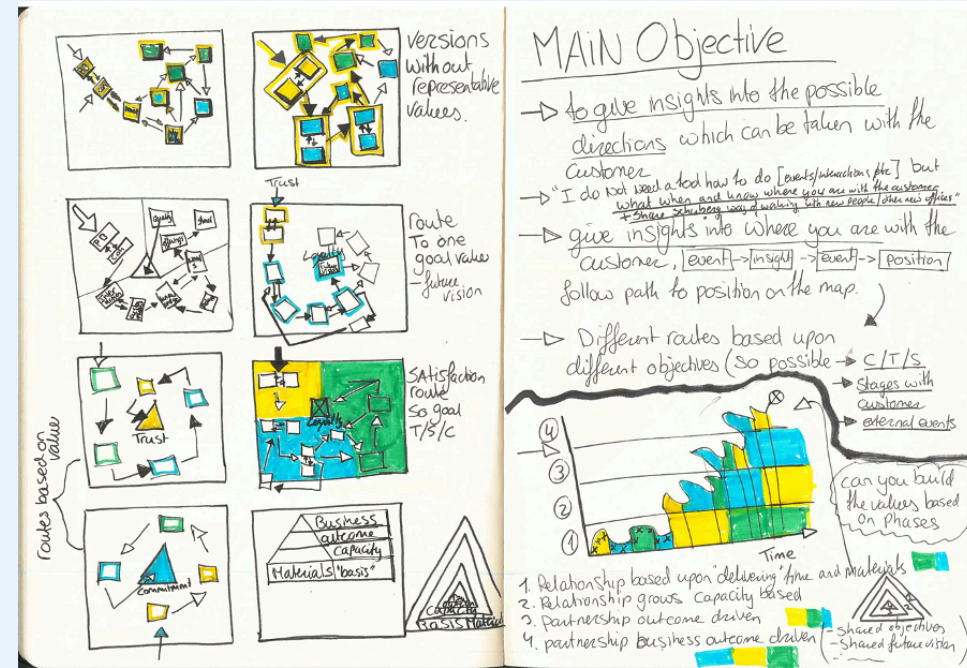
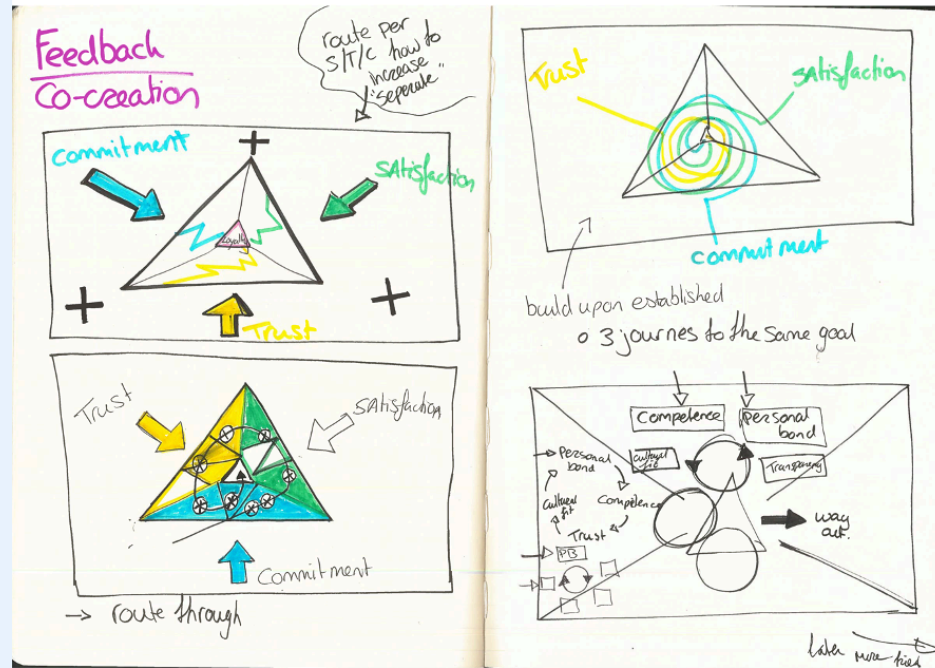


## Networks of words and characteristics external

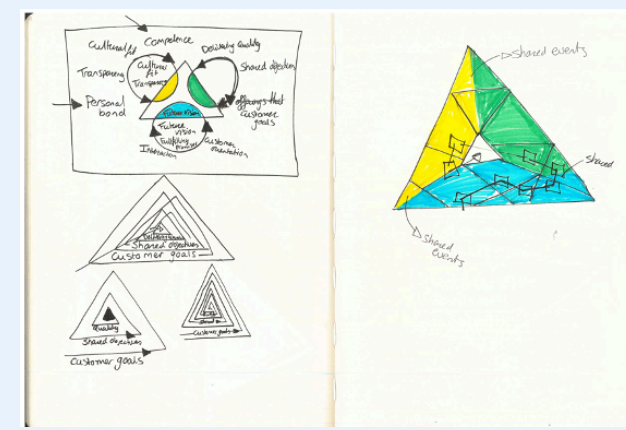
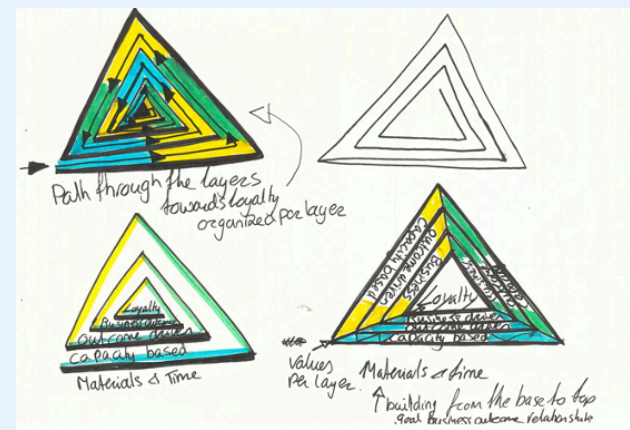
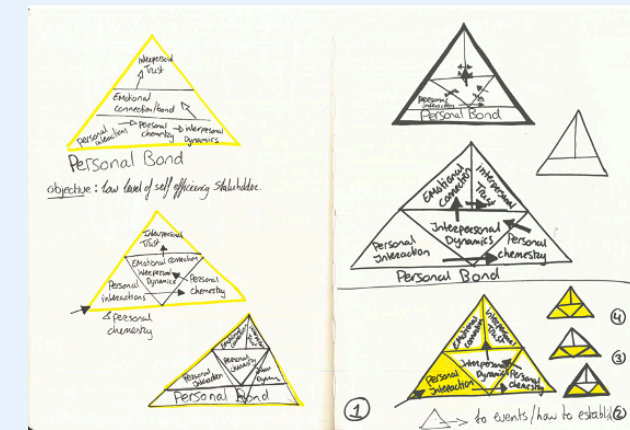
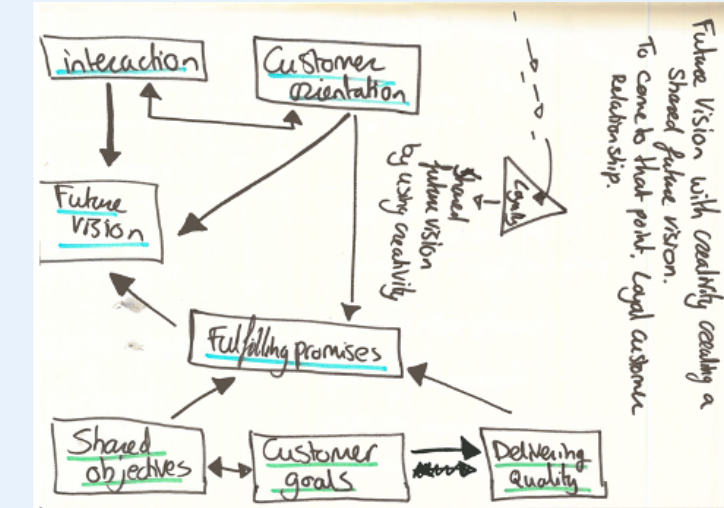








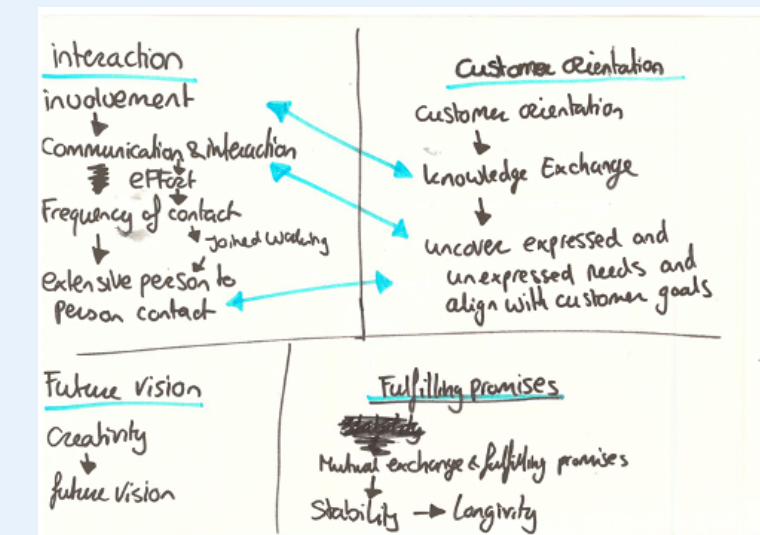
Sketches Ideal route, connection between values and value levels, per value category

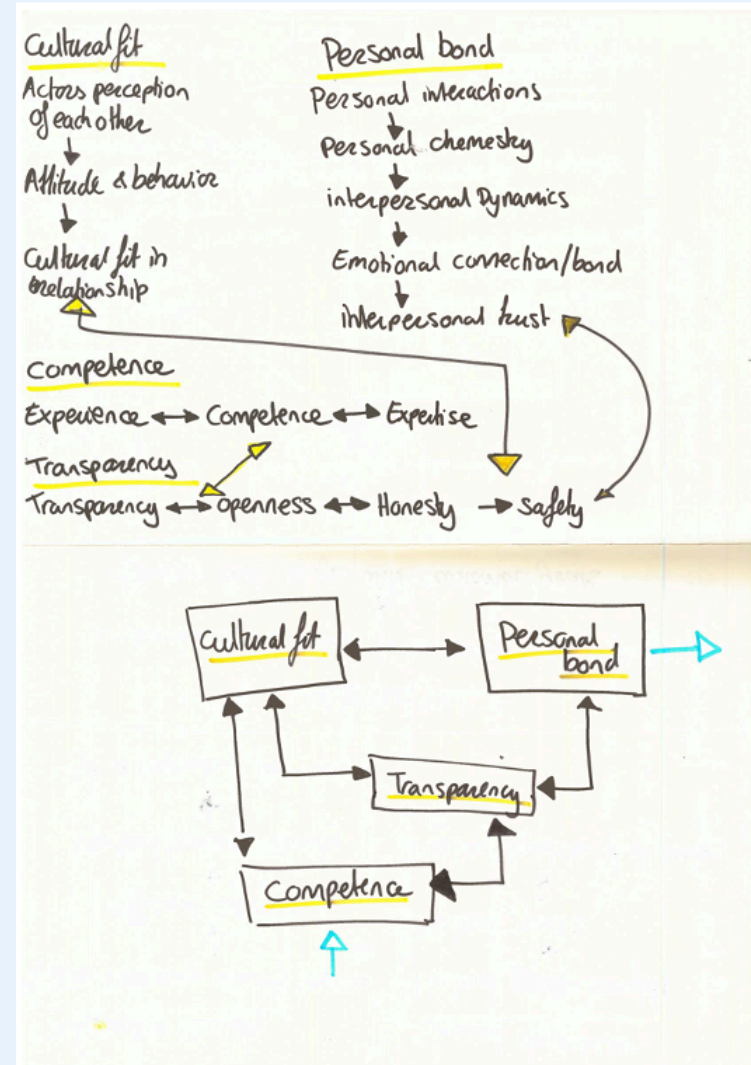


Sketches Ideal route



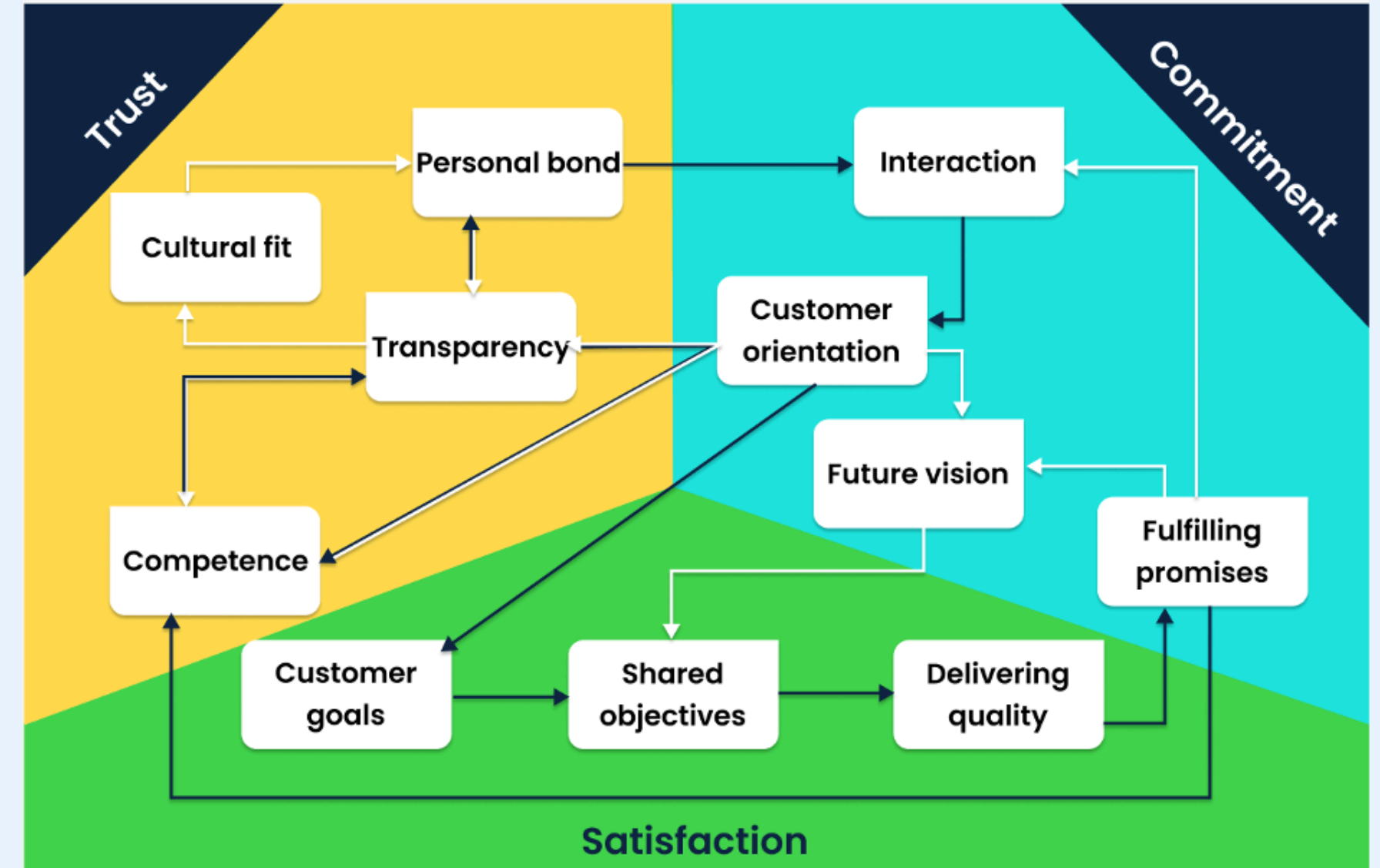
Satisfaction & Commitment





## Trust

## Ideal Path, Concept 2





# Trust

```
graph TD; subgraph CF [Cultural fit]; A[Actors' perception of each other] --> At[Attitude]; At --> C[Cultural fit]; end; subgraph PB [Personal bond]; PI[Personal interaction] --> PC[Personal chemistry]; PC --> ID[Interpersonal dynamics]; ID --> EC[Emotional connection]; EC --> IT[Interpersonal trust]; end; subgraph T [Transparency]; H[Honesty] <--> O[Openness] <--> TR[Transparency] --> S[safety]; end; subgraph C [Competence]; E[Expertise] <--> CO[Competence] <--> EX[Experience]; end; CF --> T; PB --> T; T --> C; C --> T;
```

The diagram illustrates the components and relationships of Trust. It is structured into four main boxes: Cultural fit, Personal bond, Transparency, and Competence.

- Cultural fit**: Contains "Actors' perception of each other" leading to "Attitude", which leads to "Cultural fit".
- Personal bond**: Contains a vertical sequence: "Personal interaction" → "Personal chemistry" → "Interpersonal dynamics" → "Emotional connection" → "Interpersonal trust".
- Transparency**: Contains "Honesty", "Openness", "Transparency", and "safety". "Honesty", "Openness", and "Transparency" are interconnected with double-headed arrows. "Transparency" leads to "safety".
- Competence**: Contains "Expertise", "Competence", and "Experience". "Expertise", "Competence", and "Experience" are interconnected with double-headed arrows.

Relationships between the boxes:

- "Cultural fit" and "Personal bond" both have arrows pointing to the "Transparency" box.
- The "Transparency" box has an arrow pointing to the "Competence" box.
- The "Competence" box has an arrow pointing back to the "Transparency" box.

# Commitment

```
graph TD; subgraph CO [Customer Orientation]; CO1[Customer orientation]; CO2[Knowledge exchange]; CO3[Uncover expressed and unexpressed needs and align with customer goals]; end; subgraph I [Interaction]; I1[Involvement] --> I2[Communication]; I2 --> I3[Interaction]; I3 --> I4[Effort]; I4 --> I5[Frequency of Contact]; I5 --> I6[Joined working]; I6 --> I7[Extensive person to person contact]; end; subgraph FV [Future vision]; FV1[Creativity] <--> FV2[Future vision]; end; subgraph FP [Fulfilling promises]; FP1[Mutual exchange and fulfilling promises] --> FP2[Stability] --> FP3[Longevity]; end; CO1 --> I1; CO2 --> I2; CO3 --> I3; CO3 --> FV2; FV2 --> FP1; I1 --> I2; I2 --> I3; I3 --> I4; I4 --> I5; I5 --> I6; I6 --> I7;
```

**Customer Orientation**

- Customer orientation
- Knowledge exchange
- Uncover expressed and unexpressed needs and align with customer goals

**Interaction**

- Involvement
- Communication
- Interaction
- Effort
- Frequency of Contact
- Joined working
- Extensive person to person contact

**Future vision**

- Creativity
- Future vision

**Fulfilling promises**

- Mutual exchange and fulfilling promises
- Stability
- Longevity

# Satisfaction

```
graph TD; subgraph Customer_Goals [Customer Goals]; direction LR; CG1[Understand and adapt to customer needs & goals] --> CG2[Offerings that align with customer goals]; end; subgraph Shared_objectives [Shared objectives]; direction TB; SO1[Mutual benefits] --> SO2[Mutual goals] --> SO3[Meeting objectives of all parties]; end; subgraph Delivering_Quality [Delivering Quality]; direction TB; DQ1[Delivering quality service] --> DQ2[Efficient service] --> DQ3[Product/service quality] --> DQ4[Got an important job done]; end; CG2 --> SO3; SO1 --> DQ1; SO2 --> DQ3; SO3 --> DQ4;
```

The diagram illustrates the relationship between Customer Goals, Shared objectives, and Delivering Quality. It is structured into three main sections:

- Customer Goals** (Bottom):
  - Understand and adapt to customer needs & goals
  - Offerings that align with customer goals
- Shared objectives** (Right):
  - Mutual benefits
  - Mutual goals
  - Meeting objectives of all parties
- Delivering Quality** (Left):
  - Delivering quality service
  - Efficient service
  - Product/service quality
  - Got an important job done

Flow and Connections:

- An arrow points from **Offerings that align with customer goals** to **Meeting objectives of all parties**.
- Arrows point from **Meeting objectives of all parties** to each of the four steps in **Delivering Quality**.
- Arrows point from each of the four steps in **Delivering Quality** to the corresponding step in **Shared objectives**:
  - Delivering quality service** to **Mutual benefits**
  - Efficient service** to **Mutual goals**
  - Product/service quality** to **Mutual goals**
  - Got an important job done** to **Meeting objectives of all parties**
- Internal flow arrows exist within **Shared objectives** (Mutual benefits to Mutual goals to Meeting objectives of all parties) and within **Delivering Quality** (Delivering quality service to Efficient service to Product/service quality to Got an important job done).

**Customer Engagement**

customer has a pain

**Trust**

- compliance
- Fulfilling promises
- Tender process
- Deliver quantity
- Work with customer often
- Share expertise

**Personal bond** between stakeholder SBP & customer

**Customer** reaches out to SBP, conversator

transparency

**Conversations** between SBP & customer

Personal introduction

Invite for lunch team at SBP

**SBP**

- do research into customer about vision, mission, market, customers etc

Transparency

**find cultural fit** by shared attitude, way of thinking and mission

invite for breakfast Inspiration Day

**Project** ~~start~~ Proposal

- Design workshops
- knowledge exchange & conversations
- conversations
- shared knowledge

**Understanding customer goals**

see opportunity

**workshops**

- Design research
- Conversations
- Inspiration day

**Concept/Inspiration day**

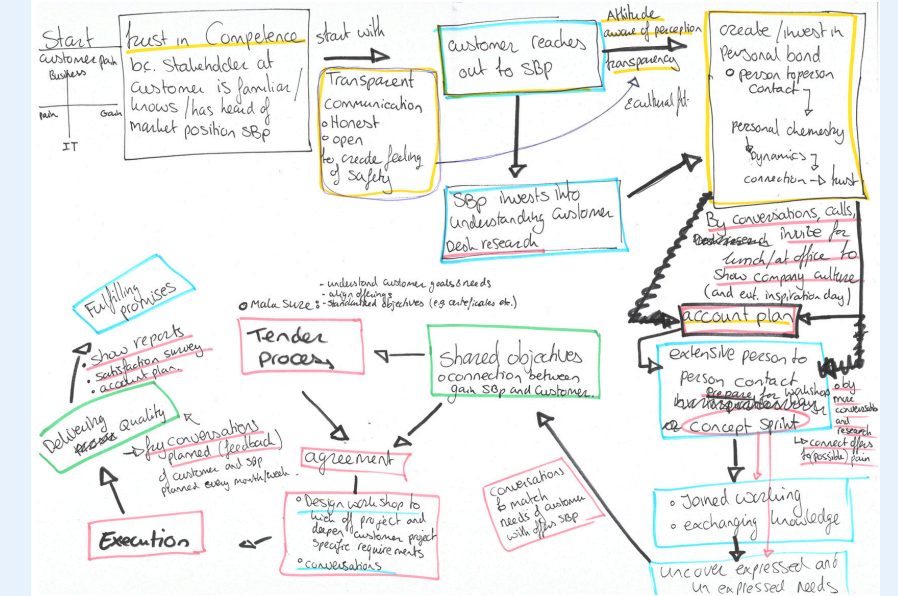
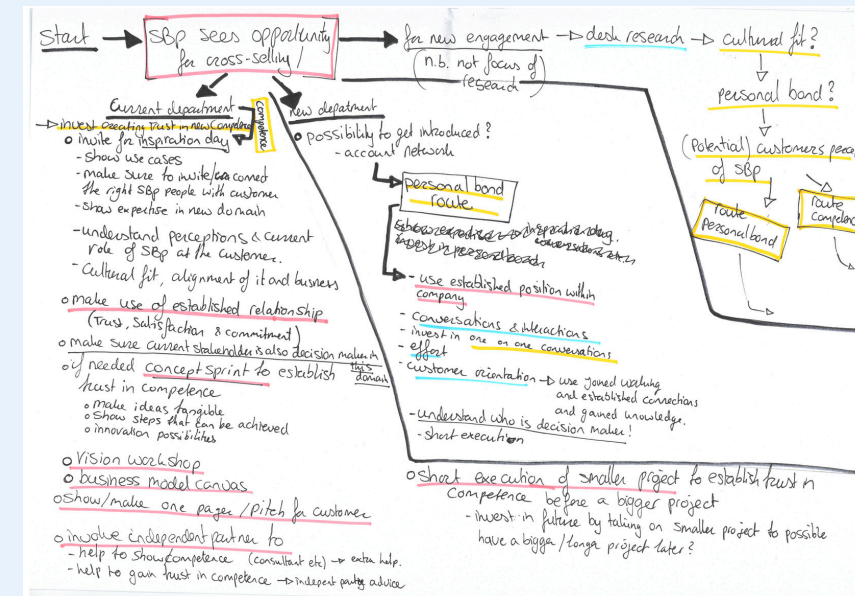
**Project execution**

- Monthly/annual Reports

**Investment into more customer orientation**

- conversations
- do research

+ understand who is are the decision makers. culture



## Visualizing data into ideal route



Design Strategy Playbook

To → show the strengths of SBP  
show the way of working at SBP

→ make connectors  
experience possible directions

→ create understanding and implementation/use of  
B2B values at SBP establishment of loyal B2B relationships  
user → seeks to understand the establishment of loyal  
customer relationships  
→ stimulate the

scope → steps towards building loyal customer relationships  
to create a shared future vision  
• explain the B2B values  
• detailed explanation of B2B values  
interactions, events and practices that established

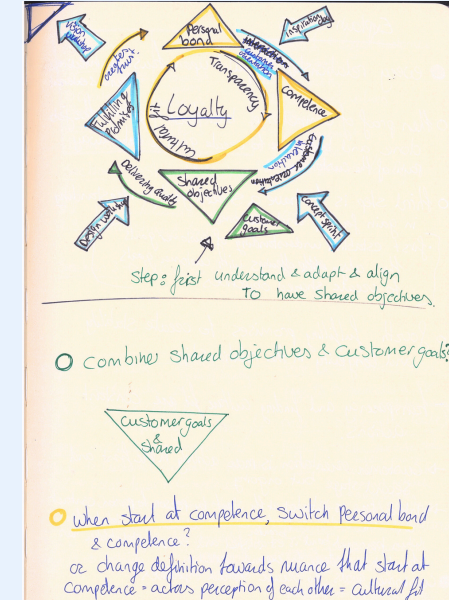
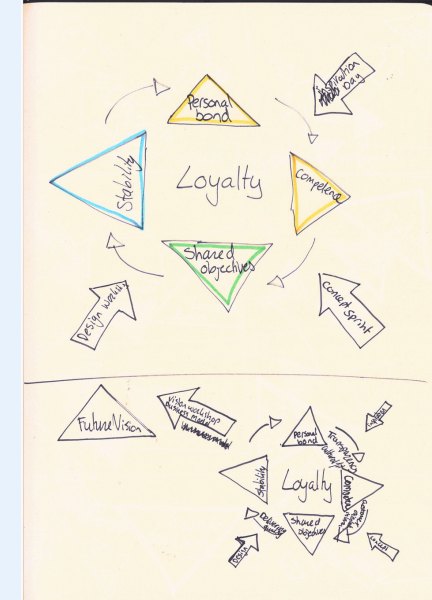
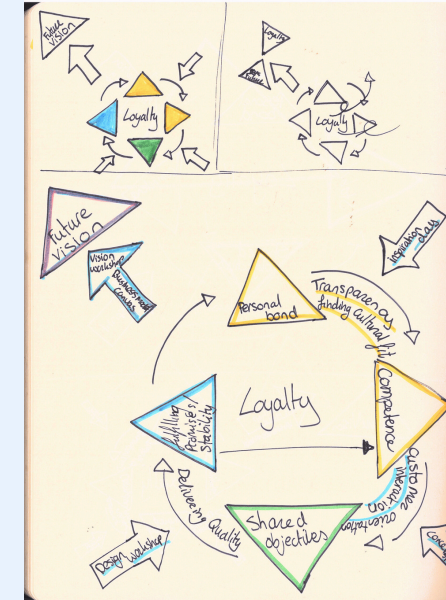
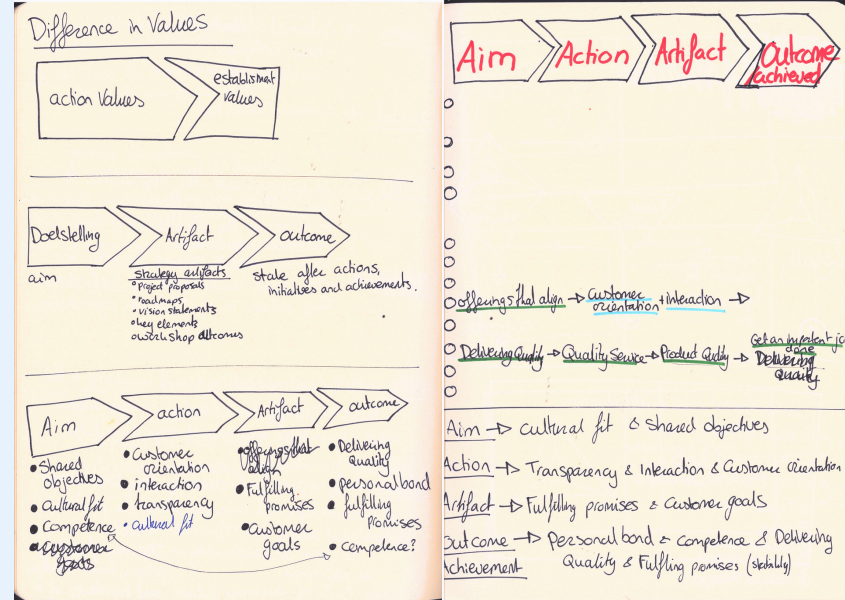
who → Internal stakeholders  
- new colleagues  
- customer teams

what → communication tool

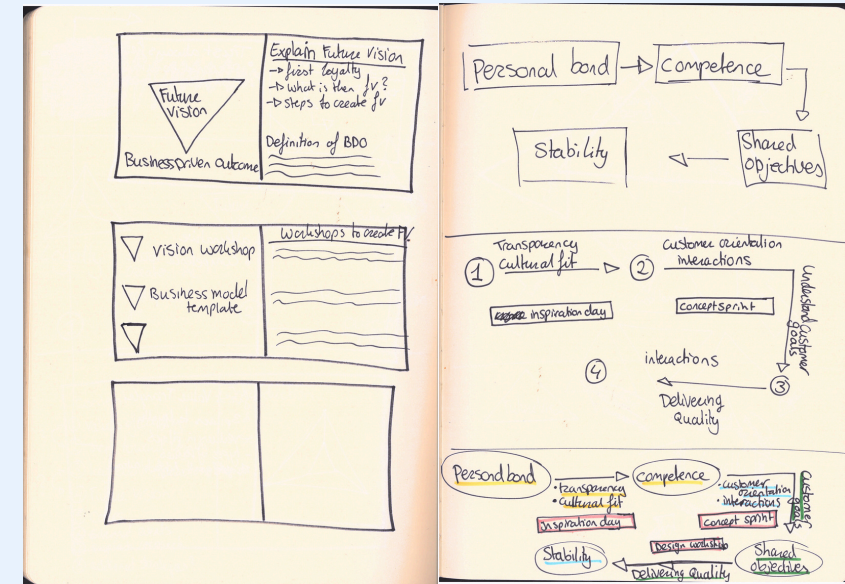
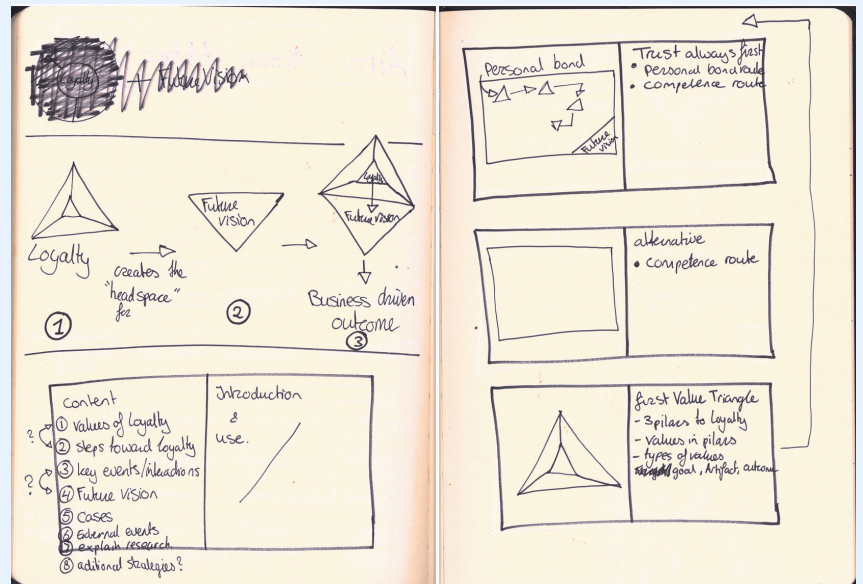
why → - to communicate the SBP culture to  
new colleagues and offices  
- to increase the establishment of loyal  
customer relationships  
- to know what is required for every step  
- To create awareness of B2B relationship  
values in an IT driven organization.

How → by communicating gained knowledge in this  
thesis project for from literature, combined internal  
views & knowledge and external views & knowledge.

when → to be used during the establishment  
of relationships and uncertain about the position/  
established values as reference tool/book  
to gain understanding on step way of working  
as new hired (actions, event, interactions)  
when lack of customer values and importance of



Steps toward the design of the playbook





E.9 Validation session

- 1."How clear is the information presented in the playbook?"
- 2."Were there any sections or terms that were confusing or unclear?"
- 3."Do the design elements support the clarity and understanding of the content?"
- 4."Are the visual aids (charts, graphs, frameworks) helpful in conveying the necessary information?"
- 5."Is the playbook organized in a way that you can easily find information?"
- 6."How practical do you find the navigation between different sections of the playbook?"
- 7."Can you see yourself applying the strategies outlined in the playbook in your role?"
- 8."Which part of the playbook do you think will be most useful in your daily activities?"
- 9."In what ways do you think this playbook can help improve B2B relationships?"
- 10."Are there specific strategies in the playbook that you think will be particularly effective in fostering loyal B2B relationships?"
- 11."What improvements or additional information would make the playbook more effective?"
- 12."Are there other design elements or supporting materials that could enhance the playbook's effectiveness?"
- 13."Could you provide an example of how you would use this playbook in a real-world scenario?"
- 14."How well do you think the playbook prepares you to handle challenges in establishing or maintaining B2B relationships?"
- 15."Overall, how satisfied are you with the playbook?"
- 16."Would you recommend any changes to the structure or content of the playbook for better clarity or usefulness?"

tuDelft

DESIGN FOR our future

IDE Master Graduation Project

Project team, procedural checks and Personal Project Brief

In this document the agreements made between student and supervisory team about the student's IDE Master Graduation Project are set out. This document may also include involvement of an external client, however does not cover any legal matters student and client (might) agree upon. Next to that, this document facilitates the required procedural checks:

- Student defines the team, what the student is going to do/deliver and how that will come about
- Chair of the supervisory team signs, to formally approve the project's setup / Project brief
- SSC E&SA (Shared Service Centre, Education & Student Affairs) report on the student's registration and study progress
- IDE's Board of Examiners confirms the proposed supervisory team on their eligibility, and whether the student is allowed to start the Graduation Project

STUDENT DATA & MASTER PROGRAMME

Complete all fields and indicate which master(s) you are in

Family name

Initials

Given name

Student number

IDE master(s) IPD ☐ Dfi ☐ SPD ☒

2<sup>nd</sup> non-IDE master

Individual programme (date of approval)

Medisign ☐

HPM ☐

SUPERVISORY TEAM

Fill in the required information of supervisory team members. If applicable, company mentor is added as 2<sup>nd</sup> mentor

Chair

mentor

2<sup>nd</sup> mentor

client

city

optional comments

dept./section

dept./section

country: the Netherlands

Chair and mentor same department Omdat.....

! Ensure a heterogeneous team. In case you wish to include team members from the same section, explain why.

! Chair should request the IDE Board of Examiners for approval when a non-IDE mentor is proposed. Include CV and motivation letter.

! 2<sup>nd</sup> mentor only applies when a client is involved.

APPROVAL OF CHAIR on PROJECT PROPOSAL / PROJECT BRIEF -> to be filled in by the Chair of the supervisory team

Sign for approval (Chair)

Name

Date 1 Oct 2024

Signature

CHECK ON STUDY PROGRESS

To be filled in by SSC E&SA (Shared Service Centre, Education & Student Affairs), after approval of the project brief by the chair. The study progress will be checked for a 2<sup>nd</sup> time just before the green light meeting.

Master electives no. of EC accumulated in total

Of which, taking conditional requirements into account, can be part of the exam programme

EC

EC

★

YES

all 1<sup>st</sup> year master courses passed

NO

missing 1<sup>st</sup> year courses

Comments:

Sign for approval (SSC E&SA)

Name

Date

Signature

APPROVAL OF BOARD OF EXAMINERS IDE on SUPERVISORY TEAM -> to be checked and filled in by IDE's Board of Examiners

Does the composition of the Supervisory Team comply with regulations?

YES ☒ Supervisory Team approved

NO ☐ Supervisory Team not approved

Comments:

Based on study progress, students is ...

★ ALLOWED to start the graduation project

NOT allowed to start the graduation project

Comments:

Sign for approval (BoEx)

Name

Date

Signature



Name student **Pleun de Goede** Student number **4,853,121**

#### PROJECT TITLE, INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM DEFINITION and ASSIGNMENT

Complete all fields, keep information clear, specific and concise

**Project title** Empowering Schuberg Philis as a trusted partner in clients' strategic, innovative and business IT projects

Please state the title of your graduation project (above). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

#### Introduction

Describe the context of your project here; What is the domain in which your project takes place? Who are the main stakeholders and what interests are at stake? Describe the opportunities (and limitations) in this domain to better serve the stakeholder interests. (max 250 words)

Schuberg Philis (SBP) is an IT outsourcing company that focuses on combining transformation with IT modernization. They specialize in mission-critical engineering, managing applications where any downtime directly impacts an organization's results. Dedicated customer teams within SBP work with a "plan-build-run" model (see Figure 1) to empower customers with digital resilience and guide them through digital transformation. SBP aims to address IT questions that influence a customer's strategic goals (Schuberg Philis, 2021) and to be part of the effective alignment of IT and business strategy.

This alignment of IT and business strategy enables organizations to use technology as a catalyst for innovation, efficiency, and differentiation (Adegbite et al., 2023). SBP aims to shift from being an IT executor to becoming an innovative strategic business partner (see Figure 2). However, this transition is not proceeding as smoothly as had been envisioned.

The innovative projects within SBP are driven by or with the help of Lab271, which enables SBP to combine design thinking, innovation, and business-oriented problem-solving with IT, facilitating the company's transition into the role of an innovation partner. Although SBP has made internal changes to facilitate and accelerate its business transformation, its customers are either unaware of or uninterested in the innovation of their value proposition. The main stakeholder is SBP, followed by their current and potential customers. During my research, I will conduct a case study of SBP customers. This will provide insights into the relationship between SBP and its customers and why (most of) its current customers are unaware or uninterested in having SBP as their innovative, strategic business partner.

I aim to identify and reframe the underlying challenges and explore an innovative solution space. From these insights, a set of feasible recommendations will be visualized in a roadmap to support SBP's strategic transition.

→ space available for images / figures on next page

introduction (continued): space for images

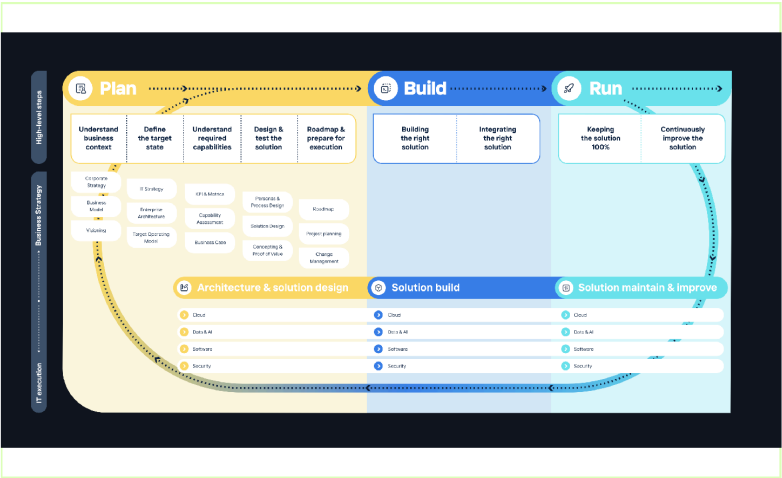


image / figure 1 Schuberg Philis Plan Build Run model

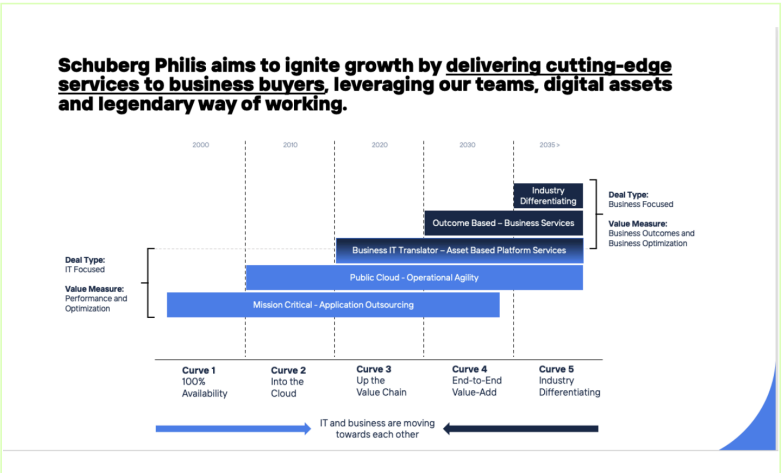


image / figure 2 Schuberg Philis transition towards strategic business partner

#### Problem Definition

What problem do you want to solve in the context described in the introduction, and within the available time frame of 100 working days? (= Master Graduation Project of 30 EC). What opportunities do you see to create added value for the described stakeholders? Substantiate your choice. (max 200 words)

Schuberg Philis' corporate strategy aims to engage in more innovative projects with their clients. Until now, strategic, innovative business projects arose from specific circumstances such as changes in the project or the client's perspective. Ideally, these projects would come from a collaborative initiative, a solo initiative from SBP, or an innovative business question from the client.

SBP aims to shift its value proposition towards an strategic innovation partner and wants to be involved in the business questions of its customers. The Lab271 team is focused on accelerating the development of new capabilities and could help facilitate this shift.

However, although SBP has adjusted its value proposition and has set up structures to run innovation projects, (most of) its current and potential clients are unaware or uninterested in having SBP as their strategic business partner. During my research, I am to identify what is required for SBP to becoming a strategic business partner for its current and potential customers and align SPB' s capabilities with their client's strategic needs. My goal is to uncover the key elements necessary for SBP to become a trusted partner in their clients' strategic, business, innovation IT projects.

#### Assignment

This is the most important part of the project brief because it will give a clear direction of what you are heading for. Formulate an assignment to yourself regarding what you expect to deliver as result at the end of your project. (1 sentence) As you graduate as an industrial design engineer, your assignment will start with a verb (Design/Investigate/Validate/Create), and you may use the green text format:

Design a strategic roadmap to evaluate and improve Schuberg Philis position of strategic, business IT partner for their customers, and accelerate Schuberg Philis transition towards pioneering business transformation.

Then explain your project approach to carrying out your graduation project and what research and design methods you plan to use to generate your design solution (max 150 words)

To design this strategic roadmap, the first step is to conduct literature research on IT innovation, mission-critical engineering, and relevant methodologies. To increase my knowledge about SBP I will research their mission, value proposition, competitors and consumers.

To analyze the current situation, I will investigate SBP current customer accounts. This term is used for the long-lasting relationship that SBP builds with their customers. During this period SBP often does multiple out-sourcing projects sequential or concurrent. I will look at customer accounts where a role of strategic innovative business partner is achieved and customers where the role of SBP stayed at the level of IT executor and a more strategic and innovative relationship was envisioned. As part of the strategic approach, I will visualize the current and desired situation, describing the concrete steps that Schuberg Philis should make to accelerate the transition towards being an IT partner in innovative strategic and business projects together with their customers. The final roadmap will be focused on one of SBP greater customer teams, with the potential for expansion and adaptation to their other greater customer teams.

#### Project planning and key moments

To make visible how you plan to spend your time, you must make a planning for the full project. You are advised to use a Gantt chart format to show the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings and in-between deadlines. Keep in mind that all activities should fit within the given run time of 100 working days. Your planning should include a **kick-off meeting**, **mid-term evaluation meeting**, **green light meeting** and **graduation ceremony**. Please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any (for instance because of holidays or parallel course activities).

Make sure to attach the full plan to this project brief. The four key moment dates must be filled in below

Kick off meeting 1 Oct 2024

Mid-term evaluation 27 Nov 2024

Green light meeting 27 Jan 2025

Graduation ceremony 28 Feb 2025

In exceptional cases (part of) the Graduation Project may need to be scheduled part-time. Indicate here if such applies to your project

Part of project scheduled part-time	
For how many project weeks	
Number of project days per week	

Comments:

#### Motivation and personal ambitions

Explain why you wish to start this project, what competencies you want to prove or develop (e.g. competencies acquired in your MSc programme, electives, extra-curricular activities or other).

Optionally, describe whether you have some personal learning ambitions which you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project itself. You might think of e.g. acquiring in depth knowledge on a specific subject, broadening your competencies or experimenting with a specific tool or methodology. Personal learning ambitions are limited to a maximum number of five. (200 words max)

As a Strategic designer the right frame for your project, understanding the context and formulating the right problem definition is one of the most important aspects. Insights on value propositions, strategy, problem-solving and a holistic view are skills of a Strategic designer, and I think this project at Schuberg Philis gives me the possibility to develop these important skills further.

I also wanted to start this project because I want to learn how a corporate strategy is implemented in a company and how this needs to keep up developing. I want to understand the reasoning and impact of a shift in the strategy and value proposition. And I want to learn what my added value is in this process from my role as a strategic designer. But I also want to learn better where my knowledge, skills and interests as an individual excel.

The domain of IT is an interesting field from which I would like to gain more knowledge and understanding. A world without IT is not thinkable anymore, IT simply does not function without. IT innovates fast, and its impact is increasing. I want more in-depth knowledge about IT, understand more about its role and understand better what is needed to facilitate our digital world.