



Department of Marketing

A Study of Switching Behaviours
in the B2B Service Sector

(In Two Volumes)

Volume 2

Michael J. Marck

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Chapter 7 Results of Research – Triad Interviews

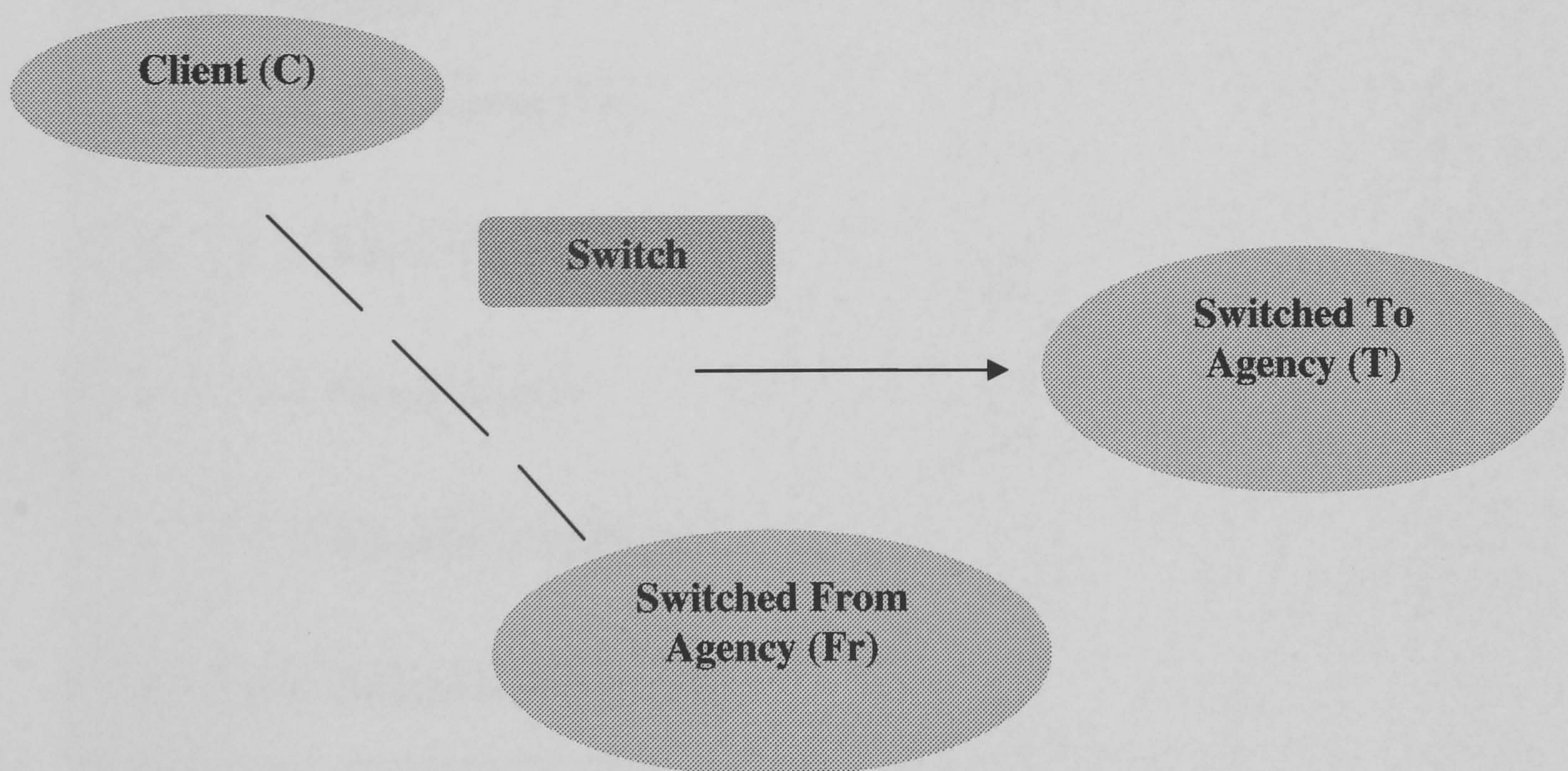
“Service providers who understand and meet their clients’ wants and needs are least likely to see their customers switch to a competitor. Service providers can learn much from a client who decides to switch about how their service can be improved” (Grace and O’Cass, 2001, p 317)

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 justified the use of multiple case based research for this study. This chapter will present the results of the case studies for the seven triad interviews. Each triad will be analysed separately. The cases will be described, analysed and interpreted with references to the aim and objectives of the study.

Each triad consists of the client, the ‘switched from’ staffing agency and the ‘switched to’ staffing agency as outlined below in figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 The Interview Respondents



The clients were asked open ended questions surrounding their switching experience (Appendixes D and E list the interview questions). In each of the triads there was

more than one reason that led to the switching decision; the analysis will discuss all of the switching reasons each of the clients provided.

The ‘switched to’ agencies were asked to provide reasons why they were successful of attaining clients. The ‘switched from’ agencies were asked to explain why they lost clients.

7.2 List of Respondents for Triad Interviews

Table 7.1 provided below lists the abbreviated codes to identify the respondents.

Table 7.1 List of Respondents for Triad Interviews

C = Client

Fr = Switched From Staffing Agency

T = Switched To Staffing Agency

Triad	Client + industry sector	‘Switched to’ staffing agency -won client’s business (Tier level)	‘Switched from’ staffing agency -lost client’s business (Tier level)
1	C 1 Telecommunications Company	T 1 (Tier 1)	Fr1 (Tier 1)
2	C 2 Engineering Firm	T 2 (Tier 3)	Fr2 (Tier 3)
3	C 3 Bus Company	T 3 (Tier 3)	Fr3 (Tier 3)
4	C 4 Manufacturer	T 4 (Tier 3)	Fr4 (Tier 3)
5	C 5 Petroleum Producer	T 5 (Tier 3)	Fr5 (Tier 3)
6	C 6 Oil and Gas Company	T 6 (Tier 1)	Fr6 (Tier 1)
7	C 7 Oil and Gas Company	T 7 (Tier 3)	Fr7 (Tier 3)

The following sections will provide a brief profile of each respondent and the analysis of each triad.

7.3 Analysis of Triad 1: Profile of Triad 1 Respondents

Respondent	Profile
C1	Large crown corporation with hundreds of offices across Canada; telecommunications and delivery services sector Respondents were two HR managers from the corporation
T1 (Tier 1)	This agency has many international offices Provides search services, contingency and temp hiring services Does not handle national contracts; they only manage local clients while serving the local market Respondent was the branch manager
Fr1 (Tier 1)	International staffing agency with a local presence Provides search and contingency hiring services Respondent was the branch manager who has over 30 years of staffing agency experience

7.3.1 Triad 1: Client Perspective

The client requested the recruitment services of Fr1 to hire thirty operations managers. The initial fee for this hiring service was approximately C\$ 250,000. This was the first time the client had used the services of Fr1. The client was using the services of Fr1 due to the scope and urgency of hiring the new managers (Adelson, 2001). In addition C1's HR department was preoccupied with other related HR duties. The following is a quote from one of C1's HR managers:

“we consider hiring as non-value added work . . . that's screening and recruiting . . . we let the staffing agencies do that . . . one year we had ten vacancies and we received over a thousand resumes . . . so for the managerial positions we're currently hiring, we'd have to interview 90 people to find 30 qualified candidates”.

The above quote clearly indicates that recruiting is not a valued task by C1's HR department and is a major reason why C1 chose to outsource this recruiting project. This demonstrates that HR departments are contracting out services that were previously done internally which supports Cook's (1995) position discussed in section 5.9. Csokos (1995) suggests when HR department's outsource they

experience reduced costs and increased service quality since the service provider has greater economies of scale, and is has increased access to experts in specialised areas. In this triad the client is expecting a strong relationship between themselves and the staffing agency with expectations that quality services are performed.

The service agreement between C1 and Fr1 included the following conditions:

- To screen-in all internal applicants
- Provide a daily update of the hiring process (number of applicants interviewed, number hired)
- To have a dedicated account manager

The branch manager from Fr1 agreed to these conditions and stated there would be two dedicated account managers assigned to this project. C1 was confident the project would be a success since the service level conditions had been arranged (Hanson, 2007).

During the hiring process issues arose that indicated that many of the service level conditions had not been met. The first issue was a breach of contract by Fr1. The client discovered that many of their internal employees had been screened out. This situation created animosity between the C1, Fr1 and C1's employees. Excluding internal candidates was a violation of C1's hiring policy which resulted in the entire recruiting process to be repeated. The client commented that this exclusion was a serious service failure.

The second service incident occurred when the client realised that Fr1 was not able to provide an accurate daily update of the number of people interviewed or hired. C1 was given conflicting numbers of the people that were interviewed and hired. C1 was in a position where they could not rely on Fr1's ability to administer the hiring project. The inaccurate reporting and miscommunication lead C1 to believe that Fr1 was incompetent and untrustworthy (Messmer, 2006; Jain et al., 2003).

The third service issue was about the continuity between C1 and Fr1. The continuity issue arose when C1 called Fr1 and asked to speak with their account manager. The

client was told by the receptionist their account manager had quit two weeks ago. The following quote summarises C1's distress:

“we were told we had two dedicated local agency reps working on our account . . . turns out we had one rep, and she handled numerous other accounts at the same time . . . she quit and no one bothered to let us know . . . we were left in the dark”.

Continuity was a critical service issue for C1 due to urgency of filling the positions in an expedited manner. The incidents described by C1 are core service failures and resulted in C1 not trusting Fr1 (Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). This lack of trust was a result of Fr1's poor job performance and inability to communicate with C1. Fr1 is in contempt with C1 due to their failure to provide the services that had been agreed to.

These exacerbating situations led the client to state:

“we'd never use Fr1 again, or recommend them . . . never . . . they were just out for the money . . . we only wanted to use them for the short term . . . we used them to just do the recruiting, the non-value work of HR, and in the end we got shafted”.

C1's quote demonstrates their frustration and lack of trust with Fr1 due to the service failures. C1 has expressed their dissatisfaction and felt their service requests had been ignored while there was no value in the services provided by Fr1 (Sharma and Patterson, 1999).

7.3.2 Triad 1: 'Switched To' Staffing Agency Perspective

The interview with T1 discussed reasons why clients switch to their agency. T1 felt that the most critical reason for attracting clients was to their ability to meet their clients' staffing requirements with the right 'fit' of candidate' (Daniel, 2006). This occurred when there was a perfect 'three-way fit' which included:

- Fit of candidate to the job
- Fit of candidate to the client's company
- Fit of candidate to their boss (the person they reported to at the client's company)

T1 commented that the number one reason why people leave their job is because they don't get along with their boss. T1 stated that most staffing agencies do not consider the 'third fit' (fit of candidate to their boss) which results in a mismatch between the candidates requirements and the client's expectations. T1 commented that the 'three-way fit' is critical to ensuring the clients are satisfied. By providing the best possible candidates, satisfied clients became loyal to their agency. The need of getting the right 'fit' was discussed in section 5.8 and signifies the importance of matching a client's needs to a candidate's abilities (Daniel, 2006).

To build a client's trust T1 understands the need to build relationships based on a true understanding of the client's business. The manager of T1 stated:

“a true interest in the client's business develops trust . . . and this is done by listening to the client . . . listening is so critical in relationship building”.

Once a client's needs have been determined it is the agency's responsibility to find the most suitable candidate. It is the capability to match the client's needs to the most qualified candidate that demonstrates an agency's competency and ability to understand the client's needs (Simon and Kumar, 2001).

This agency (T1) has the business acumen to treat their candidates with respect. It is their belief to successfully serve the client they must attract the best candidates. T1 offers their candidates a full range of benefits including premium wages, training, and personal development. The respect and care for their candidates gives this agency a competitive advantage.

An additional benefit T1 offers their clients' is continuity of service because they provide two recruiting consultants for each client. The manager stated:

“We have two consultants working with each client. I really like to hear a client call and ask to speak with either one of their consultants, . . . that way the consultants work as a team to serve the client . . . and, if one of the consultants quits, then we still have an experienced consultant available for the client . . . all services can be negotiated and managed by the consultant . . . they don't need my approval for anything . . . the consultants know they are responsible for all activities with their client . . . this keeps the continuity

and builds loyalty between the client and the consultant”.

The strategy of having two agency representatives managing each client maintains continuity (Sharama and Patterson, 1999). T1 stated that continuity becomes a non-switching factor and allows for continuous communication that strengthens the client-service provider relationship.

A significant finding with this triad was to learn how T1 manages national service contracts. National contracts arise when a staffing agency’s branch office is delegated to manage a client’s business locally. This type of service contract is negotiated between the client’s and agency’s head offices. All of the branch offices within this company’s organisation are structured only to manage service contracts with local clients. This means the client must be located in the same city where the agency has a branch office. The branch manager from T1 stated:

“from the agency’s perspective, national contracts have several pitfalls at the local level . . . there is a lack of pride and ownership at local branch . . . there is too much time and effort to manage national contracts . . . the bonus structure for our staff makes managing national contracts less desirable than local contracts . . . a lot of the national contracts do not guarantee exclusivity for the chosen local agency . . . national contracts are less profitable and the success of the business relationship is based on price – this is normally negotiated by the client’s and agency’s head offices”.

T1 is an international agency and they manage their national and multi-national clients as *local contracts*. This means they pre-select their clients (Fink et al., 2007) – clients who have a local presence. The significance of this practice allows T1 to provide *local service* without all of the national contract pitfalls. To provide this level of service T1 abides by the following relationship principles:

- client relationship is more important than prices charged
- continuous communication with a local client is imperative
- follow up is scheduled with the local client which maintains continuity
- any service level changes are negotiated with the local client, not the client’s head office; less chance of miscommunication between

the staffing agency and local client

- the local client is given volume discounts

The above principles also incorporate relational selling strategies that were discussed in section 2.5.4 of the literature review (John and Heide, 1992; Anderson and Narus, 1991). The success of T1 is their ability to provide *local service* to all of their clients. It is their capacity to listen to their clients (Stuart and McCutcheon, 2000; Krause and Ellram, 1997), maintain continuity, respect their recruiters and temps that has won-over many previously unsatisfied clients. The above discussion exemplifies how T1 has adapted business practices to maximise client satisfaction while minimising switching factors.

7.3.3 Triad 1: Switched From Staffing Agency Perspective

The branch manager from Fr1 stated that the main switching factor his agency experienced was due to poor quality of service. He defined ‘quality of service’ by stating:

“quality of service is being able to respond to the clients’ needs in a timely and professional manner”.

The issue of delivering timely services was one of the reasons why C1 switched from this staffing agency. Fr1 knows that a key switching factor is timeliness yet they were not able to correct their actions to prevent C1 from switching (Bitner et al., 1994). This demonstrates the discrepancy of service level expectations between C1 and Fr1. There is an inconsistent message between what the branch manager is saying about ‘quality of service’ and what is actually happening.

- ’ The issue of continuity was raised with the branch manager whereby he commented:

“Internal turn-over for this industry is a problem . . . looking at 30 - 40% turn-over, and it can be as high as 60%, which is terrible . . . it’s endemic in this industry . . . if people (agency’s employees) can get this industry in their blood, they stay . . . if it’s just a job and I get two years out of them, I consider myself lucky”.

This affirms that retaining employees for staffing agencies can be significant factor determining continuity and quality of delivery service. The branch manager admitted that continuity may result in clients switching. The branch manager commented that as soon as a member of his staff quits a contact is made with all of the affected clients. That form of contact is usually an email from either him or the new account rep, which is done within 1 – 2 weeks. This statement contradicts the branch manager’s own comment about the importance of “responding to clients in a timely and professional manner”. There appears to be difference in the timeliness of communication between what the client was expecting and what Fr1 was providing.

This raises the issue of determining the frequency and most appropriate method and of communicating critical information to clients (Messmer, 2006). In this situation the client and the agency had different expectations of how quickly information is shared and this issue became a switching factor for the client.

7.3.4 Role Conflict between H.R and Staffing Agency

The branch manager from Fr1 discussed a key issue that involved role conflict between clients’ HR departments and staffing agencies. The branch manager stated:

“HR people are the most useless people . . . they are a constant thorn in my side and everyone else’s . . . because HR is a made up position they don’t do anything . . . whenever any of my sales consultants say they are dealing with HR I say, that’s nice but try to find someone who can make a decision . . . so we always try to work around HR . . . you can’t ignore them because they always have a knock out vote in a large corporation . . . if you ignore them or antagonize them they won’t be much help to you . . . you want them to be your friend but you don’t want to deal with them . . . you want to keep them in the loop, give them their respect and deal with the people who make the decisions, this is not rocket science”.

The above comment reveals a potential role conflict and acrimonious relationship. The branch manager feels that his agency’s effectiveness is weakened when HR is involved. Recall the client stated that recruiting is ‘non-value’ activity, which further

demonstrates the potential conflict. This lack of mutual respect and trust will result in conflict and a precarious situation will arise since HR is usually involved in the decision to contract out the recruiting process. A relationship without trust causes uncertainty, opportunistic behaviour (Das and Teng, 1998) and a lack of confidence in the other party's intentions and motives (Lewicki et al., 1998).

7.3.5 Triad 1: Summary of Analysis

The client switched due to core service failures resulting from a lack of continuity, trust and poor communication. It was learned that the 'switched to' staffing agency (T1) resolved continuity issues by having two consultants assigned to each client's account. The literature has stated that clients are motivated to maintain a relationship when they trust and have confidence in the provider's competencies and abilities (Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998). Sharma and Patterson (1999) argue that trust is decisive for continuity of a B2B relationship. This triad proved that a 'local' approach to managing clients allows service providers to minimise switching factors.

It is recommended for clients and staffing agencies to have clear service level agreements to minimise potential conflicts (Britton and Ball, 1999). Service agreements must be adhered to by both parties and truly reflect the needs of the client and the service delivery capabilities of the staffing agency. This recommendation is supported in the literature review, section 5.5, where the subject of *assignment specifications* was discussed (Hanson, 2007).

This triad highlighted the need for mutual trust between the client and service provider. The construct of trust is viewed as an expectation about an exchange partner's trustworthiness. Such trustworthiness is the result of the partner's expertise, reliability or intentionality (Pruitt, 1981; Rotter, 1967; Blay, 1964). In this triad the client valued continuity as a trust building factor and once trust was severed they elected to switch.

Hausman (2001) suggests that two key antecedents of building relationship strength are open communication and frequent interaction (Anderson and Weitz, 1992;

Anderson and Narus, 1990; Newman and Rhee, 1990). Hausman stressed that such antecedents result in mutual trust which in turn allows the service provider decreased conflict and long-term survival with clients. The incidents described by C1 substantiated the need for staffing agencies to prevent miscommunication which ultimately leads to mistrust. The client–service provider relationships are weakened when the antecedents of a strong relationship are either missing or severed (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

This triad also proved the need for a co-operative relationship between the client and service provider. The role conflict between the parties was discussed and signified that such conflict and lack of cooperation may result in client switching. Section 3.3.2 discussed how the construct of trust enables co-operative behaviour between two parties and reduces conflict (Wilding, 2006; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). This finding supports Wilding's (2006) and Anderson and Kumar's (2006) position that co-operative behaviour between the parties is necessary to promote trusting relationships. In this triad the service provider did not perform the expected services and there was a lack of trust between the parties.

The client expressed concern when the '*switched from*' agency (Fr1) failed to complete several of the requested tasks such as: screening-in the internal applicants and providing accurate data about the number of people hired. The client then realised the risk and uncertainty they had taken in hiring Fr1. In section 3.6 the subject of risk perception was discussed and these findings of this triad are supported by Moriarty (1983).

Fleischer (2000) argues there is an increase in risk probability when suppliers who do not fully understand a customer's directives which results in service delays and poor quality. The literature suggests that in situations when there is both high-risk importance and high-risk probability the client often turns to relationship building to reduce risk (Hunter, 2004; Beatty and Smith, 1987; Moriarity, 1983). In this triad there was evidence of role conflict and a lack of trust between the client and Fr1 that lead to the inability to form a beneficial relationship between the parties.

A key finding from this triad was the relational selling strategies used by the 'switched to' agency (T1) to control and monitor the sales processes. It was confirmed that T1 is more concerned about the client relationship and regular communication with the client than maximising prices. This finding is supported in the literature review, section 2.5.5 where it was suggested that the salespeoples' own practices and behaviours have considerable impact on the relational interactions with clients (Price and Arnould, 1999). The significance of this finding is that service providers must encourage a work environment that encourages salespeople to form relational relationships with their customers. Such an environment would reward salespeople for their ability to develop long-term relationships (Anderson, 1996).

7.4 Analysis of Triad 2: Profile of Triad 2 Respondents

Respondent	Profile
C2	International engineering firm that designs highly sophisticated military defence systems within a very secure working environment Respondent was the HR Manager
T2 (Tier 3)	A local temporary staffing agency Respondent was the VP of the agency
Fr2 (Tier 3)	A local temporary staffing agency Respondent was an account manager who had dealt with the client

7.4.1 Triad 2: Client Perspective

The client in this triad, C2, uses a local staffing agency to provide casual clerical workers. The temps work in the reception area of this engineering firm. The reason why C2 switched was due to the poor quality of candidates. The client stated they received unsuitable candidates because Fr2 did not understand their culture or staffing needs. The following quote from the HR manager provides more insight:

“Fr2 just couldn’t get it right . . . the candidates they sent were duds . . . I even had Fr2 replace a few . . . but Fr2 was never timely in getting replacements . . . quality of the temps just wasn’t there . . . I put it down to poor listening . . . Fr2 never took the time to understand our culture and truly understand our needs . . . our business is very special . . . you can tell by the level of security just to get into the building! We do defence contracts, real secret stuff, high tech and all, so we expect a staffing agency to realise our needs are different . . . we were treated just like everyone one else”.

Analysis of the above comments reveals that C2 has identified three issues. The first issue is that the client felt they are being treated like everyone else. Due to the prestige work environment the client expected preferential treatment. The second issue is the poor quality of temps and the third was the quickness of replacing unqualified temps. In the mind of the client these latter two factors are core service failures (Keaveney, 1995) that led to their switching decision. The third issue is significant since it is considered a service recovery action which Fr2 failed to perform to the satisfaction of C2.

The literature states a service failure happens when the service delivery falls short of customers’ expectations (Bell and Zemke, 1987) and service recovery refers to the actions a service provider takes in response to a service failure (Gronroos, 1988). The object of the service recovery efforts is to move a customer from a state of dissatisfaction to a one of satisfaction (Zemke, 1993). The client was not satisfied with the service recovery which compounded the issue of not being provided quality candidates.

The service failures that C2 experienced led to a situation of mistrust. It is critical that a staffing agency build a strong trusting relationship with their clients (Ring, 1996; Wilson, 1995). A failure to form a relationship built on quality services and trust will lead clients to switch. The HR manager from C2 stated:

“I’m an old guy in my 50’s, relationships with vendors are more important today than they used to be . . . I rely on third party vendors frequently and will continue to do so for the rest of my career . . . it’s about getting the people with the right work skills . . . in the long run, poor quality hires make me look bad”.

The above quote demonstrates the need for the client to have confidence and trust in the staffing agency he has deployed (Moorman et al., 1993). The client knows the success of his career is directly affected by the staffing agency's ability to perform.

Another issue for the client was to receive preferential treatment (Gwinner et al., 1998; Parasuraman et al., 1991). Recall that the client's company is involved in highly secret military defence work. The HR manager from C2 was proud of his company and expected his service providers to respect him and his company. This was a major issue for C2 and it was fulfilled by the staffing agency the client switched to (T2).. The HR manager made the following two statements:

“I switched to an agency (T2) that quickly got to know our culture and that is the virtue of not switching . . . they become surrogate recruiters for us . . . they have become an extension of me in this office . . . and when you do have a relationship that endures, you get increased efficacy of your hiring substantially because they know us”.

“I can call them (T2) anytime and speak to Irene (the president of the agency) . . . if I have any problems, they are handled immediately . . . for example billing issues . . . no questions asked, they take my word and corrections are made . . . there's none of this, leave it with us and we'll get back to you . . . we trust each other, Irene and I are very close”.

The above quote identifies the HR manager's need to be personally involved and recognised by the staffing agency. This preferential treatment became a switching factor; T2 recognised this need and fulfilled it. Sections 2.3.2 and 4.3.2 of the literature review describe how this emotional bond is associated with a customer's needs to be identified and be personally involved with the service provider (Johnston et al., 2006; Bove and Johnson, 2002; Gwinner et al., 1998, Adleman et al., 1994; Parasuraman et al., 1991).

The client made a switching decision to a staffing agency (T2) that adopts a relational orientation that resulted in an increase in trust and commitment. Kingshott (2006) argues that a relational client-provider relationship leads to a psychological

contract. Such contracts increase the level of psychological and social bonding within the relationship.

7.4.2. Triad 2: ‘Switched To’ Staffing Agency Perceptive

The interview with T2 discussed reasons why clients switch to their agency. T2 felt the most significant reason for attracting clients was their ability to understand clients’ needs. There must be an exchange of information between the client and staffing agency to fully assess the client’s expectations (Napolitano, 1997). This is also the opportunity for the staffing agency to determine if they have the capabilities to meet the client’s expectations. It is a critical step in the service delivery process whereby the staffing agency and client can mutually set service level goals (Anderson and Weitz, 1992). The Vice President of T2 explains how their staffing agency operates:

“we fulfil the clients’ expectations . . . we manage their expectations . . . we are always communicating with our clients’ . . . it’s a conditioning process . . . we take control of the clients’ recruitment needs . . . we schedule regular follow up quality calls with our clients”.

The above quote demonstrates the requirement to fully understand a client’s needs (Simon and Kumar, 2001). T2 has an operating agreement whenever a client is not satisfied with a temp’s performance, then the temp is replaced the same day and the client is credited for all of that temp’s wages (Hanson, 2007). This service level agreement is communicated and known to all of T2’s staff, temps and particularly to their clients’. Regular visits to the client’s work site are also conducted by T2 which provides a great opportunity to ensure the client is fully satisfied (Liu, 2006). The necessity to manage a client’s expectations is best summarised by the quote from the Vice President of T2:

“anyone can get into this business, but only those agencies that truly understand their clients’ needs and fulfil those needs on a timely basis get to stay”.

The issues discussed by T2 clarified the need to understand clients’ needs,

determine service level performance goals and solve any conflicts immediately. Creating a trusting relationship begins by listening to the client and delivering a quality service (Messmer, 2006).

7.4.3 Triad 2: ‘Switched From’ Staffing Agency Perceptive

The key reason why clients switch from their agency (Fr2) is the issue of timeliness to fill a vacancy. The account manager of Fr2 commented that her priority is filling a client’s employment request as soon as possible. To determine a client’s culture and to match the right candidate to the vacancy, this account manager obtains her information from the client’s website. The account manager stated:

“a job description of the position to be filled is sent to us by the client and we match up the candidate’s desires to the most suitable job . . . and if the client’s company has a website that is very helpful too . . . that allows me to familiarise myself a little about the company . . . and we refer the candidate to the client’s web site before the candidate starts the job assignment”.

The issue arising from this situation is that Fr2 is not taking the necessary time to understand the client’s needs. Instead they are concerned about the time to fill a job request instead of matching the candidate’s qualifications to the temporary position. The Fr2 account manager stated, “if a client is not satisfied with the candidate we can normally have a replacement there in 2 – 3 days”.

The 2-3 day time frame to replace a temp would not meet the needs of most clients and particularly not for C2. The inability to replace an unsuitable candidate within one day is considered a core service failure. Section 4.6 discussed that client switching caused by unsatisfactory employee-client interactions might be reduced by teaching employees how to respond more promptly to clients’ needs (Keaveney, 1995). It is also suggested service providers develop policies for effective service recovery (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Hart et al., 1990). It is clear from this situation that Fr2 does not have a service recovery plan nor do they respond quickly to service failures. Fr2 feels the most critical performance indicator is the speed of filling vacancies.

It was learned from their former client, C2, that the quality of the candidate is the most significant factor to hiring a temp. It is noted that Fr2 is not spending enough time to determine their clients' needs. Significant information would be gained if Fr2 visited the client's work site and discussed the client's service level expectations. The importance of conducting an on-site visit was discussed in section 5.8 of the literature review (Liu, 2006; Messmer, 2006).

7.4.4 Triad 2: Summary of Analysis

The client in the second triad experienced service failures due to a core service failure – receiving poor quality of temps and the excessive length time to replace unqualified temps. The literature argues that clients will switch when core service failures occur (Keaveney, 1995). Furthermore service providers need to develop customised service recovery strategies for clients who have a low tolerance for service failures (Mattial, 2004). Service recovery strategies may have the effect of reducing client switching (Smith et al., 1999).

A key finding in this triad was the client's need of preferential treatment due to the 'highly secret work' they conducted and HR manager's experience and positional power. The issue of providing a client with preferential treatment was supported in the literature review, section 4.8.2 (Yamanandram, and White, 2006; Colgate and Lang, 2001). Parasuraman et al. (1991) and Gwinner et al. (1998) suggest that personalised and customised services lead to closer client-service provider relationships which were evident in this triad. Henning-Thurau (2002, p 65) refer to this situation of preferential service as a "commercial friendship".

The staffing needs and preferential requirements of the HR manager were met by T2. The 'switched to' agency took the time to fully understand C 2's culture and service needs. Section 3.3.4 of the literature review discussed how a relational orientation is able to increase trust and commitment in B2B relationships (De Ruyter et al., 2001). Kingshott (2006) argues that a relational strategy will result in the formation of the psychological contract between the parties and encourage social bonding. This client

was looking for a service provider who could deliver a quality service and provide a trusting social bond. Recall the HR manager stated, “. . . *relationships with vendors are more important today than they used to be*”.

Another finding from this triad is the importance of the service provider to conduct an on-site visit of their client’s work environment (Messmer, 2006). The ‘switched to’ agency conducted regular on-site visits whereas Fr2 had not conducted any. Liu (2006) suggests that visiting customers, informing customers of new developments and being knowledgeable about the customers’ businesses are ways of enhancing relational relationships.

It can be learned from this triad the necessity to fully understand a client’s needs and to fulfil those needs with the highest possible quality services. Conducting this client interview was beneficial for the researcher to observe the client’s work environment and appreciate the client’s need for recognition and preferential treatment from their service providers (Gummesson, 2007).

7.5 Analysis of Triad 3: Profile Triad 3 Respondents

Respondent	Profile
C3	Inter-city bus company serving North America Respondent was the operations manager
T3 (Tier 3)	A local staffing agency doing temporary and contingency work Respondent was owner/president of the agency
Fr3 (Tier 3)	Staffing agency providing local and national recruiting services Respondent was owner/president of the agency

7.5.1 Triad 3: Client Perspective

The third triad client, C3, was using an agency (Fr3) to hire local temporary clerical staff. This was the fourth time C3 used Fr3’s services. The company would spend C\$ 100,000 – C\$ 300,000 annually for temporary staffing services.

During a recent recruitment project the client encountered two issues which resulted in their decision to switch. The first issue was a core service failure due to a lack of continuity. This issue of continuity was discovered by the client who stated:

“I called the agency (Fr3) and found out from the receptionist that my account manager had left . . . I never heard anything from the agency at all . . . I was concerned about the level of service I had been getting, let alone about future service . . . it seemed I had a better relationship with the receptionist than I did with my account manager”.

The issue of continuity in this triad is identical to the continuity issue C1 experienced in the first triad. It appears Fr3 was having their own staffing problems and did not notify C3 that their account manager had quit. The failure to maintain regular contact with the client and particularly to not notify them of staff turnover resulted in the client switching. The need to arrange regular feedback opportunities was discussed in section 5.8 (Messmer, 2006).

The second switching reason was due to Fr3’s mistreatment of their temporary workers. The client reported that Fr3 was simply supplying temps and failing to provide any follow up calls to them or the temp (Slattery et al., 2005). The client stated:

“I did not like the way the agency (Fr3) treated their temps . . . they treated the temps like numbers . . . it became obvious the temps were not proud of the agency they worked for . . . there was very little if any communication from Fr3 to me or the temps . . . the temps were placed in our company and forgotten about by the staffing agency!”

The switching issue surrounds the client’s expectations of having regular communication and feedback (Carter and Miller, 1989; Primo and Amundson, 2002) and for the agency to respect their temporary workers.

The client provided the following positive comments about the agency they *switched to*, T3. The new agency provided frequent feedback to the client and the temps to ensure everyone was fully satisfied. The client stated:

“The temporary workers were a perfect fit to our needs and company culture; this agency (T3) knew their people and respected them. I had a better relationship and a lot more respect with new staffing agency”

This statement verifies the necessity for staffing agencies to maintain regular feedback with their clients’ *and* the temps they have placed. Daniel (2006) argues that getting the right ‘*fit*’ is the most critical factor for clients to consider when hiring temps.

7.5.2 Triad 3: ‘Switched To’ Staffing Agency Perspective

The interview with T3 discussed reasons why clients switch to their agency. The president of T3 commented that to win clients he had to provide the best quality of candidates possible. To do this T3 must truly listen and understand the client’s needs (Simon and Kumar, 2001). The president of T3 stated:

“Clients will tell me they switched to my agency because they did not get results . . . they didn’t get their positions filled and because of the feelings of apathy they got from the staffing agency. Clients will say that the agency did not take to heart what the client really wanted . . . we hear on a regular basis from clients that they used such-and-such agency and they were disappointed with the quality of fit they got from that agency . . . there’s a lot of pressure for staffing agencies to get warm bodies out to clients in neck-breaking speed”.

The above quote emphasises that clients are expecting quality and fast service. However there is an innate conflict in this industry whereby the clients are judging an agency’s efficiency by speed of filling positions and the quality of the candidates. Agencies need time to recruit the most qualified candidates yet the demands of the clients are pressuring the agencies for hasty service which may result in shoddy service.

A strategy to find the best quality candidates has been deployed by T3. This involves hiring highly professional recruiters. T3 has chartered accountants recruiting for finance candidates, former sales managers looking for sales candidates, finance specialists looking for finance professionals, I.T. experts recruiting I.T. candidates.

T3 discovered that clients trust experts, and by having qualified professionals recruiting within their field of expertise builds trust and loyalty with *both* the candidates and clients (McKnight and Chervany, 2002). The president of T3 stated:

“agencies that are out for the money and fail to build relationships with their clients will ultimately go broke . . . short term, quick fixes don’t work in this industry. We are not in business to hoard every dollar we earn in the short run, we are in business to gain the trust of the candidates and clients for the long term”.

The above comment signifies the importance of establishing relational relationships with clients. A key element to develop trust is respect - treat your clients’ and candidates’ with the utmost respect and professionalism (Foote, 2004) which was supported in section 5.6 (Bones, 2006). T3 initiates this trust by using professional recruiters who are experts within their industry to which they are sourcing candidates. The above ideas were supported in section 3.3.3 of the literature review which argued the importance of trust in building commitment in the client-service provider relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Moorman, 1993).

7.5.3 Triad 3: ‘Switched From’ Staffing Agency Perspective

The president of Fr3 stated the main reason why they lose clients is due to candidate’s poor quality of ‘*fit*’ (Daniel, 2006). In other words, sending candidates who did not meet the client’s expectations or were not suited for the job. The Fr3 president stated:

“I’ve been in HR for thousands of years . . . to be successful in this business you have to be quick and skilful when filling the placements . . . both the client and candidates want to see action happening . . . and the odd time I have slipped up . . . or a candidate lies about their qualifications . . . it doesn’t happen often . . . when the fit doesn’t work we send a replacement as soon as possible . . . a lot of our clients like to know that we guarantee our placements”.

Fr3’s quote reflects the need of servicing the client quickly with quality results. The best way to meet the client’s service expectations is to fully explain the time requirements to fulfil their service requests and to schedule regular feedback sessions. The need for service providers to frequently communicate with their clients

have been extensively discussed in the literature in sections 3.3 (De Ruyter, 2001; and 5.8 (Messmer, 2006; Simon and Kumar, 2001).

It is interesting to note that Fr3 did not mention continuity as a switching factor. This is an indication that Fr3 did not really understand why C3 switched which contravenes the literature suggesting service providers need to analyse and learn why their clients are switching (Lam et al., 2004; Grace and O’Cass, 2001; Keaveney, 1995).

7.5.4 Triad 3: Summary of Analysis

The client in this triad switched due to a loss of continuity. It is recommended that staffing agencies have contingency plans in place ready to continue serving a client whenever one of their account managers quits (Mattila, 2004). Such plans would include a communication strategy to instantaneously notify the client and immediately assign another staff member to the client’s account.

In addition the client said they did not appreciate the disrespectful treatment the temps had received from their staffing agency. This is an important issue since a temp’s work performance will be affected by the way they are managed by their staffing agency (Foote, 2004; Slattery et al., 2004).

The literature has argued that a satisfied temporary employee is less likely to quit than an unsatisfactory temporary employee (Slattery et al., 2005). In addition organisations that routinely employ temps need to focus upon improving working conditions for temporary employees to increase employee organisational commitment and reduce turnover (Slattery et al., 2005). This confirms that it is *both* the client and the staffing agency’s responsibility to respect and manage the temporary employee’s work performance and well-being.

T3 has adopted the business practice of using professional recruiters to hire within their own field of expertise. This has resulted in hiring the best qualified candidates

while expediting the recruiting process. It also minimises the chances of mismatching a candidate's skills to a client's expectations.

Section 5.6 of the literature review suggests that a service provider's reputation and trust is affected by the employment relationship they have with their employees (Marin and Hetrick, 2006). Service providers should hire the best quality employees while providing a trusting work environment (Bones, 2006) which in turn will result in providing quality and promoting the well-being of their organisation (Dirks and Ferrin, 2001).

This triad demonstrated the importance of trust within the B2B relationship. The client switched due to a loss of trust with Fr3. Section 3.3.3 describes how trust becomes the fundamental building block of the B2B relationship (Wilson, 1995; De Ruyter et al., 2001). This triad has supported the findings of Turnbull and Moustakatos (1996) who argue that trust is an important element of service quality within the B2B relationship.

7.6 Analysis of Triad 4: Profile of Triad 4 Respondents

Respondent	Profile
C4	Office furniture manufacturer Respondent was the production manager who chose which staffing agency to hire
T4 (Tier 3)	Local Staffing agency who provides temporary industrial labourers Respondent was an account manager
Fr4 (Tier 3)	Local Staffing agency who provides temporary industrial labourers Respondent was the former account manager

7.6.1 Triad 4: Client Perspective

This client (C4) was an office furniture manufacturer who exports products around the world. This client has a strategy of HRO (Human Resource Outsourcing) whereby their staffing agency does all of the hiring and training of their temporary production workers.

Contracting out HR processes has become a trend in many business environments and was discussed in section 5.9 of the literature review (Stewart, 1996; Csoko, 1995). Employers increasingly rely on temporary workers which have the advantage of lowering benefit costs and the ability to remain flexible. The literature argued that “when organisations go through staffing agencies to fill positions, organisations in effect are turning to an external HR department so they don’t have to worry about hiring, firing, payroll and benefits” (Vu, 2005, p 17). It was learned that C4 spends C \$ 1 M– C\$ 1.3 million annually for wages of temporary labour.

The reason why the client is using a strategy of HRO was explained by their production manager who stated:

“10 – 15% of our total work force are temps, so that would be 40 – 60 temps . . . we use the agency to do our recruiting which saves us time . . . the agency is responsible to train the new temps the basics of the job, safety training and ensure they speak English. The critical reason why we use a temp agency is because the agency is responsible for laying off temps too . . . they take complete responsibility for layoffs . . . and we can guarantee permanent work to our full time employees . . . we can say, we don’t lay off our workers, which is true. This is a big issue for our company (no layoffs, and retaining our work force) . . . layoffs are bad for company morale . . . the permanent employees get very upset if layoffs occur”.

The client provides a clear distinction of status between temps and permanent workers (Foote, 2004), yet both groups (temps and permanent staff) work well together. The temps have become an integral part of this company’s production operations. The company hires their permanent workers from the pool of experienced temporary labour. Moorman and Harland (2002, p 176) call this a “*foot in the door*”

assignment whereby the temp may choose to exert more effort in hopes that they will get first crack at a full-time position when one becomes available”.

The client’s staffing agency is the gateway of joining the company which has been described in the literature as an important new port of entry into organisations for new employees (Ward et al., 2001). Mangum et al. (1985, p 602) refers this form of recruitment as a “labour-market intermediary” and Grimshaw et al. (2001) suggests that temping has substituted the need for permanent workers to be on probation.

The fact that this company hires in this manner is well known by the temps and the local labour market which is an incentive to become a temp for that particular staffing agency. The temps’ hourly wage is double the minimum wage. Due to the complexity and number of temps working for this company, the staffing agency has provided their own on-site staffing manager (Frazee, 1997). The manager from the staffing agency is responsible for the temps’ attendance, safety and the *daily* staffing requirements. This is another trend in the recruiting sector whereby the *daily* HR operations are being contracted out to a staffing agency. The staffing agency has become the company’s on-site HR department which emphasises the importance of establishing a robust relationship with the client (Peck and Theodore, 1998).

The client switched staffing agencies because there was a core service failure. Temp workers were being hired could not speak English and were reporting for work without the proper safety training or equipment (steel toed work boots). The latter incident resulted in temps being sent home which resulted in lost production time which the client could not tolerate. The client stated:

“when we lose production time, we all look bad . . . due to the poor quality of temps being hired we had to switch . . . we didn’t trust the staffing agency any more, they were unreliable and we kept running into staffing shortages . . . they failed to deliver the quality service we needed!”

The client switched due to service provider (Fr4) failing to deliver the core services. This resulted in the client not trusting the service provider which led to a loss of commitment to continue the relationship. Section 3.3.3 of the literature review

discussed the influence of trust on commitment. Morgan and Hunt (1994) suggest that trust leads to commitment while earning customers' trust is critical for a company to develop customers' commitment. When the trust level is low, less favorable attitudes will be generated between the customer and service provider (Sharma and Patterson, 1999) resulting in less commitment to maintain the relationship.

7.6.2 Triad 4: 'Switched To' Staffing Agency Perspective

The interview with the 'switched to' agency (T4) discussed reasons why clients switch to their agency. A significant finding was to learn that T4 conducted an extensive review of C4's recruiting needs to determine if they could fulfil the demands of the HRO contract. Part of the review was to examine why Fr4 lost the contract and understand C4's reasons for switching. The account manager stated:

“Our mission was to understand C4's operation inside-out and to ensure we had a good fit of candidates to meet their daily requirements . . . we learned the deficiencies and reasons why the client was not happy with the quality and speed of filling vacancies they had been getting from Fr 4 . . . we could not proceed with this contract until we were absolutely certain we could deliver”.

The above quote emphasises the need for a service provider to understand the critical success factors that the client is expecting and analyse any past switching experiences (Johnston et al., 2001; Weitz and Bradford, 1999). In addition, it underscores the need for the agency to determine if they have the core competencies to deliver the expected services. This relationship building strategy was discussed and supported in section 2.5.3 which confirms the need to fully understand a client's needs (Svensson, 2004; Johnson et al., 2001; Gronroos, 2000).

Another key learning was T4's ability to motivate and retain the temporary workers for C4. T4 initiated various pay incentives, safety award programmes and production bonuses for the temporary production workers (Slattery et al., 2005; Connell and Burgess, 2002). This resulted in reduced absenteeism, improved morale and reduced lost production time. T4 gave more responsibilities to their on-site manager to ensure

the temporary workers met the client's *daily* requirements for safety and work quality. Daily control checks were implemented with the results being communicated regularly to the client.

It can be concluded from this triad that the staffing agency's key account management requires a service level strategy of extra care and commitment. Such efforts are necessary to develop the skills of the temporary workers to ensure the client's recruitment needs are met *daily* (Takeisi, 2001; Kogut and Zander, 1992). A key issue raised in this triad was the need for the staffing agency to control the overall recruitment costs on behalf of C 4. The account manager from T4 stated:

“we work closely with a client to anticipate their short term and long term temporary labour needs . . . this is key in monitoring and reducing the client's labour costs . . . getting the right number of temps in the right jobs each day is critical to this client . . . speed and quality is everything for our clients' and we have to deliver this daily . . . the quality of our services is shown in two ways – through the quickness of quality job placements and by saving our client money in the recruiting function”.

The significance of this quote indicates the importance of managing client's staffing needs with the utmost professionalism and to appreciate how the core and non-core services affect the client's overall satisfaction. In this triad the client required a full service, on-site staffing agency that provided consistent and cost-effective recruiting services *each day*. The '*switched to*' agency was successful because they used relational selling skills to manage the client's needs. Section 2.5.5 of the literature review suggested the relative importance of key account management (KAM) increases as the parties involved seek to establish closer relationships (Homburg, 2000). KAM provided the client a range of recruitment services that coordinated the logistics of hiring and managing the temporary employees that met the client's production schedule needs (Slater and Olson, 2000).

7.6.3 Triad 4: '*Switched From*' Staffing Agency Perspective

The next discussion will focus on the reasons why the '*switched from*' agency (Fr4)

loses their clients. Fr4 stated the key reason why their clients switch was due to poor quality of 'fit' of the candidates (Daniel, 2006). Fr4 stated they had been managing C4's account for eight years and losing this client was a significant loss to their reputation and revenues. This switching incident stems from Fr4's lackadaisical attempt to sustain a quality core service critical to C4's operation. Due to the amount of client's recruitment activity one of Fr4's strategies was to provide an on-site manager (Frazee, 1997). However, even with an on-site manager the core-services were not being performed adequately. This raises the issue of the job performance and capabilities of Fr4's on-site manager. Key accounts who have requested a full range of services require the highest degree of quality service delivery (Ivens and Pardo, 2007). Fr4 should have had one of their senior executives over-seeing their on-site manager's work performance. *Daily* control mechanisms monitoring the quality of service and C4's satisfaction is recommended and may have prevented Fr4 from losing this major account.

The learning from this triad is that a service provider's on-site manager's productivity and effectiveness must be measured by tangible results and the client's satisfaction. The success of HRO depends on the service provider's ability to increase service quality, reduce costs and be accountable for their performance (Johnson et al., 1998; Csoko, 1995). Fr4 lost this key account due to their lack of commitment and failure to meet their client's *daily* service expectations (Wilson and Jantrania, 1996).

7.6.4 Triad 4: Summary of Analysis

The client was a manufacturer of office furniture who was using a HRO (Human Resources Outsourcing) strategy supported in the literature review, section 5.9 (Ehret, 2006; Hindle, 2005; Grundy, 1998; Klaas et al., 1998; Frazee, 1997). When the expected core services were not being performed on a *daily* basis the client switched to an alternative staffing agency.

This triad confirmed the need to monitor the daily work performance of a staffing agency's on-site manager. The on-site manager's role is so critical that it warrants a

senior executive from the staffing agency to ensure the tasks are fulfilled to meet the client's daily service expectations (Purcell and Purcell, 1999; Peck and Theodore, 1998).

The 'switched to' agency (T4) used relational selling strategies by initiating an interdependent and long-term orientation relationship with the client (Heide and John, 1992; Anderson and Narus, 1991). T4 learned the reasons why the client switched from Fr4 which began an exchange of critical information while initiating a level of trust (Slater and Olson, 2000). It was evident that T4 had a fundamental goal of developing a long-term, mutually profitable partnership with the client (Anderson, 1996).

A critical learning from this triad is the need for service providers to ensure greater emphasis is placed on key account management and senior personnel are assigned to manage key accounts (Homburg et al., 2000). KAM strategies involve client-service provider interdependence which is based on trust and a stable relationship (Slater and Olson, 2000) while increasing the value created by the synergy of their relationship (Wotruba and Castleberry, 1993).

The needs of the client from this triad were so complex and numerous it would be appropriate for the service provider to apply a team selling strategy (Jones et al., 2005a; Weitz and Brandford, 1999) that was discussed in section 2.5.7. Such a strategy is suggested when a large and multifaceted client is serviced by many individuals and the coordination of these individuals tasks is necessary for the service provider to become the preferred vendor (Moon and Armstrong, 1994). Recall that this client required their temporary workers to be hired, trained and provided an introduction orientation before they arrived at their production facility. F4 committed several core service failures demonstrating they were no longer reliable or committed to performing the services the client required. Zeithaml (1990) argues that reliability is considered the most important dimension for customer loyalty. In a services context there needs to be an attribute of reliability and confidence to sustain a loyal relationship (Dick and Basu, 1994).

The client in this triad had a need to produce a quality product and they were willing to pay an above average wage to their production workers. The unwillingness to risk quality for lower wages or risk using an unknown supplier was discussed in section 3.6 (Tait and Guevel, 2000; Nagle and Holden, 1995). However, once the client's production quality was threatened by poor quality from their service provider they took immediate action and switched. This demonstrates the premise that a client would rather switch than risk with a potential quality issue (Nagle and Holden, 1995).

7.7 Analysis of Triad 5: Profile Triad 5 Respondents

Respondent	Profile
C5	Multinational Petroleum Company; head office in Calgary, Canada; Respondent was the I.T. Manager who employs the services of staffing agencies for long periods of time (6-24 months)
T5 (Tier 3)	A local temporary staffing agency specialising in professional services (engineering and I.T services) Respondent was the owner/president of the agency
Fr5 (Tier 3)	A national, very well established staffing agency noted for supplying professional temps Respondent was the account manager who had dealt with the client

7.7.1 Triad 5: Client Perspective

The fifth triad raises the issue of trust between the client and staffing agency. The client (C5) is a major petroleum production company and was using staffing agencies to hire I.T. specialists. The temporary workers were needed to assist with various projects lasting from 6 – 24 months and earned hourly wages C\$ 80 – \$ 120 per hour. The client's annual payments for their I.T. department's temporary labour ranged from C \$ 800,000 – 1.2 million annually, a substantial operating expense.

The client requires the temporary worker to be highly skilled and able to work well in an established team environment. To find highly skilled I.T. temps the client commented that paying a high wage rate was not a concern. The client stated:

“the staffing agencies we use are specialists; they have the resources to find the right people when we need them. If we are looking for a specific skill, they can find it . . . I would never be able to find the right person unless I had assistance from these agencies . . . the agency finds a key person who will complement our existing I.T. staff . . . the temp is the missing link to work on key I.T. projects . . . without the temp we cannot move the project forward”.

The above quote emphasises how staffing agencies add value to a client’s operation. Guiltinan (1989) and Urbany et al. (1997) argue that customers who receive services that are highly valued by the client are less likely to search or consider alternative service providers. The factor whereby the staffing agency is able to provide a customised, highly technical solution results in an interdependent relationship between the client and service provider which was discussed in section 2.9 of the literature review (Ford et al., 2003; Houseman, 2001). It also creates a level of collaboration between the parties due to the complexity and uniqueness of required skill level of the temporary labour (Ploetner and Ehret, 2006).

Clients are willing to compensate a staffing agency commensurate to skills required for the position and for the challenges encountered to fill the position (Frazee, 1997).

These challenges would include:

- the importance, responsibility and accountability of the position
- if the position is part of a team environment
- the skill level required
- the degree of difficulty to find a suitable temp

A client will stick with a staffing agency that has the resources to conduct extensive hiring searches and is able to provide the most qualified, highly sought after candidates (Dyer et al., 1987).

The issue of honesty and trust arose between C5 and Fr5 concerning a pay issue. The client negotiated with Fr5 to pay an above average wage for the temps that reflected the high skill level of position. Several months after the temps were hired C5 learned

that Fr5 unilaterally lowered the wage rate. This was a violation of the service agreement and an act of fraud. The client stated:

“a big thing for me is the way these agencies treat their employees . . . I am particularly concerned for the amount of pay and and benefits they get from the agency . . . the temp ultimately gets embedded in our culture . . . they get the sense that they are our employees, even though they are not on our pay roll . . . we want the temps to feel they are being taken care of in all respects”.

The client's benevolence for their temps was damaged by the inappropriate actions of Fr5. The client realises that good employee relations are needed to gain the trust and commitment from the temp workers (Slattery et al., 2005). The literature states that temporary workers generally lack affective commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1997) to their contingent employer (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990) and it is in the employer's best interest to provide temps a stimulating work within a team environment. In this triad, Fr5's negligent actions had a detrimental effect on promoting a trusting relationship between the client and temporary workers.

The kindness and respect the client exhibited for their temps was neglected and overridden by Fr5's opportunistic actions. The client stated:

“I told the agency (Fr5) what to pay the temps and the agency stated they would . . . but as this agency grew bigger they took my instructions for granted . . . they felt they had a firm hold of my business . . . they comprised our trust and made exceptions to my instructions and paid the employees less . . . while pocketing more profit for themselves . . . that agency (Fr5) tested the boundaries . . . these temps become our family and we want these agencies to treat their employees (the temps) as their family too”.

The wrongful actions of Fr5 described above resulted in a breach of trust. Mooreman et al. (1992) suggests that trust is the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence and there are actions that promote the relationship through reduced uncertainty and less opportunistic behaviour (Cheung and Lee, 2001; Das and Teng, 1998). Trust is viewed as an essential ingredient for successful relationships (Berry, 1995) and achieving common goals (Khodyakov, 2007) and it in this triad it became apparent that the client did not trust Fr5.

The discussion will now focus on another service issue that impacted the client's decision to switch from Fr5. A service failure arose when Fr5 failed to comply with a request from the client to resolve a billing issue. C5 was informed that all billing enquiries were handled by the agency's head office and it was the client's responsibility to call the head office. C5 was displeased with this situation of Fr5 being unable to resolve the billing problem *locally* with their account manager. This situation exemplifies how a core service failure (billing issues) becomes a switching factor for the client (Chumpitaz, 2004; Keaveney, 1995).

The situations experienced by the client exemplify Fr5's failure to fulfilling all aspects of the client's service requests. Due to poor service and dishonesty surrounding the wage payments a trusting relationship was not possible. The client stated:

“When there is the potential for more business you see the sales team a lot, then they disappear after I sign the contract. That is an indication that they are really not interested in your long term goals . . . and for me, that has caused me to switch!”

The above quote substantiates the client's evaluation of an opportunistic situation. The situation also supports the argument of Bell et al. (2005) from section 4.3.5 that stresses the need for service providers to be attentive not only to new clients but also to established ones. Unfortunately Fr5 was operating on a transactional level (Gronroos, 1994) and failed to meet C5's service requirements. The literature argues that a relational strategy (Laing, 1995) is necessary for the client and service provider to become interdependent, form a stable and profitable relationship (Guenzi et al., 2000; Slater and Olson, 2000).

7.7.2 Triad 5: ‘Switched To’ Staffing Agency Perspective

The interview with the ‘switched to’ staffing agency, T5, discussed the switching reasons why clients switch to their agency. The president of T5 commented that it is due to their strong understanding of the client's needs (Simon and Kumar, 2001) that allows them to attract and retain clients. T5 conducts an on-site visit whereby a sales manager and a technical engineer meet face-to-face with potential clients. The

advantage of on-site visits allows the staffing agency to gain a better understanding of their service role (Franke and Park, 2006) and client's culture and job requirements (Liu, 2006; Messmer, 2006). The president of T 5 stated:

“We take the time to learn the client's true needs and to understand how our candidates assist the client . . . it takes months to fully understand a client's I.T. needs and it is our job to learn those needs and match the right candidate to the client . . . it is our matching and fulfilling the client's needs that earn us respect in the eyes of the client”.

T5 stressed the importance to understand a client's service needs and expectations. The president of T5 commented that her agency becomes the surrogate HR department for their clients and stated:

“We are a small company; we treat our clients and candidates as family . . . we have to since we are offering highly skilled I.T. professionals whom our clients rely on . . . there are two reputations at stake with every placement, ours and the client's”.

The above benevolent comments assist staffing agencies in establishing the attributes of affective commitment and trust with their candidates (de Gilder, 2005). It was learned that this local agency shares all pricing and profit margin information with their clients'. Britton et al. (1999) argue that candidness about payment structures helps form mutual trust between the parties. The owner's relational selling strategies and concern for their clients' was very evident as observed by the researcher in the interview. The value of relational selling strategies was discussed in section 2.5.4 of the literature review (Homburg et al., 2000; Wilson, 2000; Gronroos, 1994).

The role of ethics and how an agency respects their clients' and their candidates' was discussed with T5. It was learned that T5 has an extensive code of ethics governing their relationship with clients and candidates which is posted on their company website. Permission was granted from the president of T5 to publish this code of ethics which is located in Appendix M. T5 believes there are fewer conflicts when the rules of engagement are known between the parties - the client, candidate and staffing agency. A code of ethics enhances the client-provider relationship and

confirms the commitment T5 has to building their reputation of being a highly professional recruiter. The president of T5 stated:

“There are a lot of unethical agencies out there . . . many agencies today treat their candidates like a loaf of bread, a total commodity”.

A code of ethics mitigates the chance whereby one of the parties will take opportunistic action that may result in a precarious or unethical action that results in the client switching. Ganesh et al. (2000) argue that equity and fairness is a key component in client-service provider relationships. The client’s satisfaction and commitment will increase if they there is a fair exchange (Goff et al., 1997; Oliver and Swan, 1989). T5 is selling more than recruitment services – they are also marketing their professional reputation. Section 5.6 of the literature review discussed the value for service providers of having a good reputation (Britton and Ball, 1999) and discussed that clients will switch to companies that have good reputations (Bones, 2006; Martin and Hetrick, 2006).

7.7.3 Triad 5: ‘Switched From’ Staffing Agency Perspective

The account manager from Fr5 stated they lose clients due to the poor quality of *‘fit’* with their candidates (Daniel, 2006). In other words, Fr5 provides a candidate that does not meet a client’s expectations. In this triad it is noted that the client did not identify poor quality of *fit* as their switching reason. C5 identified the improper payment of wages by Fr5 as the ultimate factor that led to their switching decision. It is noteworthy that Fr5 did not know that the payment of wages was the key reason why their client switched.

Concerning the payment of wages issue, the account manager from Fr5 commented that it is their business practice *not to tell* the client the wage rate that they are paying the temp. The account manager from Fr5 stating:

“generally the client does not know the wage rate we pay the temp . . . what we pay the temp is an issue between our company and

our employee (the temp) . . . concerning billing enquiries, we give the client a 1-800 toll free telephone number to our head office . . . it's easier for the client to call head office since all of the pay records are with our head office”.

Britton et al. (1999) argues that disclosure of sensitive information between the parties fosters reciprocity of trust. The above situation contravenes a study by Barber (1993) who suggests the service provider is obligated to act in the interests of the client without any opportunism or self interest.

Fr5's method of resolving clients' billing met their needs and was inconvenient for clients. This situation creates set-up costs and cumbersome information-gathering procedures for the client (Hu and Hwang, 2006; Jones et al., 2002). Keaveney (1995) suggests that inconvenience is a key switching trigger. The reason why clients use staffing agencies is to reduce administrative costs (Houseman, 2001).

7.7.4 Triad 5: Summary of Analysis

To summarise the fifth triad, the client switched due to a dishonest act by Fr5. The client switched to T5 who took the effort to understand their clients' staffing needs. This situation identifies a situation whereby a service provider neglected the importance of serving an established client, as supported in literature review section 4.3.6 (Bell et al., 2006). Fr5 unilaterally changed the wage schedule that had previously agreed by both parties which demonstrates opportunistic behaviour (Britton et al., 1999). Barber (1983) suggests that service providers act in the interest of their client without any opportunism or self interest. Keaveney (1995) argues that unethical behaviour and dishonesty are switching triggers.

The client's benevolence and concern for adequate wages for their temps demonstrates they are improving the working conditions and strengthening organisational commitment (Slattery et al., 2005). Torka and Schyns (2007) suggest that clients monitor an agency's pay and benefit schedule provided to the temporary workers since the compensation levels can affect temp workers attitudes and behaviours. They suggest that clients should actively influence the compensation

levels staffing agencies pay the temps and “should be aware of the fact that they, too, are a part of the temporary worker’s history, and thus they, too, are co-responsible” (Torka and Schyns, p 453).

The literature stated that employers are using temporary workers to save on labour costs since temps are traditionally paid less (Freedman, 1996; Abraham, 1988). In this triad the opposite was true since the client was paying a substantially higher wage for *skilled temps*. This situation is the same as triad 4, whereby a wage premium is paid to ensure quality work is performed (Tait and Guevel, 2000). Dyer et al. (1998) suggest that the highest risk to client-service provider relationships occur with key suppliers who are providing clients with strategic inputs – skilled labour in this triad. Moriarty (1983) suggests that a client cannot tolerate underperforming service providers when there is a critical need for their service, particularly when the firm’s overall performance or quality is at stake (Chow and Holden, 1997). Dwyer et al. (1987) argue that the perceived switching costs of replacing a valued service provider will act as a switching cost and influence a client’s decision to remain with a crucial service provider (Patterson, 2004).

This triad emphasises the need for service providers to offer superior value through personal interaction and service and access to ‘know-how’ (Vandenbosch and Dawer, 2002). The ‘switched to’ agency demonstrated strong technical ‘know how’ and realised the value of conducting an on-site visit to create superior customer value during the early stages of the relationship (Eggert et al, 2006). Simon and Kumar (2001) support this premise by suggesting that technical knowledge is a key factor clients are seeking from their service providers.

A key learning from this triad was the desire and actions of the client and the ‘switched to’ staffing agency to treat and respect the temporary workers ‘*as family*’. The advantages of having loyal employees are similar to having loyal customers which was discussed in section 3.5 (Uncles and Laurent, 1997; Dick and Basu, 1994). Frequent turnover of temps “may disrupt work schedules and be expensive for clients since they must expend time and resources for training and socialisation of temporary employees” (Slattery et al., 2005, p 65). Jones and Sasser (1995) describe

loyalty as the feeling of attachment to or affection for a company's people, products or services. Organisations that routinely employ temporary workers need to focus on improving working conditions for temps to increase employee organisational commitment and reduce turnover (Moorman and Harland, 2002).

The literature also advocates that although temporary employees are not on the direct pay roll of the client's firm (Torka and Schyns, 2007), the client could use the leverage with the staffing agency to ensure that temps receive fair pay and benefits (Slattery et al., 2005). Frequent turnover of temps may jeopardise the credibility of the temp agency with the client's firm. Staffing agencies should make sure that their temps receive fair pay and benefits and try to assign temps to clients that provide favourable working conditions (Slattery et al., 2005).

Griffeth and Horn, (2001) suggest that challenging work, growth opportunities on the job and help from supervisors and co-workers at the client's work site resulted in temps who are more committed to the client organisation and had less intention of quitting the client's firm. The above premise is further supported by Van Dyne and Ang (1998) who suggest that when organisations treat temporary workers with respect and do not view them as peripheral the temps will exhibit a higher level of commitment to the client's organisation.

It was learned from this triad that T5 has established a *code of ethics* which is a testament to their business acumen of providing the highest quality of service for their clients' and candidates'. T5 understands the importance of marketing their reputation and building trust. This triad has discussed how a B2B relationship built on trust becomes a fundamental non-switching factor for the client (Lewicki et al., 1998). These findings are supported by the literature review, sections 2.3.2, 3.3.1 and 5.6 which argued that trustworthiness leads to credibility, builds a good reputation, determines perceptions of service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1995; Morgan and Hunt, 1994) and is a determinant of communications between the parties (Mohr and Nevin, 1990). Trust has a great importance to this study since the B2B

clients' encounter the complexity of evaluating many intangible aspects of a service provider's offering (Doney et al., 2007).

It is recommended that staffing agencies follow the example set by T5 and establish a code of ethics. A knowledge factor gained from this triad is that a code of ethics becomes is an invaluable method of building trust for staffing agencies.

7.8 Analysis of Triad 6: Profile of Triad 6 Respondents

Respondent	Profile
C6	Oil and Gas Exploration Company Respondents were two HR Managers
T6 (Tier 1)	A small, regional executive search firm Conducting executive placements for the client Respondent was a partner in the firm (co-owner)
Fr6 (Tier 1)	An international recruitment agency Fourth largest staffing agency in North America Agency conducted executive searches for the client Respondent was the Vice President of the Agency

7.8.1 Triad 6: Client Perspective

The client of the sixth triad used an executive search firm because of the firm's ability of hiring the highest quality of candidates. The client from this triad was using an executive search firm to head hunt senior managers and 'C level' executives. The search fee was one third of the starting salary, with the fees ranging between C\$ 30,000 – 100,000 *per placement*. The client in this triad was spending approximately C\$ 5000,000 annually for search fees (Britton and Ball, 1999).

The client hires a search firm because of their ability to *head hunt* executives who are already employed and not actively seeking a career change. Sheff (2007) suggests that a search firm's networking allows them to uncover passive candidates through proactive soliciting. HR departments do not target executives who are already working in fear it would damage their company's reputation (Simms, 2004). A second benefit of using a search agency is their ability to conduct detailed

background checks. The search firm's expertise and technical knowledge are key factors why clients use these services (Simon and Kumar, 2001; Britton et al., 2000). Clients expect an agency to be able to conduct a more detailed reference check than they are capable of doing. The client stated:

“we use an executive search firm so they can lure the very best candidate from their current position to come work for us . . . not only that, we want the background dirt on the candidate as well, stuff we couldn't possibly have gotten on our own . . . these agencies know enough people in the industry, they can use their networks to find out what a candidate did over at Encana for example . . . we pay a search fee of C\$ 60,000, we'd expect C\$ 5,000 of that fee to go towards some type of industrial psychology testing”.

The quality and scope of the background check can become a contentious issue. There are legal restrictions that limit the scope of information that can be sought. It is the search firm's role to set the client's expectations of a background check. Communicating the parameters of the background check by the search firm will ensure the client's expectations are met (Messmer, 2006).

The client in this triad switched due to three acts of negligence committed by the 'switched from' agency, Fr6. The first incident occurred when Fr6 contacted the Vice President (V.P.) who was making the hiring decision instead of restricting their communications with the client's HR department. The client stated:

“the search firm (Fr6) said they had some stellar candidates for us . . . but the search firm did not respect the boundaries we set out . . . we told the search firm, we are the contact (i.e. HR), under no circumstances do you contact the V.P. directly . . . the hiring V.P. does not want to hear from you; you will hear from us . . . sure enough, the search firm was constantly calling the V.P. directly . . . that makes us in HR look like fools!”

The situation raises the issue of role conflict between Fr6 and client's HR department. By circumventing the rules of engagement the trust between Fr6 and C6's HR department had been broken. This scenario is similar to the situation in triad

1 where there was mistrust and role conflict. Fleischer (2000) suggests there is an increase in risk probability when service providers who do not fully understand or comprehend (Simon and Kumar, 2001) a client's directives.

The second conflict occurred when Fr6 sent out a *blanket email* to all of their clients' advertising that they had a candidate they were trying to place. The client detested this action and felt it was a breach of trust. C6 stated:

“it was like the search firm (Fr6) was trying to create a bidding war over one of their candidates . . . this broadcast email listed all of the Fr6's clients including our company . . . highly unprofessional”.

This second incident reflects the need for search firms to respect the privacy of their clients. Many clients do not want their competitors to know any details surrounding their recruitment needs. This was an incident that lacked integrity whereby Fr6 put their own interests ahead of their clients' (Simon and Kumar, 2001). The failure to maintain a client's privacy and confidentiality became a switching factor for the client (Roche and Skapinker, 2004).

The third conflict arose when Fr6 sent a vacancy posting to one of the temps they had permanently placed at the client's company. The client felt that Fr6 was trying to poach the candidate they had placed in their company. This act of negligence resulted in a breach of trust (Ring, 1996; Turnbull and Moustakatos, 1996). Fr6 claimed it was not their intent to entice that person to leave the client's company but simply ask if that person knew anyone who could fill such a position. The client interpreted Fr6's action as being deceitful and stated:

“we don't care if Fr6 was just checking things out . . . they were going under-handed behind our backs”.

These three situations identified gaps in service delivery whereby Fr6 ignored C6's directives which resulted in loss of trust and commitment. The literature states there must be some perceived commitment for a genuine relationship to exist (Hogg,

1996). Commitment provides the basis for a cooperative spirit in business relationships (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986) and leads to a stronger partnership (Anderson and Weiss, 1992). It was due to Fr6's negligence that caused the client to switch to an alternative staffing agency.

7.8.2 Triad 6: 'Switched To' Staffing Agency Perspective

The interview with T6 discussed two reasons why clients switch to their executive search agency. The first reason being the need for the agency to communicate the recruiting process to the client. It is critical that the client understand the steps involved in an executive search and to ensure the client's expectations are realistic. T6 stated:

“in the client's eye we are a commodity, so we need to know where the client places value for what we do . . . it is the relationship that keeps the client”.

It can be learned from the above situation that it is critical for the search firm to clarify the client's expectations. The exchange process between the client and service provider initiates a B2B relationship based on mutual trust (Srnak, 2004). Trust will then increase cooperation, encourages open communication and information sharing between the parties (Stanko, 2007; Doney and Cannon, 1997; Mohr and Spekman, 1994). T6 identified that many of their clients' were comparing the executive recruitment process with contingency based method. The executive search involves many different processes and the results are very different than contingency placements. Sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2 of this thesis outline the differences between the various types of staffing agencies.

T6 suggested the best strategy to avoid any client confusion between the executive and contingency processes of recruiting is to listen the client (Simon and Kumar, 2001; Messmer, 2006). If the client uses any of the following statements, then the client is expecting a contingency hiring strategy:

“send over a pile of resumes as soon as you can”

“how many weeks will it take to fill this position?”

“we’ll pay your fee in instalments, one third now, second upon receiving a short-list of candidates and the final third upon hiring”

All of the above statements refer to *contingency* based hiring. The issue is for the executive search firms to educate the client and to their expectations of the time frames and fee structure (Britton and Ball, 1999; Akerlof, 1970). T6 refers the clarification steps as an *education process* between the agency and the client. T6 stated:

“expect confusion if the client has used contingency firms before and is using a search firm for the first time”.

The knowledge gained from this triad stresses the importance of clarifying the client’s expectations. Educating the client of the recruitment process reduces potential conflicts that will result in the client becoming confused and switching to an alternative search agency (Paulraj and Chen, 2005). It can be concluded that *‘educating your client’* becomes a non-switching factor.

The key issue about client referrals was discussed with T6. It was learned that it is a norm for search agencies to receive referral business by candidates they have placed (Britton et al., 1997). Referrals are a significant source of business revenue for executive search agencies (Nazmi, 2006; Britton and Ball, 1999; Maitland et al., 1985).

7.8.3 Triad 6: ‘Switched From’ Staffing Agency Perspective

The interview with Fr6 confirmed the reason why their clients switch is due to poor quality of *‘fit’* (Daniel, 2006). It is worth noting that Fr6 believes that clients are switching due to a poor quality of *fit*, when in fact it was learned the client switched due to agency’s acts of negligence. The literature supports clients’ switching

decisions when there are conflicts of interest (Keaveney, 1995) and breaches of goodwill trust (Rousseau et al., 1998; Sako, 1998; Ganesan, 1994).

Fr6 also confirmed they lose a few clients each year when clients undergo a merger or acquisition. The unification of two companies usually results in a reduction of duplicated services, particularly in the area of professional services. The literature refers this to this situation as involuntary switching (Yanamandram et al., 2006; Keaveney, 1995).

An additional issue raised by Fr6 is the way their agency enhances the B2B relationship by performing many value-added services. Fr6 stated:

“many of our clients are small to medium oil and gas firms who don’t have their own HR departments . . . so we often provide the traditional tools HR departments would have provided such as salary reviews, constructive dismissal advice and information about industry trends . . . we also conduct educational seminars for clients which include subjects such as employment law and effective interviewing techniques”.

The issue identified is the ability for staffing agencies to extend their services beyond the traditional recruiting role (Chow and Holden, 1997). It has become a competitive advantage for staffing agencies to fulfil traditional HR duties for their clients’. The client becomes dependent on their staffing agency to perform these peripheral services which makes switching difficult (Mukherjee and Nath 2005; Bolten and Lemon, 1999). When the staffing agency is providing a wider scope of services it is difficult for clients to compare the service levels of different agencies. In other words, by providing a wide breadth of services becomes a non-switching factor and was supported in section 4.8.4 of the literature review (Burnham et al., 2003; Ram and Jung, 1990). If clients see one service provider as being different and highly beneficial then there are stronger bonds of identifying with that service provider which becomes a non-switching factor (Bhattacharya et al., 1995).

The Vice President of Fr6 discussed the value of business referrals to her executive search firm. It was learned that Fr6’s referrals arise from developing committed

relationships from clients. A committed relationship occurs when the service provider offers superior value through personal interaction and service (Eggert et al., 2006). The literature states that repeat business discourages short-term opportunistic behaviour (Maitland et al., 1985) and that 73% executive search firms rely on recommendations by existing clients as the first or second source of attracting new clients (Britton et al., 1997).

7.8.4 Triad 6: Summary of Analysis

A review of the sixth triad reveals that the client switched because of several negligent actions by Fr6. It is recommended that employee performance checks be conducted by staffing agencies to ensure their employees are not misbehaving. A key non-switching factor identified in this triad was the ability of the service provider to educate their clients of the service delivery process. Educating the client and reviewing the client's expectations mitigates any potential issues of poor service delivery (Jap and Ganesan, 2000; Heide and Weiss, 1995).

This triad identified how an agency's ability to provide value added services became a non-switching factor. The ability of a service provider to offer extra services became a method of differentiation (Bhattacharya et al., 1995) and a stronger bond was formed. Over time clients will become loyal to the service provider who offers both core services and value added services. This will result in a psychological attachment and the client will resist changing service providers (Chen, 2001). De Ruyter et al. (2001) further support this premise by suggesting that a customer's dependency on their service provider may lead to non-switching.

A breach of trust between the client and service provider in this triad resulted in switching situation. The value of the service provided may be less significant when the client cannot trust the service provider (Doney et al., 2007). McKnight and Chervany (2002) support this position and add that trust is lost when there is a lack of integrity and further eroded when one party feels vulnerable to the actions of the other party (Mayer et al., 1995). This triad has demonstrated that negligence results in a breach of trust which caused the client to switch.

This triad also discussed how role conflict between the client's HR department and the 'switched from' agency became a switching factor. The same issue was identified in triad 1, where it was discussed that role conflict led to a lack of trust. Das and Teng (1998) argue that a relationship without trust causes opportunistic behaviour. Trust is generally viewed as an essential ingredient for successful relationships (Berry, 1995) and cooperation because both parties recognise the importance of collaboration in achieving common goals (Khodyakov, 2007).

Interviews from this triad confirmed that a service provider's industry knowledge and expertise are valuable attributes sought by clients and become non-switching factors. The literature review, section 2.3.4 discussed the *scout function* whereby the role of the service provider is to offer technical knowledge and resources (Walter et al., 2003). One of the key reasons why clients select a particular service provider is to seek their professional opinion, industry knowledge (Messmer, 2006) and technical information (Simon and Kumar, 2001). Jackson and Cooper (1998) argue that clients rely on service providers to provide information and assistance in purchasing technically complex services which are inherently more complex than purchasing goods. It is also suggested that a lack of tangibility results in a service decision process can be highly complex and difficult for purchasers of services to evaluate, therefore there is more reliance on the service provider's knowledge and expertise (Stock and Zinszer, 1987).

Another key learning from this triad was the importance of developing committed relationships and getting business referrals (Maitland et al., 1985). A committed relationship occurs when the service provider offers superior value through personal interaction and service (Eggert et al., 2006). Britton et al. (1997) suggest that 73% of the executive search firms rely on recommendations by existing clients as the first or second source of attracting new clients. McIlroy (2000) supports this premise by arguing that the antecedent to building a B2B relationship is loyalty. McIlroy further argues that loyalty describes a client's commitment to do business with a particular firm, purchasing their services repeatedly and recommending the services to their associates.

7.9 Analysis of Triad 7: Profile Triad 7 Respondents

Respondent	Profile
C7	Oil and Gas Exploration Company Respondents were two HR Managers
T 7 (Tier 3)	A local Staffing agency Respondent was the owner/president of the agency
Fr7 (Tier 3)	A local Staffing agency Respondent was the Account Manager who worked with the client

7.9.1 Triad 7: Client Perspective

The seventh and final triad involved the same client from the sixth triad. This discussion is about the client's experience with temporary agencies providing clerical workers.

The first issue raised by the client dealt with staffing agencies inability to differentiate themselves. The client stated:

"it's difficult to differentiate the good staffing agencies from the weaker ones because we found the sales pitches to be the same . . . identical in fact . . . and what we really need to know is the background of the recruiters . . . we ask them, why should we use your agency? And if they can't answer that we don't consider their agency".

This situation describes criteria the client uses when making a purchase decision (Hoegl and Wagner, 2005). It is important for this client to be able to differentiate amongst the qualified service providers (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006; Vandebosch and Dawar, 2002). Part of the purchasing process is for the client to assess the potential risk and the satisfaction level that each provider offers (Baker and Abu-Ismael, 1993). This client is demonstrating they are *'technical buyers'* whereby they are judging and comparing the various technicalities of potential service suppliers

(Miller et al., 1985). The literature supports the client's comment that suppliers must offer superior value through personal interaction and service and appear to be able to differentiate themselves in today's highly competitive market to be successful (Koene and van Riemsdijk, 2005; Vandenbosch and Dawar, 2002).

The client described two culminating incidents that resulted in their decision to switch. The first incident occurred when the client discovered the temps were not being paid the hourly wage that had been negotiated with Fr7. The client stated:

“we demand the agency pay the temp a certain wage . . . the girl on the reception desk for example, I tell the agency I want her to make C\$ 16 / hour . . . you (Fr7) charge us the amount that will allow the girl to earn C\$ 16 / hour . . . we don't want someone coming in here and making C\$ 12/hour . . . we request a wage parity with our own employees . . . plus we are looking for a quality person . . . we will pay a high wage so the temp is proud to work here and she won't quit after the first day”.

The above comment signifies the client's willingness to pay higher wages for better quality candidates. (see Hutt and Speh, 2001; Wise and Morrison, 2000). Not paying temps the agreed wage is a fraudulent act resulting in a breach of trust. The literature is very clear that a B2B relationship relies on trust (Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987). The level of trust that develops between the parties is a fundamental relationship building block (Wilson, 1995). In this situation the service provider exhibited opportunistic behaviour resulting in a loss of commitment (Moorman et al., 1992) This situation is identical to the scenario in Triad 5 and confirms that acts of dishonesty (Keaveney, 1995) result in the client switching.

The second incident involved Fr7 exaggerating a candidate's qualifications (computer skills). It became known the candidate received many hours of computer training from Fr 7 which assisted her to score 92% on her computer proficiency test - *after re-writing the same test six times*. The misrepresentation of the candidate's qualifications resulted in client not trusting Fr7. The client stated:

“The agency (Fr7) exaggerated the candidate’s abilities and skills . . . Fr7 is not representing the true skills of the candidate . . . this makes me question the agency’s abilities . . . there is no longer any trust”.

The literature proposes that trust acts to promote relationship success through reduced uncertainty and the less likelihood of opportunistic behaviour (Das and Tang, 1998). When the trust levels are low, less favourable attitudes and behaviours will be generated between the client and service provider (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Berry (1995) adds that alliances between the parties can be established only when trust exists. The actions of Fr7 were opportunistic and the client felt vulnerable. Confidence in a service provider is built on the positive expectations of another party’s actions or inactions (Rousseau et al., 1998). It can be concluded that inappropriate actions that sever a client’s confidence and disregard to goodwill trust (Ratnasingham, 2005; McAllister, 1995) result in the client switching.

7.9.2 Triad 7: ‘Switched To’ Staffing Agency Perspective

The interview with T 7 discussed reasons why clients switch to their agency. The success of T 7 is their ability to establish B2B relationships based on four core business values of: *enthusiasm, sincerity, stability and loyalty*. The president of T 7 stated:

“we pre-select our clients . . . if the client does not have these four values, then we know they won’t be loyal no matter what we do . . . also, the same core values must be present when we recruit our temporary workers and our staff of recruiters”.

The above quote signifies T 7’s practice of pre-selecting their clients which is supported in literature (Fink et al., 2007; Weitz and Bradford, 1999). The quote also demonstrates that not all customer relationships should be treated the same (Pillai and Sharma, 2003; Sheth and Reshma, 2003). It is suggested that service providers offer a relational strategy that can be adopted with different levels of intensity depending on the value of the potential relationship (Slater and Olson, 2000). During the interview it was learned that T 7 regularly performed follow-up calls to ensure the client *and* candidate are satisfied with the placement (Simon and Kumar, 2001). By incorporating their four core values (enthusiasm, sincerity, stability and loyalty)

and conducting regular quality checks T 7 has established a substantial list of loyal clients and employees. It was learned from this triad that communication is vital to build confidence and reduce potential conflicts while building successful supplier relationships (Anderson and Weitz, 1992; Anderson and Narus, 1990; Newman and Rhee, 1990). The timely exchange of information through effective communication can improve coordination of buyer and supplier activities (Paulraj and Chen, 2005) which help eliminate negative attitudes such as mistrust, frustration and dishonest acts.

It was also learned that T 7 deploys switching barriers (Ranaweera et al., 2003; Jones, 2000). One of these switching barriers is the use of a business contract which outlines the service level agreement and payment terms. Fornell (1992) suggests that firms use switching barriers to make it difficult, expensive or even illegal for customers to switch. The literature also suggests that switching barriers are an important factor influencing a client's decision to remain with a service provider (Jones et al., 2000) and can be a potential strategy for retaining key customers (Patterson, 2004; Jones and Sasse, 1995). T 7 offers a price discount to clients which act as a switching barrier. A client is rewarded under any of the following conditions:

- if the client is exclusive to their agency
- volume discounts
- if a client refers a new client

T 7 has also established loyalty schemes with their recruiters' and temporary workers'. These loyalty programmes can be interrupted as switching barriers since they entice clients, employees and candidates from switching (Patterson, 2004; McCracken, 1986). Yanamadram and White (2006) suggest that such switching barriers are a form of recognition by the service provider to entice the clients from switching. It has also been suggested that loyalty schemes act as switching barriers and are 'lost performance costs' since they relate to the benefits and privileges lost by switching (Jones et al., 2002; Jap and Ganesan, 2000; Heide and Weiss, 1995). The interview with the president of T 7 has confirmed that integrity, continuous communication with clients, and building loyal relationships has had significant impact on the achievements of her staffing agency. The president has successfully

deployed many key attributes to build beneficial B2B relationships while maintaining loyal recruiters, candidates and clients.

7.9.3 Triad 7: ‘Switched From’ Staffing Agency Perspective

The account manager from Fr7 stated the reason why some of their clients’ switch is due to poor quality of ‘*fit*’ of the candidates. This same issue has been identified by the ‘switched from’ agency (Fr5) in triad 5. Daniel (2006) comments that ‘*fit*’ is one of the most critical factors for staffing agencies and is an integral part of the core service being offered. Messer (2006) argues both parties need to understand the requirements of the position to be filled to ensure there is a proper ‘*fit*’.

It was learned that Fr7 provides a full range of recruitment services. Klemperer (1995) argues that a service provider who is a full-line producer has the opportunity to secure more if not all of the client’s business needs. The literature also suggests that the prospect of switching multiple services increases the risks associated with switching service providers (Burnham et al., 2003). It can be argued that as a client uses more types of a provider’s services, the client appears to have entered a more advanced relationship stage in which switching is more costly (Burnham et al., 2003). There is also the need to invest in learning how to use a greater number of new services and features when switching many services to a new service provider (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987; Schmalensee, 1982). Due to these factors it can be argued that providing a greater breadth of services becomes a non-switching barrier (Ram and Jun, 1990).

A similar factor such as breadth of service is the ‘one-stop-shopping’ (Frazee, 1997). Fr 7 offers a single source for all types of temporary labour (temp, temp-to-hire, long term temp and a project management) which provides greater recruitment flexibility for the client (Sheff, 2007). It can be concluded that providing a breadth and variety of services becomes a means of value creation (Eggert et al., 2006) and differentiation for service providers (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006).

This interview identified that some staffing agencies have established their own ‘in-house training school’ which saves the client training costs (Allan, 2002; Gunderson, 2001; Houseman, 2001). Such training can add ‘special expertise’ to the candidate’s skill set (Messmer, 2006) and offer greater value to the client and staffing agency.

7.9.4 Triad 7: Summary of Analysis

This final triad has shown fraudulent acts cause a breach of trust which result in switching. The literature is very clear that trust and cooperation are essential antecedents for successful, collaborative relationships (Khodyakov, 2007; Berry, 1995). Trust is the willingness to rely on an exchange partner (Moorman et al., 1992) which did not occur between the client and Fr7. In this triad the client was respectful and benevolent to their temps and paid above average wages (Van Dyne and Ang, 1998). The literature supports client’s efforts to enhance temporary workers affection commitment (Bansal et al, 2004; Meyer and Allen, 1997) while providing challenging work and growth opportunities (Griffeth and Horn, 2001).

It was also learned that staffing agencies need to differentiate themselves (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006) because the client is searching for in-depth information about their purchase decision to reduce risk (Baker and Abu-Ismael, 1993).

This triad confirmed that rewarding non-switching behaviours is an effective way of reducing switching. Using switching costs and barriers to reward loyalty is more effective than penalising and locking-in clients (Jones et al., 2002; Jap and Ganesan, 2000; Heide and Weiss, 1995). It was also learned that loyalty rewards should also be extended to employees and temp workers.

The advantage of pre-screening and selecting clients was confirmed as a valuable strategy for service providers (Fink et al., 2007; Weitz and Bradford, 1999). It was recognised that not all customer relationships should be treated the same and it is worthwhile to selectively deploy relational sales strategies (Pillai and Sharma, 2003)

A key learning that T 7's business acumen to work only with clients who share their core business values of *enthusiasm, sincerity, stability and loyalty* was effective in establishing trusting relationships (Anderson and Narus, 1990).

It was affirmed that the service provider must provide a reliable and quality core service (Messmer, 2006; Grace and O'Cass, 2001; Keaveney, 1995). In this triad it was confirmed that the candidate's 'quality of *fit*' is a key indicator of a service provider's ability to meet a client's expectations. It was confirmed that breadth of services results a more dependent relationship with a stronger bond of identification with the chosen service provider (Bhattacharya et al., 1995).

In-house training was proven to be an effective way of providing technical knowledge and expertise (Simon and Kumar, 2001) for a candidates. A qualified candidate undertakes more challenging work opportunities (Griffeth and Horn, 2001) while being committed (Bansal et al., 2000) the client and the staffing agency. In turn a more committed temporary employee is more likely to retain regular employment resulting in less attrition for the staffing agency (Slattery et al., 2005).

7.10 Summary of Chapter Analysis

This section will provide an overview of the findings from the triad interviews. Table 7.2, listed below provides a comparison of the key switching factors.

Table 7.2 Comparing Switching factors from the triad interviews

Triad	Clients' (C) Switching reasons	Switched From Agency (Fr): Reasons clients would switch	Switched To Agency (T): Reasons clients would stick
1.	C1 Lack of continuity	Fr1 Poor Quality of service	T 1 Quality fit of candidate
2.	C2 Poor quality of candidates	Fr2 Speed of filling a vacancy	T 2 Understand the client's needs
3.	C3 Lack of Continuity	Fr3 Poor quality of fit	T3 Understand the client's needs
4.	C4 Poor quality of fit	Fr4 Poor quality of fit	T4 Understand the client's needs
5.	C5 Breach of trust	Fr5 Poor quality of fit	T5 Understand the client's needs
6.	C6 Agency performing negligently	Fr6 Poor quality of fit	T6 Understand the client's needs
7.	C7 Breach of trust	Fr7 Poor quality of fit	T7 Establishing rapport and trust with client

Table 7.2 reveals that there is only one triad (Triad 4) where the 'switched from' agency knew the reason why their client had switched. This is a significant finding that confirms that both the 'switched to' and 'switched from' staffing agencies are not aware of the switching behaviours of their clients. The literature states a way of building customer relations and retaining customers is to understand why buyers switch (Yanamadram and White 2006; Johnston et al., 2001; Keaveney, 1995). This research has demonstrated that only one service provider (T4) took the opportunity to fully analyse the switching situation their company had encountered. Jones et al. (2000) suggests obtaining information about switching costs and experiences

represent an important avenue for better understanding and predicting customer retention which has been supported by this research.

Role conflict occurred between HR departments and staffing agencies (see triad 1 and triad 6) which resulted in mistrust, uncertainty and opportunistic behaviour (Das and Teng, 1998). Findings of this research confirmed that, *lack of confidentiality*, *opportunistic behaviour* and *acts of negligence* resulted in a lack of commitment and trust in the other party's intentions and motives (Lewicki et al., 1998). The triad interviews found the following negligent resulted in client switching:

- *payment of temps wages*
- *misrepresenting a candidate's qualifications*
- attempting to poach a previously placed candidate

'*Listening to the client*' and '*understanding the client's needs*' emerged from the triad interviews (Messmer, 2006; Simmon and Kumar, 2001) as significant switching factors. It was found that both of these factors were necessary to form B2B relationships built on mutual respect (Anderson and Narus, 1990; Newman and Rhee, 1990), trust and commitment (Wilson, 1995; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). It was confirmed an '*on-site*' visit was essential when the B2B relationship is in the growth stages (Liu, 2006; Messmer, 2006; Dingman, 1993) and to understand the client's needs. The triad interviews affirmed the need for service providers *differentiate* their services and demonstrate how their services *add value* for their clients'.

The triad interviews confirmed that *continuity* is a significant factor in maintaining the B2B relationship. Continuity is needed to establish trust (Sharama and Patterson, 1999; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991) and is related to the level of commitment a client will offer the service provider (Dwyer, Schurr and OH, 1987). It was found that a lack of continuity resulted in client switching.

HRO (Human Resources Outsourcing) was discussed in this chapter and it was confirmed a *key account management* (KAM) and *team selling* strategies are needed

to manage HRO contracts. Service providers must assign on-site senior personnel to manage HRO situations (Homburg et al., 2000; Purcell and Purcell, 1999; Peck and Theodore, 1998). The KAM strategy involves client-service provider interdependence which is based on trust and a stable relationship (Slater and Olson, 2000).

It was found that clients appreciate the *indirect functions* of their service provider when the provider offers *industry knowledge* and *technical expertise* (Vandenbosch and Dawer, 2002). This knowledge would include inside information and/or industry trends (Eggert et al., 2006). It was also learned that some of the service providers offer related services (seminars, salary reviews) to assist with their client's (Walter et al., 2003; Lovelock, 1996). In other words, the service provider has become a gateway of knowledge and expertise.

Strategies that helped staffing agencies build B2B relationships included, providing *preferential treatment*, using *non-switching barriers* and *flexible contract terms*. Significant findings of this research that were not found in the literature included:

- the need for service providers to *respect their employees*
- *role conflict* between the recruiter and client's HR department

It was confirmed that establishing a *code of ethics* was an effective way of promoting benevolent and respectful relationships. It is recommended that role conflict can be minimised if the recruiter abides by the processes and controls set out by the client.

7.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has analysed the findings from the seven triad interviews. The triad interviews have provided rich and robust data which has led to significant contributions to knowledge about switching behaviours and B2B relationships which were discussed in the previous section.

The next chapter will present the analysis of the '*single interviews*' which were conducted independently with clients and staffing agencies. These additional interviews provided a deeper understanding of B2B relationships, switching behaviours and presented additional knowledge that will be useful in designing a switching model. The next chapter will also include some factors about B2B relationships that have not been discussed – gift giving, confidentiality and apathy/inertia.

Chapter 8 Results of Research – Single Interviews

“An old truth is that it is more profitable to have a defensive strategy and to strive to retain existing customers than to constantly try to attract new ones”.
(Roos and Gustafsson, 2007, p 93)

8.1 Introduction

Two sets of interviews were conducted for this research, ‘*triad interview*’ and ‘*single interviews*’. Chapter 7 discussed the *triad interviews* and this chapter will discuss the findings of the *single interviews* which were conducted with eight staffing agencies and nine clients. The single interviews are independent of each other and not related to the triad interviews. They have been analysed to provide further switching knowledge. The analysis for this chapter has been divided into the single *staffing* interviews and single *client* interviews. The discussion is organised by the switching issues discussed by the respondents from each of the two groups.

The first part of the chapter will analyse the eight *staffing agency* interviews followed by the client interviews. The staffing agencies were asked to provide reasons why they were successful of having clients switch to their staffing agency.

8.2 List of respondents for *Single Staffing Agency Interviews*

Table 8.1 listed below provides the abbreviated codes to identify the respondents.

Table 8.1 List of Respondents Single Staffing Agency Interviews

SA 1 = Single Interview, Agency 1

Code Name	Agency Description (Tier level)	Respondent/years of industry experience
SA 1	Small Executive Search Agency (Tier 1)	President – 15 years
SA 2	Contingency Agency (Tier 2)	President - 13 years
SA 3	Small Contingency Agency (Tier 2)	President - 8 years
SA 4	Small Executive Search Agency (Tier 1)	Partner - 12 years
SA 5	International Staffing Agency; specialise in the oil and gas sector (Tier 2)	Account Manager -10 years
SA 6	Contingency Staffing Agency (Tier 2)	President – 16 years Vice President – 11 years
SA 7	Large, national contingency agency (Tier 2)	Account Manager - 9 years
SA 8	Small Contingency Agency Oil and Gas Sector (Tier 2)	President – 7 years

8.3 Analysis from Single Staffing Agencies Interviews

The analysis for this chapter will be organised by issue. The first issue is continuity and sustaining a B2B relationship.

8.3.1 Continuity and Creating value

A significant non-switching factor is the ability to establish a relationship with the key decision makers. The buying process is complex (Rozin, 2004; Webster and Wind, 1972) and it is critical to identify the decision makers since they are the people who complete the purchase decision (Chumpitaz et al., 2004). In addition it is

important to have regular communication with the decision makers to maintain continuity (Doney and Cannon, 1997).

The staffing agency SA1 maintains regular communication with their client's decision makers which encourages a strong client-provider relationship. This agency emphasised how their services add value to their client's business. The creation of a value statement was done in the pre-sales negotiation with the decision makers. The president of SA1 stated:

“we are a very small, executive search firm and we do not have a big name or decades of experience . . . to build our client list we must make an impact with the decision maker by using a value statement . . . that gets us in the door and then we must continuously create value for the client on a daily basis”. (President, SA 1)

The above statement emphasises the need for the service provider to maintain continuity (Sharama and Patterson, 1999; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991) with the client's decision maker and demonstrate how their services bring value to the client (De Ruyter et al., 2001).

This research has confirmed that price and price discounts are not a significant switching factor for B2B clients. This finding was explained by a president of a *local* staffing agency:

“there is a crack appearing in our industry today . . . large companies are switching from the national recruiting firms and are turning to the local provider . . . national recruiters can offer clients a better price but today it's all about the quality of the candidate, not price . . . clients have decentralised the decision to hire recruitment agencies to their branch offices . . . clients were being remotely served by a series of voice mails and emails from their national staffing agencies . . . there has been a recent change, the client is switching to local agencies like mine . . . the local recruiter knows the local market and can respond quicker to the client's need”. (President, SA 2)

The above issue extends the discussion about continuity. It suggests that the local agencies have a competitive advantage due to their proximity to the client. Clients

have stated that they value the quality of the services more than price discounts (Allan, 2002; Gunderson, 2001; Simon and Kumar, 2001). These findings support the discussion from the triad interviews whereby a client (C1) switched from a national to local agency and discovered there was more continuity with the local agency.

8.3.2 Clients' Loyalty to Salesperson

This research has found when the salesperson starts working for another staffing agency; he or she will take some of their existing clients to their new job (Grewal and Sharma, 1991). This is a similar finding of Palmatier et al. (2007) whereby customers displayed loyalty to their salesperson which had a direct effect on a firm's sales levels. The following quote from an account manager supports this discussion:

“in this industry there are clients who become loyal to their sales rep . . . and when the agency's sales rep leaves, the account usually goes with him or her . . . because in this business the client deals with the sales rep not the agency; it is a very personalised service . . . it's me the client gets attached to, not my company . . . it's my face they remember”. (Account Manager, SA 7)

The above quote signifies the importance for staffing agencies to minimise their staff turnover. One of the steps to develop loyal clients is to develop loyal employees. This study has found that staff turnover for staffing agencies becomes a continuity issue for clients. In the triad interviews two clients (C1 and C3) switched due to a loss of continuity when they discovered their salesperson had quit (Johnson et al., 2001; Jones et al., 2000).

8.3.3 Understanding the Client's Corporate Culture

In chapter 7, the subject of *'poor quality of fit'* (Daniel, 2006) was discussed as a frequent and significant switching factor. One of the reasons this switching factor occurs is the staffing agency's inability to understand the client's corporate culture (Messmer, 2006). Many of the staffing agencies are using on-site visits to obtain a better understanding of the client's needs. The on-site visit provides the staffing

agency the opportunity to understand the client's culture and ensure their candidate *fits* the client's requirements (Liu, 2006; Messmer, 2006).

The significance of learning a client's culture is exemplified by the following quote by an account manager:

"I take considerable time to get to know the client . . . I learn the client's culture and the role of culture in the oil and gas industry; I understand the oil and gas industry. I do a site visit, a real site visit, I go out to the drilling sites . . . I provide my client with the best possible service and that involves understanding their culture and adapting to the client's environment". (Account Manager, SA 5)

The above quote explains the value of having a strategy to experience the client's culture. The account manager from SA 5 has emphasised the ability to provide outstanding service is contingent on fully understanding the client's culture and conducting an on-site visit (Liu, 2006; Dingman, 1993). This strategy was discussed and supported in the literature review, whereby it was emphasised that client switching is lessened when the service provider understands the client's needs and culture (Day, 2000; Ozanne and Churchill, 1971).

8.3.4 Shared Values and Pre-selecting Their Clients

Findings from the *triad* interviews and from the *single* interviews confirm that pre-selecting clients is a non-switching factor for staffing agencies. This strategy was described in the previous chapter in triad 7 and was used by T 7. Pre-selecting clients is a strategy used by the account manager from SA 5 who stated:

"I am successful because I pre-select my clients I want to work for . . . I am interested in working with people who share my values . . . I don't get involved with people who do not value my role as a recruiter . . . by using my formal education I am able to learn as much as possible about the client who helps builds my rapport with the client . . . if the client does not respect me and treat me as a professional, then they can use someone else". (Account Manager, SA 5)

The issue of pre-selecting clients is a proactive retention strategy whereby staffing agencies are able to build loyal customers based on mutual values. This loyalty then forms a trusting business relationship built on shared respect and mutual goals

(Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Moorman et al., 1993). This finding supports the discussion in sections 2.8 and 3.5.1 whereby it was argued that suppliers are selective when targeting clients who favour relational exchanges (see Fink et al., 2007). On a similar note it was found that some staffing agencies only accept clients when they know they can find a candidate for the client's vacancy.

“we never take a job order we can't fill and furthermore I may refuse to take an order that I cannot fill quickly” (Account Manager, SA7)

The above strategy maximises a staffing agency's potential success and allows the agency to utilise their core competencies to build a list of loyal clients.

8.3.5 Pre-screening Candidates

The single interviews have affirmed there is a need for the staffing agency to conduct a thorough review of a candidate's resume before sending the candidate to a client. The account manager from SA 7 commented that a fatal mistake would be failing to pre-screen and sending the wrong candidate to the client. Sending the wrong candidate creates mistrust, discredits the agency's reputation (Martin and Hetrick, 2006) and weakens the client-service provider relationship (Gefen, 2000; Venkatesh and Davis, 2000). The president of SA 3 stated:

“I ensure the best fit possible . . . this involves my integrity and the applicant's honesty . . . I cannot afford to have a candidate be dishonest in front of a client . . . I will never alter a candidate's resume nor do I expect a candidate to change their resume either . . . my success depends on my reputation!” (President of AA 3)

The significant learning from the above discussion is the need of the staffing agency to pre-screen the candidate and to verify their qualifications *before* they are sent to a client. An incomplete pre-screening may cause a client to switch and severely damage an agency's reputation (Simon and Kumar, 2001).

8.3.6 Industry Knowledge and Reputation

It was learnt that staffing agencies establish trust by having a vast amount of industry knowledge and expertise (Simon and Kumar, 2001). The industry expertise includes

knowing key employers, company executives and labour trends within the industry. This research has confirmed that some clients rely on their staffing agencies to provide industry information.

“I prefer using an agency that never loses sight of what’s happening on the street . . . someone who knows the industry well . . . also, the agency should keep close to me . . . let me know what’s happening, and understand our needs” . (Regional Vice President, SC 1)

Findings from the single interviews have found that the agencies experiencing minimal switching are those agencies that specialise in one particular industry. In addition, these agencies are owned and staffed by people who formerly worked in the industry (Messmer, 2006). This type of insider knowledge and familiarity is invaluable for recruiters. The president of SA 3, a female recruiter who specialises in the oil and gas sector stated:

“I click with oil people I worked in the industry fifteen years before opening this agency . . . I am a red neck myself . . . oil people are entrepreneurs . . . and so I am!”
(President, SA3)

The ability to build a reputation and a network of business associates (Fish and Macklin, 2004) was proved to be a critical success factor for service providers and reduce client switching. Greenwood et al. (2005) argues that reputation is especially significant in professional service firms because of the intangibility of the service and the importance of the profession. Greenwood et al. (2005) suggest that reputation for service firms has three benefits: the ability to attract and hire the very best employees; lowering marketing costs because clients actively seek higher status firms and the ability to charge premiums because of their brand name.

It was discovered that the president of SA 8 built her company’s network within the oil and gas industry by the following activities:

Company website:

- provides their credentials to substantiate they are specialists for recruiting within the oil and gas sector
- lists their key accounts on their company web site

eNewsletter:

-provides current vacancies, salary reviews and industry information and trends

Hosting Networking parties:

-Bi-monthly event; by invitation only, held at a prestigious local night club

The president of AA 8 stated:

“the oil and gas industry is well connected . . . our networking parties are well known . . . for anyone to be successful in this industry they have to be connected, and I am providing the networking venue . . . as far as I know, I am the only one hosting this kind of event . . . it’s a great way to keep up my appearance with clients and candidates . . . and particularly find new candidates!”

(President SA8)

The significance of the above discussion emphasises the need for service providers to be continuously connected to the industry they are working within (Sheff, 2007). The networking activities SA 8 offers the oil and gas sector have become a key factor for that agency’s continuing success.

It was learnt that staffing agencies that are networked and have extensive industry knowledge have been successful in retaining their clients (Dingman, 1993). SA4 commented that providing the client with the thorough industry knowledge is a good way to establish competence trust (Doney and Cannon, 1997). It can be concluded from the above discussion that reputation (Britton and Ball, 1999), industry expertise (Simon and Kumar, 2001) and industry networks become non-switching factors for staffing agencies clients’.

8.3.7 Listening To Client’s Needs

Closely linked to the recruiter’s need to establish trusting relationships is the necessity for the staffing agency to listen to clients’ needs (Messmer, 2006; Simon and Kumar, 2001). One recruiter’s credo is based on his ability to listen and build trust which is emphasised in his quote:

“trust is established on the basis of good listening skills . . . listening to the requirements of your client . . . if we don’t understand our clients’ needs . . . and properly place our candidates’ within the client’s work environment then we have broken our client’s trust”. (Partner, SA 4)

The above quote emphasises the importance of listening to the clients’ needs and relates to objectives one and two. This finding was supported in the literature Javalgi et al. (1997) and Keaveney (1995) – see section 4.6.

8.3.8 Gift Giving

Section 2.7 of the literature has stated that gift giving can be beneficial when forming B2B relationships (Fan, 2006; Beltramini, 2000; Davies, 1996). During the single interviews the account manager from SA 1 stated:

“ Gift giving is a tricky subject . . . you let the client lead . . . if they want to be smoozed, then fine . . . otherwise we back off . . . the client sets the degree and intensity of smoozing . . . I will ask a client out to lunch once . . . if they don’t go, then I back off”.
(Account Manager, SA 7)

The above comments support the discussion in section 2.7 which confirmed that gift giving should be consistent with the ethical code of a client’s organisation (Fisher, 2007; Shaw and Barry, 2004; DesJardin and McCall, 2000). The findings of this research also confirmed that gift giving can be helpful for promoting long-term cooperation and mutual benefit (Beltramini, 2000). It was also found some clients preferred not to accept any gifts and avoid any potential conflicts of interest (Mellahi and Wood, 2003; Kitson and Campbell, 1996). This finding is supported by the discussion in section 2.7 (see Carter, 2000; Cooper et al., 1997) whereby some clients are hesitant to accept gifts due to the ethical issues surrounding gift giving.

8.3.9 Confidentiality

Roche and Skapinker (2004) argue that the lack of confidentiality is devastating to the recruiting process and has a negative impact on the staffing agency industry. They argue that if a company discovers that a head-hunter has approached one of their employees’ it will have disturbing effects on everyone – the candidate, the

recruiter and the companies involved. Confidentiality is exemplified by the following statement:

“It is critical to maintain confidentiality with your clients . . . there are times when the client will call and ask you to begin a search before they have fired the employee . . . it’s difficult to handle this kind of situation . . . I call this ‘the dead man walking’ . . . I know the guy is going to get fired, and here I am trying to fill his job . . . so, in one sense we help the client by getting a replacement ready we cannot advertise the vacancy in the newspaper because it could upset the out-going employee . . . concerning the candidate, the culture today is that people will call their head-hunter before calling their wife when they want to quit their current job”. (Account Manager, SA 7)

The above quote signifies the importance of confidentiality between all the parties involved in the staffing industry – the agency, the client and the candidates (Dingman, 1993). A breach of confidentiality will damage the B2B relationship and result in the client switching.

8.3.10 Role Conflict between HR and Staffing Agency

Role conflict between a staffing agency and the client’s HR department was discussed in the triad interviews and this same issue was found with the single interviews. The account manager from SA 7 commented that HR is ineffective at recruiting since they do not approach potential candidates who are already employed. The account manager stated:

“HR departments don’t know how to recruit . . . they don’t poach candidates from other companies . . . they leave that to us . . . I prefer to deal with the hiring manager . . . HR is the biggest stumbling block in the recruitment process for us . . . the best HR people are the ones who get out of the way and let us headhunters do the recruiting”.
(Account Manager, SA 7)

This comment signifies there is potential conflict between HR and staffing agencies. This conflict arises when the staffing agency wants to act unilaterally or side-step recruiting protocol. This discussion also raises the ethical issue of HR departments luring candidates from competitors (Guy, 2001; Dingman, 1993). This research has found that HR departments do not approach potential candidates unless

they are unemployed. HR uses executive search firms when a candidate needs to be headhunted (Capell, 2007).

8.4 Summary of Single Staffing Agency Analysis

Listed below table 8.2 provides an overview of the key findings from the *single staffing agencies* interviews.

Table 8.2 Summary of Findings from single staffing agency interviews

Switching Factor (Corresponding research objective)	Significance and findings
Continuity and strengthening the B2B relationship (1)	Loss of continuity results in switching; weakened relationships leads to potential switching
Clients' Loyalty to Salesperson (3)	Staffing agencies with high attrition rates will experience clients switching
Understanding the Client's Corporate Culture (1)	Critical to ensure the candidate <i>'fits'</i> the client's needs
Shared values and pre-selecting their clients (1)	Builds trust and a stronger client-service provider relationship
Pre-screening Candidates (1)	Ensures quality of work and sustains reputation of the staffing agency
Industry Knowledge (2)	Establishes trust and reputation; a vital core competency for the staffing agency
Listening to Clients' Needs (1)	Poor listening skills result in regrettable placements
Gift Giving (3)	Let the client lead
Confidentiality (2)	A breach of confidentiality results in client switching
Role Conflict between HR and Staffing Agency (2)	Significant issue which leads to switching, builds mistrust

A review of table 8.2 reveals all of the above switching factors that have been discussed in the triad interviews except for two (highlighted in table 8.2) – *client's loyalty to salesperson* and *gift giving*. The following discussion will focus on the two new factors. The other factors have been discussed in the triad interview analysis.

Clients' *loyalty to the salesperson* was discussed in section 8.3.2 of this chapter (Palmatier, 2007; Grewal and Sharma, 1991). This research identified that staffing agencies have attrition problems and when sales people quit it results in a loss of continuity with the client. A high attrition rate may cause the defecting salesperson to take some of the past clients to their new position (Wengler et al., 2006) It is recommended that staffing agencies review their operations to identify why their staff are quitting. Secondly, a contingency plan must be actioned to ensure attrition doesn't cause any service failures. It was learnt from the triad interviews that one staffing agency assigned two account managers to each client. This strategy of team selling (Homburg et al., 2002; Weitz and Bradford, 1999; Moon and Armstrong, 1994) has proven effective in maintaining continuity and retaining clients.

Gift giving (Fisher, 2007; Fan, 2006; Davies 1996) was discussed in section 8.3.8 and it was affirmed it may assist in building the B2B relationship if certain precautions are followed. It was also confirmed that some customers refrain for accepting gifts due to ethical issues (Fritzsche, 2005; DesJardins and McCall, 2000; Preuss, 2000; Kitson and Campbell, 1996). This research found that reciprocal gift giving creates a win-win situation. In other words, a service provider should follow their client's own gift giving policy – if the client gives gifts to their customers, then it would be beneficial to offer gifts (Beltramini, 2000). This research has affirmed that when a client refuses any form of a gift, then it is best to refrain from *all* types of gift giving.

The next section presents the findings and analysis from the *single client* interviews.

8.5 List of respondents for Single Client Interviews

Table 8.3 listed below provides the abbreviated codes to identify the respondents

SC 1= Single Client 1 Interview

Table 8.3 Single Client Interviews

Code Name	Client Description (Tier of agency being used)	Respondents; Staffing needs
SC 1	National Insurance Company (Tier 3)	Regional Vice President -clerical, temp
SC 2	Medical Office (Tier 3)	Office Manager -clerical, temp
SC 3	College (Tier 3)	Office Administrator -clerical, temp
SC 4	Small Business Consulting Firm (Tier 2)	Owner -sales rep
SC 5	Department of City Council (Tier 3)	Office Manager -clerical, temp
SC 6	Department of Provincial Government (Tier 3)	Office Manager -clerical, temp
SC 7	Car Leasing Firm -sole proprietor (Tier 3)	Owner -clerical, temp
SC 8	Small Law Firm - 3 lawyers (Tier 3)	Partner -clerical, temp
SC 9	Multinational Oil Producer (Tier 3)	HR Manager -clerical, temp

8.6 Analysis from Single Client Interviews

Nine client interviews were conducted with a variety of companies that had switched from their staffing agency. The significance of conducting these additional interviews was to provide greater knowledge and in-depth understanding of clients' switching behaviours.

8.6.1 Continuity With Service Provider

The subject of continuity was previously discussed as a significant switching factor with clients from the triad interviews. It was found the issue of continuity arose when a client did not receive a gift that he had been promised. The client stated:

“The staffing agency called and invited me to a special event . . . I agreed to go . . . they were supposed to courier the ticket the following day . . . the ticket never arrived . . . I waited a couple more days . . . no ticket . . . so I called the agency to find out that our account manager had quit . . . no one told me . . . and I never got the ticket . . . so, if I had not called there myself, I would still be expecting the ticket (client laughing) . . . that was the first time I’d been stood up since high school!” (Vice President, SC 1)

The subject of continuity was previously discussed in the triad interviews with a clear indication that continuity is a major factor in sustaining the client–service provider relationship (Sharama and Patterson, 1999; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). The situation with the Vice President, SC 1, resulted in the client switching which further emphasises the need for staffing agencies to maintain regular communication with their clients’ (Svensson, 2004; Gronroos, 2000; Brown et al., 1994). This incident of continuity is similar to the situation that the clients in triad 1 and triad 3 – discovering their account manager had quit only after *they contacted* the staffing agency. The findings of this research have clearly proven that a lack of continuity is a significant and frequent reason for clients to switch.

8.6.2 Poor Quality of temp

Five of the nine single interview clients stated that the primary reason they switched was due to *‘poor quality of the temp’*. This research found that some temps have a work effort that is proportionate to the chances of being hired full time by the client. Clients discovered that the temp becomes lackadaisical if an offer of permanent work is not forthcoming and results in a lack of organisational commitment (Foote, 2004; De Gilder, 2003). The temp’s *liaise-faire* work attitude damages the staffing agency’s reputation (Martin and Hetrick, 2006; Ellingson, 1998) and leads the client to switch.

“Some temps we hire become lazy and develop poor work habits once they know I’m not going to hire them full time . . . the temp knows we have vacancies and they expect us to hand them a job, . . . their expectation is we will hire them automatically, which is not the case or is it possible” . (Office manager, SC 5)

The temp's quality of work and particularly their work ethic became switching factors which are readily evaluated by the clients.

An issue related to the '*poor quality of the temp*' is evident when a temp is hired and does not have the proper skills. Findings showed that the job skills on a temp's resumes may be inconsistent and unreliable to the tasks they can actually perform. The office manager from SC5 stated:

“we were told the temp had ‘good’ computer skills only to learn when the temp arrived they had limited’ skills . . . and their computer skills were shallow . . . they may have ‘limited skills with microsoft word, but they are weak or have no skills with microsoft excel”. (Office Manager, SC 5)

The above comment reflects the client's inability to trust a staffing agency due to the candidate's skill set is being misrepresented (Doney et al., 2007; Das and Teng 1998; Lewicki et al., 1998). A temp's inability to perform the job is a core service failure and resulted in client switching.

Closely related to the 'poor quality of fit' is the subject of *inappropriate behaviour* by the temp. This research found clients will not tolerate any misbehaviour. Inappropriate behaviour discovered in this research included:

- Surfing the internet on company time
- Making or receiving personal phone calls
- Writing or reading personal emails at the office

Throughout this research clients related numerous incidents of inappropriate behaviour which not only caused the temp to be released, but also led the client to switch to another staffing agency. One manager stated:

“our temp was using the company computer for her personal emails . . . we warned her to stop . . . she didn't . . . one day we discovered a virus on our network . . . it was from one of her emails . . . it cost hundreds of dollars to fix our network . . . I called the agency immediately . . . she was gone by lunch time . . . that was the last time I used that agency!” (Office Manager, SC 2)

This situation of inappropriate behaviour by the temp is challenging for staffing agencies to control. It is difficult to make recommendations to resolve this vicarious liability for staffing agencies. This situation can be mitigated by establishing a service recovery strategy (Mattila, 2004) and warning temps that inappropriate behaviour will not be condoned.

8.6.3 The effect of Price and Business Referrals

The *B2C* switching behaviour literature states that price is a common reason for customers to switch (Keaveney, 1995). This research contradicts the research and found only one B2B client switched staffing agencies due to a pricing issue (Urbany et al., 1997). The client stated:

“I’m a shopper . . . like to shop around for the best price . . . I don’t go for the least inexpensive agency . . . I look for value . . . I am always switching to find the best deal.” (Owner, SC 7)

The above quote is transactional in nature and was expressed by only one client. This form of buying strategy, known as *individual task* was discussed in section 2.5.2 (Webster and Wind, 1972). This research did support the literature suggesting B2B buyer uses a price-quality comparison as a critical factor for switching decisions (Wathne et al., 2001; Gale, 1994).

A similar transactional situation was found with a client (SC8) from a small law firm. The client stated they deploy the services of a particular staffing agency only if the agency can refer legal business to their firm. In other words, this law firm regularly switched staffing agencies to obtain reciprocal business and referrals (Yanamandram and White, 2006; Weigand, 1968). This research found that only one out of 16 clients mentioned reciprocal business referrals as a switching factor.

8.6.4 Gift Giving A Reciprocal Process

Gift giving was discussed with the single interview *staffing agency* in section 8.3.8 (Fan, 2006; Beltramini, 2000, Davies, 1996). The interview with SC 1 presented a different perspective of gift giving. This client believes that gift giving should be a

reciprocal process – his company uses a variety of gifts and is receptive to receiving gifts. The client stated:

“gift giving . . . or smoozing as we call it, is still popular and, in fact I was out playing golf with one of my client’s yesterday . . . smoozing is an important resource for our company . . . there is less smoozing today than earlier years” . (Regional Vice President, SC 1)

It can be concluded from the above quote that if a client’s company uses gift giving for their own clients then it would be acceptable for a service provider to bestow gifts to that client (Fisher, 2007; Feder, 1998; Freeman, 1996). In other words, the service provider should take note of their client’s practices of gift giving when considering this method of building a B2B relationship.

8.6.5 Listening to Clients’ Needs and Frequent Communication

This study found ineffective communication was a switching factor and those agencies who communicated frequently with their clients’ were able to minimise client switching. The staffing agency industry requires continuous communication to ensure clients staffing needs are met (Giunipero, 1990) which could be done through on-site visits (Liu, 2006; Dingman, 1993) and regular telephone calls (Messmer, 2006). The staffing agencies are able to prevent client switching by scheduling regular interactions with their clients.

“I stick with an agency that provides excellent feedback . . . one evening Terra called me on my mobile phone to say she had found a temp for us . . . Terra got back to me so I wouldn’t have to worry all night . . . Terra knew I had left the office but she tracked me down because getting a temp was a important issue for our department” . (Office Manager, SC 6)

“The agency we have is great . . . this agency always gets back to me . . . it’s critical they get back to me on the same day . . . they even called me once at 7:30 pm . . . it’s great to have an agency that goes beyond the 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. routine” . (HR Manager, SC 9)

It was found that many clients prefer face-to-face meetings with their service provider since they provide invaluable opportunities to learn about the client's work environment and culture.

“We make our money only when we are in front of our customers . . . and we expect the same from the staffing agencies” (Vice President, SC 1).

It was found that reliable and frequent communication is a vehicle for the staffing agencies to build trust and commitment with their client (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Kogut and Zander, 1992). Providing timely follow-up and fulfilling client's expectations has been shown in this research to be a significant non-switching factor (Paulraj and Chen, 2005; Jain et al., 2003; Kotable et al., 2003; Takesi, 2001).

8.6.6 Building trust

This study has discussed in length the importance of building trust between the client and provider (De Ruyter et al., 2001; Wilson, 1995). A critical success factor for staffing agencies is to determine a method of building trust with their clients. This research has found that being a member in a local HR Association or Staffing Society can be beneficial to both the client and staffing agency. A client's staffing needs can be fulfilled by using a staffing agency who is also a member of the local staffing association. This becomes a situation where association membership encourages members to work with each other (Anderson and Narus, 1990).

“I have been a member of the Calgary Personnel Association for over ten years . . . I have met many staffing agency people through our Association . . . when our company needs recruiting services, I have always hired the services of our members in the past without any problems . . . I fully trust the abilities and credentials of my fellow Association members . . . it is a win-win situation when members can help members!”
(Office Administrator SC 3)

The above situation highlights the benefit of being connected in the industry to form client-service provider relationships. Professional associations provide the opportunity for service providers to meet potential clients within a trusting well established environment (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). It can be concluded that

membership in a professional association, for both the client and staffing agency can become a non-switching factor.

8.6.7 Confidentiality

A breach of confidentiality was discussed with a client who stated:

“Our staffing agency made a major mistake . . . they sent out a blanket email to all of their clients’ . . . that way we all saw who were using that agency . . . we considered it a major breach of confidentiality and switched immediately”.
(HR Manager SC 9)

In the previous chapter, the client in triad 6 also received a blanket email from their staffing agency and switched for the same reason. This situation demonstrates a client’s need for confidentiality and a level of professional respect from the staffing agency (Roche and Skapinker, 2004; Simon and Kumar, 2001). Failure to abide by the client’s request for privacy results in switching. It was found that clients value the confidentiality they have with their staffing agencies. This confidentiality extends to the following factors:

- A client’s hiring strategy
- When the client is trying to lure an executive from another company
- When the client is releasing an employee and the recruiting agency is finding a replacement

Maintaining integrity is necessary for the staffing agencies to build a trusting relationship with their clients (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

“A switching factor would be the lack of confidentiality by the agency to withhold the news of our upcoming vacancies . . . if we ask an agency to find us someone, we don’t want everyone to know about our staffing needs . . . or staffing problems”.
(Regional Vice President, SC 1)

The above situation exemplifies the strategic role a staffing agency fulfills for their clients. This strategy requires the staffing agency to be trusted with confidential information and knowing how to use such privileged information to increase the service value for their clients (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Achrol, 1997; Simpson and Mayo, 1997).

Martinez (2001) suggests that clients notify the staffing agencies they use and stipulate that ‘inside’ information is privileged and should not be misused, which would include employee directories, e-mail addresses, and organisational charts.

8.6.8 Client Is A Frequent Switcher

The switching factor whereby a company has a policy to switch service providers regularly has been recognised in the literature (Caruana, 2004; Burnham, 2003; Bhattacharya et al., 1995) and was identified with SC 4. It was this client’s practice to have several staffing agencies competing to fill one vacancy. This client believes that rivalry between the staffing agencies will provide the best possible candidate. The client, an owner of a small business consulting firm stated:

“it is the mandate of our company to use several agencies at once to fill one position . . . that way you expand the search by having more agencies doing the recruiting for us at the same time . . . it also forces the agencies to maintain a strong relationship with us . . . it’s all about motivation . . . we are a highly competitive company and we expect our service providers to be competitive . . . we believe that switching is beneficial because our service providers work harder for us!” (Owner, SC 4)

The above situation reflects the competitive nature of the staffing agency industry. It also confirms this client’s belief that using a variety of staffing agencies encompasses a wider search resulting in acquiring the most qualified candidate. This scenario confirms there are some clients who will always be switchers regardless of the level of service they receive. This proneness to switching was discussed in section 4.8.5 of the literature review along with recommendations of how to manage this situation (Sharma and Patterson, 2000; Raj, 1980).

8.6.9 ‘Temp-to-Perm’ Agreement, A Switching Factor

It was found that clients prefer using a temporary staffing agency that offers ‘temp-to-perm agreements’ (Frazee, 1997). This situation was discussed as a key service attribute in the previous chapter in triad 4. Clients value this service since they can

evaluate a temp's work performance (Stanworth et al., 2006; Allan, 2002) before considering him or her for a permanent position.

“temp-to-perm agreements are very critical for me . . . this gives me flexibility without any commitment to the agency or temp . . . this type of service needs to be part of the pre-sales negotiation . . . I will only work with agencies that provide this service . . . the ‘temp-to-perm’ service saves me time and money in the long run”.
(Office Manager, SC 6)

The above situation describes how the ‘temp-to-perm’ service has become a switching factor for this client. It is critical for service providers to identify services that are essential and valued by their clients (Frazee, 1997; Weitz, 1992).

8.6.10 Apathy/Inertia

The B2C switching literature argues that some customers do not switch due to apathy (Jones, 1998; Keaveney, 1995; Young and Denize, 1995). The findings of this research contradict the literature whereby it was found that B2B clients exhibit no apathy and switch without hesitating.

“if we were not satisfied with our staffing agency we’d switch in an instant . . . Apathetic? Never! . . . a service provider is only as good as you can hold them to the task . . . we would always switch . . . in a second the agency would be gone!”
(HR Manager, SC 9)

The reason that clients are not apathetic is due to the nature of staffing agency industry. The following industry related factors support the premise that clients will switch immediately:

- Highly competitive industry
- Numerous providers available
- Filling vacancies is critical to the client's business operations
- B2B clients are generally not price driven – quality of work is the key purchasing decision

The above factors are discussed in sections 4.3.5 and 4.5 and are related to the availability of alternative service providers (Patterson and Smith, 2003; Anderson and Narus, 1990).

8.6.11 Client's Internal Conflict with their HR Department

In the triad interviews the issue of HR departments being detrimental to the hiring process was discussed. It has learnt that many of the clients found their own HR departments are a hindrance and delayed the recruiting process (see: Triad 1, Fr1; single interviews with agencies, SA 4 and SA 7). The issue of HR's ineffectiveness was also raised by the following *client*:

“our HR department is a barrier to getting anyone hired . . . HR is too bureaucratic, they slow us down . . . to get anything done you have to avoid HR.” (Office Manager, SC 5)

The client's quote describes an internal conflict with their own HR department. The being unresponsive and ineffective (Adelson, 2001; Houseman, 2001). These inefficiencies support a company's decision to use a staffing agency or deploy an HRO strategy (Stewart, 1996; Csoko, 1995).

The next section will review the key switching factors identified by the single client interviews.

8.7 Summary of Single Client Analysis

Table 8.4 listed below provides an overview of the key findings from the *single client* interviews. The interviews have found similar switching factors identified in the two previous interview groups – *triad* and '*single staffing agency*' interviews. There were five new factors identified which have been highlighted in table 8.4.

Table 8.4 Summary of Findings from *single client* interviews

Switching Factor (corresponding research objective)	Significance and findings
Continuity (1)	Loss of continuity resulted in switching
Poor Quality of temp (1)	A significant and frequent switching factor
Industry Knowledge (2)	Identify this type of client and minimise affects of having this customer switch
Gift Giving (3)	May assist in building B2B relationships; reciprocal gift giving is recommended
Listening to Clients' Needs and Frequent Communication (1, 3)	Critical factors to prevent switching; effective listening and feedback prevents switching
Building Trust (3)	Strong client-provider relationship built on trust prevents switching
Confidentiality (1)	Breach of confidentiality will result in switching
The effect of Price (1) and Business Referrals (4)	Valuable service clients are seeking; prevents switching
Client is a Frequent Switcher (4)	Both are very minor switching factors
'Temp-to-Perm' Agreement is a Non-Switching Factor (1)	Essential service; shown to be a switching factor if not available
Apathy/Inertia (1)	Clients are not apathetic and will not hesitate to switch; frequent feedback and communication recommended
Client's Internal Conflict with their HR (1)	Factor for clients to use staffing agencies

The discussion will now focus on the five new factors identified from the *single client interviews* (the last five factors in table 8.4).

The switching factors of '*price and business referrals*' (Grace and O'Cass, 2001; Keaveney, 1995; Weigand, 1968) were discussed in section 8.6.3 where it was noted the clients who mentioned these switching factors were from very small firms (single proprietorship and a three person law firm). It can be concluded that smaller clients are more interested in the financial values of switching opposed to forming long term relational relationships. The consequences of switching did not have a major impact

on their business operations or economic impact (Yanamandram and White, 2006; Burnham et al., 2003; Wathne et al., 2001; Gale, 1994; Gultinan, 1989)

Proneness to switching (Caruana, 2004; Bhattacharya et al., 1995) was discussed in section 8.6.8. Burnham et al. (2003) suggested that service providers evaluate the switching history of potential customers to determine their proneness to switching. The switching literature also suggests evaluating the client's level of risk aversion since high risk takers are prone to switching (Ganesh et al., 2000; Raj, 1980). This research supports these strategies and recommends service providers to preselect their clients in situations where the client's loyalty is questionable (Fink et al, 2007).

The '*temp-to-perm*' service was identified as a non-switching barrier by a client. This service provides the client flexibility and saves recruitment costs (Allan 2002; Houseman, 2001; Frazee, 1997; Freedman, 1996) and has become a key non-switching barrier for clients. The significance of this finding emphasises the need for service providers to offer a full line of flexible services that save their clients time, money and effort (Burnham et al., 2003; Klemperer, 1995).

Apathy/Inertia (Jones, 1998) was discussed in section 8.6.10 whereby it was determined B2B clients are not apathetic and would switch without any hesitation.

This is due to the economic losses and serious repercussions of having a temporary worker not performing. Poor quality and poor '*fit*' of candidates will not be condoned by clients (Daniel, 2006). This study has clearly emphasised the importance of exceptional core service delivery and affirmed that in situations where the service is not performed correctly the B2B client will switch immediately (Grace and O'Cass, 2001).

It was found that some client's have a *conflict with their own HR department*. This arises due to HR's inefficient handling of recruitment and leads some clients to believe an outsider recruiter is better for their firm. This premise supports Houseman's (2001) arguments discussed in section 5.7 outlining the advantages and of using a staffing agency instead of using their own internal HR department.

8.8 Overview of Analysis -Triad and Single Interviews

This section will provide an overview of the analysis and link the research aim and objectives to the findings (section 1.4 lists the aim and objectives). The triad interviews have provided an opportunity to evaluate a client's switching decision and the effect that decision had on the '*switched from*' and '*switched to*' staffing agency. It was found that all twenty-two staffing agencies interviewed understood the value of retaining clients; however only one agency analysed the switching situation they were involved in. The literature advocates for practitioners to learn about client switching and to take proactive measures to retain clients (Grace and O'Cass, 2001) - *found not to be happening in this research*. Staffing agencies are losing clients and there is no analysis or follow up to determine the cause(s) of the switch. Furthermore, the analysis of the triad interviews found that in the vast majority of '*switched from*' staffing agencies did not know the real reason why their clients switched. Many of the '*switched from*' agencies stated 'quickness to fill positions' was the cause of the switch when in fact the client switched because there was either a breach of trust or '*poor fit*' of candidate.

Table 8.5 listed below identifies and combines the switching factors and attributes to strengthen B2B relationships identified in the *all* of the interviews. Beside each factor is the corresponding research objective, shown in brackets.

Table 8.5 Interview Findings Linked to Research Objectives

Switching Factors and B2B Relationship Attributes Identified by Respondents Listed by Objective	Triad Interviews (from pages 258 + 259)	Single Staffing Interviews (from table 8.2)	Single Client Interviews (from table 8.4)
Objective 1: <i>Switching Behaviour Attributes</i>			
Providing a quality service	x	x	x
Listen to the client's needs	x	x	x
Continuity	x	x	x
Understanding client's corporate culture	x	x	
Price			x
Pre-selecting clients	x	x	
Using non-switching barriers	x	x	
Apathy /Inertia	x		x
'Temp-perm' agreement			x
Client's internal conflict with their HR dept.			x
Providing preferential treatment	x		
Pre-screening Candidates	x	x	
Objective 2: <i>Attributes of B2B Relationships</i>			
Confidentiality	x	x	x
Trusting Relationship	x	x	x
Misrepresenting a candidate's qualifications	x		x
Provide value added 'non-core' services; indirect functions: industry knowledge and expertise	x	x	
Objective 3: <i>Relational Selling Attributes</i>			
Client's Loyal to Salesperson	x	x	
Role conflict with client's HR Dept	x	x	
Acts of negligence	x		x
Gift Giving		x	x
Relational Selling: KAM and team selling strategies	x	x	x
Objective 4: <i>Strategies to strengthen B2B Relationships</i>			
Invest and develop candidates and temps	x	x	
Service providers respect their employees – Code of Ethics	x	x	
Educate clients about the delivery processes	x		
Client is a frequent switcher			x
Business Referrals	x		x
The Need to differentiate services	x	x	
Use Professional Recruiters	x	x	

Table 8.5 is significant because it outlines the switching factors and B2B relationship attributes found when analysing the data from the different interview groups. The analysis found there are six significant factors identified by *all* of the interview groups (continuity, providing a quality service, trusting relationship, listening to the client and relational selling). These six factors are essential to retain clients while strengthening the B2B relationship and have already been discussed in previous sections.

There were five factors identified by only one respondent group:

1. Educate clients about the delivery processes
2. Client is a frequent switcher
3. 'Temp-perm' agreement
4. Client's internal conflict with their HR department
5. Price

Even though the above factors were only chosen by one respondent, they are significant to the study and deserve further discussion.

The literature addressed the issue of frequent communication with the client and the significance of a feedback loop with the client and temp workers. It was found that a service provider's communication strategy must *educate clients about the delivery processes* which include time frames and payment expectations. This strategy is needed due to the complexities and various delivery modes each staffing agency is offering. This study affirmed that switching occurred when clients service expectations were not met which emphasises the need to educate clients about the delivery process

The factor, '*the client is a frequent switcher*' was discussed in section 8.6.8 and addressed in the literature 4.8.5. Service providers must recognise that some clients are perpetual switchers and limit resources allocated to these clients. Findings of this study support the arguments presented by Sharma and Patterson (2000) and Raj (1980) discussed in section 4.8.5.

The '*temp-perm service agreement*' demonstrated the need for service providers to identify particular services that add significant value to their clients. It is essential for service providers to understand why such services create value and to customise the service to meet client expectations. The literature supports this strategy whereby a client's dependency of a particular service (De Ruyter et al. (2001) from a provider they feel is heterogeneous (Burnham et al., 2003) results in less client switching.

The factor, '*Client's internal conflict with their HR department*' provides an opportunity for the staffing agency to investigate how *they can* offer better services to the client. This strategy is supported by the need to listen to the client, understand their needs and particularly understand *why and how* their services add value.

The literature discussed how *price* was a significant switching factor within B2C service environments (Keaveney, 1995). This B2B service study contradicts the literature and found that price was not a switching factor. Only one client, a sole proprietor responded that price was a switching factor (discussed in section 8.6.3). The client said, ". . . I'm always switching to find the best deal" (SC 7). This client's switching decision was risk free and the service required (clerical duties) was non-essential. It can be concluded that smaller businesses receiving non-essential services have a tendency to switch.

8.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the analysis from the single interviews consisting of eight staffing agencies and nine clients who had switched. The interviews were independent of each other and added valuable knowledge on the subjects of switching and B2B relationships. The chapter also provided an overview of the analysis and linked the findings to the research objectives.

The next chapter will present the conclusions of the research, implications of this study for theory and professional practice and the limitations of this study.

Chapter 9 Conclusions and Recommendations

“It is imperative that service organisations begin to understand, and learn from, the actions of those customers who chose to switch service providers”

(Grace and O’Cass, 2001, p 300)

9.1 Introduction

This final chapter will first reiterate an overview of the study’s research aims and objectives as well as the research approach. It will then discuss in detail the conclusions and recommendations related to each individual research objective. Further, the contribution to academic knowledge, managerial implications and suggestions for future research will be highlighted.

9.2 Overview of Research Objectives and Approach

The aim of this study was to investigate switching behaviours within the B2B service sector. The value of this research was that all three parties affected by the switching decision were interviewed (the client, the ‘switched to’ staffing agency and ‘switched from’ staffing agency).

The research was designed to offer a focused analysis of the factors that cause clients to switch service providers and to build on switching behaviour theories. The challenge of this research was to complete the triad interviews with all of the parties involved which allowed an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of switching behaviours. This research also explored the attributes of B2B service relationships and investigated how switching behaviours affected those attributes.

This research was undertaken within the realism paradigm with the objective of understanding how switching behaviours affect the B2B relationship in the service sector. As a research methodology, a multiple case study approach was chosen. The literature review revealed that the majority of switching studies in the services sector have been quantitative and focused on B2C. One of the key switching studies involving B2C was that of Keaveney (1995) which discovered eight reasons why

customers switch. Keaveney's study was discussed in section 4.6 and is significant since it was one of the first studies that helped managers and researchers understand service switching from the customer's perspective – a similar goal of this research for *B2B clients*.

The following sections provide a discussion of the key contributions, conclusions and recommendations derived from the findings in relation to each research objective.

9.3 Objective One

To extend the knowledge of switching and non-switching behaviours in the B2B service sector and determine their affects on loyalty and apathy.

It was learnt the greater the staffing agency's knowledge of the client's needs and culture resulted in a lower chance the client would switch. It was found that listening to the client's needs and offering frequent communication and feedback was a method to build a trust while reducing client switching.

Apathy was a non-switching factor identified in the *B2C* literature (Keaveney, 1995). This research for *B2B* service relationships found clients were not apathetic and would switch without any hesitation. This is due to the fact that any inefficiency in recruitment would result in lost production time for the client.

Confidentiality was raised as a key component of the service offering for the sample studied. Confidentiality is a three way factor between the staffing agency, the candidate and the client. The staffing agency must safeguard their client's recruiting strategies and be discrete with potential candidates. Careless acts of negligence such as sending blanket emails to all of the clients or trying to lure a candidate that had already been placed with a client will result in a switching situation (Dingman, 1993).

Price (wages paid to temps) was found *not* to be a switching issue which contravenes Keaveney's (1995) *B2C* research. Numerous respondents from this study stated they

would paid a wage premium to acquire the best temporary worker. It is recommended that service providers create competitive advantages centred on the quality and delivery of the service opposed to reducing prices.

A key finding was that clients valued the *quality of the service*. For the sample studied this factor included the 'fit' of candidate to the client's need (Daniel, 2006) and the timeliness to fill a vacancy. The staffing agency's ability to fill difficult or highly skilled positions became a switching factor for clients. It was found that clients must have confidence in a service provider's expertise and reliability to before the relationship is established. This research has discussed numerous strategies to assist service providers in delivering a quality core service such as relational selling and developing trusting relationships. Providing the client with service guarantees acted as a non-switching incentive. Many respondents stated they preferred to work with staffing agencies that offered service guarantees.

The ability to have flexible contract terms was also found to be a non-switching factor. This study determined that locking-in clients to contracts was not effective since it restricted flexibility, reduced potential cost savings and eliminated the reasons of using temporary labour (Houseman, 2001). Respondents stated they preferred relationships without any binding conditions or formal agreements, particularly during the initial stages of the relationship. This allowed the client an introductory period to assess the service provider's capabilities without any contractual restrictions. This position is supported by Grant (1996) and Volberda (1996) who suggest that flexible work terms are important as they highlight the willingness of the parties involved to change or adjust to new knowledge without resorting to a series of new contracts and renegotiations.

This research confirmed that clients will switch when there are repeated billing errors or incidents surrounding billing issues. It was also found that clients switched if there was not a local contact who could resolve billing issues. Client billing could be a source of opportunistic behaviour by a service provider therefore providers must act in the interest of their client and resolve billing issues quickly. It is

recommended that the resolution of billing issues be done in a manner that does not jeopardise or question the integrity or trust of a client. This research proved that clients evaluate a service provider's overall ability to perform by reviewing the timeliness and accuracy of the service provider's billing procedures. It was learnt that clients expect that their service provider to resolve any billing inquiry or error with the highest degree of professionalism while maintaining a level of trust. It is recommended that service providers take extra care when billing and resolving client's billing issues.

Chapter 4 discussed switching and non-switching behaviours. This study confirmed that non-switching barriers *that reward loyalty* encourage clients not to switch. Rewarding clients with price discounts and volume discounts was shown to be an effective non-switching factor as long as a quality core service was being delivered. It was also shown that rewarding employees and temps for their loyalty was beneficial to the staffing agency. The contribution to knowledge is to encourage non-switching behaviours that reward clients *and* employees for their loyalty.

It was found that clients valued *customised services* and cherish *preferential treatment*. This research confirmed that customised services must be priced fairly and offer value to the client. This research determined that the '*temp-to-permanent*' and '*back selling*' were two customised services that added value to clients. This research has shown that successful service providers understand how their services add client value. Providing customised services allows the service provider to differentiate themselves and provide superior value.

A loss of continuity (Gounaris, 2005; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Scanzoni, 1979) between the client and service provider was found to affect commitment to the relationship. The literature review revealed that commitment is the desire for continuity manifested by the willingness to invest resources into a B2B relationship (Gounaris, 2005; Anderson and Weitz, 1989). It was also argued that commitment is the belief that the ongoing relationship is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at sustaining it indefinitely (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Moorman et al., 1992). Many

of the clients stated they lost commitment to their service provider once there was a break in continuity. It is recommended that service providers have a comprehensive strategy in place to ensure continuity is maintained in the event one of their account managers quits (Mattila, 2004). A successful strategy identified in this research was to have two account managers working with each client.

9.4 Objective Two

To investigate how switching behaviours affect the key attributes of the B2B Relationship; the attributes being: trust, commitment, loyalty, risk.

This study supports the literature on the construct of trust (for example Doney et al., 2007; Mouzas, 2007; Hogg, 1996; Ganesan, 1994; Spekman, 1994) and found that trust is the most critical construct in the development and continuation of a B2B relationship. It was found that any breach of trust resulted client switching. Improperly paying temps, misrepresenting candidates' qualifications and failure to pre-screen candidates were breaches of trust discovered by this study.

Competence trust was developed when the staffing agency demonstrated and shared industry knowledge. It is recommended that service providers become industry experts and readily share industry information with their clients. This *information exchange* is a critical success factor and is a valuable strategy for the service provider to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

This research has shown that trust is the '*blood line*' for developing mutually beneficial B2B service relationships. It is recommended that trust be established early in the relationship which will reduce the chances of the client switching (Denize and Young, 2007; Doney et al., 2007)

Providing value added HR services in addition to the core-services of recruiting was another relational attribute that staffing agencies offered their clients. Such value added services would include salary reviews, HR advice and seminars related to the client's business. These 'non-core' services strengthen the client-service provider

relationship and create non-switching incentives. Offering extra services increases the involvement and benefits within the relationship and leads to greater collaboration between partners. It is recommended that service providers offer their clients 'non-core' services that add value to the client's business operation.

Reputation was found to be a key attribute of B2B relationships (Sheff, 2007). Many of the clients stated they would only work with service providers who had an outstanding reputation within the industry. The literature also argued that a service provider's reputation can be strengthened if they belong to a professional association (Lynn, 2000). It is recommended that service providers build their reputation by belonging to affiliated associations. It was also learnt that placed candidates are the best source of building a reputation. Candidates may also refer individuals who are interested in joining the staffing agency. A contribution to knowledge for practitioners is to treat temps and candidates as ambassadors since they are an excellent source of referrals and have a significant impact on the agency's reputation.

The findings revealed that a breach of *confidentiality* resulted in client switching. Due to the nature of the recruitment industry confidential information must be guarded by all three parties - the staffing agency, client and candidate. It can be generalised that confidentiality is critical when forming any B2B relationship and is an antecedent of trust. A lack of confidentiality leads to mistrust which will result in client switching.

It was learnt that *on-site visits* of the client's work place are an effective way to establish trust. The on-site visit allowed the staffing agency to see the work environment and experience the work culture. An understanding of these factors is critical when ensuring the '*fit*' of a potential candidate. It is also an opportunity for the staffing agency to listen to the client's needs and determine if they are able to fill the vacancy. One recruiter commented that the on-site visit was the opportunity to introduce himself to the client's key decision makers, HR staff and executives. This way the recruiter has initiated a relationship with several of the client's employees in case the key contact leaves. It also provides a chance to grasp how decisions are

made within the client's organisation. It is recommended that an on-site visit be conducted by service providers when new client relationships are formed and that several follow-up visits also be conducted.

9.5 Objective Three

To determine how the following relational attributes influence switching behaviours -adaptive selling, team selling, gift giving and the salesperson as a 'boundary spanner'.

The literature review discussed a variety of relational factors such as adaptive selling, team selling and gift giving that may contribute to non-switching behaviour and strengthening of the B2B relationship. It was found that adaptive selling strategies were developed by service providers to establish long-term mutually profitable partnerships. It was also learnt that the fundamental goal of staffing agencies salespeople was to develop long-term, mutually profitable partnerships. This research supported the findings that adaptive selling has become the operative manner to service clients whereby the salesperson sacrifices opportunistic actions and short-term sales to maintain client satisfaction.

It was found that team selling is a vital relational action that allows for continuity in the B2B relationship and ensures all of the *daily* requirements of HRO (Human Resource Outsourcing) are fulfilled. It is recommended that two account managers be assigned to each client so that if one decides to leave the organisation, another account manager provides the continuity to serve the client.

This research found the best way to manage *gift giving* is to follow the client's lead. If the client gives his customers gifts, then it would be appropriate to present gifts to the client. It was affirmed that the premise of gift giving was to bestow to existing or potential clients acts of hospitality or gifts with the aims of promoting a company's image and building stronger relationships. It was also found that clients prefer '*gifts*' that are beneficial to their business operation such as industry related seminars or hosting guest speaker events. Personal gifts, taking clients to lunch or attending special events was not popular. It is recommended that service providers follow their

clients' policy when giving gifts and to consider a gift that enhances the client's business operation.

Role conflict between a client's HR department and the staffing agency's recruiters was found to be a switching factor. Clients expressed their distrust and disapproval whenever the recruiters did not follow their guidelines (Das and Teng, 1998). This type of conflict led to a breach of trust and commitment which resulted in client switching. To prevent this type of situation service providers must deploy an adaptive selling strategy consistent with the client's needs. It is recommended recruiters abide by HR's directives and be cooperative and amicable while maintaining close ties with the client's HR department.

This study confirmed the benefits of the *salesperson as the boundary spanner* and being responsible to initiate the indirect functions of a service provider (Walter et al., 2003). The indirect functions of scout, innovation development and social support were shown to be valuable tools for enhancing the client-service provider relationship in this study (see figure 2.1). The scout function whereby the staffing agency provides technical knowledge and industry expertise was found to be the most resourceful factor. Clients stated that they rely on their staffing agency to provide them 'industry trends and street level gossip'. This study has affirmed the need for service providers to offer 'indirect functions', particularly the scout function of supplying industry knowledge and expertise, which have become an essential strategy of increasing the value of the client-provider relationship.

It was shown that *adaptive selling* was an effective way of building a client's trust and commitment. The most influential role of adaptive selling was to identify clients who were seeking preferential treatment. It was found that preferential treatment resulted in relational behaviours consistent with relationship selling. It was shown that the following relational actions were appreciated by clients and resulted in strengthening the following B2B attributes:

- Establishing a communication/feedback schedule that meets the client's needs; such a schedule should extend beyond normal working hours
- Respect the privacy and sensitivity of the client's business
- Honour and observe an individual's experience, credentials or special circumstances

It was shown that adaptive selling and incorporating the above actions builds trust, dependency and reduces the likelihood of client switching.

9.6 Objective Four

To identify strategies service providers use to strengthen the B2B service relationship.

Respondents appreciated the occasions when their account managers called them outside normal working hours to ensure a temp worker would be available the next day. In figure 3.1 Hausman (2001) suggested that 'open communication' and 'frequent interaction' are antecedents of relationship strength which has been affirmed in this research. Relationships built on shared commitment and mutual trust result in many beneficial factors including increased cooperation, long-term survival and less client switching. It is recommended that service providers 'go beyond the normal 9 am – 5 pm' routine when communicating to their clients and to incorporate the above communication strategies when serving their clients.

The literature review discussed the need of service providers to regularly evaluate their customer portfolio and consider terminating unsuccessful relationships or unprofitable customers (Lovelock and Wright, 1999). This research found that some staffing agencies are pre-selecting their clients using the following criteria:

- Clients who value the services of a staffing agency
- Clients with good credit records and that pay their bills on time
- If the staffing agency can fulfil the client's expectations in a timely fashion; this way the agency's reputation is not at risk

This strategy allows service providers to safeguard their reputation by selectively working with clients they can serve successfully – and profitably. A service provider's expertise and reputation have become competitive factors that differentiate them from their competitors. It is recommended that service providers pre-select the clients they can serve in a timely and efficient manner which will minimise client switching.

It was found that some clients will always be switchers. Such clients believe that by continuously switching they are getting the best value since it raises the competitiveness of service providers. It is recommended that service providers review a potential client's past record of switching and assess their likelihood of switching before accepting them as a client (Burnham, 2003; Bhattacharya et al., 1995). Service providers must be cognisant of the time and resources put forth to serve clients who are prone to switching and assess the value of serving this group of clients.

A key finding of this research was that the impact of business referrals (Britton et al., 1997; Maitland et al., 1985) and networking had on staffing agencies. It is critical that staffing agencies build relationships with all of their candidates because this research found that many of the placed candidates later become clients of the staffing agency who found them a placement. The significance of business referrals and repeat business was discussed and supported in section 5.6 of the literature review where it was learnt that 73 percent of the executive search firms relied on recommendations from existing clients as first or second sources of new clients (Britton et al., 1997).

It was learnt that a major advantage staffing agencies offer that in-house HR departments cannot provide is their extensive network. This networking allows the staffing agency to proactively solicit potential candidates that would be difficult for HR departments to reach (Sheff, 2007). The extended network allows the staffing agency daily communication with numerous candidates. Tier 1 firms have a global network and are connected to candidates who may not be actively seeking employment – but interested in hearing about a potential employment opportunity.

One respondent, an executive recruiter, suggested that he had to contact 200 to 300 people before sourcing one or two potential candidates which demonstrates the scope and depth of his network. This premise leads to the recommendation that staffing agencies must be perceived by their *clients, candidates and temp workers* as highly professional and well connected with a deep network. For executive search firms the network must be global and include a wide cross section of industries.

It was learnt that one method of gaining trust and commitment was for the staffing agency to use professional recruiters with a passion for recruiting (De Ruyter et al., 2001). This involves sales people recruiting for sales candidates and accountants hiring finance candidates. This practice gains the trust of both clients and candidates. This research discovered that clients want to know the credentials of the recruiters and the staffing agency's reputation (Martin and Hetrick, 2006). It is recommended staffing agencies use professional recruiters who recruit within their known fields of expertise and practice.

It was found a staffing agency's respect for their candidates became a switching factor. Several of the clients switched when they discovered the temps they hired had been 'mistreated' by their staffing agency. Clients defined 'mistreatment' as:

- not paying the agreed wage negotiated between the client and staffing agency
- exaggerating or falsifying a candidate's qualifications
- not disclosing the full requirements of the job

Clients expressed the need for the temp to become a valuable team player. Situations of 'mistreatment' resulted in a breach of trust and clients ended the relationship. It was found that the staffing agencies who respected their candidates were following an established *code of ethics*. The codes of ethics outlined the responsibilities of all three parties, the agency, the client and the candidate and were posted on the agency's web site. An example of such a code can be found in Appendix M. Such a code alleviates the threat of opportunistic behaviour while promoting integrity and

honesty between the parties (Simon and Kuman, 2001). It was found that staffing agencies with a code of ethics experienced the following benefits:

- trust and commitment was easily established with clients, candidates and temporary workers
- experienced less client switching
- less attrition of temporary workers

Considering the above discussion and findings of this research it is recommended that service providers establish and publish a code of ethics which upholds respect and value for their clients, candidates and employees.

It was learnt that when the staffing agency educated their clients of their business operations (Hanson, 2007) and recruiting processes, there was a less likely chance the client would switch. An *education process* would include a review of the payment schedule, timeliness of filling a vacancy and of any service guarantees (Britton and Ball, 1999; Akerlof, 1970). The education process increases cooperation, encourages open communication and information sharing. It is recommended that service providers have an education process to make clients fully aware of their services and capabilities and review the client's expectations.

It was affirmed that staffing agencies that had prepared candidates *before* being presented to the client for the job assignment (tier 2-3 agencies) or the placement interview (tier 1) experienced greater success at placing candidates. For the tier 1 firms (executive search) investment in candidates meant spending time preparing the candidate for the client interview. Preparation techniques are described in Appendix H and J and include the following steps a search firm may provide for the candidate:

- Consider the candidate's requirements during the recruitment process
- Instruct the candidate how to sell their skills to the client
- Coach them about their appearance
- Explain all of the job requirements
- Conduct a post interview de-briefing

For the tier 2-3 staffing agencies up-grading could be done at the agency's on-site training school or by providing scholarships for candidates to upgrade on their own time.

This research showed that investing resources in the candidate ensured their success, fulfilled the client's job requirements and resulted in less client switching. This '*investment*' resulted in win-win situations for both the candidate and client. Also, the *candidates* are less likely to switch to another staffing agency since they have the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications and are then eligible for better paying positions. This research found that the vast majority of clients requested the same temp to return for future vacancies. This emphasises the need for the staffing agency to retain and continue investing in their temporary workers.

The above discussion leads to the recommendation that service providers must take aggressive strategies and invest all available resources to develop their candidates and temp workers.

9.7 Summary of Academic and Managerial Contributions

Table 9.1 provided below lists *the significant findings and new contributions* of knowledge from the research. The findings are segmented into four categories and each category will be discussed separately in the following sections.

Table 9.1 Summary of Significant or New Contributions

Significant or new Switching Factors and B2B Relationship Attributes Listed by Knowledge Contribution (corresponding research objective)
Contribution to Academic Knowledge –B2B Relationship
Trusting Relationship (2)
Provide a quality service (1)
Listen to the client’s needs (1)
Gift Giving (3)
Contribution to Academic Knowledge - Switching Behaviour
Continuity (1)
Relational Selling: KAM and Team selling strategies (3)
Using non-switching barriers (1)
Price (1)
Apathy/Inertia (1)
Managerial Contributions for Service Providers
Business Referrals (4)
The need to differentiate services (4)
Educate clients about the delivery processes (4)
Client is a frequent switcher (4)
Provide value added ‘non-core’ services and indirect functions: industry knowledge and technical expertise (2)
Service providers respect their employees – Code of Ethics (4)
Pre-selecting clients (1)
Managerial Contributions for Staffing Agencies
Confidentiality (2)
Role conflict with client’s HR Dept (3)
Use professional recruiters (4)
Invest and develop candidates and temps (4)

9.8 Contribution to Academic Knowledge

Academic research has increasingly argued the importance of switching behaviours in customer retention strategies (Jones et al., 2007; Lee and Cunningham, 2001; Gronroos, 1994). In a similar fashion, marketing literature has promoted the value of retaining customers versus using traditional marketing methods to acquire new customers (Roos and Gustafsson, 2007; Fornell, 1992). It is recognised that there is abundant quantitative literature on the subject of *B2C* switching (Gustafsson, 2007; Lopez et al., 2006; Colgate and Lang, 2001; Keaveney, 1995) with limited findings for *B2B* switching (Yanamandram and White, 2006; Grace and O’Cass, 2001). This study has added significant findings where there were gaps in the *B2B* switching behaviours for services industries.

The study also evaluated the various relational factors and attributes associated with switching behaviour involved in *B2B* relationship. The robust and rich data has been beneficial to understand how switching behaviours affect all of the involved parties – the client, ‘*switched to*’ and ‘*switched from*’ service provider. The literature has justified the need for studying switching behaviour (Johnston et al., 2001; Keaveney, 1995) given the increasing competition in the global market for acquiring new customers. The literature also confirms the importance for service providers to retain existing clients (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Fornell and Wernerfelt, 1988).

This research has shown that only one of 22 service providers interviewed took the time to fully investigate why a client switched. This finding concurs with Johnston et al. (2001) who argue there is very little knowledge about customer defection. This indifferent approach of service providers to understand client switching behaviours contradicts relationship marketing strategies and further demonstrates the value of this research. Owing to the damaging effects that client switching behaviour has on the development of successful relationships, understanding clients' switching decisions can represent a key step in the process of establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges (Svensson, 2004; Johnston et al., 2001; Gronroos, 2000). Considering the above facts, it is imperative that service providers

take an active role in analysing their clients' switching behaviours. Understanding client switching behaviours will be mutually beneficial to the client -service provider relationship.

9.8.1 Contribution to Academic Knowledge: B2B Relationship

Contribution to Academic Knowledge: B2B Relationship (corresponding research objective)
Trusting Relationship (2)
Provide a quality service (1)
Listen to the client's needs (1)
Gift Giving (3)

The first three attributes have been supported in the literature and discussed in the analysis chapters. The contribution to theory is to *confirm the priority* of the top three attributes. It was found that *trust* is a prerequisite to form and nurture any B2B relationship. This study showed that once trust was formed the clients expected the delivery of a *quality service* – if this didn't happen, they switched. A corner stone to 'trust and quality service' was the requirement *to listen to the client's needs*.

This research supports Simon and Kumar's (2001) finding (see section 5.8), whereby the '*ability to listen and comprehend the client*' is a critical. Five of the seven '*switched to agencies*' responded that they retained customers because they listened to their clients and understood their clients' needs. The need to 'listen and understand your client' is a significant finding of this research. Failure to listen to your client was the third major cause of client switching for this study.

A new contribution to knowledge was the *strategy of gift giving*. This study showed that gift giving is a contentious topic and gifts should be offered only if the client offers their own customers' gifts. For situations where gift giving was sanctioned it was determined that corporate gifts that benefit the client's business are more appropriate than personal gifts, e.g. providing seminars, hosting industry related guest speaker events.

9.8.2 Contribution to Academic Knowledge: Switching Theory

Contribution to Academic Knowledge: Switching Theory (corresponding research objective)
Continuity (1)
Team selling strategies (3)
Relational Selling: KAM and Team selling strategies (3)
Price (1)
Apathy /Inertia (1)

This study showed that a *loss of continuity* resulted in client switching. It was recommended that a *team selling strategy* of having two account reps work with each client would mitigate client switching. It was also recommended that practitioners have a pro-active strategy to continue serving their client and to communicate any staffing changes with their clients.

The literature review discussed Keaveney's (1995) study which analysed switching behaviours within the *B2C* services sector. Keaveney found there were eight key switching triggers for the *B2C* market which included (listed in priority):

1. Core Service Failures
2. Service Encounter Failures
3. Pricing
4. Inconvenience
5. Employee Responses to Service Failures
6. Attraction by competitors
7. Ethical Problems
8. Involuntary Switching

This study of *B2B switching* found the primary switching factor was a *breach of trust*, which does not support Keaveney's finding. *Pricing* was not a significant switching factor for this study. In fact, it was discovered that many of the clients requested their staffing agency pay higher than industry average wages to ensure they received the best quality candidates. It can be concluded for *B2B* clients, quality of service is more important than price. Responses to service failures were not an issue in this study – the client switched without delay affirming there was no

client *apathy*. This finding, the lack of apathy contravenes the B2B literature and is contribution to service marketing literature.

The literature suggested that switching barriers and switching costs (see chapter 4) may be used to lock-in customers and prevent switching (Dowling and Uncles, 1997; Gronhaug and Gilly, 1991). This study contradicts this position and supports non-switching strategies *that reward loyalty*. Respondents in this study stated they would not conduct business with service providers who used binding and restrictive business practices. Using non-switching incentives that build client loyalty *and* fortify the B2B relationship were proven to be successful for retaining clients. This study found that rewarding clients for repeat business, exclusivity, high volumes of business, and particularly for providing referrals (clients, candidates, and temps) were the most successful ways of rewarding loyalty and minimising client switching. This leads to the contribution that clients are cautious and hesitate to use service providers who impose switching costs/barriers that are restrictive or punitive. It is recommended that service providers *reward* non-switching behaviours and establish client relationships using the attributes listed in figure 9.1.

9.8.3 Contribution to Methodology

This study filled the gap in literature by providing a qualitative study of B2B switching. Previous studies concentrated in the area of B2C using quantitative studies. This research was also one of the first studies to use triad interviews which captured robust data from all affected parties involved in switching incident – the client, the *'switched to'* and *'switched from'* staffing agency.

Another contribution of knowledge was the ability of the research to study two B2B service industry subjects that were interdependent - switching behaviour and the attributes of B2B relationships.

The sample studied, Canadian staffing agencies consisted of two groups, tier 1 and tier 2-3 firms. By studying the two groups allowed for a comparison of data between the groups which resulted in robust data on the subjects being researched.

Significant contributions were found when comparing the data which is discussed in section 9.11

9.9 Managerial Contributions for Service Providers

The aim of the research was to ‘*Study Switching Behaviours in the B2B Service Sector*’ which would offer service providers an in-depth understanding of why clients switch. Another goal was to provide managers with guidelines and recommendations to prevent client switching. This section will present the implications of the study for service managers.

Managerial Contributions for Service Providers (corresponding research objective)
Business Referrals (4)
The need to differentiate services (4)
Educate clients about the delivery processes (4)
Client is a frequent switcher (4)
Provide value added ‘non-core’ services and indirect functions: industry knowledge and technical expertise (2)
Service providers respect their employees – Code of Ethics (4)
Pre-selecting clients (1)

The literature addressed the need for service providers to use *business referrals* to grow their client lists. Due to the characteristics of services (section 2.2 and 2.3) it is advantageous for service providers to have a strategy that encourages the use of business referrals. It was found that companies who had established strategies to encourage business referrals were successful for growing their market share. It is recommended that service providers establish a referral programme that rewards *both* their employees and clients for introducing new clients to the company.

It was found there is a need for service providers to *differentiate their services* from competitors. It is recommended that service providers create a ‘selling proposition’ that highlights the values their services can offer clients.

A contribution of knowledge was the need for service providers to *educate their clients* about the delivery processes. This *education process* is essential to provide the details about the delivery experience such as billing, service guarantees and timeframes. It was also found that the education process provides an opportunity for both the client and service provider to review each other's service deliver expectations. Joint agreement and understanding of the delivery processes was found to mitigate client switching.

This research concurs with the literature that addresses the issue that *some clients are and always will be frequent switchers*. It was found the best strategy to deal with this situation is to identify this type of behaviour as early as possible into the relationship and to limit the amount of resources used to build this relationship.

A significant finding was that many clients value and fully appreciate the '*non-core*' services offered by their service provider. It was learnt that client's build trust with service providers who share their technical expertise and industry knowledge. This research supports Walters et al., (2003) findings whereby clients value the 'indirect functions' offered by a service provider. It was shown that clients will form dependencies with service providers who offer '*non-core*' services because they are unable to perform many of the services themselves. In addition, performing '*non-core*' services was found to be an effective method for service providers to differentiate themselves and demonstrate value to the client.

A key finding and contribution to theory was to discover that clients want to know if service providers are benevolent and caring towards their employees. Acts of disrespect, dishonesty or uncaring attitudes by the service providers resulted in client switching. It is recommended that service providers *establish a code ethics* to establish work and rules and outline expected business acumen for all of their stakeholders. It is suggested such a code be posted on the company's web site.

A strategy that minimised switching was for service providers to *pre-select their clients*. The contribution to knowledge was to learn the factors used by companies to pre-select their clients which included the following:

- Select clients who have the same core values as the service provider
- Work with clients who value the skills and services being offered
- Select clients that can be served efficiently and profitably

Taking into consideration the above factors, it is recommended that service providers strategically pre-select their clients.

9.10 Managerial Contributions for Staffing Agencies

The following discussion focuses on specific recommendations for the staffing industry.

Managerial Contributions for Staffing Agencies (corresponding research objective)
Confidentiality (2)
Role conflict with client's HR Dept (3)
Use professional recruiters (4)
Invest and develop candidates and temps (4)

It was found that confidentiality was a key attribute of maintaining the B2B relationship. The contribution this study offers is the requirement for tier 1 staffing agencies to maintain confidentiality with their clients *and* candidates. Confidentiality must be safeguarded due repercussions recruitment decisions have on firms and people. It was confirmed that confidentiality is directly linked to trust – a breach of confidence resulted in mistrust, resulting in client switching. The study also showed that a staffing agency's reputation was linked to confidentiality. A breach of confidentiality had immediate and unrecoverable effects for an agency's reputation. It is recommended that staffing agencies take extreme measures to ensure

there no infringements of confidentiality between themselves, their clients and candidates.

This study confirmed that *role conflicts* between the staffing agency and the client's HR department resulted in acrimonious relationships that may lead clients to switch. It has been recognised that many HR departments actually impede the actions of a recruiter and become a hindrance; however it is best to avoid any conflicting actions that would jeopardise the client-staffing agency relationship. It is recommended that staffing agents abide by any guidelines, expectations or rules set forth by the client's HR department.

A key learning was to discover the value and expertise gained when staffing agencies employed *professional recruiters*. This type of professional is hired to recruit candidates from industries they have had already worked in. It was also learnt that professional recruiters are perceived by their clients to have an extended reach and deep network of contacts which is a benefit when recruiting candidates. This strategy of using professional recruiters brings credibility and expertise to the staffing agency and results in the agency to attract and retain better qualified candidates.

The underpinning success factor for staffing agencies is to provide the best possible 'product' to meet their clients' needs - the 'product' being the candidates and temporary workers. This research has stressed the importance of having the right *'fit'* of candidate to fulfil the client's recruitment needs. In consideration of this premise and the findings of the study, it is recommended that practitioners invest and *develop their candidates and temp workers*. Such investment will result in the following benefits for staffing agencies:

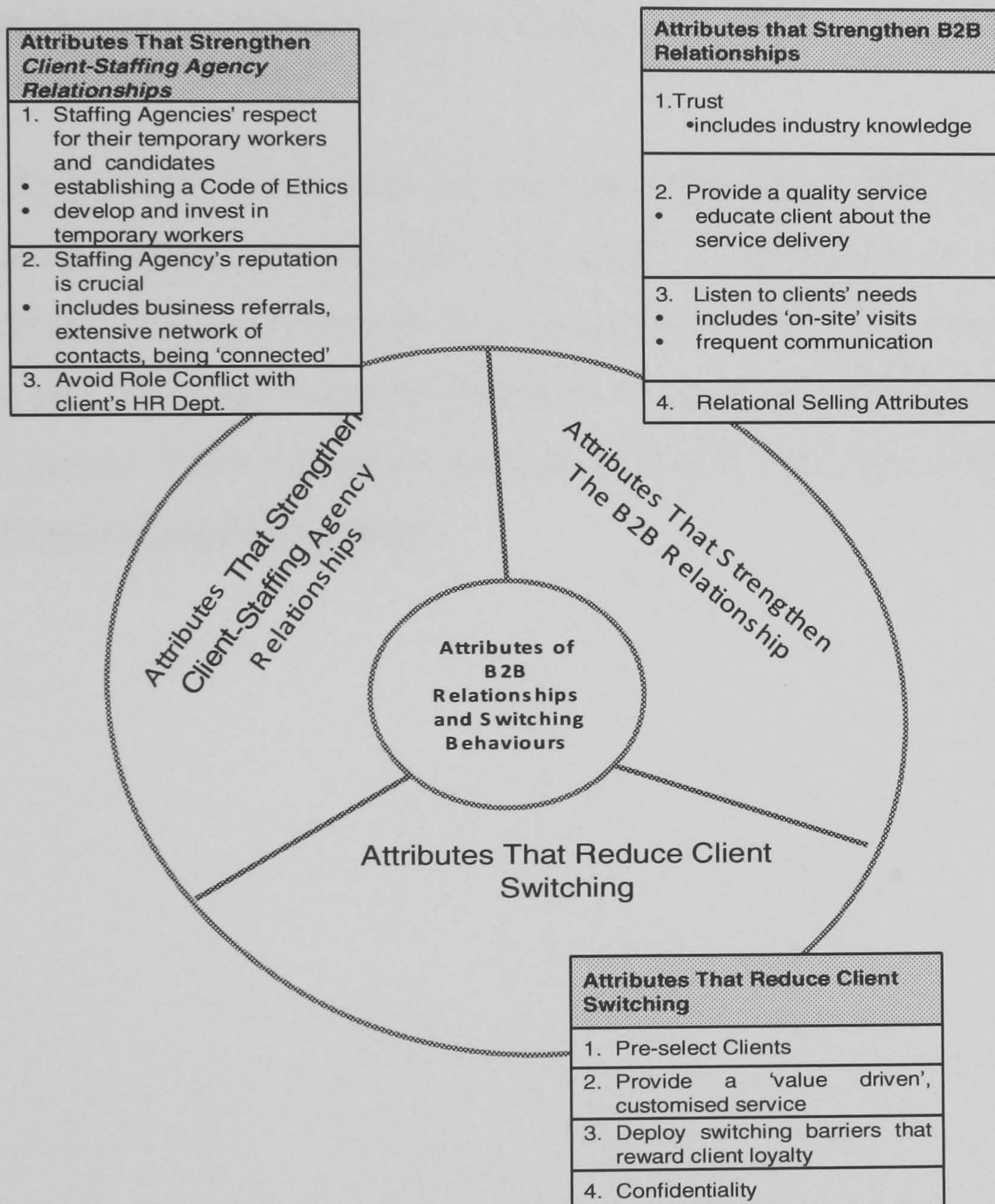
- Reduce attrition of candidates and temps
- Improve the staffing agency's reputation
- Able to fulfil clients' requests to have the same temp come back for another assignment

9.11 Attributes of B2B Relationships and Switching Behaviours

Figure 9.1 listed below provide a model that incorporates the *key attributes* found in the research. The attributes have been divided into the following three key learning:

- Attributes that strengthen Client-Staffing Agency Relationships
- Attributes that strengthen Client-Staffing Agency Relationships
- Attributes that reduce client switching

Figure 9.1 Attributes of B2B Relationships and Switching Behaviours



The value of figure 9.1 is that it provides a concise overview of the *key attributes* found in this research that influence B2B switching behaviour and strengthen B2B

relationships. Figure 9.1 also demonstrates how the three learning subjects (shown in the large circle) are interdependent. It can be concluded in order to reduce client switching firms must also adapt the attributes of strengthening the B2B at the same time. In other words, it is more effective for service providers to have a strategy that incorporates *both* switching behaviours *and* attributes that strengthen B2B relationships. A key contribution of this study is to recommend that service providers address both client switching and the attributes that build relationships simultaneously.

9.12 Managerial Contributions: Knowledge Gained from Comparing Tier 1 and Tier 2-3 Staffing Agencies

Section 5.5 provided a discussion that outlined the operating differences between the two types of staffing agencies – tier 1 and tier 2-3. The former are executive search firms and tier 2-3 provide hourly paid temporary workers. The specific nature and value of this study has been the ability to compare the findings from these two different groups. Table 9.2 below summarises the findings when comparing the two different types of staffing agencies.

Table 9.2 Key Learning's of Tier 1 and Tier 2-3 Staffing Agencies

Key Subject Area	Tier 1 Executive Search Firms	Tier 2 - 3 Temporary Staffing Agencies
Switching and Non-switching Costs and Barriers	Switching barrier, formal contract, minimal flexibility	Non-switching barriers to reward loyalty
Attributes of B2B Relationships (trust, commitment, loyalty, risk) ○ Client Relationship	Trust with clients and candidates is most important; trust is linked to agency's reputation; commitment also critical ○ Relational and focused; prolonged	Trust with clients, some extent with candidates ○ Generally, more transactional; short lived
Relational Selling Attributes; adaptive selling, team selling, gift giving, 'salesperson as a boundary spanner	Adaptive selling and team selling used	Generally all attributes used at various times
Nature of B2B Service Relationship (core product, indirect functions) ○ Differentiating Factors	Selling 'recruitment' services only; not providing 'indirect functions' ○ Ability to build trust with clients and candidates ○ Network of global contacts ○ Industry expertise ○ Hire professional recruiters ○ Reputation ○ Finding the best candidate ○ Referrals are crucial	Recruitment and staffing services Provide a variety of Indirect functions ○ Speed of filling vacancies ○ Offering quality temps ○ Providing auxiliary HR services
Staffing Agency's Role -why clients use their service ○ Preselect clients	Provide recruitment services only; search is prolonged, intense, and targeted ○ Extensive preselecting of clients	Varity of reasons, see table 5.4; search is quick and random ○ Some preselecting of clients

A key learning from this study is that tier 1 agencies have a much greater ability to form trusting relationships with their clients and candidates than tier 2-3 agencies. Tier 1 agencies rely on their reputation and business referrals more than tier 2-3 agencies. Table 9.2 indicates that tier 1 agencies are only providing recruitment services; hence they must perform this service with exceptional service quality. Tier 2-3 must also provide the best possible temps, however their clients are also relying on them to provide a variety of related HR services and 'indirect functions'.

It was found that the tier 2-3 agencies that retained their clients were applying many of the relational factors used by tier 1 firms. This was evident with the tier 2-3 agencies that respected their temporary workers and provided skill development. It can be concluded that respect and development of temps and candidates is required for both tier 1 and tier 2-3 agencies.

This research has shown that the success of any staffing agency is directly related to the quality of the candidates. The principles used to *pre-select candidates* by tier 1 agencies should be considered as a guideline for tier 2-3 agencies. In addition, tier 2-3 agencies must take greater care to match the temp's skill set to the client's needs. In other words, tier 2-3 agencies they must put more effort into the '*quality of fit*' instead of the speed of filling the position.

Clients affirmed that they evaluate an agency's reputation by the benevolence and respect they provide to their candidates. Tier 2-3 agencies should adapt the coaching and trust building that tier 1 agencies offer their candidates. This recommendation further supports the argument above, whereby an agency's success is derived from the success of their candidates.

Chapter 7 described two situations whereby clients switched from a tier 1 agency (see triad 1 and triad 6 analysis). The switching factors included miscommunication about the hiring process, continuity and an act of negligence. The latter being an incident whereby the client thought the staffing agency was trying to pouch a

candidate they had placed at their firm. These incidents led to the following recommendations for staffing agencies:

- educate clients about the hiring process (time frames, fees, expectations)
- formalize a strategy to replace account executives along with a communication plan to inform clients of any staff changes
- establish and communicate clear guidelines that outline the staffing agency's position about contentious issues and may cause conflict, such as: 'place and poach' a candidate; candidate background checks

Both tier 1 firms and tier 2-3 staffing agencies can learn from the above discussion and take appropriate actions to ensure these potential switching factors are minimised.

9.13 Generalisation

This research has confirmed that a trusting B2B relationship is linked with cooperation and adaption (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), greater performance (Simpson and Mayo, 1997; Boyle et al., 1992) and plans to continue the relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). It also affirmed the value of retaining clients (Roos and Gusstafsson, 2007; Zeithaml et al., 1996) and the need for service providers to offer customised and personalised services.

Figure 9.1 outlined the three key attributes necessary to strengthen B2B relationships while minimising client switching. The sample for this study was selected from the recruitment industry, a sector within the service industry that is experiencing tremendous growth and challenges. The findings and contributions of the research can be applied to many B2B service sectors that would include:

- legal services
- accounting services
- business consultants
- payroll services
- cleaning services
- catering and/or food services

- employee development/training
- equipment maintenance services
- property maintenance and landscaping services
- leasing services for vehicles, trucks, production equipment
- financial services including insurance and banking

The above service industries have the common attributes of creating interdependent relationships with their clients (Gronroos, 2001; Gremler et al., 1998) while providing customised (Parasuraman et al., 1991) quality services (Hogg, 2001). To effectively differentiate themselves from competitors and to serve their clients effectively these service companies should adapt the relational selling attributes (Guenzi et al., 2007) discussed in this research. As this study has outlined, service companies will benefit from a high involvement relationship (Ford et al., 2003) and relational exchange (Fink et al., 2007) with their clients.

The contributions of this study would also benefit service industries where there is a relational need that incorporates the norms of mutual trust (Mouzas et al., 2007), long-term orientation and shared goals (Gundlach and Murphy, 1993; Dwyer et al., 1987). It was proven that clients are seeking supplier partnerships with flexibility (Grant, 1996; Badaracco, 1991) and the full benefit of exchanging information (Conner and Prahalad, 1996) that allows both parties to experience mutual benefits and enhanced profitability (Dyer and Singh, 1998).

9.14 Limitations of the Study

The strength of a research project lies in the recognition of its limitations. These limitations may serve as a starting point for future research on the subject of switching behaviours within the B2B services sector. Some of the limitations of this study have already been discussed in section 6.7. The purpose of this section is to provide a broad overview of the limitations.

A major limitation of the study relates to the research design as it was an exploratory study with a small sample size. The broad cross-sectoral design could also limit the applicability of the findings to any specific company or industry sector.

Interviews were conducted in Calgary, Canada, a diverse city in excess of a million people. There is the potential limited applicability of the findings to other Canadian cities or other geographical areas. It is suggested that this research be replicated in other cities and countries in order to contribute to the generalisation of the findings.

An additional limitation may arise due to the fact that only one or two representatives from the client's firm were interviewed. The managers/executives interviewed were directly related to the decision to switch service providers; however other representatives of the relationship which will reduce the chances of the client switching company opinions were not obtained. Ideally, gathering data from as many people as possible involved in the switching decision *and* the affects of the switching decision would have provided greater insight.

The study examined data from a single industry, the staffing agency sector that embodies many general characteristics of other service industries. However, it is noted the research focused on one industry provided a narrow view of service providers and may limit the generalisability of the results. Future research may replicate this study using other industries to verify and add additional knowledge.

A longitudinal study that tracked client trust and commitment over time would have been ideal and potentially added greater depth to the findings. Such a study would have delved deeper into how trust is maintained and enhanced as the relationship grows. It would have also revealed how the length of a relationship impacts a clients switching decision in the event a critical incident occurs.

A limitation may arise since the study did not consider a client's previous switching experiences (Sharma and Patterson, 2000), a subject discussed in the literature review, section 4.8.4. Clients with frequent switching experience are more prone to switching than clients who have little switching experiences (Burnham et al., 2003). In addition the study did not take into account the clients' level of risk aversion. Companies who are risk aversive exhibit differences in loyalty to their service

providers (Ganesh et al., 2000), are less adventurous (Raj, 1980) and are least likely to switch.

A potential limitation of this study was the number of cases studied and raises concern over the representativeness of the sample. Thirty-eight cases were investigated for this research. The literature suggests there are no precise guidelines to the number of cases to be included (Perry, 1998). It would have been advantageous to have studied more cases however there were certain time constraints to guide the research activities.

The use of case studies and using the paradigm of realism presents limitations surrounding the replication of this research. Replication in realism research allows for different contexts to produce different findings. One reason for this situation is that research findings may be affected by the way that interviews were conducted in different cases, rather than by the contexts around the phenomena (Sobh and Perry, 2006). For example, different levels of rapport with different respondents may provide findings that similar levels of rapport would not have. To prevent this from occurring with this study, the researcher followed a rigid interview protocol for each case study which minimised the chances of corrupting the collection and analysis of data.

The limitations outlined above do not in any way impair, or render less the significance of the results and findings. They are outlined to acknowledge their existence and to encourage future research on B2B switching behaviours in the B2B services sector.

9.15 Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the limited *qualitative research on B2B switching behaviours in the service sector* there are several areas that would benefit from future research attention. Though justified in this research study, the use of case studies has resulted in certain limitations on the use of the results. A general recommendation for further research on switching behaviours within B2B would be to study this issue on a wider scale

using quantitative research. There is an acknowledged need to test any theoretical hypotheses for statistical generalisability with a quantitative research study. This research involved theory building and a quantitative study could be used to test the findings presented here. Quantitative research could be industry sector specific testing the findings in selective environments or, a broad cross sectoral study. In addition, a quantitative study could accurately determine the priority of which switching factors are more predominant in a study.

The geographical and industry specific limitations identified in section 9.14 could be overcome by the completion of research of a qualitative or quantitative nature in other areas and involving service sectors other than staffing agencies. This would facilitate comparison findings from other sources outside of Canada or from other service sectors.

This study would benefit from a longitudinal perspective whereby it would be interesting to re-visit respondents and determine how their views on switching have changed. A study over time would be beneficial to trace the continuous development of B2B relationships and evaluate how switching activities have influenced B2B relationships.

A key trend identified in this research has been the growth of companies using HRO as a major operating practice (Bates, 2002; Grundy, 1998; Klaas, 1998; Frazee, 1997). A study to monitor this growth and developments of this phenomenon and to determine how service providers will market themselves to clients to fulfil their HRO strategies would be very worthwhile.

There are general themes that have evolved from this research which would benefit from future research of either a quantitative or qualitative nature. For example, future research to determine the criteria determining how service providers are now pre-selecting their clients would add valuable insight on the theory of B2B relationships.

In addition, research focused in the area of '*win-back strategies*' (Evans, 2002) would complement the switching theory this research has contributed to. This study

has shown the value of retaining clients and provided the reasons why B2B clients switch. It would be worthwhile to investigate what strategies are being used by service providers to 'win-back' clients who have switched.

This study discussed the trends that are occurring in the staffing agency industry (The Economist, 2007; Vu, 2005; Frazee, 1997). One of these trends is the need for staffing agencies to be competitive, established and knowledgeable of the recruiting industry. This research confirmed that these traits have become critical success factors for this industry and are prerequisites sought by clients when selecting a staffing agency. Considering the importance of these success factors, future research would be needed to determine how staffing agencies develop and promote these factors to enable them to differentiate their services in an ever increasingly competitive market.

A key finding of this research was to discover that some service providers have established a code of ethics. It is suggested that future studies determine the impact such codes have in reducing conflict (Tsaliskis and Fritzsche, 1989) and client switching. It would be interesting to determine if such codes have an impact on lowering the incidents of opportunistic behaviour and breaches of trust within B2B relationships. Further research could explore the premise that a code of ethics is useful in defining and clarifying business practices and is part of a total quality approach (Schlegelmilch and Houston, 1990). It could also be determined if a code of ethics within a service industry is an effective tool towards self-regulation (Carasco and Singh, 2003).

It is suggested that additional research focus on the subject of how a company's *reputation* affects its ability to hire the best possible employees (Turban and Cable, 2003). Theoretically, a positive reputation is valuable because it can provide information to a firm's constituents such as customers, investors, and potential applicants (Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). Future research could build on current theories that a firm's reputation influences the success in attracting quality applicants (Taylor and Collins, 2000). Moreover little is known about factors

that influence job seekers, knowledge about potential employers and the consequences of such knowledge (Cable and Turban, 2001). This research has validated that some clients prefer to work with service providers who have an established reputation. Future research could focus on the effects and influence reputation has on all three parties – the staffing agency, clients and candidates.

A future managerial opportunity would be for the staffing agencies to contract out the training of their candidates to trade schools. In a similar fashion, staffing agencies could form partnerships with universities to ensure they have priority access to graduates. An opportunity exists whereby staffing agencies could provide a variety of scholarships, cooperative study/work programmes or sponsor training programmes at various educational institutes. By supporting such initiatives the staffing agency would be guaranteed a continuous supply of qualified candidates. Future research would determine if such alliances are viable and determine the procedures necessary to form such win-win partnerships.

9.16 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the conclusions and recommendations and provided contributions of theory concerning switching behaviours and attributes of B2B relationships for academics and practitioners. The research discussed the importance of the service sector in today's economy and reviewed the advantages of retaining clients.

This study has extended academic knowledge of switching behaviour in the *B2B* service sector and has shown that trust is the '*life blood*' of all successful B2B relationships. The findings revealed that a breach of trust resulted in the client switching without any hesitation. A significant contribution of this research was the model outlining the '*Attributes of B2B Relationships and Switching Behaviours*' (see figure 9.1). This model lists the four key attributes of trust, providing a quality service, listening to clients' needs and relational selling strategies as requirements for to build and strengthen B2B relationships.

A significant contribution of this study was to identify the need for service providers to *simultaneously* address client switching behaviours and the attributes that strengthen B2B relationships. Service marketers and practitioners must formulate strategies that incorporate the benefits of switching behaviours and relationship attributes. Combining these two strategies will have a great impact for retaining clients and strengthening the client-service provider relationship.

Marketing researchers have studied switching behaviours and stressed the importance of knowing what actions service firms, or their employees cause customers to switch from one service provider to another (Yanamandram and White, 2006; Lam et al., 2004; Grace and O’Cass; 2001; Keaveney, 1995). This research has provided insight and provided contributions that will answer marketers’ enquiries into the causes of B2B switching and advises service providers to action the recommendations outlined in this research.

This qualitative study explored the switching behaviours from the perspective of the client, the ‘*switched to*’ and ‘*switched from*’ service providers. The robustness and richness of the data has made significant contributions for practitioners and to marketing theory. The sample researched, staffing agencies, is an industry undergoing considerable change and growth and will experience even greater challenges in future years. This research has identified a trend for companies to deploy HRO (Human Resources Outsourcing) contracts worth billions of dollars, a further testimonial to the importance of the staffing agency industry in today’s global economy. This study has provided numerous recommendations for service providers and marketing academics that will be essential to understand client switching behaviours and the attributes that strengthen B2B relationships.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Letter Requesting Interview From Potential Respondents



July 18, 2006
Dear Colleague;

Greetings from Scotland

I am seeking your assistance with the vital research project I have undertaken for the past 3 years. The next phase is to collect data and I need your assistance. I am conducting interviews next month in Calgary, Alberta of people who are or have used the services of a Staffing/Personnel Agency.

Purpose of the research:

1. To investigate how Staffing/Personnel Agencies create loyalty
2. Determine the reasons why clients of Staffing/Personnel Agencies become disloyal

Interviews: conducted August 10 – 28, 2006 in Calgary, Alberta; 45-60 minutes

If you or anyone in your office has used a Staffing/ Personnel Agency to fill a temporary or long term vacancy I am most interested in speaking with them. Kindly email me and I will arrange a convenient time to discuss this valuable research project.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated and will provide extensive knowledge to enable me to complete this research project. Your participation will give you an insight into cutting edge research on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Looking forward to speaking with you soon.

Regards,

Michael J. Marck,
Ph.d Researcher, University of Strathclyde
Glasgow, Scotland, UK
Telephone: 011- 44 -141- 548-4378

Email: m.marck@strath.ac.uk

Websites: www.marketing.strath.ac.uk

www.marketing.strath.ac.uk/staff_profiles/staff_aca/staff_marc.htm

Appendix B: List of Respondents Triad Interviews –Clients

Triad Interviews: Clients (identifying code used in analysis)	Respondent's Years of industry experience Hiring Needs
Telecommunications Company -large crown corporation; national provider of delivery services (C1)	Two HR Managers 25 years; 9 years Permanent, supervisors
Engineering Firm -major defence contracts for Canadian and US government (C2)	HR Manager 22 years Temporary Clerical
Bus Company -inter-city service throughout North America (C3)	Operations Manager 8 years Temporary Clerical
Manufacturer -office furniture -using one staffing agency for HRO (C4)	Production Manager 6 years Temporary Production workers
Petroleum Producer -major multinational company -head office in Calgary, Canada (C5)	IT Manager 8 years Temporary IT engineers
Oil and Gas Producer -midsize exploration company (C6)	Two HR Managers 8 years; 6 years Executive Search
Oil and Gas Producer -midsize exploration company (C7)	Two HR Managers 8 years; 6 years Temporary Clerical

**Appendix C: List of Respondents Triad Interviews – Staffing Agencies
(‘Switched to’ Agencies and ‘Switched from’ Agencies)**

Triad Interviews: ‘Switched To’ Agencies (identifying code used in analysis)	Respondent’s Title and Years of experience
International Agency -provides temporary hiring’s (T1)	Branch Manager - 6 years
Local Staffing Agency -well known in the local market -provides temporary clerical staff (T2)	Vice President -20 years
Small Local Staffing Agency -provides all recruiting service (T3)	President - 15 years
Local Agency (T4) -specialises in temporary industrial	Account Manager - 2 years
Small Local Staffing Agency -specialises in IT placements(T 5)	President -18 years;
Small Local Executive Search Firm (T 6)	Partner/Co-owner – 16 years
Large National Contingency Agency (T 7)	Owner/President – 22 years

Triad Interviews: ‘Switched From’ Agencies (identifying code used in analysis)	Respondent’s Title and Years of experience
International Office (Fr1) -contingency hiring	Branch Manager - 30 years
Local Staffing Agency -provides temporary clerical staff (Fr2)	Account Manager- 3 years
Small , Local Staffing Agency (Fr 3) -fills temporary and mid manager positions	Owner - 24 years
Local Agency -specialises in temporary industrial (Fr4)	Account Manager - 4 years
National Agency -fill professional positions (Fr 5)	Account Manager -10 years
International Staffing Agency (Fr 6) -very large firm; executive placements	Vice President – 15 years
Local Staffing Agency -variety of temporary hiring’s (Fr 7)	Account Manager- 6 years

Appendix D: List of Respondents Single Interviews –Staffing Agencies and Clients

Single Interviews: Staffing Agencies (identifying code used in analysis)	Respondent's Title and Years of experience
Small Executive Search Agency (SA1)	President – 15 years
Temporary and contingency Agency (SA 2)	President - 13 years
Small Contingency Agency (SA 3)	President - 8 years
Small Executive Search Agency (SA 4)	Partner - 12 years
International Staffing Agency; specialize in the Oil and gas sector (SA 5)	Account Manager -10 years; (Graduate, London School of Economics, MBA)
Staffing Agency (SA 6)	President – 16 years Vice President – 11 years
Large National Contingency Agency (SA 7)	Account Manager- 9 years
Small Contingency Agency Oil and Gas Sector (SA 8)	President – 7 years

Single Interviews: Clients (identifying code used in analysis)	Respondent's Title and Staffing Needs
National Insurance Company (SC1) -branch office, 25 employees	Regional Vice President; temporary, clerical
Medical Office (SC2)	Office Manager; temporary, clerical
College (SC 3) -registrar's office	Office Administrator; temporary clerical
Small Business Consulting Firm (SC 4)	Owner; contingency, sales rep
City Council Department (SC 5)	Office Manager; temporary, clerical
Dept. Provincial Government (SC 6)	Office Manager temporary, clerical
Car Leasing Firm (SC 7)	Owner; temporary clerical
Small Law Firm (SC 8)	Partner; Temporary, clerical
Multinational Oil Producer (SC 9)	HR Manager; Temporary, clerical

Appendix E Interview Questions for the Triad Interviews

Triad Interviews	Questions Asked
<p>7 Client Interviews</p>	<p>Please explain the reason(s) and situation that caused you to switch.</p> <p>Discuss how the following attributes affected the B2B relationship: trust, commitment, loyalty and risk.</p> <p>Did the staffing agency use any particular sales strategies to build/weaken the B2B relationship?</p> <p>Describe the services and values the agency provided/failed to provide; were you satisfied with the level of feedback and communication</p>
<p>7 ‘Switched To’ Staffing Agency Interviews (won the client’s business)</p>	<p>Why are you successful for having clients switch to your staffing agency? -focus on the specific switching incident(s) that lead the client to <i>switch to</i> this agency-</p> <p>Discuss how the following attributes affected the B2B relationship: trust, commitment, loyalty and risk. How does your agency strengthen these attributes with your clients?</p> <p>Do you use any particular sales strategies to build the B2B relationship? Do you give your clients gifts?</p> <p>Describe the services and values you provide to your clients. Explain how you provide client feedback and communication.</p>
<p>7 ‘Switched From’ Staffing Agency Interviews (lost client’s business)</p>	<p>What are the factors or situations whereby customers switch from your agency? -focus on the specific switching incident(s) that caused the client to <i>switch from</i> this agency-</p> <p>Discuss how the following attributes affected the B2B relationship: trust, commitment, loyalty and risk. How does your agency strengthen these attributes with your clients?</p> <p>Do you use any particular sales strategies to build the B2B relationship? Do you give your clients gifts?</p> <p>Describe the services and values you provide to your clients. Explain how you provide client feedback and communication.</p>

Appendix F: Interview Questions for the 'Single' Interviews

Single Interviews	Questions Asked
<p>9 Clients Interviewed</p>	<p>Please explain the reason(s) and situation that caused you to switch.</p> <p>Discuss how the following attributes affected the B2B relationship: trust, commitment, loyalty and risk.</p> <p>Did the staffing agency use any particular sales strategies to build/weaken the B2B relationship?</p> <p>Describe the services and values the agency provided/failed to provide; were you satisfied with the level of feedback and communication</p>
<p>8 Staffing Agencies Interviewed</p>	<p>Why are you successful for having clients switch to your staffing agency?</p> <p>Discuss how the following attributes affected the B2B relationship: trust, commitment, loyalty and risk. How does your agency strengthen these attributes with your clients?</p> <p>Do you use any particular sales strategies to build the B2B relationship? Do you give your clients gifts?</p> <p>Describe the services and values you provide to your clients. Explain how you provide client feedback and communication.</p>

Appendix G: Interview Transcript: Triad Interview 1, Client Interview

Triad 1
Client Interview
Respondents, HR Staffing Managers, 'GB' and 'CK'
-using a tier 1 Staffing agency
Location: Respondents' office
Researcher: MM
August 23, 2006 12 noon – 1:15 pm

MM : Opened interview thanking respondents for their time and explained the purpose of the interview; the respondents would provide the names of the staffing agencies they *switched from* and *switched to*, as long as they could remain anonymous, which was agreed to by the researcher

MM: Could you begin by describing the situation and chain of events that caused you to switch staffing agencies

GB: We were using S-Staffing, we switched because the communication process between us and S-Staffing wasn't effective . . . it was quite poor; it became clear to us that the less communications from S-Staffing was occurring because they were doing less and less for us . . . the quality of the services started to slip

MM: Can you explain in detail?

CK: We never knew where S-Staffing was in fulfilling our recruitment needs . . . infrequent communication between us . . . it seemed once they got the contract the amount of work effort they put into our recruitment assignment decreased

MM: What was S-Staffing's role? Tell me why you are using a staffing agency.

GB: We are hiring about 30 operations managers . . . S-Staffing's services include, advertising, receipt of candidates resumes, pre-screening, conducting telephone pre-screening interviews, the first face-to-face interview, a computer literacy check, reference check and then the final step was for us to conduct the final interview to determine who would be hired . . . so it is safe to say that S-Staffing did 90% of the work . . . the upfront work . . . the recruitment activities which they should have been good at

MM: Were there security checks done . . . did the staffing agency conduct the security background checks?

GB: No, it is our policy that we conduct them

CK: This is a national contract S-Staffing was chosen by our head office . . . with

no field input . . . once the contract was put in place, we were supposed to coordinate the activities with S-Staffing . . . this contract was worth millions of dollars since many of our offices across Canada were also hiring managers with S-Staffing

MM: Any other factors that led to the switching decision?

GB: As the weeks went on, S-Staffing would send us the best candidates . . . but the numbers of the candidates they sent never jived with the number we saw . . . there was discrepancy with the number of people being interviewed and screened . . . it seems S-Staffing couldn't keep track of their recruitment processes . . . things started to get uneasy . . . we couldn't trust S-Staffing to honestly tell us how the process was going or when the recruitment campaign would be finished . . . it was critical to get these managers hired to meet our hiring targets . . . then S-Staffing stopped sending us candidates

MM: Who was your local S-Staffing contact?

CK: Michelle (last name was provided)

MM: So . . . S-Staffing couldn't supply candidates? Could you explain in more detail?

GB: We thought we had *two dedicated local* S-Staffing account reps working on our account . . . turns out we had one, and she handled numerous other accounts at the same time . . . this project was so critical to our operation we needed two reps from S-Staffing

CK: I called S-Staffing, asking to speak to Michelle, only to learn from the receptionist that she quit . . . S-Staffing never communicated with us that our account rep quit . . . and we'd never had known if we hadn't called S-Staffing!

GB: At that point we lost all faith in S-Staffing . . . it seemed they conned us . . . told us we'd be getting top rate, profession recruitment services by two of their most experienced recruiters, and here it was we had just one person working part time for us

MM researcher's Note: continuity issue between the agency and client

CK: There was also the issue of the candidate's quality . . . at first we received excellent candidates . . . people we hired, excellent . . . but then, the candidates they put forward did not have the required skills . . . the quality of the candidates started to slip, and we weren't hiring any of them

GB: It seems it's just a numbers game for S-Staffing . . . all about money . . . S-Staffing was not honest with us . . . we couldn't trust them at all . . . we switched to another agency

MM: What was S-Staffing's reaction when you switched?

GB: They said they had their own internal staffing issues . . . staff shortages . . . they apologized for not informing us immediately of the situation . . . that was far too late, we switched to another agency . . . they acted in bad faith . . . failed to get us involved, basically the situation went from bad to worse!

CK: We were considering S-Staffing for another major staffing/hiring project . . . not now, turns out we look bad due to their poor efforts . . . and we suffered due to their incompetencies

MM: Any other issues that caused you to switch?

GB: Yes . . . ultimately we switched when we discovered our account rep left without anyone from S-Staffing calling us

Note: GB begins a discussion about 'base-class project' . . . D.D.I is a company called Developmental Dimensions International . . . they do all of the recruiting for GM (General Motors) . . . production workers . . . the recruiting is done by D.D.I. . . the first day GM sees the new employee is on production floor ready to go, as employee of GM

MM researcher's Note: HRO, Human Resources Outsourcing example

MM: How was trust initiated between you and S-Staffing? Did trust strengthen the relationship? . . . or in your case, how was trust weakened?

GB: Initially we trusted S-Staffing . . . they had a good reputation, a national agency . . . and their size lead us to believe they could handle our recruitment needs . . . we had some good meetings with them . . . they listened to our needs . . . S-Staffing had a good handle on what had to be done

CK: We started off well, S-Staffing was confident and very qualified . . . they did send us some great candidates who we hired . . . but after a couple of weeks, there were fewer candidates being put forward and the quality just wasn't there . . . and we hired fewer candidates

MM: Were there any situations where trust or commitment was broken or formed between yourself and S-Staffing?

CK: S-Staffing did a lousy job recruiting . . . S-Staffing was told that all of our employees who applied must be screened in . . . we learned from our employees who had applied that some were screened out by S-Staffing . . . that caused a lot of internal problems we couldn't trust S-Staffing . . . trust was lost in this incident, we always had to check that they were doing their job right

MM: Do you feel there was a sense of commitment between yourself and S-Staffing?

CK: Yes, during our first meetings . . . and getting good candidates, I'd say S-Staffing was committed to us . . . but it faded fast . . . we were not loyal to them . . . when things weren't getting done . . . and our account rep quit . . . we switched

MM: Why do you use a staffing agency? What value does the staffing agency bring to you?

CK: We have too much to do (i.e. the HR department) we are working on our new organisational structure . . . we consider hiring as 'non-value added work' . . . our roles in HR have become more integrated with operations . . . more strategic role within the organisation . . . we consider hiring as, screening and recruiting . . . we'd have to interview 140 people to find 30 qualified candidates . . . it was decided to have S-Staffing do the hiring process . . . S-Staffing can do the routine hiring, while we have more worthwhile activities to do

GB: We are not recruiters . . . recruiting has become a specialty . . . they (the agencies) do the pre-qualifying . . . we do the final selection . . . the interviewing . . . we still make the job offer . . . one year we advertised for vacancies . . . we got over 1,000 applications for 10 vacancies

CK: One advantage the agency has is that they are connected to a greater supply of candidates than we are . . . we normally do not do a lot of hiring . . . this hiring project was exceptional for us . . . we needed a lot of people within a short time frame . . . a hiring project like this is best for recruiters

MM: How was S-Staffing chosen?

GB: RFQ (request for purchase); a formal bidding process was undertaken

GB: Once S-Staffing got the contract, things were great . . . then they started to drop off . . . we never heard from them for several days . . . we had to chase them!

MM researcher's note: MM then asked the respondents to rank four qualities that are critical when hiring new employees

GB's Rankings:

1. Culture
2. Fit with the team
3. Quality of candidate
4. Agency's respect for the candidate

CK's Ranking:

1. Fit with team
2. Quality of candidate

3. Culture

4. Agency's respect for the candidate

MM: Did S-Staffing provide your organisation with any particular price discounts . . . or take any actions to build the sales relationship with you?

CK: Offering two dedicated account managers was a great selling feature for us . . . we met the account managers, so they did take the initiative to review how they were going to conduct their search . . . at the beginning the account reps called us frequently to provide a status update on what was happening . . . but that stopped after the first week

GB: We got special pricing due to the volume of hiring that was needed . . . the price was fine . . . we met with S-Staffing's branch manager several times and clarified the job requirements . . . a contract was signed, agreeing to the time frame of the recruitment project and price . . . the sales process was fine, they made efforts build a relationship with us . . . it was on the delivery end they failed

CK: During our initial meetings that S-Staffing stated they would provide two account reps due to the scope and urgency of this project

MM: Did S-Staffing visit your work site?

GB: Yes, a couple of times . . . to see firsthand the physical demands of the job

MM: Was the site visit worthwhile?

GB: Yes, I would say so, it demonstrated that S-Staffing was interested in our needs and wanted to see first-hand the physical demands of the positions they were recruiting for . . . the work environment . . . got a sense of our work rules, that demonstrated they were dedicated to doing the job, defining the specific job requirements . . . it gave them credibility in our eyes

MM: Would you recommend S-Staffing?

CK: No, they were just out for the money . . . we only wanted to use them for a short term . . . we used them to do the recruiting process . . . and they didn't even get that right.

**Appendix H: Interview Transcript; Triad Interview 1,
'Switched To' Staffing Agency**

Triad 1 Interview
'Switched To' Agency Interview
Respondent: Branch Manager 'CB'
-tier 1 Staffing Agency-
Location: Respondent's office
Researcher: MM
August 25, 2006 08:15 – 09:30 am

Background of respondent

-respondent is the Calgary Branch Manager; he manages two locations, city center and south side; has 12 and 6 employees respectively for the branches
-the respondent is taking a part time MBA and was very receptive to the interview, likely because of the fact that he is currently a grad student

MM: Began the interview by stating the purpose of the research is to study client switching behaviours and the B2B relationship. Researcher did not identify the client who 'switched to' respondent's staffing agency. The interview focused on client switching behaviours and actions this agency takes to strengthen B2B relationships

MM: Could you begin by explaining the reasons why clients switch to your branches

CB: We attract and retain clients because we ensure there is a '*fit*' between the candidate and vacancy . . . our quality of work is important . . . our success is directly related to finding the candidate who has the right '*fit*' for the position

CB: There are three '*fits*' we're considering . . . the fit of the candidate to the job, the fit of the candidate to the company . . . and lastly, the fit of the candidate to the boss . . . many agencies overlook this last '*fit*' . . . we match the candidate to the boss's management style

CB: The number one reason why people leave their job is because they don't get along with their boss . . . does the candidate need a '*driving type boss*' or a '*thank you*' type boss? . . . it is understanding how '*fit*' is so vital to filling a position that makes us successful

MM: How do you establish trust and loyalty with your clients?

CB: Getting the '*fit*' builds loyalty . . . you only get one chance to impress a client . . . supplying qualified candidates earns you loyalty and trust in this business

MM: How important is the relationship you have with your clients?

CB: It is vital; we must be aware of our clients' time . . . we respect the client is busy and only wants to hear from us if it is vital to the recruitment process . . . we don't call the client unless we have to . . . it is important to learn the frequency of communicating with a client . . . doing this builds trust

CB: A second way to earn trust is we take an interest in the client's business . . . a true interest . . . this also develops trust

MM: Any other trust building factors?

CB: Listening is so critical in relationship building . . . our account managers must be able to understand the client's needs . . . determine the qualifications needed to find the right candidate to make an accurate '*fit*' . . . we match the candidate's skills to the needs of the client . . . and this is all done by listening to the client . . . one of the most important aspects of this business

Discussion about using particular sales strategies and services this agency offers

MM: Describe some of the services and values your agency offers that builds the client-agency relationship

CB: Ok . . . one of the services we offer that is popular with clients is the 'temp-to-permanent' situation . . . this is sold heavily in Calgary

MM: Why is so popular with clients?

CB: It gives the client a period of time to evaluate the candidate . . . if the client does hire a temp, then they have saved recruiting time and they feel they have made a knowledgeable decision based on skills of the candidate . . . we make this service readily available and it is quite simple to put into action for both the client and candidate

MM: Do your sales reps/consultants handle these 'temp-to-perm' buy outs or do you negotiate them?

CB: Everything can be done with the consultant . . . this keeps the continuity and builds loyalty between the client and the consultant . . . it also keeps our consultants happy . . . they have full authorisation to complete the deal . . . it allows the consultant to manage their accounts . . . brings them pride . . . we reward them for sales . . . overall it is a win-win situation for all parties

MM: Do you give a price breaks to maintain client loyalty?

CB: Absolutely . . . we encourage our clients to be exclusive to us . . . we give 'exclusivity bonuses' and we give volume discounts

MM: I take it that the consultants do not need your approval when giving price discounts . . .

CB: Nope, not all . . . the consultants manage the accounts

Discussion about National vs. Local contracts

MM: Do you have national contracts?

CB: No . . . again it's all about continuity . . . furthermore, we make more money serving the client locally opposed to serving national contracts . . . we emphasize that we know the local market . . . this is a selling feature we offer, and we have found that the majority of clients want an agency that has a local presence and knows the local labour market

CB: National contracts have down falls at the local levels . . . there is a lack of pride and ownership at the branch level . . . there is too much time and effort to manage national contracts . . . our bonus structure for the consultants makes managing national contracts less desirable

CB then described how K-Staffing Services manages their Shell Canada contract

CB: Shell has a national recruitment contract with K-Staffing Services, however Shell's operations managers hire indirectly using other agencies . . . then everyone gets upset, Shell's HR department and K-Staffing Services

MM: Other activities you do that builds trust and loyalty?

CB: We are team oriented in the branches . . . we have two consultants working with each client . . . I really like to hear a client call in and ask to speak with either one of their consultants . . . that way the consultants would as a team to serve the client . . . and, if one of the consultants leaves, then we still have an experienced consultant available for the client . . . it's continuity again . . . also as you can see, I am the only person who has an office . . . it's all open plan office . . . you can see the various consultants working together . . . plus it's easier for me to manage my team using an open plan office

MM: How do you maintain quality? Quality of filling clients' vacancies?

CB: I have regular staff meetings . . . everyone knows the profitability levels of this office . . . everyone knows who our top 20 clients are . . . I don't have any secrets . . . the staff know all the numbers . . . the staff are as activity in this operation as I am . . . also, we offer profit sharing to our staff

MM: Do you guys do a lot of smoozing with your clients?

CB: We are aware of the clients' time . . . so we don't . . . plus, a lot of companies don't accept gifts today; we do events focused on our clients' business sector and their needs . . . seminars for the clients . . . tools to assist them at their jobs . . . we may have a special speaker come in and present a seminar about current trends in the oil and gas sector which our clients would be invited . . . again it's in line with the clients' needs . . . we don't give gifts . . . we may invite clients to special events locally like the Stampede . . . that's about it

CB: I may add, we spend a lot of money on our candidates . . . they are our external team . . . our candidates have an important role of representing this company to the clients, we will do whatever is necessary to improve a candidate so they feel good about themselves and about working for our company . . . such things as boosting their confidence, appearance, taking extra time to ensure there is a proper 'fit' . . . in a sense, the candidates are our ambassadors and a great source of referrals . . . a placed candidate today is highly likely tomorrow's client; our company's success depends on having a pool of qualified, available candidates

CB: To be successful we must be able to understand our client's needs and wants . . . and particularly know the speeds needed to fill their vacancies . . . the unemployment rate currently in Calgary today is 3.5%, that is the lowest its been in ten years . . . we have to hustle to find qualified candidates

MM: Any other factors or things you do to build the relationship with the client?

CB: Well, as I said, we have to get the right 'fit', so . . . we spend a lot of time and effort preparing our candidate before they start their assignment . . . ensure the candidate knows what is to be expected . . . we don't want the candidate to say in front of the client, "oh, I didn't know I have to type letters . . . or have to answer the telephone", the relationship with the client begins by having the best qualified and prepared candidates

MM researcher's note: MM then asked the respondent to rank four qualities that are critical when hiring new employees

CB's ranking: (for a short term temp position)

1. Agency's treatment of their temps
2. Quality of the candidate
3. Fit with the client's team
4. Culture (candidate fitting into the client's culture)

For a longer term, #3 and #4 would be reversed

MM: My research has indicated that clients like to feel their staffing agency is an 'arm of their company' (MM explained in more detail) do you agree?

CB: Totally agree, we consider ourselves partners with our clients' . . . furthermore, we have two customers we must deal with, the clients and the candidates

MM: Do you know who your company's top revenue generating clients are?

CB: Yes, I know the top twenty in Calgary and top 10 in Canada

Discussion about Apathy

CB: Apathy is not an issue . . . not at all in this industry

Discussion about placing and then stealing candidates

CB: Our company does not place and then steal . . . this is a partnership between our clients' and ourselves . . . we are always acting in the best interests of our clients' . . . and our candidates'

MM: Have you ever turned away customers? Or pre-selected your clients?

CB: If we know we cannot fill a position, then we will turn away a client . . . but it is rare . . . similarly, there are some clients we refuse . . . if they have a reputation for not paying their bills or if they mistreat our candidates . . . but again, that is very, very rare

CB: We grow our market share with the candidates we place . . . the candidates we place today are likely to become tomorrow's decision makers about their company's recruitment services . . . so, today's candidates are potentially tomorrow's clients!

MM: Anything else you do that brings value to the client?

CB: Well, our staff are on salary, not commission . . . which builds a culture of team work . . . the staff receive team performance bonuses

**Appendix I: Interview Transcript; Triad Interview 1,
'Switched From' Staffing Agency'**

Triad 1

'Switched from' Agency Interview

**Respondent: Branch Manager, 'AB',
-tier 1 Staffing Agency-**

Location: Respondent's office

Researcher: MM

August 25, 2006 10:00 – 11:30 am

MM: Began the interview by stating the purpose of the research is to study client switching behaviours and the B2B relationship. Researcher did not identify the client who had switched, instead focused on the switching behaviours that had been identified by the client who had switched

MM: Could you tell me a little about your agency?

AB: We have two companies, S-Staffing is the main one...S-Staffing is a generalist, on a permanent level we would do placements up to \$ 100 k . . . that's our limit; our other sister company does the higher level position recruiting . . . it's called Mergis

MM: Do the two companies work together (Mergis and S-Staffing)?

AB: No, they are run separately; Mergis has been around for 6 years, that's when Jim started it . . . S-Staffing' started in the 1940's . . . the S-Staffing name came into existence in the early 1990's . . . built with a lot of acquisitions . . . I have also been involved with a company called Addeco, established in 1995 . . . prior to coming to Canada I was with a major firm in London (UK)

MM: Could you describe factors and situations where your clients have switched from your agency

AB: Oh, I know all about reasons for clients to switch, here and in the UK (London); I have been in this business for 30 years . . . I started in London way back with Addeco; I have been in this office for 3 months, prior I was in the Toronto office, not many of us who have been around that long (since 1975)

MM: Do you enjoy it?

AB: I'm still here

AB: Clients switch for a variety of reasons . . . it all boils down to the level of service the client wants and our ability to deliver those services . . . if we don't deliver, the client will switch . . . the reasons could vary, but it usually centers around the quickness of filling a vacancy and the quality of the candidate . . . the quality of the 'fit' is critical for us and the client . . . in the end, it's all about service

MM: Do you have national contracts

AB: Yes

MM: How many employees do you have here?

AB: 11 employees

MM: What are some of the unique sales activities your company uses to attract new clients?

AB: There's nothing unique . . . I have done it all . . . all sorts of client hosting events special events, golf tournaments . . . years ago there was lots of client activities, nowadays, no one has the time . . . it has dropped off dramatically, but, if a client requests some form of entertainment or appreciation event, we'd definitely consider it

MM: Do you have dedicated account managers?

AB: Yes . . . and they manage accounts by specific industry

MM: By vertical?

AB: Yes

MM: Does your branch use any special sales strategies to strengthen the relationship with the client?

AB: As I mentioned, we sell in verticals, that way our account managers get to know the industry they are selling to very well . . . the clients prefer an account manager who truly knows their industry and the issues within that industry . . . we will give volume discounts, even a price break for repeat business . . . but price is not a big issue with our clients, service is the issue . . . and for new clients we write the service contract to suit their needs . . . no lengthy terms . . . no penalties whatsoever . . . the client is not locked in, and for the new clients this is a key selling point

MM: I heard one agency here in Calgary has social networking parties at a local night club . . . does your firm have client networking evenings?

AB: Smooze parties, booze parties, they've all been done before, but as I mentioned, those kind of events are very rare today . . . we will have a customer hosting event if the client requests it . . . take clients to sports events, that is more popular today

MM: Do you ever trade a job placement request that your firm can not fulfil to another agency . . . hand over the request to a competitor?

AB: The odd time...only with people I trust . . . I just don't blast it out . . . there's only 3 companies I'd trust here (in Calgary) . . . because I know them

MM researcher's note: MM then asked the respondent to rank four qualities that are critical when hiring new employees

AB: (from client's point of view)

1. Quality
2. Fit
3. Culture
4. Respect for the candidate ("3rd and 4th are really tied")

AB: What you've missed is service . . . which would be #1

MM: How do you define service?

AB: Being able to respond to customers' needs . . . in a timely and professional manner . . . that would definitely be #1

MM researcher's note: a general discussion about client switching began. Switching factors such as, speed of filling placements, quality of candidates, not listening to the client, being a nuisance to the client

MM then specifically focused the interview on the reason why the client had switched from this agency

MM: As I've mentioned, the nature of this research involves speaking with clients who have switched and with staffing agencies to achieve a better understanding of switching behaviour in this industry . . . a former client of yours stated they switched due to lack of continuity . . . a situation arising when their account rep had quit and no one from your agency contacted them . . . could you describe how continuity would influence a client to switch

AB: Sure . . . I understand; I can probably name that client because I was visiting him yesterday

MM note: the respondent is not talking about the same client the researcher interviewed

AB: I was out yesterday visiting with a client who had left us with my sales person, to see if we could win-back the business

MM: I know from my sales experience that sales reps leave

AB: It wasn't only that . . . that was only part of the problem . . . one of the problems in this business Michael is turn-over . . . it's notorious

AB: Internal turn-over for this industry is a problem . . . looking at 30-40% turn-over; when I was with Addeco in England, the turn-over was 60% of internal staff which is terrible . . . my staff ask me why there is so high of turn-over? . . . high turnover is endemic in the industry . . . if people can get this industry in their blood, they stay . . . if it's just a job and I get two years out of them, I consider myself lucky . . . so, the people I'm looking for must catch my eye, that will get them into the interview . . . and when I talk to them I'm looking for the intangibles . . . I'm looking for the fire in their eyes, the chemistry . . . all those things that fit into this office

. . . I can't provide that . . . they have to come with that, I can provide the location, training but I cannot provide the interest the energy level, you need all of that to succeed in this industry . . . I have 11 people here, some are new . . . and I'd say, probably half have those skills now, the other half don't . . . people come in, nice people, do a good job and eventually leave . . . two just left and went to very different industries . . . one went to the courts . . . the other one went back to HR, . . . if I lose them to the competition then that is something else . . . if they move outside the industry I don't care, I stay on good relationships with them . . . I try to convert them (former employees who have left) into clients

MM: So, are you aware that continuity is an issue?

AB: Yes, ironically, we also have had our own staffing problems at times

MM: What is the protocol of notifying the client that their account manager has quit?

AB: Normally within a week or two I would have a new account manager assigned to the account . . . I would visit the client with the new account manager . . . to re-start the client relationship . . . if I cannot get another account manager onto that particular account, then I take over until a new account manager is found

MM: Is there any communication to inform the client of the situation

AB: Yes, I either call or email the client, which I try to do within a week, but may not happen within a week . . . may be a bit later

MM: Does your company have any covenants that restrict employees moving to competitors?

AB: There is a standard covenant but we you can't use them . . . some are enforceable, it depends on the situation . . . generally when an employee leaves there is not much we can do

MM: conversation then focused other incidents that cause switching - staffing agency sending blanket email to all of their clients . . . misbehaviour of the candidate when working for the client - misuse of email , personal phone calls., breaches of confidentiality etc.

AB: Those are personal problems with the candidate . . . anyone did that here, they'd be out on the sidewalk (referring to his own employees and the candidates) . . . yes, from the client's perspective, these behavioural issues lead to switching

AB: Our employees sign an agreement with us . . . we monitor our employees emails; if an employee misbehaves in any way he'll get one shot, then he's out, I can't afford it . . . it's my name. . . we have 40 offices across Canada, 400 across North America . . . the business runs locally . . . my reputation is at stake, along with my branch's name and the S-Staffing name within the industry . . . we cannot allow our candidates or employees to misbehave

MM: I've heard that some clients will prefer a local firm before they go with a national firm is that true?

AB: Calgary has always been like that . . . some people still have parochial attitudes . . . even back in the 1970's it's grown a lot now . . . higher level of satisfaction in this market . . . you will find major local players . . . in this market there is no one major player . . . B-Staffing has been around as long as I can remember . . . her daughter runs it now . . . she is very active in the community (i.e. president of B- Staffing) . . . very high profile, always trying to get some freebie from the government . . . she knows all the politicians, and that's how she operates

MM: Is that needed in this business (i.e. being very locally involved)?

AB: Yes and no . . . it works for a local company because it is their livelihood we did not work like that in Toronto it depends on the market

MM: What is essential today for this industry?

AB: Getting to know exactly what the client wants . . . getting the right candidate as quick as you can . . . this can be difficult because sometimes the client isn't sure what they want . . . a solid understanding of the client's business operations also . . . getting to know the client's key players, the people who really make the decisions is critical for this business to succeed

MM: Do you conduct on-site visits?

AB: Yes, try to get out as quick as possible to visit the client . . . it's a good way to initiate the client relationship . . . plus you get a real feel of what's happening at the client's place of work . . . their culture . . . how busy they are . . . observe the reporting structure and hopefully meet other key managers from the client's side . . . I make an effort to meeting other contacts of the client . . . that way if the client's representative I have been dealing with were to quit, then I still a contact I can rely on to keep the business relationship alive

MM: My research has indicated that clients like to feel their staffing agency is an 'arm of their company' (MM explained in more detail) do you agree?

AB: That's the way we want the client to feel

MM: Is this the way you build trust with your clients?

AB: We want to be their recruitment arm of their company . . . we don't want them going anywhere else . . . we want them to ourselves . . . we must prove we are invaluable to them . . . we know their business, we know their decision makers, we have taken the time to know their operation and their culture . . . we must gain their trust to become their preferred supplier . . . and if we don't do all of that we won't get their business or be able to keep their business . . . trust is earned through hard work, providing the best services possible

MM: I have met some HR people who want to screen resumes . . . they don't want the staffing agency to do all the work, they still want to keep control of the process, have you found this?

AB: HR people are the most useless people . . . they are a constant thorn in my side and everyone else's . . . because HR is a made up position . . . they don't do anything . . . whenever any of my sales consultants say they are dealing with HR I say, 'that's nice but try to someone who can make a decision' . . . so we always try to work around HR . . . you can't ignore them because they always have a knock out vote in a large corporation . . . if you ignore them or antagonize them they won't be much help to you . . . you want them to be your friend but you don't want to deal with them . . . so, you want to keep them in the loop, give them the respect and deal with the people who make the decisions . . . this is not rocket science

AB: We are #3 in this business . . . I believe that manpower is #1 in this business . . . our firm and the leaders in this industry are now providing more and more HR services for the client . . . we call it recruitment placement outsourcing . . . which is basically, outsourcing *the entire* recruiting processing . . . for example, Manpower set up a deal with Ford Motors . . . they (Manpower) set up a deal with Ford, parts manufacturing owned by Ford handling all the recruitment to the point they do a 1,000 placements/year; our American agencies are now involved in these RPO contracts . . . and it's a new part of the business, say 6 or 7 years and growing . . . it's like a large corporation outsourcing their pay roll . . . then the administration of their benefit programmes to someone like Ceridian . . . it's just outsourcing the non-core business operations . . . and it is happening with the HR functions . . . more and more firms are getting out of the recruiting just like they have gotten rid of doing payroll

MM: What does RPO mean for your firm?

AB: More opportunity . . . we must provide a greater scope of services . . . our firm has had to change with the times too . . . we will have to ensure we have the staff who can provide all of these services . . . it also translates into mega contracts with fewer clients

MM: Can you do it?

AB: Yes, we already are in some cases

MM: *discussion about client apathy*

MM: In B2B situation some people are too apathetic to switch, do you find that in this industry?

AB: You're not going to find it in this market . . . this market is not apathetic today; clients will switch without giving it a second thought

MM: Can we talk about the services you offer your clients . . . do you offer the 'temp – to – permanent' service?

AB: Yes, all the time . . . the client buys out the temp contract, and that person becomes their regular employee . . . it is very popular today . . . it allows the client to determine very quickly if they want that person as a regular employee . . . it's a test of the candidate's abilities and see if they fit in with the client's organisation . . .this is a valuable service we offer the client

MM: What is the process to for this 'temp – to –permanent' hiring service? Is it complicated?

AB: We have clear policies on this issue . . . it's all in writing, in one way, we don't like if a client wants to permanently hire a candidate then we look at it two ways, we lose a good candidate, and secondly we don't make as much as if it were a straight permanent placement situation; if the order came in as a straight permanent placement we'd make more money than temp-hire

MM: Do the clients know that?

AB: Oh ya . . . and I tell them . . . this not a secret

MM: Does your competition know your prices?

AB: Christ, I hope so, if they don't they're not doing their job . . . I am not selling against the competition .. I am selling the benefits of using my office . . . I don't compete against other people . . . I am selling S-Staffing . . . this is what we cost and this is how we work for you . . . and if I get into a straight competitive situation, and I do sometimes, Manpower charges this, we're charging this, I say, make a decision . . . I am not selling on price . . . I am selling on service . . . and our prices are very similar anyways . . . because we don't control prices, the market does . . . you're a fool if you think you can control prices . . . the market does

MM: Does the temp ever make a secret deal with the employer . . . finish the contract and return after the temporary assignment is completed?

AB: In that situation we would bill the client . . . we would find out . . . we're not stupid . . . we have phones it doesn't happen often . . . 99.9% of the clients are honest . . . mind you, I have turned down clients . . . it does not happen often, but I have if they are dishonest . . . happens very, very rarely

MM: So . . . you're saying you select your clients?

AB: Yes, we avoid clients with bad credit ratings, clients who do not pay on time, or if we cannot fulfil the type of candidate they need, doesn't happen often

MM: Discussion about *win-backs* . . . winning back clients who have switched

AB: There is a client I have been trying to win-back for 7 months . . . a customer that this office lost

MM: Continuity issue?

AB: No, no . . . about service . . . apparently a difficult client to service . . . essentially it resulted in an internal turnover and essentially they told the client that they did not want to do business with them

AB: I would never tell a client worth half a million dollars or more we don't want to

deal with them, that's just stupid

MM: Do you have a win-back strategy for this client?

AB: Yes . . . we have to earn their business . . . it will take some time

MM: Did this involve an issue of not filling the client's vacancies with the right candidates?

AB: No, we were stupid, it was between the former branch manager and one of the account managers, it happened before I got here; I don't know all of details

MM: I am interested to hear why the client switched!

AB: A bit of nepotism . . . the manager's daughter was working here and she managed the account . . . it got weird . . . you don't say to a client, "you're too difficult to deal with" . . . basically that's what they said to the client . . . and the account manager quit . . . it's just bad management

AB: Clients switch because they are not getting what they want . . . same reason why I would switch, poor service

MM: True, but we see the switching signals and deal with it...

AB: Exactly . . . we deal with it and save the account

MM: Unless you don't see the switching signals

AB: Or you don't care . . . this account manager didn't care so much so it wasn't in her interest to serve the client

MM: A lot of clients prefer a face-to-face initial meeting? How do you feel about this?

AB: We insist on it, it's part of our program . . . whenever we get a call from a new client . . . we do a face-to-face . . . we want to see who we are dealing with it is the first opportunity for us to demonstrate our abilities and services to the client, it's time to establish a business relationship with the client . . . we do a site visit, we call this '*a site discovery*', which is critical for our business . . . we want to see the site, where the people are working, the working conditions, what they are doing, who they are working with, where they are sitting, those kinds of things

MM: Does the employer ever inflate these factors . . . make the position look better than it is?

AB: No . . . not really . . . and generally, whenever I can, I will go on that first call with our account manager . . . that way I can assist our account manager and I get to know the client

MM: Do the site visits help establish continuity?

AB: Absolutely

Appendix J: Interview Transcript: Single Interview, Staffing Agency Interview

Single Interview - SA 7, Staffing Agency
Respondent: Account Manager, 'AH'
- a tier 2 Staffing agency -
Location: Respondents' office
Researcher: MM
August 15, 2006 3:00 pm – 4:20 pm

AH described his background: 9 years with the company; they are a niche agency; they have 600 employees in Canada; offices in Red Deer, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Toronto, Australia. The company started by Mike D. who was a designer at Syncrude who recognised a staffing problem in the industry and started this company. There are not a lot of competitors; this firm is considered a specialist in recruiting for the oil and gas sector; the vast majority of their placements involve electrical engineers.

MM: Began the interview by stating the purpose of the research is to study client switching behaviours and the B2B relationship

MM: Could you begin by explaining the reasons why clients switch to your firm

AH: Clients tell me they can trust and rely on our services . . . they know we will do everything possible to fulfil their recruitment needs . . . plus when we complete the placement we will never 'steal' the candidate again; we leave the candidate there . . . in this industry, that is called 'place and poach' and we never do that

MM: Other reasons?

AH: Clients switch to us because we have a good reputation on the service end . . . we conduct a thorough screening of all candidates before they are presented to a client . . . sending the wrong candidate is disastrous for any recruiter

MM: Any more client switching factors you can identify?

AH: I have found that many clients become loyal to one agency, but they also may become more loyal to the account manager, so when that account manager leaves the agency the client follows the account manager . . . in this business, the client deals with you (versus the company) and this is a very personalised service . . . it's me the client gets to know, not my company . . . it's my face they remember

MM: How do you establish trust with your clients?

AH: Trust is earned . . . it takes time especially with new clients . . . you need to explain the recruitment process . . . it begins by listening to the clients' needs and conducting the best search possible for them and getting the results . . . the right candidate, it is this process that allows me to earn the client's trust . . . you also have to be honest with them, and tell them how long it will take to find the right candidate . . . to gain the respect of the client you have to anticipate their needs . . . know the skill set the client needs . . . always be on the lookout for a potential candidate that a client may be interested in . . . particularly with some of these difficult to fill electrical engineering jobs . . . there are about 5 vacancies for every one qualified engineer at that level . . . we are working with the top 20% (of the people considered to be highly qualified candidates) . . . and only 20% of that 20% may be considering a career switch

MM: That high of demand? How much are these engineers paid?

AH: Around \$ 150,000 . . . they are one of the best paid for their industry

MM: How else is trust formed?

AH: By giving the client realistic expectations . . . building the business relationship; delivering on the *back end* is where the trust is built most . . . '*back end*' being all the small details, following up

MM: Tell me more about your role as a recruiter

AH: We charge 25% of the salary for the search fee; I would do 30 placements/year; I am not placing past candidates . . . I see about 275 'face-to-face' potential candidates/year . . . a 100 resumes/ week . . . 300,000 resumes on file (Engineers) . . . this business is a sheer numbers game

AH: Recruiting is like hunting elephants . . . we can spot the elephant, but difficult to turn-around, meaning . . . we know we want to 'poach' but it is difficult to 'steal' the person away from their current employer; us headhunters have to be aggressive !!

AH: You have to be passionate in this business . . . you have to turn it on for your clients while setting realistic expectations . . . never promise anyone a job . . . we never take an order we can't fill . . . I am right up front with a client . . . this also gives me credibility . . . the client would rather hear up front I can't do job instead of me calling him a week later and saying I can't find someone for their vacancy . . . that is unprofessional

AH: You must be realistic with the client when telling them how difficult it will be to fill the order (vacancy) . . . I prioritize the orders . . . and at times refuse to take on orders I can't fill quickly

AH: the Internet has affected our business greatly . . . the internet has raised the expectations for candidates and clients . . . there is the issue of due diligence . . . a client may interview one of our candidates and shortly thereafter see the same candidate's resume on Monster.ca . . . then the client thinks, why am I using the services of an agency when I can get the same candidate free from an internet recruitment site? . . . this type of situation is happening more often today . . . and I have to be prepared to justify my fee to the client . . . explain how the services of a professional recruiter will be better for a client than a web site

AH: The internet has made 1,000's more resumes available . . . the clients have many more expectations today . . . one thing, the client expects us to find a candidate much quicker since there are more people looking for work . . . which is not true . . . what is happening is more people are putting their resume on the those web sites, which doesn't mean they are actively ready to switch jobs

AH: The culture today is that people will call their head-hunter before calling their wife when they want to quit their current job

MM: Any other ways you develop trust?

AH: I always respect the candidate and gain their trust . . . he or she is vital in the recruitment process . . . and many staffing agencies do not spend enough time preparing the candidate . . . or considering the candidate's requirements during the search process . . . for example, I always run a trial offer to the candidate to review their wants and needs . . . this is part of the *'fit'* and assesses the candidate's willingness to accept a potential offer of employment . . . then I send the candidate to the client . . . I get the offer from the client and I present it to the candidate . . . this way I am the negotiator for both the client and candidate . . . when the candidate is making a major career move, I also talk to their spouse

AH: It's not all personal . . . the candidate still has to sell themselves . . . we tell candidates to change their resume, their appearance . . . we tell them, 'mention to the client about what you did on that previous project' . . . we also de-brief the candidate after their interview with the client too

AH: The relationship I have with a candidate that I have placed changes once they are placed . . . I continue my contact with the candidate to ensure he or she is happy with the placement . . . and hopefully the placed candidate can provide referral business . . . also, down the road, say several years, if that candidate elects to leave that employer (the former client) then my relationship as a headhunter begins again . . . and I will place him somewhere else . . . my list of candidates grows exponentially . . . the success of a recruitment agency like this one depends on knowing the industry and having the right contacts . . . contacts of clients *and* qualified candidates!

MM: Can you describe some of the critical services you provide your clients

AH: It is critical to maintain confidentiality with your clients . . . there are times when the client will call and ask you to begin a search before they have fired the employee . . . it's difficult to do conduct a search when there is still an employee doing the job you're trying to fill . . . I call that '*the dead man walking*' . . . I know the guy is going to get fired, and here I am trying to fill his job . . . in one sense we help the client by securing a replacement ready to step in . . . the client tells us to begin the search....and they don't have to advertise the vacancy in the newspaper because the client doesn't want to upset the 'out going' employee

AH: Privacy and respect for the client is also a key factor of building trust and maintaining the business relationship . . . I am always thinking of the client's needs

AH: Time frames are critical to this industry, my role is to provide a candidate as fast as I can . . . '*time kills deals*'... delays will ultimately hinder a successful placement and this occurs from both sides, the client and the candidate . . . I must keep the deal active and I always chasing the client or candidate to get through a step in the hiring process . . . time can be fatal!

MM researcher's note: MM then asked the respondent to rank four qualities that are critical when hiring new employees

Andrew's ranking of the four factors:

1. Quality - "it has to be there . . . especially in our field . . . engineers
2. Fit with the team – Engineers work alone, but they have to fit into the team
3. Culture (fit into the culture of the client's company)
4. Respect the agency shows the candidate

MM: Do you do reference checks on the candidates?

AH: I do but not personal checks I have to respect the privacy laws . . . candidate's personal behaviour is not my business . . . furthermore, past employers won't give references on their employees . . . I won't do any 'dirt checks'

MM: Do your clients' expect you do conduct in-depth checks, such as, 'dirt checks' as you call them?

AH: Some might, however I tell them up front it's not part of our service . . . this issue is clarified during the first meeting with the client . . . ensuring the client's expectations are realistic

MM: Are there any sales strategies or incentives given to your clients to build the client relationship? Give gifts?

AH: For smoozing the client . . . you let the client lead . . . if they want to be smoozed, then fine . . . otherwise I back off . . . the client sets the degree and intensity of smoozing . . . I will ask a client out to lunch once . . . if they don't go, then I back off . . . I fully respect the client's wishes not to be entertained

MM: Do does your firm give price discounts or any other incentives to keep clients?

AH: We give price discounts to our loyal customers . . . particularly volume discounts, that is one of our competitive advantages is the size of our company . . . a client needs 20 engineers for a major project, we can find them . . . also, if a client is recruiting for several positions at the same time but in different locations, for example to fill vacancies in Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto, we will give them a special rate to fill for all three of those locations . . . since our company has several branch offices across Canada, we are really good at sourcing candidates in different cities . . . the ability to do this has won us a lot of business . . . this demonstrates to the client our extensive network of contacts across Canada . . . it simplifies the recruitment process for our clients who have many offices across Canada and US

MM: Any other sales strategies?

AH: We use a 'search agreement' between our agency and the client . . . it outlines the services being offered . . . the pricing . . . for contingency based services there is no fee, no payment until the vacancy is filled . . . we give a 3 month guarantee on all of our placements . . . if the candidate quits or doesn't work out, the search fee is returned . . . which is common in this industry

MM: Do you deal with HR departments frequently?

AH: Yes and no, I try to avoid the HR departments . . . HR doesn't know how to recruit ('*poach*') or find the right person . . . I prefer to deal with the hiring manager . . . HR is the biggest stumbling block . . . the best HR people are the ones who get out of the way and let us headhunters do the recruiting

MM: My research has indicated that clients like to feel their staffing agency is an 'arm of their company' (*MM explained in more detail*) do you agree?

AH: Yes, to the extent that I like to call myself a recruitment *consultant* instead of a recruiter from a placement firm . . . the client relies on my hiring skills and . . . so yes, I become part of their hiring process

MM: Do you find clients are apathetic . . . elect not switch due to apathy?

AH: Apathy is not an issue . . . especially in the current labour market . . . if the client is not happy, they will say so and act . . . they will switch immediately

MM: Are there any other services and values you provide to your clients?

AH: One of the key services I provide is industry knowledge . . . I know the companies and the people . . . who's hiring, who's not, and I know a lot of potential candidates; my name is out there . . . to be an effective recruiter you must know the industry . . . that gets you in front of the client . . . knowledge of the industry and current trends in the industry give me credibility with the client . . . it shows the client I am interested in their company and I have done my homework

AH: There is the need to build a personal relationship . . . with both the client and candidate . . . furthermore, I understand the engineering industry

MM researcher note: the respondent (the recruiter) is not an Engineer

AH: I must establish credibility with the client . . . I perform 2 or 3 on-site visits to the client's company . . . in addition I know my competitors well . . . my role is to take the order and find the candidate . . . I do the search, negotiate all the terms and conditions for both the client and candidate . . . this makes the process a lot smoother, quicker . . . if you talk to 10 people on how to do this business, you'll get nine different ways of doing it, it's a funny industry; it is difficult to build a client list . . . I try to get 10 new clients a month, because I know I will lose 6/month

MM: Really?

AH: Yes, it's true . . . it's a highly competitive industry . . . and right now it's hard to find good candidates . . . clients will not wait . . . they get impatient . . . or, they will have 3 or 4 recruiters from different companies trying to fill their vacancy . . . the successful recruiter gets the placement fee!

MM: Do clients ever give you exclusivity to conduct a search?

AH: Yes, our regular more established clients will . . . most times the client is in a rush, so they will use many agencies to fill the one position . . . the client is up front and tells me that they are using other agencies . . . sometimes they will even tell me what other agencies they are working with . . . it's the nature of the business

MM: So . . . a real horse race to get the right candidate?

AH: Always!

Appendix K: Interview Transcript: Single Interview, Client Interview

Single Interview – SC 6, Client

Respondent: Regional HR Manager, ‘SC’

-using a tier 3 Staffing agency

Location: Respondents’ office

Researcher: MM

August 17, 2006 3:00 pm – 4:10 pm

The respondent (SC) is the Regional HR manager who works for a social services branch of the local government

MM: Began the interview by stating the purpose of the research is to study client switching behaviours and the B2B relationship; brief discussion occurred about client switching and the staffing agency industry; SC agreed she would provide the names of the staffing agencies they switched from and switched to, as long as she could remain anonymous, which was agreed to by the researcher

MM: Could you begin by describing the situation and chain of events that caused you to switch staffing agencies

SC: I had a problem with the ‘temp-to-permanent’ agreement with the agency I was using . . . I dealt directly with the temp . . . asking what the details were . . . I thought it was the temp’s responsibility to make the arrangements to become a permanent employee of ours . . . next thing I know the agency calls me about the buyout . . . I was shocked that the agency got involved at that point, the agency was quite upset that I had spoken directly to the temp about this situation . . . I was never told about the procedure . . . the agency raised the issue of the buy-out fee being thousands of dollars . . . I was shocked at the extraordinary fee and I said I was not prepared to pay that amount . . . the temp was upset, I was angry and the agency had the attitude I was doing something wrong and going behind their back . . . the temp quit and I didn’t feel comfortable using that agency again, I lost all respect and trust for the agency

MM: How important is the ‘temp-to-perm’ service for you?

SC: It is critical . . . I hire all of my new staff through this service . . . it is a service I need from any agency I work with . . . it is a factor I look for when selecting an agency

SC: That same agency continued to pester me months later with sales calls trying to get my business back

MM: Any other reasons that have caused you to switch?

SC: Poor work performance by the temp . . . that would involve a bad attitude towards their job, refusing to do the job or poor quality of work

MM: Could you describe such an incident?

SC: We had a temp come in on short term assignment . . . the first couple of days their performance was great . . . but, then they got lazy . . . they slowed down, and developed a 'I don't care attitude' . . . this happened because the temp knew it was a short term assignment . . . similarly if the temp is expected to be offered a permanent position and isn't, then they become lazy and unproductive . . . it seems the temp expects me to keep them on and hire them . . . which isn't going to happen . . . the temp hears that one of my permanent employees is leaving so they automatically think they are next in line to get hired . . . that is not the case and not always possible . . . this is a unionized work place and I have to follow the rules

MM: How did the temp get that expectation?

SC: I don't know . . . they could have heard it from their co-workers here...or seen the job posting and they think they can automatically apply . . . not knowing if we ran the position as a limited hiring they are not eligible

MM: Any other situations that would cause you to switch?

SC: If the temp does not follow the supervisor's instructions . . . we have fired temps in the past for insubordinate behaviour, it's rare . . . we had an incident where the supervisor told a temp to keep busy, and the temp said she would basically slack off since it was a slow day, that behaviour led us to switch

MM: How long are you hiring these terms?

SC: Two months, longer if they have the right experience . . . we ask the agency to supply us with temps who have office experience

MM: How did the agencies develop a relationship with you?

SC: D-Staffing has been outstanding with relationship building . . . when I make a staffing request to D-Staffing they want to know in detail what we require . . . the responsibilities of the temp, working conditions, all the particulars . . . then within 24 – 48 hours they get back to me saying whether or not they have someone to fill our temp position . . . someone to fit our specific requirements . . . it is their ability to listen to our needs and quickly find a person with the right skill set that matches our requirements

SC: I have an agreement with the agency . . . whenever a temp does not fit our requirements then I can contact the agency immediately and they will send out

someone else as soon as possible . . . they tell the temp not to return . . . basically they do all the difficult work of telling the candidate it didn't work out, I don't speak to the temp . . . real easy for me

MM: So you're saying a service guarantee is critical when you choose an agency?

SC: Yes, definitely

MM: How long does it take to for 'D-Staffing' to send out a replacement temp?

SC: Between 24 – 48 hours

MM: Do you have to pay for that day's work? (when a temp does not fit in)

SC: Yes, absolutely . . . if they have done the work for the day, then they deserve to be paid

MM: How does the agency build trust with you?

SC: Accurate billing of hours . . . it is so important to get the pay correct . . . it's always about money . . . the invoices come to me . . . I am dealing with tax dollars . . . I want the temp to record their hours correctly . . . there have been times when a billing error occurred . . . I called the agency . . . and I have a new invoice within 2 days . . . no hassle, no issues . . . easy, we trust each other and the pay situation is solved in a minute . . . the agency does all the pay actions . . . that is another reason why we use temp agencies

MM: Any other actions that build trust?

SC: Yes . . . even if they can't find anybody, 'D-Staffing' will call me back . . . and tell me where they are in finding someone . . . they will tell me if they are having difficulties

MM: Oh, so, you won't call a competitor in the mean time?

SC: Absolutely not, I will wait . . . I tell my team what's happening, explaining that the agency is still looking to get us the best person available

MM: Are you getting good value for your money from 'D-Staffing'?

SC: Yes

MM: How important is it to having a good relationship with the agency?

SC: Very important . . . I have to be able to call over there and tell them if I am having issues with a temp . . . because my team relies on me

MM: Have you ever felt that D-Staffing just dumped a candidate over to you regardless of the fit?

SC: No . . . D-Staffing has learned what my needs are . . . we are very pleased with the quality of their services . . . it was Tara's (staffing agent from D-Staffing) personality and my personality . . . we got it off from day one . . . she listens to my needs . . . even if she's not sure, she'll call me back . . . I appreciate the care

and attention Tara gives us

MM: Does the agency use any particular sales promotions or special pricing to encourage your loyalty? Ever received a gift from them?

SC: Being a government office we are restricted about accepting gifts . . . so, no, we haven't gotten gifts of any type . . . Tara has asked me out for lunch a few times, but I just haven't had the time . . . the agency has a couple of special events for clients . . . a Stampede breakfast . . . a few others . . . I haven't been, again due to time, otherwise I would have gone

MM: Any price discounts

SC: Nope

MM: Are price discounts important to you?

SC: Not really . . . the relationship and quality of service is really what counts

MM: I am going to focus on the services and values that D-Staffing offers you . . . do you deal with one person at Diversified?

SC: Yes, Tara

MM: Have you ever met Tara?

SC: Yes, when we first met she visited our office a couple of times to introduce herself and to see the work environment . . . the site visit helped her understand our needs better

MM: What is keeping you with 'D-Staffing and not switching?

SC: It's the personalised service I get . . . Tara is listening to what my needs are . . . and if I am not happy with one of their temps fitting in, Tara does not question me, (meaning D-Staffing trusts SC's opinion of the temp) . . . and D-Staffing always wants to hear my feedback about a temp . . . Tara loves feedback

MM: Is the 'fit' of the temp important for you ?

SC: Absolutely, it is the most critical factor . . . the quality of the temp affects the entire office . . . my team relies on me to get the best possible temp . . . a poor quality temp will upset the work environment and disrupt our work load considerably . . . my success depends on hiring the right temp

MM: Are there other critical service factors?

SC: There has to be a proficient skill level . . . some sort of education is helpful . . . personality is really important . . . personality is very critical . . . behaviour . . . attitude . . . all of these characteristics constitute a '*quality fit*' temp

MM: How long does it take to evaluate a temp's behaviour and job performance

level?

SC: We'll know within 2 or 3 days, depending on the individual

MM: How important are these temps to your operation?

SC: We treat them as if they are our employees; they are here to help us . . . and we are all about team work . . . the advantage of using temp agencies is the ability to evaluate their work, and if they don't perform, easy to get rid of them . . . easy to weed them out

SC: As I mentioned earlier, the 'temp-to-perm' service is critical to us . . . we will only deal with agencies that have that service . . . it's difficult to hire someone from just a formal job interview, the 'temp-to-hire' service allows us to evaluate a person's skills much better than a job interview . . . that service is so important for us

MM: Has apathy ever stopped you from switching?

SC: No . . . if our needs weren't being met, we'd switch . . . no hesitation

MM: What kind of things does D-Staffing do to keep your loyalty?

SC: Having the one contact person for all my needs builds loyalty with me, Tara, makes things easier . . . they have excellent follow-up . . . we had a past issue with a temp's availability to start . . . the issue wasn't resolved by the end of the work day, however Tara called me on my cell phone in the evening to confirm that the temp would be available to start work the next morning . . . Tara was awesome . . . she got back to as she promised so I wouldn't have to worry about the staffing situation . . . Tara knew I had left work and she did not hesitate to call me after hours to let me know the situation was resolved

SC: As I mentioned earlier, the 'temp-to-permanent' service is critical . . . we recently hired a temp . . . the procedure was very straight forward . . . the agency calculated the number of hours left in her contract , then Tara and I negotiated a payout amount . . . it was very fair . . . a win-win situation for everyone . . . agency called and said this is the payout amount . . . and that's when we negotiated the final buy out fee

MM: Any other valued services you received?

SC: The most valued service is the quality of service . . . having the agency listen to your staffing needs and being able to fill the vacancy as quick as possible with the best skilled person

Appendix L: Five Analytical Processes for N-Vivo

Source: adapted from Sinkovics et al. (2005) page 1 of 4

Five Processes Include:

1. Organising
2. Linking
3. Coding
4. Searching
5. Modelling

N-Vivo Steps	Actions taken	Advantages	Disadvantages
Organising Process Step 1 Source of Data Selecting data types	Input Data: Interviews with Respondents Technique: in depth interviews Result: rich text format document with sub-headings	Theoretical sampling; open interview technique	Interviewer subjectivity; Limited number of respondents
Step 2 Describing the data	Input data: rich text format document with sub-headings Technique: descriptions of interviews Result: extending dataset with descriptive textual data	Aspects which might not be relevant at first sight are stored together with the raw data. Increased comparability of data	'Noise' or irrelevant information might not be included
Step 3 Changing and Viewing data	Input data: N-Vivo documents (memos) and node system Technique: Code the document in browsed text (selection mode) and edit the text Result: Clarification of relevant text	Structure document and highlight relevant sections while clearing irrelevant sections	Context information might get lost
Step 4 Grouping	Input data: N-Vivo documents (memos) and node system Technique: Putting together documents or nodes in any number of sets Results: sets (documents and node)	Structuring of relevant data; reducing textual data temporarily	Wrong nodes are grouped together but handled as similar

N-Vivo Steps	Actions taken	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Step 5: Storing information and including attributes</p>	<p>Input Data: Quantitative information (company size etc.) Technique: Create and edit attributes from spreadsheets or statistical packages Result: Extending dataset with descriptive numerical data</p>	<p>Filtering documents based on attributes</p>	<p>Too much emphasis on numerical data; easy to import could lead to enormous database which is difficult to handle</p>
<p>Linking Process Step 6: Linking documents and nodes</p>	<p>Input data: N-Vivo documents (memos) and node system Technique: Create links to other documents or nodes in the same or different project or to external data Result: DocLinks and Nodelinks; linkages</p>	<p>Qualitative linking Enables the researcher to link documents and nodes prior to coding or when coding is not possible</p>	<p>Difference between links and codes might be unclear and confuse researcher</p>
<p>Coding Process Step 7: Coding and autocoding</p>	<p>Input data: N-Vivo documents (memos) and node system Technique: Creates nodes (free, tree and case nodes); explore what's coded Result: Node system; browsing node system</p>	<p>Saves time Increased reliability Potential for unexpected insights through re-contextualising material</p>	<p>Potential of mechanical errors Danger of superficial analysis De-contextualising material</p>
<p>Step 8 Revising and refining</p>	<p>Input Node System- Technique: Delete, refine, change nodes; use other techniques to trace the process (memo links) Results: New node system</p>	<p>Keeps node system alive by enabling easy change of coding Allows new ideas to be integrated</p>	<p>Easy way of dealing with nodes may lead to a never-ending coding process (when to stop coding?)</p>

Appendix L: N-Vivo Process page 3 of 4

N-Vivo Steps	Actions taken	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Step 9: What to ask?</p>	<p>Input Data: N-Vivo documents (memos) and node system Technique: node and attribute review Result: Matches</p>	<p>Range from easy to very tailored and comprehensive search; Speed of search handle large numbers of nodes Store searches in various ways Restrict searches Deal with multiple and overlapping codes; Conduct multiple search</p>	<p>Researcher needs to know questions in advance</p>
<p>Step 10: Where to ask it?</p>	<p>Input data: N-Vivo documents (memos) and node system; sets (nodes) Technique: Using assay tool prior to search; choosing scope of search (specific documents, nodes) Result: Report on the scope item; matches</p>	<p>As per step 9</p>	<p>As per step 9</p>
<p>Step 11: What to do With the answer</p>	<p>Input data: N-Vivo documents memos) and node system; sets (documents and nodes) Technique: Collect finding into nodes; store separately, apply assay tool Result: Matches</p>	<p>As per step 9</p>	<p>As per step 9</p>
<p>Modelling Processes Step 12 Drawing and linking models</p>	<p>Input N-Vivo documents memos) and node system; sets (documents and nodes) Technique: not applicable to this step Results: Visual representation of ideas</p>	<p>Use in early stage to Design the research project; Clarify nodes, documents and concept</p>	<p>None</p>

Appendix L: N-Vivo Process page 4 of 4

N-Vivo Steps	Actions taken	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Step 13: Managing Models</p>	<p>Input Data: N-Vivo documents (memos) and node system; sets documents and nodes); models Technique: Delete parts, refine, change models Result: Adapted models</p>	<p>Live models Easy switch between all parts of the N-Vivo Project</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Step 14: Layering and grouping items</p>	<p>Input data: N-Vivo documents (memos) and node system; sets (documents and nodes) Technique: Include layers Result: Layered models</p>	<p>Show different levels interpretation Represents progressive discovery process</p>	<p>None</p>

Source: www.westworks.ca Permission granted from company President

Code of ethics

general

1. This Code of Ethics is binding on all Employees of West Works, who shall ensure that they are fully aware of the obligations contained herein.
2. West Works' Employees shall not behave in a manner prejudicial to, or likely to bring discredit upon, the prestige and good reputation of West Works' Clients, Candidates, Consultants and West Works Group Inc.
3. West Works and its Employees shall not, directly or indirectly, charge any registration fees to Candidates.
4. Only an Executive of West Works Group Inc. may issue statements to the media concerning the company's activities or policies or in response to a media article/programme.
5. West Works' Employees shall obey all Statutes, Regulations, Registrations and other legal requirements, which relate to their activities in the industry.
6. West Works' Employees shall subscribe to the principle of employment on an equal opportunity basis and promote this concept to their Clients and Candidates.
7. West Works' Employees shall respect the rights of competitors and refrain from negative criticism or acts of unfair competition.
8. The principle that employment is freely chosen shall always apply.

client service

West Works' Recruiters shall:

1. Obtain from the Client, such information pertaining to the company and job specification as is necessary to ensure the accurate selection of Candidates for the vacancy;
2. Ensure that the job specifications/relevant parameters of the position to be filled shall be reported truthfully to the Candidate without omission, addition or misrepresentation;
3. Ensure that clients receive a written copy of West Works' Terms and Conditions of Business, including fee structure and guarantee periods, prior to commencement of the assignment or with referrals;
4. Ensure, as far as possible, that all Candidates referred meet the client's requirements;
5. Ensure that the details of the Candidate are stated and recorded as accurately as possible and that it contains:
 - Personal data, in accordance with the Privacy Act
 - Educational information
 - Primary and tertiary qualifications
 - Employment record, indicating dates of employment and position(s)
 - Salary expectations
 - Interview reports (whenever required)
 - Reference checks;
6. Ensure that no Candidate's details are submitted to a Client unless they are updated, especially after a period of six months has elapsed from the date of the initial interview;
7. Ensure that Candidates are interviewed properly and adequately, in person, except where, in exceptional circumstances, such as geographical location, the Recruiter's ability to conduct an interview in person is hampered, then such an interview may be conducted telephonically;
8. Treat information relating to the business of clients with confidentiality and exclusively for the purpose of selection and recruitment purposes;

9. Inform the respective Client that no contact be made with the Candidate's present employer without the Candidate's express written consent;

10. Not approach a Candidate placed in a position by them with an offer of alternative employment, unless the Candidate initiates re-activation of his/her application.

candidate service

West Works' Recruiters shall:

1. Respect the privacy and dignity of the individual;
2. Ensure that all Candidate information is treated as confidential and used exclusively for the purpose of selection and recruitment;
3. Obtain from Candidates, in as much detail as possible, all information pertaining to their personal record, employment history, qualifications, skills, experience and job/career requirements as are necessary to ensure proper non-discriminatory matching on their behalf;
4. Not submit details of any Candidate to any client without first describing all relevant details relating to the job specification or, in the absence of a specific assignment, explaining the proposed marketing plan to the Candidate;
5. Inform the Candidate of the results of any interview arranged by the Recruiter;
6. Not offer inducements of any kind to any Candidate in order to persuade him/her to accept an offer of employment.

West Works' Recruiters shall at all times during the interview process, ensure that:

7. Interviews are conducted in a manner that preserves the Candidates' privacy, confidentiality and, as far as possible, anonymity from other Candidates;
8. Candidates are interviewed by a Recruiter with a qualification appropriate to the status, qualification and seniority of the Candidate;
9. Ensure that adequate notes be taken during the interview, which shall form the basis of the Recruiter's report for the benefit of the Client;

10. Ensure that the Candidate can verify their qualifications and, wherever any doubt exists as to validity of these qualifications a process of verification must be entered into with the relevant authority;

11. Ensure that the Client is notified where qualification(s) cannot be verified.

West Works' Recruiters shall at all times ensure that:

12. Candidates' references are checked in a discrete manner that will not endanger the Candidate's future employment;

13. Where a reference on the Candidates' present position and duties is required, it only is done with the written permission of the Candidate;

14. Clients shall be advised not to take any references without the prior permission of the Candidate or the Recruiter;

15. Where references are obtained that no referee be given the name of the prospective Client without the Client's permission.




Advertising

West Works' Employees shall at all times, ensure that;

1. They do not advertise any vacancy in a misleading manner;

2. Positions listed in newspapers, electronic and any other media shall refer to bona fide vacancies at the time the advert is placed.

Appendix N: Comparing the Three Largest Global Staffing Agencies
Source: The companies' web sites (listed in references section)

Factors	 better work, better life		 Manpower
Annual Turnover (£, billions 2006)	£ 18.7 B	£ 2.82 B	£ 8.8.5 B
Head Office Company Background	Gluttbrugg, Switzerland Founded in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1957. Entered US in 1972.	Troy, Michigan, US Founded by William Kelly in Detroit, Michigan 1946.	Milwaukee, Michigan, US Founded in 1948 by Elmer Winter and Aaron Scheinfeld in Milwaukee.
Number of Countries	12	33	73
Number of Offices	5,100	2,600	4,400
Company owns all offices	Yes	Yes	No; some offices franchised