

University of Groningen

Design decisions in the front office - back office issue

Zomerdijk, L.G.

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

2005

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Zomerdijk, L. G. (2005). *Design decisions in the front office - back office issue: A Study of Trade-offs in the Financial Services Sector*. [Thesis fully internal (DIV), University of Groningen]. s.n.

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

Preface

Conducting dissertation research is like delivering a service to yourself. Even though one of the objectives of a dissertation project is to produce a book for a certain audience, it can be characterized as a service delivery process with the researcher as the primary customer. After all, the main output of the process is the accumulation of the knowledge and skills of the researcher. These are largely intangible results, as applies to most services. In addition, the outcomes are mainly produced and consumed simultaneously, for the learning and development take place on the way. Furthermore, the final product can be considered heterogeneous due to its dependence on the service provider. Finally, perishability is an issue. Opportunities to learn have to be grasped when they occur, they cannot be postponed or advanced. Although these characteristics are generally held responsible for causing operational problems, to me they provided the challenge I was looking for. Both as the customer and service provider I have enjoyed the service delivery process of my thesis and am satisfied with the end results. Still, dissertation research is not a one-woman business. A number of people have contributed to this experience and I owe them my thanks.

First of all I want to thank my supervisors: Jacob Wijngaard, Jan de Vries and Manda Broekhuis. The three of them formed a highly experienced and well-balanced back office support center. Jacob has a gift to make complex things suddenly seem simple and encouraged me to add actions to ambitions. In this way, he has significantly contributed to the focus and progress of the project. Jan is an excellent discussant and always managed to identify the weak spots in my work. I am grateful for his efforts to talk me into a PhD project in the first place and the guidance he has provided ever since. Until now, his mission of saving me for the world of science has succeeded. Manda's presence in the back office was invaluable, because of her experience in the service sector, her care for social aspects and her ability to think along. I greatly appreciate her willingness to sit down with me, often on short notice, at the times when it was most needed.

At this point I would also like to express my gratitude to the members of the manuscript committee: Jos Lemmink, Arndt Sorge and Chris Voss. I thank them for their willingness to work their way through the manuscript and act as opponents in the defense of the thesis.

Furthermore, I owe a great deal to the organizations I could work with during my dissertation project. In this respect, I am indebted to Theo Bouius, Ad Geerts and Alex

Jager for opening up the world of banks in the first place. Additionally, without the enthusiasm and cooperation of Jeanne Driessen and her department, Theo-Jan Renkema and Meinard Wendelaar-Bonga, I would not have had access to the intriguing cases in this research and lacked the opportunity to tailor my findings to the needs of real-life organizations. Likewise, I am grateful to the banks that agreed to participate in this study. To preserve their identity, I will not mention names. Instead, I thank the managers, process engineers and front office and back office employees of banks A, B, C, D, E and V for investing their time and effort in this study.

The service delivery process of the thesis would have been a lot less agreeable without the pleasures of the WSN building. One of the main sources is the department of Production Management. As a PhD student, I have always felt a full and appreciated member of the group. I am certain all parties will dearly miss my presence at the cluster meetings. I want to thank the current and previous members for constituting a home base I am not sure I will find again. Being responsible for the seventh dissertation in a row, I just hope there will be many more PhD students to come! Another significant source of work pleasure is formed by the PhD students of the faculty. The lunches at noon (sharp), the dinners at Zernike and the outings organized by SOM or ourselves provided excellent opportunities for relaxation and mutual consulting. Special thanks go to the persons I shared an office with: Deniz, Thijs, Filippo and Astrid. There is nothing like a roommate for getting immediate feedback, letting off steam and exchanging gossip.

My “paranimfen” Lian Nijenhuis and Mariëlle Zwaanenburg also deserve my gratitude. I appreciate their unremitting enthusiasm for paranimf-matters, not just for the festivities but also for the donkeywork in resizing the figures in this thesis. Yet, their role is larger than that. As friends they have always been there for me to listen, give advice on a wide range of issues or take my mind off things. Now that the thesis is done, we should have more time for those long walks and Martini nights.

Last but not least, I want to thank my family and Imre. During the dissertation project, my parents and sisters have formed a dependable and no-nonsense place to refuel. I am proud I can finally show them the thesis. Part of the achievement should be attributed to my parents, for the way they brought me up. Their motto is “raising children is teaching them to do things themselves”. I think they have accomplished that and I am grateful for it. Imre has been a wonderful source of support in the last phase of the dissertation project. I thank him for his understanding for the hours I spent at work and for the care he has provided. I am glad we could share the stressful and joyful moments in finishing a thesis.

Now that the thesis is done, my time in Groningen will come to an end too. The challenge I will take up next lies in London, as a post-doctoral researcher at the London Business School. Realizing how much I enjoyed Groningen and “Bedrijfskunde”, my final remark is to wholeheartedly thank all those persons that have contributed to this period in my life.

Leonieke Zomerdijk
Groningen, May 2005.