Team selling

in business-to-business relationships

1st version

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The best moments usually occur

when a person's body or mind is stretched to its

limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something

difficult and worthwhile.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1991), Flow: The psychology of optimal experience, p. 10

Table of contents

List of figures

List of tables

1 Objective of the thesis

1.1 Focus

Demanding love – under this unusual headline, Jeffrey K. Liker and Thomas Choi published their study findings on the success factors of Japanese car manufacturers Toyota and Honda on the American market in Harvard Business Manager (see Liker/Choi 2005, p. 60 ff. for further details). The authors had studied developments in the American and Japanese automotive industries for more than two decades and conducted in-depth interviews with 50 managers from Toyota and Honda in the USA and Japan as well as 40 American suppliers. The authors set out to find the answer to a simple question: Why are the Japanese so much more successful than their American rivals Chrysler, General Motors and Ford when it comes to relationships with their suppliers?

Liker and Choi's findings show that the Japanese take "both" parts of the word "business relationship" very seriously. Unlike their American competitors, who tend to try to achieve their business goals by deliberately bullying their suppliers, the Japanese first build very close relationships with their core suppliers. These relationships are characterised by intensive communication with a view to mutual learning, a strong basis of trust, but also by comprehensive control and the demand for discipline in all areas. Every supplier should feel that their Japanese partner wants to help them systematically improve. On the basis of this intensive relationship, the business is then established in the spirit of **joint value creation**. Through this approach, Honda, for example, increased the productivity of its suppliers by 50 per cent, improved quality by 30 per cent and reduced their costs by 7 per cent. Of course, this is not entirely altruistic, as the suppliers have to share 50 percent of the cost savings with Honda (Liker/Choi 2005, p. 71).

In order to tap into the value creation potential of close customer relationships, as illustrated by this example, companies in business-to-business

(B2B) business relationships (for customer proximity in industrial goods companies, see Homburg 2000). This applies in particular to relationships with a company's particularly important key customers, known as key accounts (see Capon 2001, Jensen 2001, Pardo 1997, Sharma 1997, Sidow 2002, among others). A good example of this is the intention of many companies to regularly measure and systematically increase the satisfaction and loyalty of their customers (see, among others, Bauer/Huber/Bräutigam 1997, Beutin 2003, Homburg/Bucerius 2003). The results of a cross-industry study show that there is still immense potential here, with more than 80% of companies operating below the optimal level of **customer proximity** in terms of profitability (Homburg 2000, p. 210).

The shift of a business relationship from a purely transactional relationship to joint value creation between supplier and customer also entails a change in the internal organisational structure of the company (Weitz/Bradford 1999, p. 242). While pure transactions can be handled between a seller on the supplier side and a buyer on the customer side, joint value creation should involve all functional areas. The multifunctional group of people on the customer side who are relevant to value creation (the buying centre, cf. Johnston/Bonama 1981) is mirrored on the supplier side by a multi-functional sales team: "As products, pre- and post-sales services, and buyer requirements become more complex, salespeople must interact more closely with one another than ever before. Team selling is now a fact of life in marketing" (Strutton/Pelton 1998, p. 1). The question is not so much whether a supplier company should engage in **team selling** at all. Customer requirements often make it inevitable that several people on the supplier side are involved in the value creation process. The question is rather how the organisational structure can be optimally designed by management: "...large, complex customers are serviced by many individuals, and coordination of these individual efforts is necessary for the seller to become the preferred supplier" (Moon/Armstrong 1994, p. 19). This quote also illustrates how the problem of team selling arises in practice. In most cases, several people on the supplier side are already involved in a business relationship, and management is now faced with the task of coordinating these people adequately, i.e. forming a team (on the necessity of team selling, see, among others, Hutt/Johnston/Rochetto 1999, p. 1).

management is now faced with the task of coordinating these individuals appropriately, i.e. forming a team (on the necessity of team selling, see, among others, Hutt/Johnston/Rochetto 1985, Moon 1996, Moon/Armstrong 1994, Moon/Gupta 1997).

The coordination of employees in teams has long been common practice in companies. As early as 1995, 68% of Fortune 1000 companies stated that they regularly used teams (Lawler/Mohrman/Ledford 1995). In addition to the simple necessity of teams for handling complex and interdependent tasks in business relationships, there are other advantages **to teamwork.** First, companies in B2B business relationships are increasingly forced to combine their vertical functional hierarchical structures with horizontal, multifunctional, process-based structures. Multifunctional teams are ideal for these hybrid organisational structures (Day 1999, p. 194). Secondly, increasingly complex and dynamic business environments are forcing companies to become fast-learning and interactive organisations. Multifunctional teams enable better information exchange between the "functional silos" within a company and also better information exchange with customers: "The essence of interactive strategies is the use of information from the customer rather than about the customer" (Day 1999, p. 202). Thirdly, the use of teams also contributes to reducing bureaucracy in the corporate structure. The tendency towards bureaucracy is particularly noticeable in large companies, which has a negative impact on their customer proximity (Homburg 2000, p. 188; Simon 1991, p. 258 f.).

The flip side of the coin, however, is that working in teams is not without its problems. According to Pelled/Eisenhardt/Xin (1999), for example, harmful emotional or personal **conflicts** between team members can seriously damage teamwork (for a detailed discussion of the causes of team inefficiency, see Levi 2001, Tjosvold 1991b, p. 45 f.). The first challenge for senior management in B2B business relationships is therefore to ensure high-quality teamwork between its employees at the customer interface. To put it bluntly, team members must be really keen to achieve sales success "together" with the customer:

"A hot group is just what the name implies: a lively, high-achieving, dedicated group, usually small, whose members are turned on to an exciting and challenging task" (Leavitt/Lipman-Blumen 1995, p. 109).

In addition to successful interaction between the members of the sales team, senior management must ensure that the sales team is successful with customers. As we showed at the beginning using a concrete example, this involves both successfully building a relationship with the customer and successfully tapping into the acquisition potential hidden in the business relationship (cf. Gutenberg 1979, p. 243 ff.). Economic success, i.e. the **business generated from the relationship,** is therefore the ultimate goal of a sales team. The success of the relationship is, in a sense, causally upstream of this ultimate goal.

These two challenges facing senior management with regard to the successful design of team selling form the **focus of our work**. Firstly, we aim to identify key factors that senior management can use to optimally design teamwork and the success of a sales team. Secondly, we also want to determine the priority of these factors. To this end, we will analyse the extent to which the individual factors that can be shaped influence the quality of teamwork and the success of business relationships. To ensure that our recommendations are highly transferable, we will draw on data from a large cross-industry sample of sales teams in B2B business relationships with key accounts and analyse it using advanced quantitative statistical methods.

1.2 Positioning and research questions

More than ten years ago, James A. Narus and James C. Anderson called on ambitious scientists to become involved in the highly practical and relevant field of team selling research. In B2B business relationships, recommendations for designing optimal interaction between the sales team on the supplier side and the buying centre on the customer side would be particularly valuable: "Articles in the business press suggest that more and more firms are turning to groups to manage marketing activities. Yet, the marketing literature is deficient in its examination of group-on-group relations. Clearly, significant conceptual, empirical, and practical issues need to be addressed."

in the business press suggest that more and more firms are turning to groups to manage marketing activities. Yet, the marketing literature is deficient in its examination of group-on-group relations. Clearly, significant conceptual, empirical, and managerial contributions must be made by academics in this area of study" (Narus/Anderson 1995, p. 39). However, our review of empirical research on team selling in section 2.3.3 will reveal that very few scholars have heeded this call. Close to the positioning of our research project, there are only two studies that can base their management-relevant recommendations for action on a large quantitative sample: Helfert (1998) and Stock (2003).

Due to the author's many years of practical experience, this research paper has been guided by very simple, practice-relevant questions in the relatively uncharted field of team selling. In section 1.1, we explained that we are interested in factors that senior management can use to shape team selling in a company. We also made it clear that the employees involved in the business relationship are usually already in place and that the first step is to coordinate them optimally. Consequently, we would first like to provide management with factors that are relatively easy to implement or can be implemented at short notice, which they can use to weld a sales team together and ensure success with customers. Our first research question is:

Research question 1*: How do key factors that can be relatively easily or quickly shaped by management influence the success of sales teams in business-to-business relationships?*

Once the group of people involved in the business relationship at the customer interface has been effectively coordinated, management can also consider designing factors that are difficult or long-term to shape. This leads us to the next research question:

Research question 2*: How do key factors that are difficult or take a long time for management to shape influence the success of sales teams in business-to-business relationships?*

These two questions form the actual research focus of our work (see Figure 1-1). In addition, we would like to generate well-founded statements for business practice on how and with what priority these factors should be shaped. We therefore also need to know how strongly these shapeable factors and their respective facets are pronounced in practice. The final research question is therefore:

Research question 3*: What is the current state of practice?*

In addition to focusing on these three research questions, our study will continue to be guided by the following principles:

- The study should build a bridge between business relationship research on the one hand and team research on the other.

- The study should have a solid theoretical foundation (Homburg 2000, p. 155).

- The study should focus on a few factors that can be influenced in team selling. This means that we are not aiming for a total model to explain the success of sales teams in B2B business relationships, but rather a partial model (cf. Homburg 2000, p. 155). This requirement allows the complexity of the resulting causal model to be kept within limits, thereby ensuring that the model can be empirically tested (on the necessity of limiting the complexity of causal models, see Baumgartner/Homburg 1996).

- The study aims to achieve a high degree of generalisability of the empirical results and will therefore be based on a large quantitative sample (for the dimensionality of empirical studies, see Stock 2003, p. 134 ff.).

- Finally, the study should ensure a meaningful balance between scientific rigour and practical relevance. This means that we will
will not follow Marie Curie's advice: "...scientific work must not be considered from the point of view of its direct usefulness. It must be done for its own sake, for the beauty of science" (Curie 1921, p. 2; on the requirement for scientific rigour and practical relevance, see Varadarajan 2003).
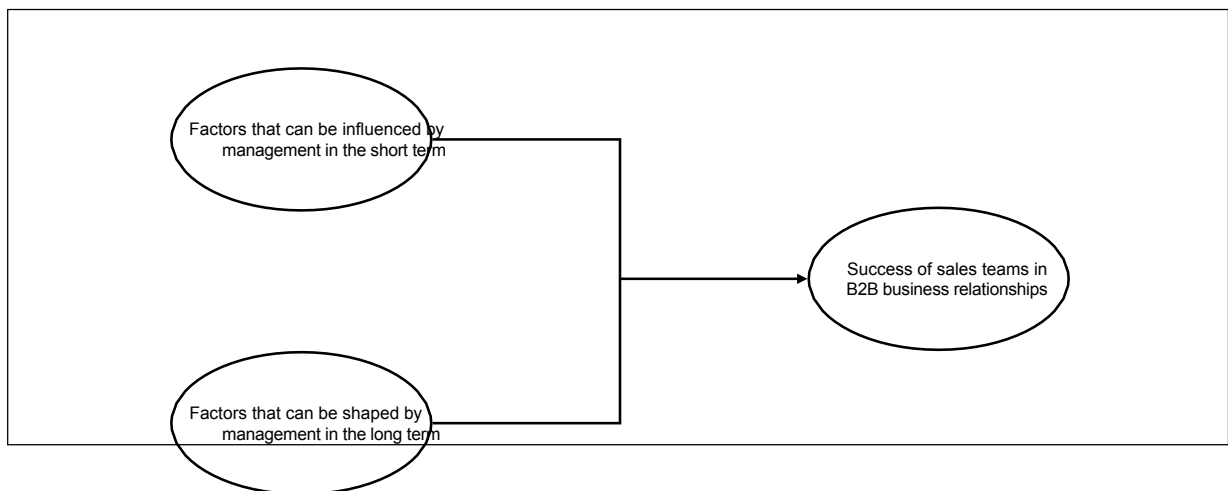
Figure 1-1: Research focus of the thesis

1.3 Structure of the thesis

In the following chapter 2, we will first answer the question: "What exactly is our work about?" In order to make the work as rigorous and understandable as possible for the reader, we will, so to speak, put the cart before the horse and go directly to the definitions of the constructs in team selling that we will later examine empirically. We will then answer the question:

"Why are these constructs important?" We have selected three theoretical points of reference and reviewed the empirical work relevant to our research questions. In doing so, we will continuously refine the positioning of our work, systematically substantiate the central importance of our constructs, and lay the foundation for our research models. Chapter 2

by presenting the statistical methods used and our data basis.

Chapter 3 answers the question: "What are the core findings of our research project?" We will formulate hypotheses for the constructs presented in Chapter 2. These are based on obvious rational considerations. On the other hand, the hypotheses are substantiated by the theoretical reference points and the results of other empirical studies from Chapter 2. We then go on to discuss the conceptualisation, operationalisation and measurement of the constructs. Finally, we present the results of the empirical testing of our hypotheses.

In Chapter 4, we will address the question: "Where is there a concrete need for action in practice?" As part of an impact versus level analysis, we will identify priorities with regard to the factors that can be influenced by management in team selling. To this end, we will compare the characteristics of the individual factors in practice (level) with their respective effects (impact). Finally, we will highlight further measures that the practitioners we surveyed use to optimise team selling in their companies.

The question "What specific conclusions can be drawn from our work?" will be answered in the final chapter 5. We will briefly summarise the key findings of our work, highlight areas where we see a need for further research in the field of team selling, and conclude with specific recommendations for management.

2   Basis of the work

The answers to the research questions formulated in section 1.2 are based on conceptual and empirical foundations, which are presented in this chapter. Essentially, these involve

- the definition of our research subject and the constructs that are empirically examined in our work (section 2.1).

- selected theoretical reference points that underpin the central importance of the constructs we are investigating and form the theoretical basis for our hypotheses and investigation models (section 2.2).

- a comprehensive inventory of empirical research on teams in organisations, which further underlines the high relevance of our constructs and forms the empirical basis for our hypotheses and research models (section 2.3).

- the methodological foundations and data basis of our research work, on which we will test our hypotheses (section 2.4).

2.1 Key definitions

"If you wish to converse with me, define your terms" (Voltaire quoted in Durant 1961, p. 59). Following Voltaire's advice, we will first precisely define the subject of our investigation. In section 2.1.1, we describe what we mean by a sales team in a B2B business relationship. In the following sections 2.1.2 to 2.1.5, we then define the factors that can be influenced in team selling, which will later form the focus of our empirical investigation.

2.1.1 Sales team

We deal with teams in companies. A team is a social group consisting of several employees of a company (for social groups, see Homans 1972). A **group** must have at least three members. We do not consider dyads to be groups, as essential group processes, such as the formation of coalitions or more complex communication structures, are not possible in them (Guzzo/Shea 1992, p. 272 f.; Wiswede 1995, p. 739 ff.). If, on the other hand, the number of members in a group is too large, the likelihood of direct cooperation between group members decreases and the group runs an increasing risk of breaking up into sub-groups (1 source). In order for a group to form a social unit in the perception of its members, external boundaries of the group must exist (Alderfer 1987, p. 202). This shared identity or sense of unity (Rosenstiel 1978, p. 240) can be based not only on organisational affiliation but also on the existence of common tasks and goals, i.e. on mutual dependence (interdependence) among the group members (! 1 source).

When considering social units in the context of a company organisation, these include, for example, departments and working groups or the **teams** we are examining. A department is a group of positions between a management unit and one or more executive units (1 source). Unlike teams, departments and working groups are managed centrally, whereas management tasks in a team can also be distributed decentrally (for management decentralisation in teams, see 2 sources). Another distinguishing feature is the interdependence between the individual members. This is least pronounced in a department, tends to be higher in a working group and is most pronounced in a team (1 source). A team can also be seen as a special form of working group that differs from other working groups primarily in its working methods, i.e. teamwork (Salas et al. 1992, p. 5).

Our definition of a sales team is based on the team definition provided by Gemünden/Högl (2000a, p. 8) and enriched accordingly for the purpose of our study. In order to prevent the risk of the study unit breaking down

into several sub-teams, we limit the number of team members to a maximum of twelve (1 source). Furthermore, we take into account the specific sales context of our teams. We therefore define a **sales team** in a B2B business relationship as

- a social unit of three to a maximum of twelve people (group),

- whose members are recognised as such by outsiders and perceive themselves as members (shared identity),

- who are integrated into an organisation (context),

- through direct cooperation (interaction),

- Performing joint tasks and pursuing common goals (interdependence)

- that relate to sales or sales support activities with another company (interaction with a customer).

2.1.2   Quality of teamwork

According to Homans' social group theory (1950, 1958, 1960), one of the oldest approaches to team research, three sub-areas can be distinguished with regard to the social behaviour of people in groups: activity, interaction and sentiment. Homans defines **activity** as the observable actions and activities of group members. The quantity and correctness of this activity can be assessed (Homans 1960, p. 58). Taken together, the activity of all group members determines the quality of the team's work in relation to the team goals. This contrasts with **interaction,** which Homans understands as the pure "connection" between group members (Homans 1960, p. 60). The quality of this interaction therefore reflects how well the team works "together". The last sub-area, sentiment, refers to the inner states of each individual in the group, such as
drives, emotions or individual motivation. Unlike interactions and activities, feelings cannot be observed. However, the feelings of each

individual determine their interactions and activities and are in turn influenced by them (Homans 1960, p. 62).

Based on Homans' explanations, our construct of quality of teamwork aims, on the one hand, at the quality of interactions between members of a sales team. This construct thus includes facets such as coordination between team members (2 sources) or team cohesion (2 sources). On the other hand, however, a sales team cannot operate largely context-free, unlike a basketball team, for example. Since it is embedded in a corporate context, the quality of interaction with the intra-organisational environment (boundary management, cf. Ancona/Caldwell 1992a) is also crucial for a sales team. We define the **quality of teamwork** as the quality of cooperation within a team and the quality of a team's interaction with its intra-organisational environment (boundary management).

2.1.3 Success in business-to-business relationships

After focusing on interaction within the sales team in the last section, we now turn our attention to the goal of a sales team's activities. In line with Staehle's (1999, p. 412) goal approach, we consider the success of a sales team in a B2B business relationship to be the degree to which the company's goals are achieved. According to Gutenberg (1957, 1958, 1979, 1983), the **ultimate goal** of a commercial enterprise is to make a profit: "Profit maximisation is the primary effect of business activity, whereas service provision is the secondary effect, insofar as service provision is a means to the end of maximising profits" (Gutenberg 1983, p. 465). Consequently, economic success in a business relationship is the ultimate goal of a sales team.

However, for a sales team, the ultimate goal of profit is inextricably linked to a **modal goal**, namely the establishment of an optimal relationship with the customer company. The long-term nature of this relationship is one of the fundamental

special features of business-to-business marketing (Homburg/Krohmer 2006, p. 1056). A relationship between companies has emotional and rational facets. From an emotional point of view, for example, it is about building a basis of mutual trust (1 source). An example of a rational facet of the relationship would be the targeted mutual adjustment of tasks and goals with a view to maximising joint value creation (! 1 source). Consequently, the success of the relationship in a business relationship is another goal of a sales team.

We assess the success of a sales team relative to the respective potential on the customer side (! 1 source). We thus define **relationship success in the business relationship** as the extent to which the relationship potential in the business relationship is exploited, and **economic success in the business relationship** as the extent to which the economic potential in the business relationship is exploited.

2.1.4 Factors that can be influenced in the short term in team selling

We will empirically examine six factors in team selling that can be relatively easily or quickly influenced by management in a company. We are interested in the effects these factors have on the quality of teamwork in a sales team and on its success in a B2B business relationship. Three factors relate specifically to the structure of the sales team: the centralisation of leadership within the team, the interdependence of tasks within the team and the interdependence of goals within the team. Management can use the other three factors to shape the team context: team autonomy, team support and team communication decentralisation. As these constructs run like a thread through our work, we will define exactly what we mean by them at this early stage.

Our first construct relates to team leadership, which can be used to influence teamwork regardless of the team's composition. In extreme cases, team leadership is exercised solely by a central team leader. In the other extreme, team leadership is jointly exercised by all team members in the

in the spirit of democratic leadership (cf. Gemünden/Högl 2000, p. 49 f.). Between these two extremes, we establish a continuum with our definition and define **leadership decentralisation in a team** as the extent to which team leadership is shaped jointly by the entire team (high leadership decentralisation) as opposed to team leadership by a central team leader (low leadership decentralisation).

Our next two factors focus on how team members can be encouraged to work cooperatively with each other and avoid harmful competitive behaviour. Research into these opposing poles of human behaviour, cooperation and competition, dates back to Deutsch (1949, 1973, 1985). Later, Johnson and Johnson (1989) pointed out that cooperation can be achieved in particular by increasing social interdependence between team members:

"Social interdependence exists when individuals share common goals and each individual's outcomes are affected by the actions of the others" (Johnson/Johnson 1989, p. 167). We consider two facets of interdependence that have proven central in recent team research: task interdependence and goal interdependence (cf. Wageman 1995, p. 146 f.; Sethi 2000b, p. 331 ff.; Sethi/Nicholson 2001, p. 158). Following Sethi (2000b, p. 337), we define **task interdependence in a team** as the extent to which individual team members must cooperate in order to complete team tasks (joint work products), and **goal interdependence in a team** as the extent to which the responsibility, evaluation and remuneration of individual team members are based on the achievement of team goals.

Let us now turn to three constructs that management can use to shape the team context in the short term. First, we will look at two constructs that relate to the influence that management outside the team exerts on a sales team. One facet of this is the freedom of decision and action granted to a team. We define **team autonomy**, following Sethi (2000b, p. 337) and Stock (2003, p. 157), as the extent to which a team is independent of management outside the team with regard to the process of performance delivery (external decision-making autonomy). Another facet of this

influence of senior management is the support given to a team (cf. Eisenhardt 1995, p. 346). We define **team support** as the extent to which senior management provides the team with the necessary power and resources.

As the final facet of the team context, we examine a factor that can be shaped by management in the short term, which relates to how many members of the sales team are allowed direct contact with the customer company. We define the **communication decentralisation of the team** as the extent to which several team members from the supplier company are in contact with the customer company.

2.1.5 Long-term factors in team selling

(! Revise entire section to be more inclusive) In addition to the factors that can be shaped in the short term in team selling, we will empirically examine four additional factors that are difficult or impossible for management to change in the long term. The first of these is the quality of the individual team members' skills in the sales team. It could be argued that this factor can also be shaped in the short term by skilfully selecting team members and quickly replacing weak employees. However, extensive expert interviews have confirmed our assumption that in practice, the problem usually arises in such a way that the members of a sales team are already fixed and the focus is on the targeted long-term development of their skills.

We are also interested in the long-term balance between team orientation and performance orientation in the corporate culture in which a sales team is embedded. As a final factor, we examine the effects of the imbalance between the supplier and the customer company in a business relationship. With regard to these four factors that can be shaped over the long term, we are also interested in the influence these factors have on the quality of teamwork in the sales team and on the success of the business relationship.

We define **the quality of the team members' skills** as the extent to which the individual team members possess the professional skills and personal characteristics required to fulfil the team task, as well as the extent to which they complement each other (cf. 3 sources).

There are numerous definitions of the term corporate culture in scientific literature (see overview in Deshpandé/Webster 1989, Krohmer 1999). We understand it to mean "... the pattern of shared values and beliefs that help individuals understand organisational functioning and thus provide them with behaviour in the organisation" (Deshpandé/Webster 1989, p. !). Corporate culture can be characterised by the following dimensions (cf. O'Reilly/Chatman/Caldwell 1991, p. 505): 1) team orientation, 2) performance orientation
, 3) innovation, 4) stability, 5) respect for people, 6) attention to detail and 7) aggressiveness. We will focus on the first two dimensions.

We define the **team orientation of corporate culture** as the extent to which team-related values are pronounced in the corporate culture. Team orientation or the sense of belonging among employees, or even the family atmosphere, are dominant characteristics of what is known as clan culture (cf. Quinn 1988, Cameron/Freeman 1991, Deshpandé/Farley/Webster 1993). Denison/Spreitzer (1991, p. 5) refer to this as "group culture".

This contrasts with the **performance orientation of corporate culture,** which we define as the extent to which performance-related values are pronounced in corporate culture. Performance orientation and competition between employees are dominant characteristics of what is known as market culture (cf. Quinn 1988, Cameron/Freeman 1991, Deshpandé/Farley/Webster 1993). Quinn/McGrath (1985, p. 326) use the term "rational culture" for performance-oriented cultures.

This brings us to our last factor that can be shaped in the long term: **asymmetry in the business relationship**. We define this as the extent of imbalance between the supplier company and the customer company in terms of the degree of mutual alignment of tasks and goals (source: 1).

2.2 Contribution of selected theoretical reference points

We arrive at three selected theoretical reference points for our work, which will systematically underpin the significance of the constructs we are investigating (see Section 2.1) and form the theoretical basis for our hypotheses and research models. To understand the tasks of sales teams in B2B business relationships, we draw on the business relationship approach (section 2.2.1). From the group syntality theory (section 2.2.2) and selected team models (section 2.2.3), we then derive important theoretical insights with regard to the general question: "How does a team function?

2.2.1   Business relationship approach

Since the mid-1990s, research into the optimal design of business relationships has become increasingly important (Plinke 1997, p. 5). The field of "relationship marketing" emerged, originating in a shift in perspective from the analysis of market-related individual transactions to a holistic analysis of business relationships (Jensen 2001, p. 52). We understand a **business relationship** to be "... long-term interaction processes and bonds between members of different organisations that are guided by economic goals and aimed at a series of exchange processes" (Gemünden 1990, p. 34). This definition encompasses, on the one hand, business relationships between a company and its cooperation partners (e.g. in the context of joint ventures) and, on the other hand, the business relationships between supplier companies and customer companies examined in our study.

our study.

In the course of scientific analysis of the phenomenon of business relationships, a rough distinction can be made between personal and organisational approaches (Homburg/Krohmer 2006, p. 156). Within the framework of organisational interaction approaches, in addition to the approaches of Gemünden (1980) and Kirsch/Kutscher (1978), the **interaction model of the IMP Group** (Industrial Marketing and Purchasing Group, cf. Håkansson 1982) shown in Figure 2-1 is of central importance for the present work. This model divides interaction into four core elements: the interaction process, the parties involved (organisations and individuals), the atmosphere and the environment of this interaction process. Two aspects are particularly interesting for our work. Firstly, the interaction process is divided into two components. One component is short-term, focused on the pure transaction and therefore more rational in nature. The other interaction component is long-term, aimed at establishing a mutual relationship and therefore more emotional in nature. The second interesting aspect is the fact that the interaction process is embedded in a network of relationships specific to the interaction partners. This situational network of relationships is referred to as the atmosphere and includes aspects such as power relations, mutual dependence, willingness to cooperate and closeness between the two organisations (Håkansson 1982, p. 15 ff.). The atmosphere thus significantly determines the potential of a business relationship, which is of particular importance for our work (see section 3.1).

The qualitative approach of the IMP Group has been expanded by a series of studies. We will discuss a selection of seminal works in this field (listed by year of publication) and highlight the aspects that are relevant to our investigation.

In their conceptual work, Dwyer/Schurr/Oh (1987) distinguish between business relationships that focus purely on the transaction (discrete exchange) and those that are also based on a mutual relationship (bilateral relationships). According to the authors, the relationship component can only develop

only develop if both sides invest in building this component, as they expect greater returns as a result. We see the real added value of their work in the fact that they present a **phase model** for the temporal development of long-term business relationships. According to this model, business relationships go through the following four phases: awareness, exploration, expansion and commitment. As these development phases are passed through, emotional (e.g. trust) and rational facets (e.g. interdependence) become more pronounced in the business relationship (see Dwyer/Schurr/Oh 1987, p. 15 ff. for details).
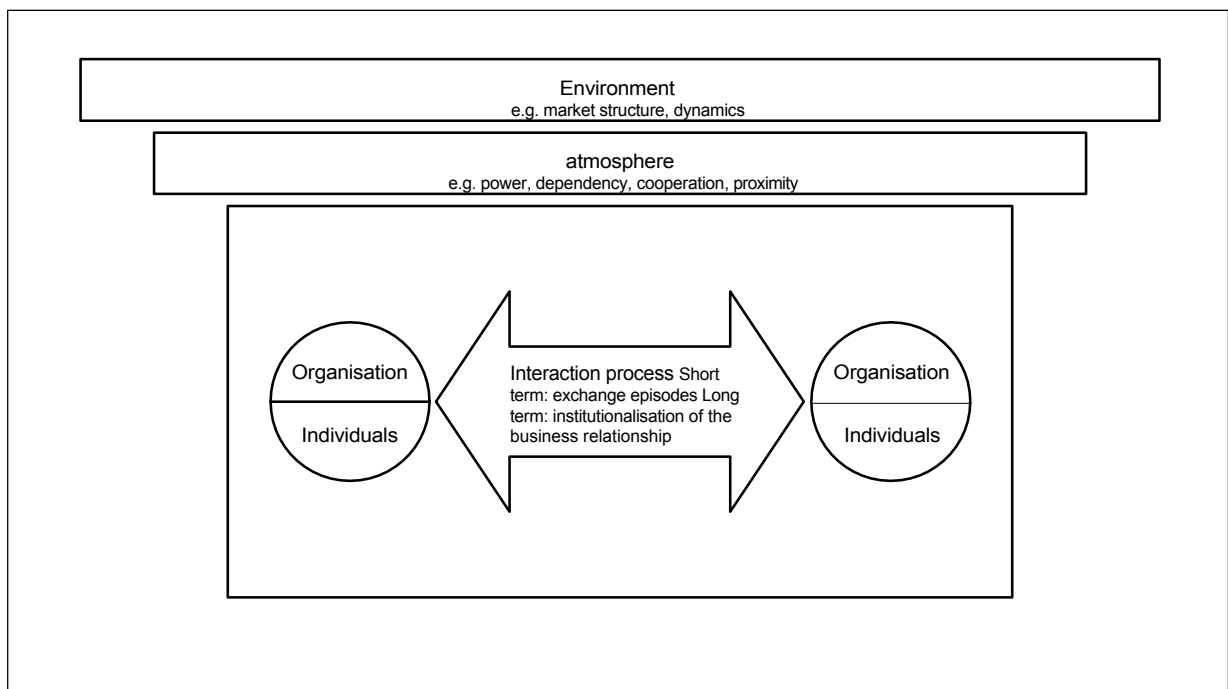
Figure 2-1: Relevant characteristics of the IMP Group's interaction model (based on Håkansson, 1982, p. 24)

Subsequently, research increasingly turned to identifying key constructs of the relationship component of business relationships. The empirical work of Robert M. Morgan and Shelby D. Hunt (1994) represents a key milestone in this field. The authors identify the constructs **of commitment** and **trust** as central mediators of a cooperation-oriented business relationship. They define commitment as "...an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it" (Morgan/Hunt 1994, p. 23). The construct of commitment, which can be roughly translated as

"inner obligation" (Diller/Kusterer 1988, p. 218), originally comes from social science research (Blau 1964, Thibaut/Kelley 1959; for a detailed overview of research on this construct, see Söllner 1993). According to Morgan/Hunt (1994, p. 23), the second construct, trust, is pronounced in a business relationship when "...one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity". This construct is based on the classic view of Rotter (1967, p. 651), who defines trust as "...a generalised expectation held by an individual that the word of another ... can be relied upon". In addition to providing empirical evidence of the central importance of these two constructs, Morgan/Hunt also demonstrate that trust is causally upstream of commitment. Furthermore, they show that the quality of communication is an important determinant for the development of trust.

The conceptual work of Day (1999, p. 133 ff.) is one of several works that further refine the **business relationship continuum** between a "pure transaction sale" on the one hand and a "cooperative relationship sale" on the other (cf. Heide 1994, Narus/Anderson 1995, Weitz/Bradford 1999). Pure transaction sales are characterised by a very short-term perspective, a focus on price negotiation and independence from past interactions and possible future interactions. It is basically a zero-sum game in which the side with the greater power wins. Day (1999, p. 125) refers to this, in our opinion very aptly, as a "dehumanised" business relationship. In contrast, cooperative relationship sales are characterised by a stronger sense of community and long-term orientation (Heide 1994, p. 74). The goal is a win-win situation in which the long-term potential of the business relationship can be jointly exploited (Day 1999, p. 134).

According to Day, the **relationship component** of a business relationship is supported in particular by mutual benefits (see Figure 2-2). If this diminishes, the business relationship will inevitably be pulled to the other side of the business relationship continuum over time, i.e. towards a pure transaction (Day 1999, p. 138). For this reason, it is important to constantly demonstrate to the other party the potential mutual added value of a cooperation

(Day 1999, p. 139) in order to then be able to mutually adapt the tasks and goals with a view to jointly exploiting this potential. Day later summarises this under the term "customer-relating capability" (Day 2003, p. 77). In addition to the constructs of commitment and trust, so-called connective links are important for building the relationship component. These create a long-term structural and social bond between the business partners. It is crucial that the resources committed are compensated accordingly by the added value generated (Day 1999, p. 134).
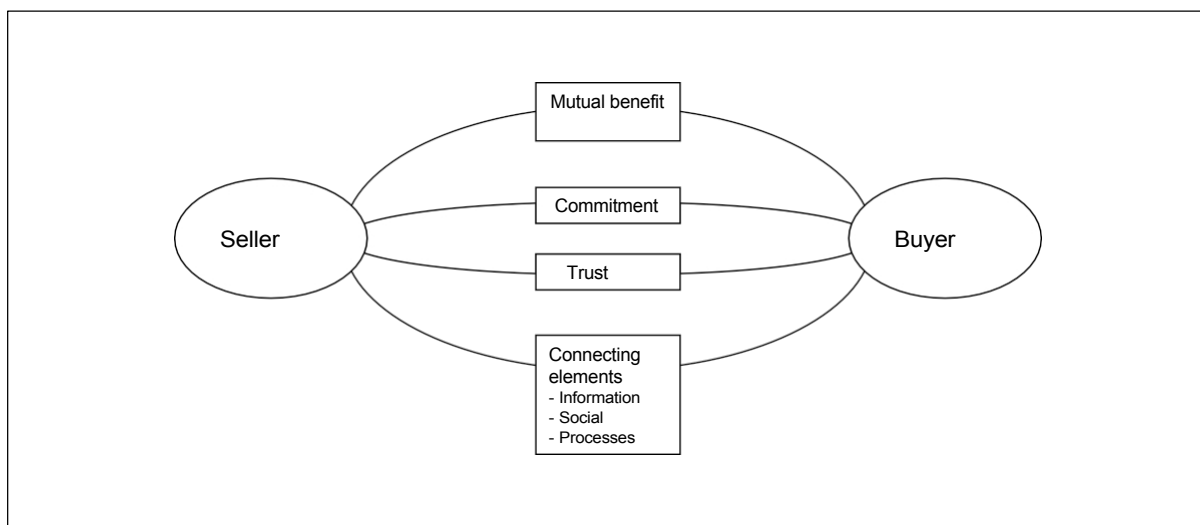
Figure 2-2: Cooperative relationship selling according to Day (based on Day 1999, p. 135)

Building on the business relationship continuum, Cannon/Perreault (1999) used an empirical study to create a **typology of business relationships**. They identified eight types of business relationships that differ in terms of the intensity with which the following "relationship connectors" are used: process integration, information exchange, legal agreements, cooperative norms, investment in the relationship by the supplier, and investment in the relationship by the customer (Cannon/Perreault 1999, p. 449). The authors limit themselves to rationally tangible, directly action-related elements of the relationship and deliberately exclude emotional elements such as trust, commitment and long-term orientation. They implicitly assume that these emotional facets of the business relationship are causally upstream of the rational facets: "...sharing proprietary information is unlikely to occur in the

absence of trust. Similarly, relationship-specific adaptations reflect a way to put long-term orientation and commitment into action" (Cannon/Perreault 1999, p. 449). We consider it a very important insight of the authors that business relationships do not necessarily have to go through the four temporal phases postulated by Dwyer/Schurr/Oh (1987) to reach commitment. The willingness to become dependent on a supplier through a close relationship, which may also involve considerable investment, exists, for example, if the supply is particularly important for the customer, the business relationship is complex and there are few alternative suppliers. If this is not the case, a business relationship may remain limited to a few "relationship connectors" even in the long term (Cannon/Perreault 1999, p. 453).

We briefly summarise the **implications** of the business relationship approach for our work. The greater the joint value creation potential between a supplier company and a customer company in a business relationship, the more important it is to develop key relationship facets. This involves not only designing rational facets, but also emotional relationship facets. The initial focus is on adequate communication between the business partners and the development of mutual trust. This is followed by a mutual adjustment of tasks and goals with a view to tapping into potential that can only be exploited jointly. In the long term, a business relationship is then sustained by a mutual long-term commitment on the part of the business partners. This commitment is expressed, for example, in business relationship-specific investments.

2.2.2 Group syntality theory

Group syntality theory was founded in 1948 by Raymond B. Cattell (Cattell, 1948a, 1948b). Cattell's aim was to create a basis for the meaningful description and measurement of groups. The description of the
"personality" of a group at any given point in time was a fundamental basis for him to subsequently derive general laws of group behaviour.

(Shaw/Constanzo 1970, p. 302). The theory consists of two parts: "Dimensions of a group" and "Dynamics of group potential" (Dynamics of Syntality). In terms of the **dimensions of a group**, Cattell distinguishes between the abilities of the group members (population traits), the structure of the group (structural characteristics) and the group potential (syntality traits; Cattell 1948b, p. 53).

The abilities of the group members are the individual characteristics of the individual members (e.g. intelligence) that are relevant to group work and which they contribute to the group. The respective group average with regard to these characteristics is considered. The structure of the group describes the relationships between the group members. This organisational pattern of the group includes facets such as leadership structure, roles and interaction behaviour. Cattell defines group potential as "...that which permits the psychologist to predict what the group as a whole will do when the stimulus situation has been defined" (Cattell 1951b, p. 181). Cattell summarises the reaction of a group as a whole (R), its potential (O) and the respective situation (S) with which a group is confronted in a mathematical formula (Cattell 1951a, p. 25):

$R = f(O,S)$

This formula can be expanded by breaking down the group potential into its individual facets and then assigning them to the corresponding situation facets to:

$R_j = S_1F_1 + S_2F_2 + \ldots S_nF_n + S_jF_j$

R_j is the reaction of the group in a specific situation j, the F_j are the facets of its potential, and the S_j are the facets of the situation that give meaning to the corresponding potential facets. Cattell's concept of group potential is particularly interesting with regard to measuring the performance of a group leader. He defines a group leader as "... a person who produces a group syntality different from that which would have existed had he not been present in the group, and his leadership ability is measured by the magnitude of the changes which he produces along all dimensions of syntality" (Cattell 1951b, p . 182). The

performance (L) of a group leader (X) is therefore the sum of the facets of group potential influenced by him:

$$L = F_{1X} + F2X + F3X + \ldots$$

Based on this observation, Cattell was able to comprehensively expand the concept of group leadership: "A leader is a person who has a demonstrable influence upon group syntality. And we measure leadership by the magnitude of the syntality change (from the mean) produced by that person, i.e. by the difference between syntality under his leadership and the syntality under the leadership of the average or modal leader" (Cattell 1951b, p. 175). Since every group member influences the potential of a group, every group member can also be regarded as a group leader to a certain extent (Cattell 1951 a, p. 26).

According to Cattell, the interaction between the three dimensions of a group (abilities of the group members, group structure and group potential) is very complex, but the underlying basic mechanism is relatively simple: "... the general causal sequence is through the interaction of population with the environmental situation producing structure and from this the syntality characteristics" (Cattell 1951 a, p. 181; see Figure 2-3).
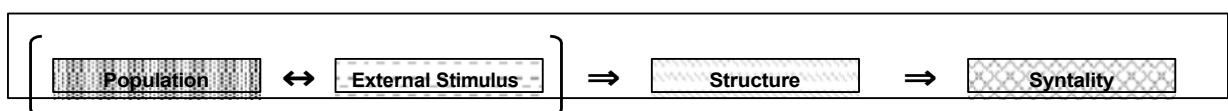
Figure 2-3: Causal interaction chain of teamwork according to Cattell

Cattell's comments on the influence of cultural facets on the three dimensions of a group are also significant for our work. On the one hand, cultural tradition is reflected in the individual characteristics of the group members and thus shapes the resulting personality of the group. On the other hand, the structural relationships between group members are also culture-dependent, which ultimately influences the group's potential (Shaw/Constanzo 1970, p. 304).

After describing groups using these three dimensions, Cattell turns to the psychodynamics of groups. Under the heading Dynamics of Syntality, he formulates seven theorems, from which we will now draw a few relevant aspects (Cattell 1948b, p. 55 ff.). According to Cattell, every group has the same origin: "Groups are devised for achieving individual satisfaction and exist only when they provide a means to the ends of individual ergic goals" (Cattell 1948b, p. 55). To explain the connection between the individual investments of group members and the existence of a group, he introduces an energy concept. He refers to the three parts of this concept as synergy, effective synergy and maintenance synergy.

Synergy is the sum of the individual energies that the individual members contribute to the group. In this context, Cattell quotes Jean Jacques Rousseau's famous statement: "the general will is not the same as the will of all" (Rousseau 1762). According to this, the energies contributed individually to the group by the members are partially offset by internal group friction. This part of synergy, which must be expended by the group with the highest priority in order to hold the group together (ensuring cohesion), is referred to as maintenance synergy. The remaining part of synergy, effective synergy, can be used by the group to achieve group goals. Cattell notes that maintenance synergy is relatively large compared to effective synergy. In extreme cases, i.e. when an attempt is made to break up a group, it can happen that all the energy is expended on the cohesion of the group (Cattell 1948b, p. 55).

The synergy of a group is the resultant vector of the energy vectors of its members. The level of this synergy is therefore determined by the number of group members and the intensity of the satisfaction of needs that the members experience through the group, as well as by the direction of these individual vectors (Cattell 1948b, p. 56).

For an individual, working in a group can only be a subordinate means of achieving a higher personal goal. Cattell uses the following example to explain this: "An emigré doctor may acquire citizenship (Group 1) in order that he may belong to his professional group (Group 2) in order that he may maintain his professional status (Group 3) in order that he may maintain his

explain this fact: "An emigrant doctor may acquire citizenship (Group 1) in order to belong to his professional group (Group 2) in order to maintain his family (Group 3)" (Cattell 1948b, p. 57).

During group work, those patterns of action that generate rewards for the members stabilise. Cattell sees monetary incentives as a primary means of directing the dynamic energies in a group in the desired direction. For Cattell, reward is "...one of the bridges from psychology to economics" (Cattell 1948b, p. 59). However, action patterns in groups stabilise much more slowly than in individuals, as the reward can often only be linked indirectly and with difficulty to the contribution of the individual member. Cattell concludes from this that teams generally learn much more slowly than individuals.

According to Cattell, the potential of a group and the abilities of its members are interdependent and change in constant harmony, particularly with regard to learning ability and dynamic stability. For example, he sees the stability of a group's structure as rooted in the stability of its members' attitudes and feelings (Cattell 1948b, p. 59).

Cattell derives several implications for further research from his theorems (Cattell 1948b, p. 60 f.). The following implications are of particular importance for the teams we investigated:

(1) The potential of a group varies much more in terms of quantity and quality than the potential of an individual.

(2) Due to the highly sensitive interdependencies within groups, they are much more susceptible to energy drain than individuals.

The Group Syntality Theory makes an initial comprehensive **contribution** to the short-term factors we have examined in team selling. Since these factors influence the structure within a team, i.e. they bring individuals together to form a team in the first place, they determine the level of the resulting team potential. Cattell's theory further emphasises the importance

of the structure-generating constructs of leadership decentralisation and goal interdependence. By increasing leadership decentralisation, the latent leadership potential of all team members can be tapped. In the context of goal interdependence (e.g. in the form of team-based remuneration systems), rewarding value-adding interaction patterns within the team can help to stabilise them in the long term.

With regard to the factors in team selling that can be shaped in the long term, the theory first emphasises the central importance of the construct of team member skills. In particular, a high degree of compatibility and conflict management skills among team members can make a valuable contribution to reducing the amount of energy required for team cohesion. This leaves more energy available for achieving team goals. Group Syntality Theory also points to the overarching influence of cultural facets. These shape the abilities of team members, the structure of the team and thus also the level of the resulting team potential.

2.2.3 Team models

In addition to the business relationship approach and Group Syntality Theory, we also wish to provide a theoretical foundation for our work using selected team models. Team models summarise success factors identified in the highly fragmented field of team research (for an overview of team models, see Gemünden/Högl 2001, Yeatts/Hyten 1998). They generally follow a so-called "input-process-output" scheme, i.e., a model depicts the effect of several independent variables (input) on team success (output) via the mediating team process. We will briefly present the input-process-output team models that we consider most significant and discuss the characteristics that are relevant to our work. We will then turn to three other team models that depart from the dominant input-process-output scheme.

Joseph McGrath (1964) was the first scientist to systematise the success factors of teams in this aggregated way. Based on comprehensive research, he identified a large number of input success factors, which he divided into three dimensions. These input factors indirectly influence two output dimensions via the group process (Figure 2.4). McGrath's approach is particularly significant because it inspired a large number of scientists to follow this input-process-output systematisation (Yeatts/Hyten 1998, p. 25). Our work is also based on this integrative frame of reference.
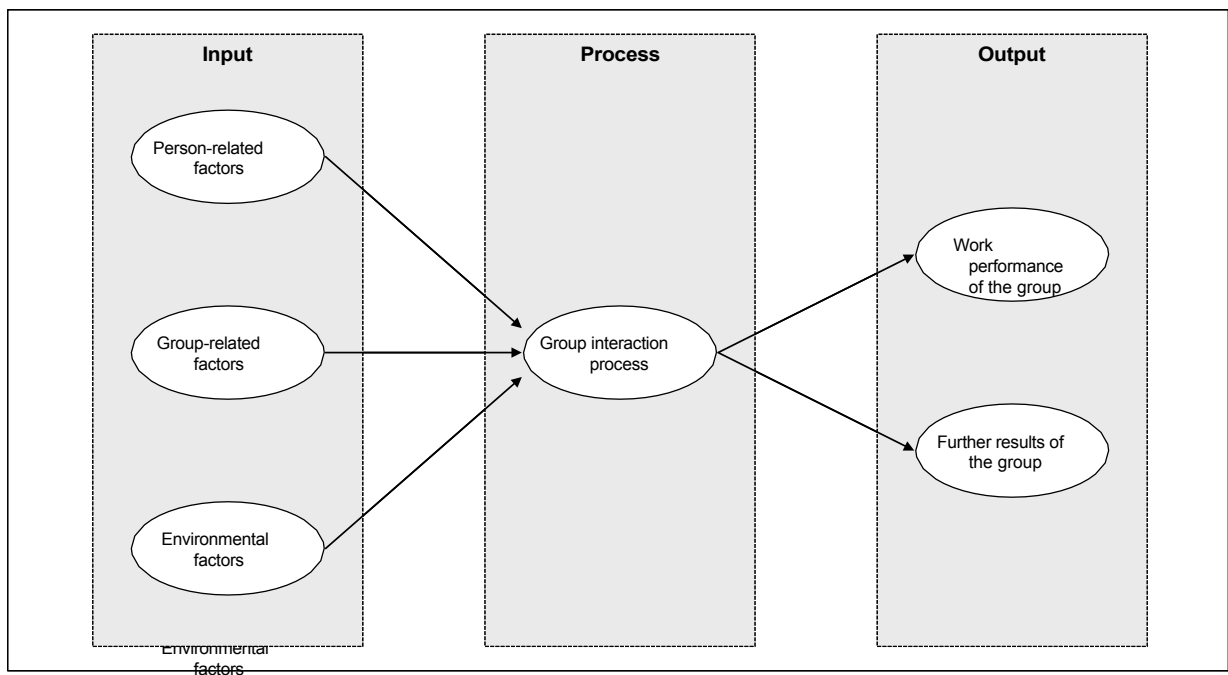
Figure 2-4: Relevant characteristics of McGrath's input-process-output model (1964)

Deborah L. Gladstein (1984) further developed McGrath's model (Gladstein 1984, p. 502). In her theoretical model, presented below, the input factors not only have an indirect effect via the group process but also a direct effect on success (see Figure 2-5). She also assumes that the group task has a moderating influence on the effect between the group process and group effectiveness. The group task includes facets such as task complexity, task interdependence and environmental uncertainty. The significance of the group process changes depending on the characteristics of these facets. This is particularly true with regard to the demands placed on information processing within the team (Gladstein

1984, p. 501). The theoretical basis for this moderating effect is the information processing approach, according to which a group must have an information processing capacity that corresponds to the relevant requirements of the group task (Driver/Streufert 1969, Galbraith 1973, Tushman/Nadler 1978).
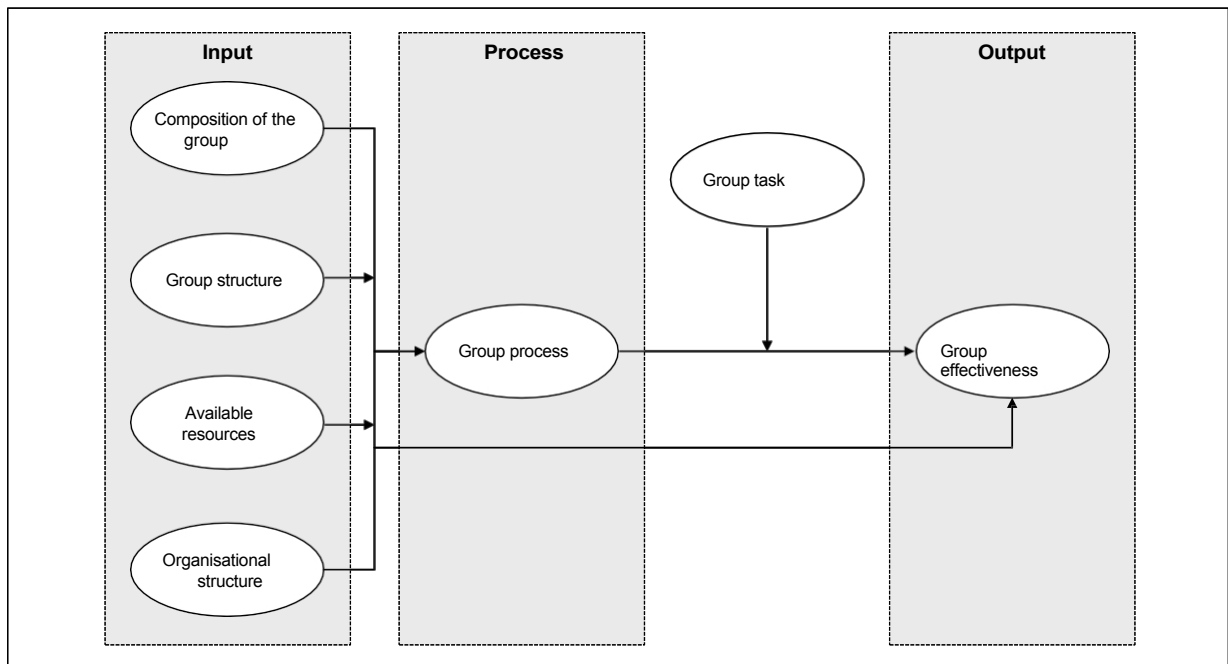
Figure 2-5: Relevant characteristics of Gladstein's input-process-output model (1984)

The moderating effect of the requirements of the group task or the work technology is also underlined by **Hackmann's** normative model of group effectiveness **(1988, 1990)** shown in Figure 2-6. Hackmann chose the term "normative" because he wanted not only to explain team success, but also to identify specific starting points for increasing the success of teams (Hackman 1988, p. 331). We also follow this normative approach in our present work. Another relevant characteristic is the postulated moderating influence of group synergy. Hackman's considerations thus fit seamlessly into the energy concept of Group Syntality Theory (see Chapter 2.2.2). Hackman postulates that the energy generated by a team's input factors can be further enhanced. This can be achieved through external support that helps to increase coordination and cooperation within the team and reduce any friction losses. This synergy-generating support results in a team culture that unleashes a very high level of team commitment and

a strong will to achieve goals in every team member: "When individuals value their membership in the group and find it rewarding to work collaboratively with their teammates, they work considerably harder than they would otherwise" (Hackman 1988, p. 326).
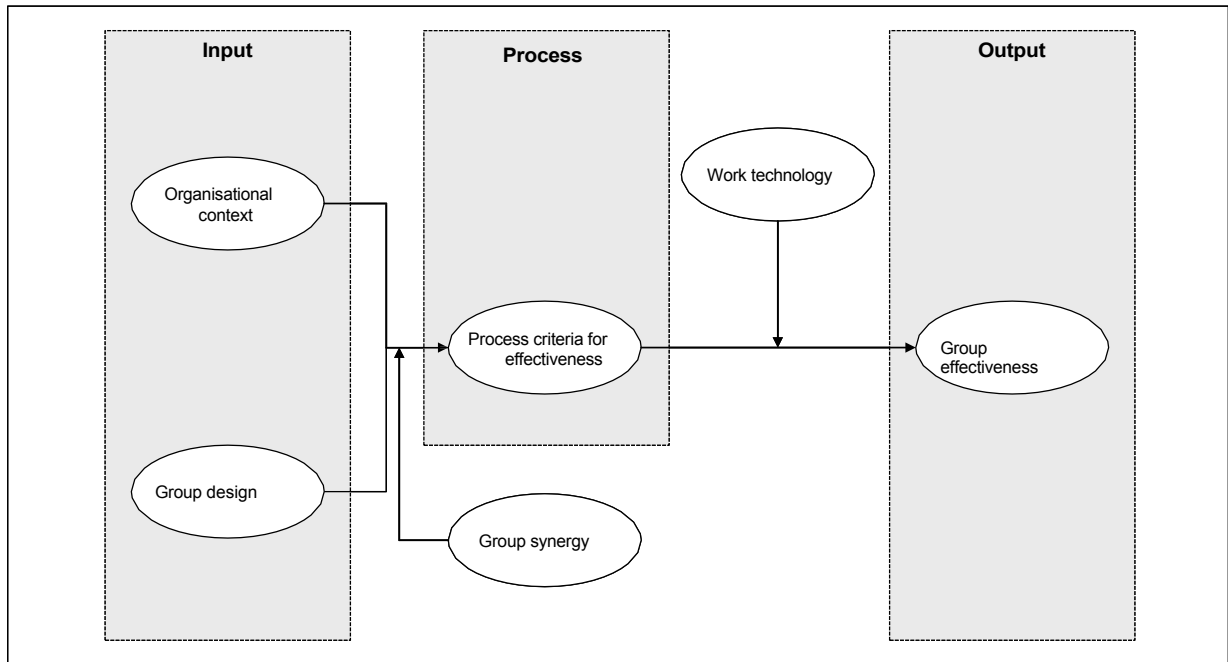
Figure 2-6: Relevant characteristics of Hackman's input-process-output model (1988)

Tannenbaum, Beard and Salas (1992) developed their team model shown in Figure 2-7 based on the work of Gladstein (1984) and Hackman (1988). The authors' aim was to develop a holistic conceptual framework for teams (Tannenbaum/Beard/Salas 1992, p. 120 ff.). The model clearly illustrates the high complexity of interdependencies in teamwork. This complexity relates firstly to the extensive interdependencies of the factor dimensions on the input and output sides of the model. Secondly, the authors assume that organisational and situational contextual influences overlap the entire impact structure of the model. Finally, they are the first to explicitly highlight the iterative nature of input-process-output models by introducing a feedback loop for the causal effect of the output on the input. This postulate also follows from the group-related life cycle concept, which is based on the fundamental assumption that newly formed groups are not immediately fully effective (Gersick 1988,

Tuckman/Jensen 1977). Rather, they go through several phases with very different performance levels (cf. the team development phases of forming, storming, norming and performing in v. Rosenstiel 2000, p. 262). It is easy to see that such a complex, holistic team model would not be empirically verifiable. To validate the iterative process, longitudinal data from teams would have to be collected, for example.
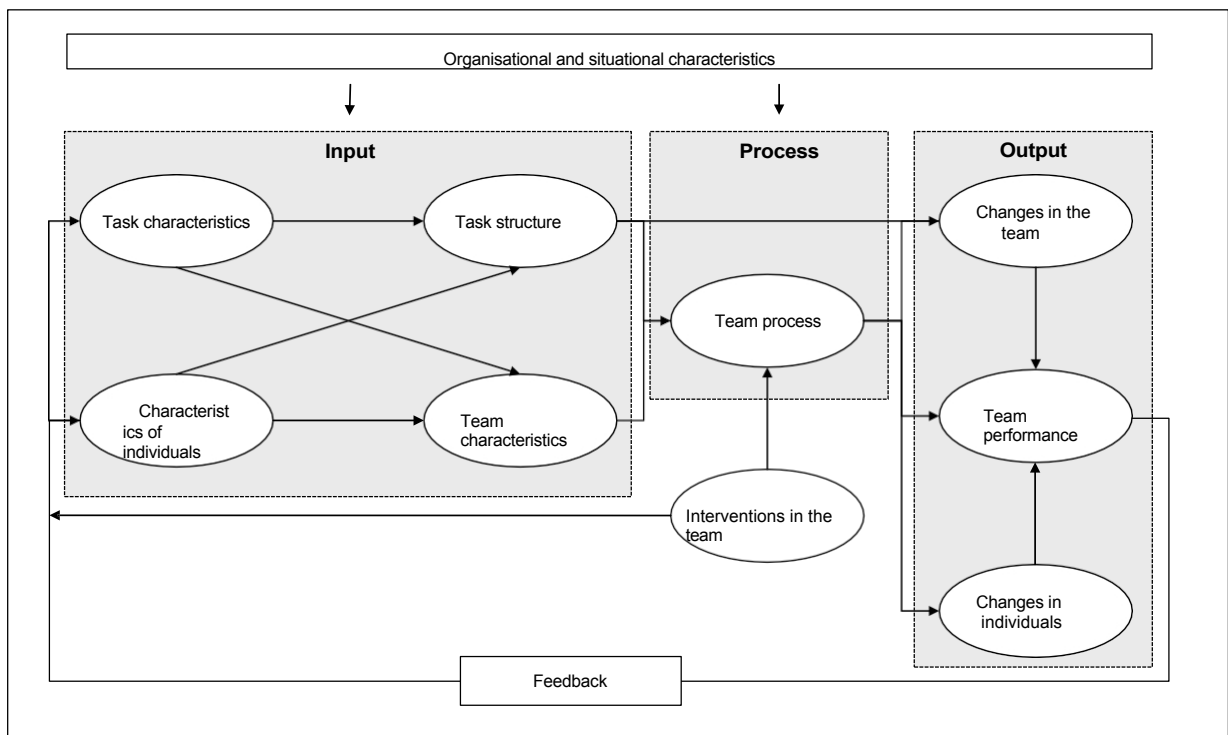
Figure 2-7: Relevant characteristics of the input-output model by
Tannenbaum/Beard/Salas (1992)

Given the complexity of dependency structures postulated by Tannenbaum, Beard and Salas (1992), we will impose two requirements on the causal models we have examined (see sections 3.2.1 and 3.3.1). On the one hand, the models should be concentrated on a few central variables so that they can be empirically verified. Second, only factors that can be directly influenced by managers should be included. In this respect, we follow **Shea/Guzzo (1987a, 1987b)**, who imposed these two requirements on the input-output team model shown in Figure 2-8 (Shea/Guzzo 1987b, p. 328 f.). In addition to limiting the complexity of the model and the required management relevance, we will take up another interesting facet of this model in our study

: the moderating effect of task interdependence on the causal relationship between goal interdependence and team success (task-related group effectiveness) postulated by Shea/Guzzo. According to this, it would only make sense to design a high level of goal interdependence in a team (e.g. through a team-based remuneration system) if the team task also requires a high level of cooperation between team members (Shea/Guzzo 1987a, p. 26).
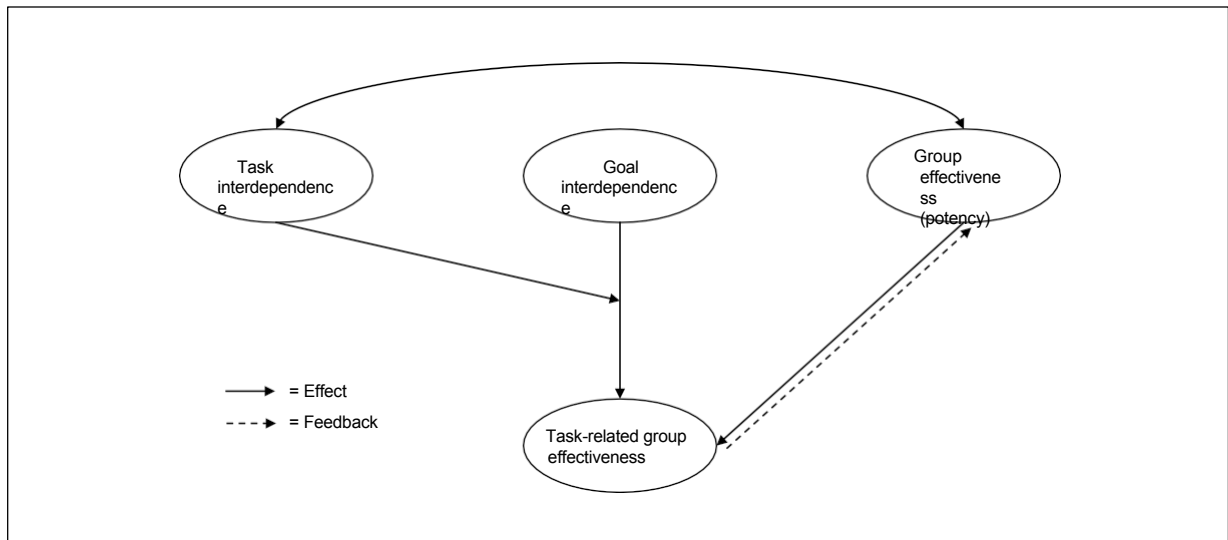
Figure 2-8: Relevant characteristics of the input-output model by Shea/Guzzo (1987)

As another team model that departs from the dominant input-process-output scheme, we would like to draw on the creative approach of **Sundstrom/DeMeuse/Futrell (1990)**, which the authors themselves refer to as the "ecological approach" (Sundstrom/DeMeuse/Futrell 1990, p. 120). The approach is limited to four central dimensions of teamwork: organisational context, boundaries, team development and team effectiveness (see Figure 2-9). In contrast to the other team models, the authors impressively emphasise the very high cyclical interdependence between all these dimensions. Furthermore, they highlight team boundaries as a central dimension. They call for a balanced degree of differentiation from and integration into the organisation surrounding the team. This balance should be tailored to the situation depending on the team's task. Teams that are too open run the risk of losing their identity. In other cases

, there is a risk of isolation, for example from important managers, customers or suppliers (Sundstrom/DeMeuse/Futrell 1990, p. 125).
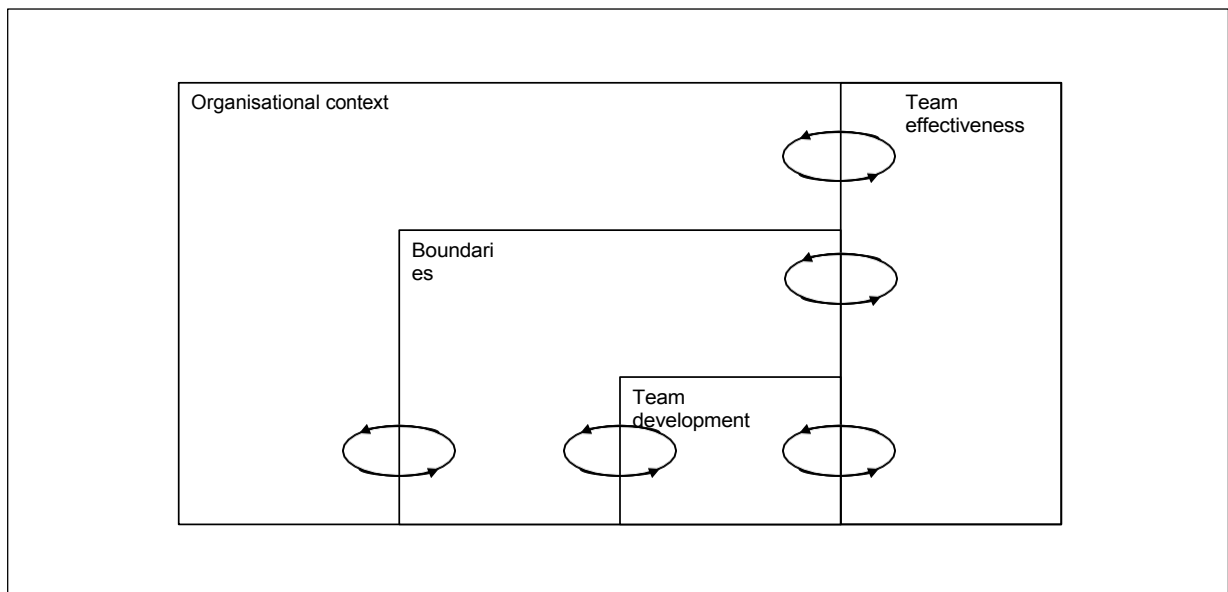
Figure 2-9: Relevant characteristics of the input-output model by Sundstrom/De Meuse/Futrell (1990)

To conclude our discussion of team models, we would like to highlight two interesting aspects of the input-output model presented by **Susan G. Cohen (1994)** in Figure 2-10. This model is an input-output model because it views the process-related capabilities of teams (e.g. the ability to coordinate) as facets of the input dimension of group characteristics. By including these point-in-time capabilities of a team as input, she is able to implicitly express the cyclical component of teamwork in her model (Co-hen/Ledford/Spreitzer 1996, p. 647). Furthermore, she emphasises the importance of leadership-related behaviours of all team members. She refers to the work of Manz and Sims (1987, p . 114), who identified the following six so-called "supervisory behaviours" that self-managed teams can use to increase their performance: self-reinforcement, self-criticism, self-goal setting, self-observation/evaluation, self-expectation and rehearsal. According to Manz/Sims (1987, p. 106 ff.), the ability of team members to manage themselves must be systematically developed by a leader or coordinator within or outside the team: "The best of all leaders is the one who helps people so that, eventually, they don't need him" (Lao Tzu, quoted from Manz/Sims 1987, p. 106).
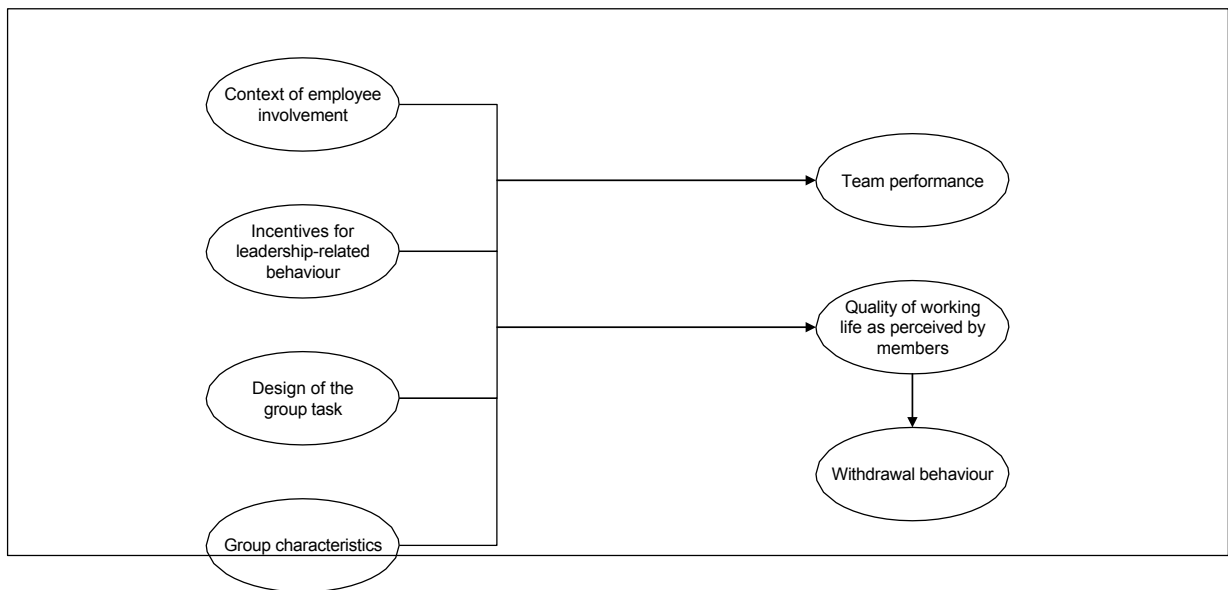
Figure 2-10: Relevant characteristics of Cohen's input-output model (1994)

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the individual team models summarise a large number of research results on individual facets of teamwork. In addition to the overarching **relevance of the team models for our work**, they also specifically underline the relevance of the input factors we examined for success. Our factors that can be shaped in the short term in team selling (section 2.1.4) are supported by the following team models: decentralised leadership (Cohen 1994), task interdependence (Hackman 1988, Shea/Guzzo 1987, Tannenbaum/Beard/Salas 1992), goal interdependence

(Cohen 1994, Hackman 1988, Shea/Guzzo 1987, Sundstrom/DeMeuse/Futrell 1990), autonomy (Hackman 1988, Sundstrom/DeMeuse/Futrell 1990), subordination

Futrell 1990), autonomy (Hackman 1988, Sundstrom/DeMeuse/Futrell 1990), support (Cohen 1994, Hackman 1988, Sundstrom/DeMeuse/Futrell 1990, Tannenbaum/Beard/Salas 1992) and decentralised communication (Tannenbaum/Beard/Salas 1992: Intergroup Relations).

The relevance of our long-term factors for success in team selling (section 2.1.5) is supported by the following team models: team member skills (Cohen 1994, Hackman 1988), team orientation and performance orientation of the corporate culture (Tannenbaum/Beard/Salas 1992, Sundstrom/

DeMeuse/Futrell 1990), asymmetry (Tannenbaum/Beard/Salas 1992: intergroup relations).

2.3 Contribution of selected empirical studies

Having established a basis for our investigation in section 2.2 using three theoretical reference points, we will now turn to an overview of key empirical research findings. First, we will structure the research findings, i.e. divide them into research areas (section 2.3.1). We will then highlight the findings from these research areas that are relevant to our study (sections 2.3.2 to 2.3.6).

2.3.1   Structuring the relevant empirical research

The **research areas relevant** to our work arise directly from the subject of our investigation. We deal with teams that operate at the interface between supplier and customer companies to ensure the success of these business relationships. Consequently, our work bridges the gap between business relationship research on the one hand and team research on the other. Within the framework of business relationship research, we focus on work that deals with the success of the relationship component (the relationship) and the success of the economic component (the business) of business relationships (section 2.3.2). Next, within the framework of team research, we first consider work that deals with sales teams (Section 2.3.2). Since there is relatively little empirical work in this field of research, we must draw on related research findings. We consider research on new product development teams to be closely related (Section 2.3.4). These teams are often multifunctional, the tasks are similarly complex and require a high degree of interdependence among team members. We therefore believe that the success factors identified in this area of research are easily transferable to our study.

Finally, we also turn to the very comprehensive further research on teams, focusing on work that examines teams in an organisational context (section 2.3.6).

Several criteria were decisive in **selecting the work** within the four research areas in order to ensure the appropriate scientific quality of the results. Firstly, we focus on recent work published within the last ten years, i.e. from 1995 to 2004 inclusive. In doing so, we deliberately include research results that were published after our empirical survey began in March 2003. Secondly, we concentrate on empirical work based on a large sample. Thirdly, the work should have been published in leading German and international journals and thus have undergone an anonymous review process by several experts (see reference to CH journal pyramid).

(! revise paragraph) The work selected using these criteria is presented clearly in **literature tables** at the end of each section, separated by research area (section: Selected empirical work). Here we first list all the constructs that were considered in the respective work. When examining the causal structure of these constructs, we follow the input-process-output logic of team research in all research areas and divide the constructs into input variables, mediator variables (process), output variables and moderator variables. For reasons of precision, we retain the original English names of the constructs in the literature tables. In view of the breadth of the research, we focus on the implications of these works for the environment of the constructs we are investigating in order to ensure adequate rigour and focus with regard to the added value generated for our study. Very important works are examined in greater depth in specific cases. To ensure that the presentation is complete while remaining concise, we also list works at the end of the literature tables that we will only refer to in passing because they do not meet our criteria or are only of secondary relevance to our study (section: Further empirical work).

2.3.2   Working towards success in business-to-business relationships

Building on the business relationship approach already outlined (see section 2.2.1), we first examine the contribution of empirical studies with regard to the characteristics of individual facets of the emotional and rational relationship components between two companies (see section 2.1.3). We then consider research findings that are of overarching relevance. These provide insight into the interdependence, phased development and cyclical evolution of these two components. Finally, we turn to work that provides an explanation for the economic success resulting from the successful development of the relationship facets.

Communication was described by Mohr/Nevin (1990, p. 36) as "...the glue that holds together a channel of distribution". This was followed by a wealth of work that underscored the high importance of communication in business relationships (including Johlke et al. 2000, Mohr/Fischer/Nevin 1996, Sengupta/Krapfel/Pusateri 2000). Initial indications of the emotional side of communication (referred to as **social exchange** in our study) are provided by the conceptual analysis of Hutt/Johnston/Ronchetto (1985, p. 35): "The buying and selling organisations are depicted in a power-dependence relationship whose operating mechanisms include social exchange (e.g., friendship) and mutual adaptation." The work of Nielsen (Nielsen 1998, p. 455) empirically confirms that the interpersonal closeness generated by personal contact between several function holders from both companies has a positive influence on the mutual exchange of information and the quality of cooperative work. The importance of the informal aspect of communication (informality) for the success of key account managers is underlined by the study by Schultz and Evans (2002, p. 28). Finally, the results of Nicholson/Compeau/Sethi (2001) demonstrate a strong positive influence of mutual liking (interpersonal liking) on mutual trust. We see this construct, defined as "...attraction to the rep such that the buyer would desire to be around the other out of choice, even if business ties were to terminate" (Nicholson/Compeau/Sethi 2001, p. 5), as closely related to the part of communication that goes beyond the purely business aspect. Further scientific support for the emotional facet of communication

in sales is provided by the work of Sharma/Levy (2003, p. 526: Salespeople's affect towards customers) and Pugh (2001, p. 1018: Emotional contagion; for a detailed discussion of this construct, see Hatfield/Cacioppo/Rapson 1994).

There is scientific consensus on the high importance of **trust** in business relationships that are geared towards long-term joint value creation: "It is now well established that trust supports exchange and helps partners project their exchange relationships into the future," note Donney/Cannon (1997, p. 36) in their broad overview of the determinants of trust that have already been identified (p. 38 ff.). Their finding that the criteria and the process differ greatly depending on whether trust is being built up towards a supplier company or towards the salesperson of that company is particularly interesting (p. 45). The importance of trust-building measures, especially for the supplier company, is also demonstrated by the work of Homburg/Giering/Menon (2003, p. 50). They demonstrate a negative moderating effect of trust on the positive relationship between customer satisfaction and the intention to expand the business relationship with the supplier. The relationship thus becomes more resistant to fluctuations in customer satisfaction due to the trust generated in the past. Finally, the work of Selnes/Sallis (2003) illustrates the downside of excessive mutual trust. They identify a negative moderating effect of trust on the positive effect between mutual learning (relationship learning) and the success of the business relationship. The authors refer to the hidden costs of excessive trust. These can result, for example, from the avoidance of negative but important information (maintaining harmony in the relationship), the increasing risk of opportunism (one-sided exploitation) and the loss of creativity. Consequently, they argue for an optimal level of trust (p. 91). Further reading on the significance of the construct of trust can be found in the more recent works by Lau/Chin (2003), Miyamoto/Rexha (2004) and Razzaque/Boon (2003).

According to the commitment-trust theory discussed in the context of the business relationship approach, the relationship between a supplier and a customer company is characterised at the highest level by mutual commitment.

(see section 2.2.1). The work of Ganesan (1994) provides an initial contribution to the emotional facet of this bond, which we refer to as **social bonding** in our study. He divides the determinants of long-term orientation in a business relationship into mutual dependence (rational side) and the two facets of trust, credibility and goodwill (emotional side). However, he can only demonstrate a positive relationship between credibility and long-term orientation in these emotional facets (p. 12). Zimmer (1999, p. 28 f.) conceptualises the construct of commitment using the rational dimension of "inner obligation" (knowledge of being committed to a particular partner) and the emotional dimension of "inner connectedness" (positive emotional orientation and belief in common goals). Other studies distinguish between affective and calculative commitment (2 sources). Finally, Cannon/Perreault (1999, p. 449) identify the presence of shared cooperative norms as a fundamental component of a close bond between two companies. In this context, we consider the research findings of Rokkan/Heide/Wathne (2003, p. 220 f.) to be particularly important. The authors are able to demonstrate that the extent of cooperative norms (norms of solidarity) significantly alters the risk of unilateral investments in business relationships. When cooperative norms are weak, unilateral investments increase the risk of opportunistic behaviour on the part of the other party, whereas when they are strong, unilateral investments reduce this risk: "We found that a strong norm of solidarity caused a shift in the effect of specific investments from expropriation to bonding" (p. 221). The works of Gundlach/Achrol/Mentzer (1995), Söllner (1993) and Zimmer (1999) provide a broad overview of the research results on commitment in business relationships.

We now turn to empirical studies on the facets of the rational component of business relationships. A basic facet of this component is the **factual exchange** between two business partners. Cannon/Perreault (1999) demonstrate that a certain level of information exchange, which they define as "...open sharing of information that may be useful to both parties" (p. 441), must be present in every business relationship. The closer the relationship, the more pronounced this exchange of information is (p. 449). Schulz/Evans (2002, p. 28) demonstrate in particular the importance of the "strategic content" of communication by key account managers for the success of their business relationships. Homburg/Giering/Menon (2003, p. 50) show a negative moderating influence of the "strategic content" of communication by key account managers on the success of their business relationships.

strategic content" of key account managers' communication on the success of their business relationships. Homburg/Giering/Menon (2003, p. 50) show a negative moderating influence of the quality of information exchange on the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The negative effects of temporary slumps in customer satisfaction are therefore mitigated by the quality of communication, which makes the business relationship more stable. The central importance of relevant exchange is further confirmed by the work of Mohr/Spekman (1994), Mohr/Fisher/Nevin (1996) and Ivens (2004).

Building on communication, a coordination mechanism takes place between the supplier and customer companies. The work of Jap (1999, p. 470) makes an initial contribution to the rational side of this coordination, which we refer to in our study as **mutual adjustment of tasks and goals**. In her study, the author identifies goal congruence and complementary capabilities as key determinants of coordination efforts between two companies. These coordination efforts manifest themselves in "...an ongoing effort to exploit existing synergies and idiosyncratic opportunities between the firms" (p. 464). She uses the very apt term "pie expansion efforts" (p. 461) for this mutual coordination, which is solely aimed at generating added value for both sides. Hom-burg/Schneider/Fassnacht (2003, p. 43) identify the involvement of the customer in the supplier's decision-making processes and, above all, the similarity of the companies as determinants of their successful cooperation. The authors operationalise similarity on the basis of several strategy- and culture-related facets (p. 51). In particular, from a strategy perspective, companies can become similar over time as they adapt their tasks and goals. Subramani/Venkatraman (2003, p. 48 f.) ultimately model these joint coordination efforts of two companies using the dimensions of quasi-integration and the scope of joint decisions. Brennan/Turnbull/Wilson (2003), Kim/Hsieh (2003) and Razzaque/Boon (2003) provide further support for these mutual coordination mechanisms with regard to the generation of joint added value.

The highest level of the rational relationship component is the making of business relationship-specific investments. This integration mechanism, which we refer to as **structural commitment**, includes "...investments in adaptations to processes, products, or procedures specific to the needs or capabilities of an exchange partner...relationship-specific adaptations reflect an aspect of calculative commitment...Adaptations can provide value to one or both parties to the extent that these investments reduce costs, increase revenues, or create dependence" (Cannon/Perreault 1999, p. 443). Close cooperative business relationships do not necessarily entail investments, and if they do, these can also be made asymmetrically (see the clusters "Collaborative" and "Customer is king" in the taxonomy of Cannon/Perreault 1999, p. 449). Business relationship-specific investments have a strong positive influence on mutual commitment in a business relationship (Anderson/Weitz 1992, p. 25 ff.). In addition, the commitment of a business partner is influenced by the perceived commitment of the other party. The increasing risk of opportunistic behaviour is discussed as a negative consequence of these investments, especially those made unilaterally and thus asymmetrically (Gierl 2000, 2004). This risk can be reduced, for example, by jointly establishing business relationship norms (Rokkan/Heide/Wathne 2003, p. 221) or by securing it through explicit joint contracts. However, the latter have a negative influence on perceived commitment (Jap/Ganesan 2000, p. 241). This facet of a business relationship is further substantiated by the work of Buvik/John (2000) and Subramani/Venkatraman (2003).

We will now briefly turn to empirical research findings that are of overarching relevance to our work. Building on the conceptual considerations of Dwyer/Schurr/Oh (1987, p. 11 ff.) and Wilson (1995, p. 335 ff.), the empirical research results indicate, on the one hand, a phased development of the emotional and rational components of business relationships. With regard to the rational facets, for example, the results of Cannon/Perreault (1999, p. 449) show that increasingly close business relationships entail a steady increase in the exchange of factual information and the integration of both companies in terms of systems, processes and business procedures.

. From an emotional perspective, trust has been proven many times over as a key determinant of commitment (Geyskens/Steenkamp/Kumar 1999, p. 226; Homburg/Giering/Menon 2003, p. 51; Morgan/Hunt 1994, p. 22). In addition, research findings point to an interdependence between rational and emotional components. In particular, the interdependence between trust and business relationship-specific investments has been comprehensively confirmed empirically (Ganesan 1994, p. 1; Miyamoto/Rexha 2004, p. 317). This relationship is also intuitive when one considers that trust increases the predictability of the other party's actions and reduces the risk of opportunistic behaviour (Jap 1999, p. 466). Finally, the research findings of Anderson/Weitz (1992, p. 19 ff.) suggest a cyclical development in which individual facets of a relationship gradually reinforce each other.

The successful development of the emotional and rational facets of a relationship between two companies is ultimately not an end in itself. It is certainly not "the marriage between buyer and seller" (Dwyer/Schurr/Oh 1987, p. 14), but ultimately a calculated or deliberative bonding process aimed at generating economically tangible added value:

"Buyers and suppliers are willing to accept the risks associated with coordination efforts and idiosyncratic investments because they are motivated by the achievement of strategic outcomes (larger pie shares)" (Jap 1999, p. 466). Several studies have shown that this calculative process of increasing customer proximity justifies the commitment of resources and generates appropriate **economic success** (see, among others, Jap 1999, p. 1; Kalwani/Narayandas 1995, p. 1; Workman/Homburg/Jensen 2003, p. 14). Homburg (2000a, p. 199) shows that the positive association between customer proximity and profitability is based in particular on the ability of customer-oriented companies to use their resources efficiently. His findings also suggest an inverse U-shaped curve for this effect. In the area of very high customer proximity, the cost effects would therefore exceed the benefit effects.

Finally, we would like to point out two weaknesses in previous empirical research on the success of B2B business relationships that are important for the **positioning of our work**. First, the findings on

the individual facets of the emotional and rational components of business relationships are very fragmented. We aim to take an integrative view of all relationship facets. Second, we will conceptualise the success of a supplier company as potential exploitation. To our knowledge, this has not been done in any previous work. Table 2-1 summarises the work considered and the focus or constructs examined in those studies that are particularly relevant to our investigation. Broader literature reviews in this field of research can be found in Homburg (2000, p. 7 ff.) and Jensen (2001, p. 26 ff.).

Selected empirical studies on success in business-to-business relationships	
Authors (journal, year)	**Constructs examined (original designation)**
Buvik/John (Journal of Marketing, 2000)	Ex post transaction costs, Vertical coordination, Uncertainty, Supplier asset specificity, OEM asset specificity
Cannon/Perreault (Journal of Marketing Research, 1999)	Input: Availability of alternatives, Supply market dynamism, Importance of supply, Complexity of supply; Mediators: Information exchange, Operational linkages, Legal bonds, Cooperative norms, Adaptations by sellers, Adaptations by buyers; Output: Customer satisfaction, Customer evaluation of supplier performance
Doney/Cannon (Journal of Marketing, 1997)	Input: Characteristics of the supplier firm, Characteristics of the supplier firm relationship, Characteristics of the salesperson, Characteristics of the salesperson relationship; Mediators: Buying firm's trust of supplier firm, Buying firm's trust of salesperson, Purchase choice; Output: Anticipated future interaction
Ganesan (Journal of Marketing, 1994)	Input: Environmental diversity, Environmental volatility, Transaction-specific investments by retailer, Perception of specific investments by vendor, Reputation of the vendor, Retailer's experience with the vendor, Satisfaction with previous outcomes; Mediators: Dependence of retailer on vendor, Perception of vendor's dependence on retailer, Vendor's credibility (trust), Vendor's benevolence (trust); Output: Retailer's long-term orientation
Homburg/Giering/Menon (Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing, 2003)	Input: Customer satisfaction, trust, information exchanges, joint working arrangements, flexibility of the supplier, age of the relationship; Output: Customer loyalty; Moderators: Trust, information exchanges, joint working arrangements, flexibility of the supplier, age of the relationship
Homburg/Schneider/ Fassnacht (Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing, 2003)	Input: Similarity; Mediators: Participation in decision processes, Cooperation, Distributor power; Output: Relationship effectiveness for the manufacturer
Japan (Journal of Marketing Research, 1999)	Input: Dyad's environmental factors (Environmental dynamism, Environmental demand), Dyad's organisational properties (Goal congruence of the dyad, Complementary capabilities of the dyad), Interpersonal states (Beliefs in interpersonal trustworthiness); Mediators: Coordination effort, Idiosyncratic investments; Output: Profit performance, Realised competitive advantages

Selected empirical studies on success in business-to-business relationships	
Authors (journal, year)	**Constructs examined (original designation)**
Jap/Ganesan (Journal of Marketing Research, 2000)	Input: Retailer's transaction-specific investments (TSIs), Control mechanisms (Supplier's TSIs, Relational norms, Explicit contracts); Mediator: Retailer's perception of supplier commitment to the relationship; Output: Evaluation of supplier's performance, Conflict level, Relationship satisfaction; Moderator: Relationship phase (Exploration, Building, Maturity, Decline)
Kalwani/Narayandas (Journal of Marketing, 1995)	Input: Long-term relationship; Output: Level of sales, Inventory holding and control costs, Selling price, Profitability
Lau/Chin (Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing, 2003)	Input: Moral philosophies (relativism, idealism), organisational culture (clan, market, hierarchical, adhocracy), salesforce control systems (behaviour-based), motivational orientation (extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation); Output: Trustworthiness of salespeople (character, commitment, conviction, competence, courage)
Miyamoto/Rexha (Journal of Business Research, 2004)	Input: Perceived supplier relationship-specific investments; Mediators: Perceived supplier relationship-specific interaction competence (responding behaviour, alerting behaviour, initiating behaviour, task compliance), perceived supplier commitment, customer relationship satisfaction; Output: Contractual trust, competence trust, goodwill trust
Nicholson/Compeau/Sethi (Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 2001)	Input: Similarity of business values, Frequency of personal interaction; Mediator: Interpersonal liking; Output: Interpersonal trust
Razzaque/Boon (Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing, 2003)	Buyer's trust in the supplier, buyer's dependence on the supplier, buyer's satisfaction with the relationship, buyer's commitment to the supplier, buyer's tendency to cooperate with the supplier
Rokkan/Heide/Wathne (Journal of Marketing, 2003)	Supplier opportunism, buyer-specific investments, extendedness, norm of solidarity
Schultz/Evans (Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 2002)	Input: Collaborative communication (informality, bidirectionality, frequency, strategic content); Output: Key account representative role performance, trust in key account representative, synergistic solutions
Selnes/Sallis (Journal of Marketing, 2003)	Input: Collaborative commitment, internal complexity, environmental uncertainty, transaction-specific assets, relational trust; mediator: relationship learning; output: relationship performance
Subramani/Venkatraman (Academy of Management Journal, 2003)	Input: Process specificity, domain knowledge specificity, physical asset specificity, site specificity; Output: Quasi integration, joint decision making
Further empirical work on success in business-to-business relationships	

Anderson/Weitz (1992), Artz (1999), Bensaou/Anderson (1999), Brashear et al. (2003), Brennan/nan/Turnbull/Wilson (2003), Cannon/Achrol/Gundlach (2000), Coulter/Coulter (2003), Eriksson/Sharma (2003), Friman et al. (2002), Geyskens/Steenkamp/Kumar (1999), Gierl (2000), Gierl (2004), Gundlach/Achrol/Mentzer (1995), Homburg (2000a), Homburg/Stock (2004), Ivens (2004), Johnson/Barksdale/Boles (2003), Joshi/Stump (1999), Kim/ Hsieh (2003), Kumar/Scheer/Steenkamp (1995), Lam et al. (2004), Mohr/Spekman (1994), Mohr/Fisher/Nevin (1996), Morgan/Hunt (1994), Nielson (1998), Ping (2003), Pugh (2001), Rose/Shoham (2004), Sharma/Levy (2003), Smith/Barclay (1997), Smith/Barclay (1999), Söllner (1993), Wathne/Heide (2004), Wetzels/Ruyter/van Birgelen (1998), Workman/Homburg/Jensen (2003), Zimmer (1999)

Table 2-1: Empirical studies on success in business-to-business relationships

2.3.3   Studies on team selling

In the course of scientific debate on the design of long-term business relationships (see section 2.2.1), **the** first **conceptual contributions** on team selling also emerged. The starting point was the concept of the "buying centre" on the customer side (Webster/Wind 1972, Johnston/Bonoma 1981). The empirical findings of Johnston/Bonoma (1981, p. 154) illustrate that horizontal and vertical interdependence on the customer side increases with the importance, novelty and complexity of the purchasing situation. This multi-person and multi-functional networking on the customer side should be mirrored by a "selling centre" on the supplier side: "Thus, high transactional interdependence on the buying side increases the need for mutual adaptation and coordination on the selling side" (Hutt/Johnston/Ronchetto 1985, p. 37). The appropriate positioning on the supplier side therefore depends on the situation and the interdependence resulting from the business relationship (Spekman/Johnston 1986, p. 521).

Smith/Barclay (1990, p. 6) see the limits of this selling centre in the group of people on the supplier side who are in direct contact with customers. This team is entrusted with the following customer-specific tasks, the content of which changes fundamentally in the course of the transition from a pure transaction relationship to joint cooperation: (1) communication, (2) negotiation, (3) problem solving, (4) coordination and (5) adaptation (Narus/Anderson 1995, p. 25).
(4) coordination and (5) adaptation (Narus/Anderson 1995, p. 25).

Building on this, Moon/Armstrong (1994, p. 20 ff.) differentiate between two groups of people on the supplier side, the "core selling team" and the "selling centre". The core selling team focuses on the respective customer, is responsible for maintaining the business relationship, and the membership of the team is stable over the long term. This type of team is also the focus of our investigation. The selling centre, on the other hand, is similar to the buying centre in that it focuses on the respective transaction, the goal is the successful completion of a single sales transaction, and the members are called in as needed. Moon/Gupta (1997, p. 33) developed a conceptual input-process-output model based on the buying centre to explain how these selling centres work. Finally,

this line of research, a distinction is increasingly made between the successful development of relationship facets on the one hand and the economic and operational success of the business relationship on the other (Narus/Anderson 1995, p. 24; Moon 1996, p. 40).

Let us now turn to the contributions **of empirical studies**. Jackson et al. (1999, p. 155) investigate the circumstances under which supplier companies deploy sales teams in B2B business relationships. They identify the following determinants: the customer is purchasing a complex product for the first time, the customer has a high need for information, the customer requires special treatment, several people on the customer side are involved in the purchasing decision-making process, there is relatively high sales potential for the supplier, or the supplier is selling a new product.

As part of our investigation **into factors that can be influenced in the short term** in team selling, Deborah Gladstein examines the effects of active **team leadership**. This has a positive influence on the quality of the group process, the quality of the team's interaction with its environment (boundary management) and on group effectiveness (Gladstein 1984, p. 511). Stock (2003, p. 287 f.) shows a reverse U-shaped curve for the initially positive influence of the intensity of team leadership on cooperation within the team and on the process quality of decision-making. Extreme influence by the team leader should therefore be avoided. However, she finds that the intensity of team leadership has a consistently positive effect on the containment of task-related conflicts within the team. De Jong/de Ruyter/Lemmink (2004, p. 26) demonstrate the positive effect of decentralised leadership (tolerance for self-management) on the customer orientation of sales teams in the financial services sector. The positive influence of the use of behaviour-related management tools in comparison to purely results-oriented control is underlined by the study in the service sector by Piercy/Carvens/Lane (2001, p. 44). The authors advocate the use of female team leaders, as women tend to lead in a more behaviour-oriented manner than men (p. 39). The positive effect of a team leader's mood (leader positive mood) on the sales success of

teams in retail has been empirically confirmed (George 1995, p. 787; George/Bettenhausen 1990, p. 706).

In the work of Stock (2003, p. 206), the task-related and goal-related facets of the interdependence of a sales team are combined in a construct. High **interdependence** is characterised by the fact that team members are highly dependent on each other. It appears that interdependence essentially has an indirect effect on team success via three process-related mediators (extent of interpersonal conflicts, extent of task-related conflicts and process quality of decision-making). However, the presumed positive influence of interdependence on cooperation and communication within the team could not be confirmed (p. 252).

Helfert (1998, p. 149 ff.) conceptualises the decision-related **autonomy** of a sales team as a facet of the construct "quality of the organisational context". Her study in B2B marketing demonstrates the positive effects of this factor on the quality of group processes and on the fulfilment of business relationship tasks by the team. The work of Stock (2003, p. 251 ff.) shows that the decision-making autonomy of teams primarily has a positive indirect influence on team success via the group process. Kirkman et al. (2004, p. 181 ff.) regard autonomy as a facet of the construct "team empowerment". In the virtual sales teams in the service sector they studied, this variable has a positive effect on team success.

Helfert (1998, p. 149 ff.) also includes the facet of team **support** through resources in the aggregated factor of organisational context quality, which has a positive influence on both the team process and team success. Particularly in business relationships with key accounts, the key account manager's (or his team's) access to marketing and sales resources is a key success factor (Workman/Homburg/Jensen 2003, p. 14). However, this largest study to date on success factors in key account management was not limited to examining team constellations on the supplier side, but also investigated the success factors of business relationships with key accounts in general.

Other factors that can be influenced in the short term, such as the effects of suboptimal team size and the existence of norms, were also considered. Suboptimal team size has a negative impact on the quality of group processes (Helfert 1998, p. 162; Stock 2004, p. 801). There is an inverse U-shaped relationship between norms, defined as "...the extent to which team members share expectations regarding desired behaviours" (Stock 2004, p. 788), and the quality of team processes. The widespread absence of norms suggests performance-reducing behavioural uncertainty among team members, while a high presence of norms appears to severely restrict personal freedom and thus the willingness to cooperate (Stock 2003, p. 289 f.). The high importance of team norms with regard to the quality of information processing in teams is also underlined by the study by Deeter-Schmelz/Ramsey (2003).

Since team-related characteristics (e.g. interdependence within the team) can be shaped in the short term, the following result is particularly relevant for our investigation. By shaping team-related characteristics, team success can primarily be increased indirectly by improving team processes (Stock 2003, p. 255).

Let us now turn to **factors that can be shaped in the long term** in team selling and consider empirical findings with regard to the **skills** required **of team members**. Here, the personal characteristics of technical competence and social competence were initially identified as success factors (Helfert 1998, p. 162; Stock 2003, p. 249). The danger of excessive demographic heterogeneity in the team was also highlighted (McNeilly/Russ 2000, p. 280 ff.). Teams should be appropriately homogeneous in terms of personal, professional and goal-related characteristics. This team-related homogeneity has an indirect positive effect on team success via the team process (Stock 2003, p. 254). In technical terms, however, a team can also be too homogeneous, which suggests the initially cooperation-promoting but then U-shaped effect of this facet (Stock 2003, p. 286). The need for an optimal level of task-related conflict within the team (initially positive, but negative from a certain point onwards) while avoiding interpersonal conflict

(consistently negative effect) points to the high importance of conflict management skills among team members (Stock 2003, p. 292). Furthermore, positive effects were found for the personal characteristics of team orientation (Dixon/Gassenheimer/Feldman 2003, p. 213 ff.; Stock 2003, p. 248 ff.), flexibility (De Jong/de Ruyter/Lemmink 2004, p. 29) and the experience of team members (Gladstein 1984, p. 511).

The study by Workman/Homburg/Jensen (2003, p. 10 ff.) provides initial indications of the positive impact of individual facets of **corporate culture** on the success of sales teams. The team spirit of a key account management team, defined as "...the extent to which people involved in the management of key accounts feel obligated to common goals and to each other" (p. 10), is the determining factor that has the greatest influence on the effectiveness of the respective business relationship in the study. The authors see this team spirit as being largely driven by the customer orientation of the corporate culture: "KAM team esprit de corps is related to the development of an organisational culture that supports customers" (Workman/Homburg/Jensen, p. 10).

Team development measures and the interorganisational nature of teams were examined as further long-term factors of high relevance to our study. Team training has a positive effect on the quality of group processes and the fulfilment of a team's business relationship tasks (Helfert 1998, p. 134). Training in this area should increase the pro-social behaviour of team members (George/Bettenhausen 1990, p. 705) as well as their task-specific skills and motivation (Churchill et al. 1985, p. 117).

Stock (2003, p. 167 ff.) summarises the numerical composition of the team and the distribution of power between the members of the supplier or customer company in the construct "degree of interorganisationality of a team". She concludes that interorganisationality has a weak positive effect on team success, but that a team can also be too interorganisational. This is particularly true when the framework conditions of market dynamics, technological dynamics, competitive intensity and task-related

Dynamic and task-related complexity are particularly successful in interorganisational teams (Stock 2003, p. 324).

If several people from a supplier company are involved in a business relationship with a customer company, it can be considered scientific consensus that the **quality of the teamwork** between these people has a positive influence on the success of the business relationship (Gladstein 1984, p. 512; Helfert 1998, p. 162; Stock 2003, p. 256).

The following selected interaction-related facets are examples of high-quality teamwork: communication (Helfert 1998, p. 162; Gladstein 1984, p. 511), team cohesion (Helfert 1998, p. 162; Stock 2003, p. 256), process quality of decision-making (Stock 2003, p. 256), mutual support (Gladstein 1984, p. 511) and team spirit (Workman/Homburg/Jensen 2003, p. 14). Cooperation between team members and the extent of task-related conflicts within the team are beneficial up to a certain point, but beyond that they reduce the effectiveness of a team (cf. the comments on non-linear effects of these constructs in Stock 2003, p. 291 f.). However, interpersonal conflicts have a consistently detrimental effect (Stock 2003, p. 294). Since sales team members are often not adequately compatible, conflict-reducing affective closeness can also be compensated for by certain "ingratiating behaviours" (Ingratia-ting Behaviours). Strutton/Peltron (1998, p. 8 f.) demonstrate the positive effect of various such ingratiation tactics on team cohesion. This approach proves particularly promising in sales: "Salespeople are, after all, principal practitioners of the art of influence" (Strutton/Peltron 1998, p. 1).

The work of Workman/Homburg/Jensen (2003, p. 14) provides some general implications for sales teams in B2B business relationships. There is no compelling need to use a team if the business relationship can be handled by a single salesperson. The impact of simply using a customer-related team proves to be insignificant in terms of the effectiveness of the business relationship. In the event that several

people from a supplier company have to work together to serve a customer company, Helfert/Vith (1999, p. 556 ff.) conceptualise the overarching construct "quality of team design" (TDQ). This consists of three dimensions: quality of team composition, quality of group processes and quality of the organisational context. The authors show that customer teams with a high TDQ exploit the sales potential, product development potential and market entry potential of their business relationship by up to 30% better than teams with a low TDQ (p. 560).

Table 2-2 summarises the empirical studies considered in the field of team selling. Due to the limited scientific coverage of this topic, we have also drawn on studies that do not meet our quality criteria mentioned above or that do not focus on identifying success factors for sales teams in B2B business relationships. It is easy to see that there is a huge need for research in this area. Finally, we would like to distinguish our work from other empirical studies in this field. We base our work on four **pillars:**

- **Object of investigation**: Our study focuses exclusively on the analysis of sales teams in B2B business relationships. We further increase precision by limiting the size of the teams we examine to a maximum of 12 members (minimising the risk of the object of investigation breaking down into several sub-teams).

- **Conceptualisation of success**: We conceptualise team success as relationship success on the one hand (exploitation of the potential of rational and emotional relationship facets) and downstream economic success of the business relationship on the other.

- **Generalisability of the research results**: We aim to achieve this by using a large sample of sales teams from the largest companies in five target industries and by choosing a multi-informant approach.

- **Management relevance of the results**: For our intended analysis of direct and indirect effects of controllable factors within causal chains (input-process-output model), the use of multivariate methods is absolutely necessary (Homburg/Krohmer 2006, p. 357 ff.). To our knowledge, there is currently no differentiated and comparative analysis of factors that can be shaped in the short and long term. We are also breaking new ground in the analysis of the effects of the following constructs in this context: decentralised communication, team orientation and performance orientation in corporate culture, and asymmetry in business relationships.

Several studies in this field of research do not specifically examine sales teams in B2B business relationships (e.g. Deeter-Schmelz/Ramsey 2003, Dixon/Gassenheimer/Feldman Barr 2003, Piercy/Carvens/Lane 2001, Workman/Homburg/Jensen 2003), recruit their sample from only one industry (e.g. De Jong/de Ruyter/Lemmink 2004, McNeilly/Russ 2000) or do not use sophisticated multivariate methods to analyse causal chains (Kirkman et al. 2004, Strutton/Pelton 2003). With our scientific positioning, **relevant overlaps** are reduced to two works: Helfert (1998) and Stock (2003).

We consider the research results of **Helfert (1998)** to be relatively difficult to generalise, as the sample was recruited exclusively from software manufacturers and advertising agencies (p. 103). Furthermore, the management relevance of the results is very limited, as it is hardly possible to make differentiated statements about the direct and indirect effects of individual factors that can be influenced. For example, the author aggregates the factors of team development measures, resource access and decision-making autonomy of the team into a higher-level construct (quality of the organisational context). It is also surprising that the quality of teamwork is not supposed to have a direct influence on the economic success of business relationships (p. 134). Finally, the level of team success (fulfilment of business relationship tasks by the team and relationship effectiveness) is measured only in absolute terms, not in relation to the level of customer potential (p. 113 ff.).

Stock's (2003) work deals with a broader subject matter, namely teams at the interface between supplier and customer companies. Of the 245 teams in their sample, only 86 are permanent customer service teams. The rest are new product development teams and customer-related project teams. We consider the size of the teams included in the sample to be critical. 66 teams have between 11 and 20 members, 23 even have more than 20 members (p. 187). Furthermore, team success is measured using very general criteria of effectiveness and efficiency, and therefore only allows limited conclusions to be drawn about sales (p. 214).Finally, due to the complexity of the causal model she has chosen, the author is forced to break down the structure into sub-models, which greatly impairs the direct comparison of the effects of individual factors that can be influenced and thus reduces the relevance for management.

Selected empirical studies with high implications for team selling	
Authors (journal, year)	**Constructs examined (original designation)**
De Jong/de Ruyter/ Lemmink S (Journal of Marketing, 2004)	Input: Tolerance for self-management, Flexibility of team members, Interteam support, Intrateam support; Mediator: SMT service climate; Output: Perceived service quality, Share of customer, Sales productivity; Moderator: Service type (Routine, Nonroutine)
Dixon/Gassenheimer/ Feldman Barr (Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, 2003)	Lone wolf, Affective trust, Cognitive trust, Autonomy, Team orientation
Helfert (dissertation, 1998)	Input: Qualifications within the team, quality of the organisational context, suboptimal team size; mediators: quality of group processes, fulfilment of business relationship tasks by the team, relationship atmosphere, output: relationship effectiveness
Helfert/Vith (Industrial Marketing Management, 1999)	Team Design Quality (Quality of team composition, Quality of group processes, Quality of the organisational context)
Kirkman et al. (Academy of Management Journal, 2004)	Input: Team empowerment; Output: Virtual team performance (Process improvement, Customer satisfaction); Moderator: Extent of face-to-face interaction
McNeilly/Russ (Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 2000)	Input: Demographic differences between the sales manager and the sales rep (age, education, gender); Mediator: Frequency of interaction between the sales manager and the sales rep; Output: Role stress of the sales rep, Sales reps' opportunities for advancement, Sales rep's organisational attachment, Sales rep's performance
Piercy/Carvens/Lane (Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management 2001)	Sales manager gender, salesperson gender, sales management control strategy, organisational commitment, intrinsic motivation, job anxiety, job involvement, role conflict, role ambiguity, propensity to leave, burnout, job satisfaction, performance

Selected empirical studies with high implications for team selling	
Authors (journal, year)	**Constructs examined (original designation)**
Stock (Habilitation, 2003)	Model 1: Input: Personal characteristics (professional competence, social competence, team orientation), team-related characteristics (homogeneity, cohesion, interdependence, intensity of team leadership, presence of norms, decision-making autonomy); Mediator: Characteristics of team processes (degree of cooperation, degree of communication, degree of conflict, process quality of decision-making); Output: Team success (efficiency, effectiveness); Moderator: Degree of interorganisationality of the team Model 2: Input: Degree of interorganisationality of the team; Output: Team success (efficiency, effectiveness); Moderators: Environmental conditions (market dynamics, technological dynamics, intensity of competition), company-related conditions (task-related complexity, task-related dynamics, degree of specificity of performance)
Stock (Journal of Business Administration, 2004)	Input: Presence of norms; Output: Degree of cooperation, process quality of decision-making, degree of task-related conflicts, degree of person-related conflicts; Control variables: Size of the team, professional homogeneity of team members, company size
Strutton/Pelton (Journal of Business Research, 1998)	Input: Ingratiatory influence tactics used in the sales team (favour rendering, attitudinal conformity, self-promotion, other-enhancement, behavioural conformity, court & counsel); output: lateral interpersonal attachment in the sales team
Workman/Homburg/Jensen (Journal of the Academy of Marketing Sciences, 2003)	Input: Activities (Intensity, Proactiveness), Actors (Top Management involvement, Use of teams), Resources (KAM Team esprit de corps, Control over marketing and sales resources), Formalization (KAM Approach formalization); Mediators: KAM Effectiveness, Performance in the Market; Output: Profitability; Control variables: Market dynamism, Competitive intensity
Further empirical work with implications for team selling	
Deeter-Schmelz/Ramsey (2003), George (1995), George/Bettenhausen (1990), Gladstein (1984), Jackson et al. (1999), Moon (1996)	

Table 2-2: Empirical studies considered in the field of team selling

2.3.4   Work on new product development teams

A structural mechanism that has proven very promising for new product development (NPE) is the use of multifunctional NPE teams (Hackman/Wageman 1995, Clark/Fujimoto 1991). Similar to the multifunctional sales teams we examined in B2B business relationships, NPE teams also require a certain degree of flexibility, creative freedom and participatory decision-making processes. In addition, both types of teams face the problem of optimal alignment, control and support

by senior management (Bonner/Ruekert/Walker Jr. 2002, p. 236). According to a very comprehensive study in the USA, best practice companies use multifunctional teams in 50 to 60% of all NPE projects. This figure rises to as much as 85% for highly innovative projects (Griffin 1997, p. 431). According to the work of McDonough III (2000, p. 230), the following process-related reasons are particularly decisive for the use of multifunctional NPE teams: (1) the need for multifunctional interaction, (2) clearly defined responsibilities, (3) process optimisation, (4) motivation and (5) better use of resources. The high relevance of NPE research for our research object is immediately apparent from this list. We will now discuss key quantitative research results that we consider important for our research project:

The head of an NPE project is the connecting interface between senior management and the project team. Empirical research shows that the quality of the project manager has a significant influence on the quality of the NPE process and on the quality of the resulting product. Key characteristics of this person are a high degree of assertiveness (power) within the company and the ability to bring together various factors into a coherent product vision and communicate this adequately (cf. the compilation of empirical research findings on the skills of NPE project managers in Brown/Eisenhardt 1995, p. 369 ff.).With regard to the **management** of an NPE team in particular, only the work of Lovelace/Shapiro/Weingart (2001) makes a relevant contribution to our research project. High-quality team leadership increases the motivation of team members to contribute their own objections or doubts to the teamwork and at the same time reduces the incidence of task-related conflicts within the team (Lovelace/Shapiro/Weingart 2001, p. 786 ff.).

We can also draw only a few conclusions from the research examined regarding the design of **task interdependence**. According to Sethi (2000b, p. 330), the degree of task interdependence in NPE teams has no effect per se on the process-related facet of group personality (superordinate identity) or on the success of NPE projects. Olson/Walker/Ruekert (1995, p. 48 ff.) provide a very differentiated picture for the context of new product development.

Task-related interdependence increases with the degree of innovation required and the difficulty of the development task. Ultimately, success depends on the use of more participatory coordination mechanisms as interdependence increases. The fit is crucial, i.e. a high degree of innovation should inevitably lead to the use of more complex team structures. In new product development in particular, this is complicated by the fact that the necessary cooperation between the functions involved (e.g. development, production, marketing, sales) can shift significantly over the course of the project (Olson/Walker/Ruekert/Bonner 2001, p. 258).

The effects of individual facets of **goal interdependence** are controversial. This is particularly true for team-based remuneration systems, which are relatively uncommon in practice (Griffin 1997, p. 431). According to Bonner/Ruekert/Walker (2002, p. 240), this type of remuneration has no influence on the success of NPE projects. This facet is analysed in more detail in the work of Sarin/Mahajan (2001). If the individual contributions of the individual team members are easy to evaluate, individual position-based remuneration leads to higher satisfaction within the team. The result is interesting in cases where individual contributions are not easy to evaluate. In such cases, both differentiated individual remuneration and equal rewards have a negative impact on team member satisfaction and team performance (p. 42). Sarin and Mahajan therefore advocate optimised assessment systems to minimise the harmful perception of unfairness within the team caused by inaccuracies in the distribution of financial rewards (p. 47). Sethi (2000b) and Sethi/Nicholson (2001) examine the overarching construct of goal interdependence in teams. This describes the extent to which the responsibility, assessment and remuneration of individual team members are based on the achievement of team goals (Sethi/Nicholson 2001, p. 331). Goal interdependence significantly determines the quality of the team process (Sethi/Nicholson 2001, p. 164) and contributes to the development of a group personality. Group personality encompasses the cognitive aspects of a team member's relationship with their team, as opposed to social cohesion, which encompasses the affective aspects. The positive influence of goal interdependence is further enhanced when task interdependence within the team is high (Sethi 2000b, p. 332 ff.).

A high degree **of autonomy** in an NPE team has a positive effect. Firstly, team autonomy contributes directly to the development of a group personality (Sethi 2000b, p. 339). Secondly, the early and active participation of team members in decisions regarding the performance process (e.g. goals, budgets, schedules) has a direct positive influence on project success. On the other hand, interference by management outside the team during the performance process only has negative effects (Bonner/Ruekert/Walker 2002, p. 240). The positive influence of team autonomy is reduced when communication and contact between the departments involved in a company is generally strong (cf. the negative moderating effect of the construct "interdepartmental connectedness"; Sethi 2000b, p. 339).

In highly innovative companies, senior management succeeds in "conducting" their company on the difficult line between structure and chaos, thereby enabling the continuous generation of innovative products (Brown/Eisenhardt 1997, Waltrop 1992). With regard to the success factors of development projects, Brown/Eisenhardt (1995, p. 346) emphasise the central role of senior management in their summary of the research results. The optimal level of **support** and skilful control have a central influence on the speed and productivity of development projects. However, the empirical results are contradictory when it comes to the support of NPE teams. Högl (1998, p. 156) cannot prove any connection between the support of NPE teams through material resources and the quality of teamwork. In the work of Bonner/Ruekert/Walker (2002, p. 240), any influence exerted by upper management has a negative effect on project success. Finally, Sethi/Smith/Park (2001, p. 78 ff.) postulate an inverse U-shaped relationship between the supportive influence of upper management and the innovation performance of NPE teams. However, they can only demonstrate a consistently positive effect. These results suggest the following hypothesis: "However, as upper managers go beyond a facilitative/integrative role to a more directive role, one which actively changes decisions and redirects the team during the project, there can be negative ramifications" (Bonner/Ruekert/Walker 2002, p. 242). We see considerable need for further research into the optimal design of this subtle

balance between support and autonomy for NPE teams on the one hand and control and intervention by upper management on the other, we see a considerable need for further research.

Other factors that can be influenced in the short term and are conducive to the performance of an NPE team include the physical proximity of team members (Sethi 2000b, Sethi/Nicholson 2001) and the team's networking with the relevant corporate functions (Denison/Hart/Kahn 1996).

Let us consider the additional insights provided by NPE research into our long-term factors in team selling. With regard to the variable **of team member skills,** the positive influence of multifunctional teams on the success of NPE projects is initially emphasised (Brown/Eisenhardt 1995, p. 346; Eisenhardt/Tabrizi 1995, p. 102). During the period under review, this line of research focused in particular on the impact of team member heterogeneity (see, among others, Ancona/Caldwell 1992b, Keller 2001, Pel-led/Eisenhardt/Xin 1999). Relevant to our study is, on the one hand, that the professional heterogeneity of team members has a positive effect, particularly indirectly, through the improvement of communication outside the team, i.e. the team's contact with important functions within the company can be improved (Ancona/Caldwell 1992b, p. 332 ff.; Keller 2001, p. 551 ff.). Furthermore, heterogeneity brings with it two types of conflict. On the one hand, there are performance-enhancing task-related disputes between team members, which are primarily caused by professional heterogeneity. On the other hand, however, there are also performance-reducing personal and emotional conflicts. Differences in the length of time team members have been with the company (tenure) intensify emotional conflicts, while age differences reduce these conflicts. Gender heterogeneity has no effect here (Pelled/Eisenhardt/Xin 1999, p. 16).

These opposing effects of heterogeneity are summarised in the works of Reagans/Zuckerman (2001) and Reagans/Zuckerman/McEvily (2004). With increasing demographic heterogeneity, internal density decreases ("Internal density...team members of different demographic categories are presumed to have relatively weak relationships with one another";

Reagans/Zuckerman/McEvily 2004, p. 103) and, at the same time, the external reach of the team increases ("Amount of range in the team's external network...team members of different demographic categories are presumed to be able to reach different constituencies outside the team"; Reagans/Zuckerman/McEvily 2004, p. 103). The authors can show that team performance is positively influenced by both internal team density and external team range (Reagans/Zuckerman/McEvily 2004, p. 125). The trick is to strike a balance in the team across all aspects of diversity, meaning that the personal and professional qualities of the team members need to complement each other perfectly: "A team that doesn't develop connections among its members that enable it to coordinate effectively faces an uphill battle. However, when such networks remain concentrated among homogeneous sets of individuals, the team fails to generate the learning that can only come from interactions among different individuals"; Reagans/Zuckerman 2001, p. 512 f.).

Sethi (2000a) and Sethi/Nicholson (2001) examine the effects of quality orientation as a facet of **corporate culture**. Quality orientation is defined as "the extent to which a firm lays emphasis on quality, creates a commitment to quality among its employees, and practices total quality management" (Sethi 2000a, p. 5). The strong influence of corporate culture, which "channels" towards an optimal result, is very clear in these studies. Compared to the team-related facets that can be shaped, quality orientation has a much stronger influence on the quality of the new product and its market success in both studies (Sethi 2000a, p. 9; Sethi/Nicholson 2001, p. 164). In addition, the quality orientation of the corporate culture reduces the positive influence of a team's information integration (ability to incorporate information from different functional areas) on product quality. This result means that even a team with low capabilities in this area can produce high-quality products in a company with a high quality orientation (Sethi 2000a, p. 10).

At this point, we would like to briefly discuss another factor that can be shaped over the long term and is also of particular interest for team selling: team longevity (see Katz 1982, Sethi 2000b, Sethi/Nicholson 2001, among others). In teams

with too short a lifespan, internal communication is insufficient. In teams with too long a lifespan, on the other hand, external communication is too weak, i.e. the team becomes increasingly isolated from the outside world (Katz 1982, p. 95). The optimum seems to lie in a situation where the internal and external orientation of an NPE team are in balance (Brown/Eisenhardt 1995, p. 368).

In this area of research, too, empirical results agree that the **quality of teamwork** in an NPE team has a significant positive influence on the efficiency-related success factors of speed and productivity. Product effectiveness, on the other hand, is influenced in particular by the project manager, senior management and involved customers, as this group of people generates a clear product vision. Financial success ultimately results from this channelling product vision in combination with an efficient process (see the summary of research findings in Brown/Eisenhardt 1995, p. 346). Research on the facets of teamwork in NPE teams provides particularly important insights for our research object with regard to striking a balance between inward-oriented team cohesion and outward-oriented boundary management.

Sethi/Smith/Park (2001) divide **team cohesion** into a cognitive facet (superordinate identity) and an affective facet (social cohesion). It has been shown that the cognitive facet has a consistently positive influence on a team's innovation performance. The affective facet of cohesion, on the other hand, has two negative effects when it exceeds a moderate level. Firstly, it has a direct negative effect on innovation performance and secondly, it also reduces the positive effect of the cognitive facet of cohesion (Sethi/Smith/Park 2001, p.). The cognitive side of cohesion is determined in particular by the interdependence of the team members' goals and by the autonomy of the team (Sethi 2000b, p. 339). The subtle interplay between cognitive and affective facets is also evident in studies on team-internal conflicts that threaten cohesion (cf. Gobe-li/Koenig/Bechinger 1998, Lovelace/Shapiro/Weingart 2001, Pelled/Eisenhardt/Xin 1999). While emotional conflicts between team members are consistently

have negative effects (Pelled/Eisenhardt/Xin 1999), the results on the effects of task-related conflicts are not consistent (Lo-velace/Shapiro/Weingart 2001, p. 786 f.; Pelled/Eisenhardt/Xin 1999, p. 22 f.). In this context, the way in which a team deals with emerging conflicts, i.e. the type of communication or the quality of conflict management, has emerged as an important success factor (Lovelace/Shapiro/Weingart 2001, p. 779; Gobeli/Koenig/Bechinger 1998, p. 433 f.).

The activities of a team with regard to the management of its organisational environment, also known as **boundary management**, were first investigated in the work of Ancona and Caldwell (1990, 1992a). Their work suggests that, in addition to the frequency of communication outside the team, the nature of these activities is also crucial to the success of the team. Specifically, they identify the following facets of teamwork that are aimed at managing the team's external organisational environment:

- "Ambassadorial activities provide access to the power structure of the organisation as members promote the team, secure resources, and protect the team from excessive interference.

- Task-coordinator activities provide access to the workflow structure; they are aimed at managing horizontal dependence. Through coordination, negotiation, and feedback, these activities allow for a tighter coupling with other organisational units, often filling many of the gaps left by formal integrating systems.

- Scouting activities provide access to the information structure; they are aimed at adding to the expertise of the group. These activities allow the group to update its information base, providing new ideas about technologies and markets" (Ancona/Caldwell 1992a, p. 659).

In this context, the work of Lynn/Skov/Abel (1999, p. 444 ff.) emphasises the importance of acquiring and processing important information from outside the team with regard to the learning effects of NPE teams (team learning). Later work then points to the subtle interdependence of the factors boundary management and cohesion. Increasing the heterogeneity of team members in functional and demographic terms can increase the success factor

boundary management, but at the same time the equally important internal team cohesion declines (Keller 2001, p. 552; Reagans/Zuckerman 2001, p. 510 ff., Reagans/Zuckerman/McEvily 2004, p. 125 ff.).

The work of Högl/Gemünden (2001, p. 435 ff.) provides insights into **conceptualising the quality of teamwork** in NPE teams. The authors conceptualise the construct using six facets: communication, coordination, balance of member contributions, mutual support, commitment and cohesion. These facets enable them to explain 72% of the variance in this construct. With particular regard to the high importance of a dynamic and creative interaction process in NPE teams, Sethi/Nicholson (2001, p. 155 ff.) create the process construct "charged behaviour" based on the work on "hot groups" by Leavitt (1996) and Leavitt/Lipman-Blumen (1995). This charged behaviour is defined as "the extent to which cross-functional product development teams are enthusiastically and jointly driven to develop superior new products" and encompasses the facets "enjoyment, commitment, open information sharing, challenging ideas, and cooperation" (Sethi/Nicholson 2001, p. 156).

This research has two main implications for team selling. As with team selling, new product development often requires coordination between different NPE teams (Denison/Hart/Kahn 1996, p. 1017). This interteam coordination in multi-team R&D projects is the focus of the study by Högl/Weinkauf/Gemünden (2004). Another parallel between NPE teams and sales teams is the trend towards global teams (Zupancic 2001; McDonough III./ Kahn/Barczak 2001). Compared to local NPE teams, global NPE teams place considerably greater demands on the behaviour of team members and the quality of project management due to the cultural heterogeneity of the team members and the physical distance between them (McDonough III./Kahn/Barczak 2001, p. 114 ff.).

Table 2-3 summarises the work we have considered in this field of research. For further information, we refer to the broader and differently structured presentations by Högl (1998, p. 50 ff.) and Stringfellow (1998, p. 7 ff.).

Selected empirical studies with high implications for team selling	
Authors (journal, year)	**Constructs examined (original designation)**
Bonner/Ruekert/Walker (Journal of Product Innovation Management, 2002)	Input: Formal controls (process control, output control, team rewards), interactive controls (team operational control influence, team strategic control influence, management intervention); output: project performance; moderators: product innovativeness, product programme integration
Eisenhardt/Tabrizi (Administrative Science Quarterly, 1995)	Input: Planning, supplier involvement, CAD usage, project overlap, multifunctional team, reward for schedule attainment, number of design iterations, testing, time between milestones, power of the project leader; Output: Development time
Gobeli/Koenig/Bechinger (Journal of Product Innovation Management, 1998)	Input: Context, Conflict intensity, Conflict management styles (Confrontation, Give and take, Withdrawal, Smoothing, Forcing); Output: Overall success, Customer satisfaction, Member satisfaction
Högl/Gemünden (Organisational Science, 2001)	Input: Teamwork quality (communication, coordination, balance of member contributions, mutual support, effort, cohesion); Output: Team performance (effectiveness, efficiency), personal success (job satisfaction, learning)
Keller (Academy of Management Journal, 2001)	Input: Functional diversity; Process: External communication, Internal communication, Job stress; Output: Technical quality, Schedule performance, Budget performance, Group cohesiveness
Lovelace/Shapiro/Weingart (Academy of Management Journal, 2001)	Input: Functional diversity, leader effectiveness; Process: Intra-team task disagreement, freedom to express doubts; Output: Team performance (innovativeness, constraint adherence); Moderators: Freedom to express doubts, collaborative communications, contentious communications
Lynn/Skov/Abel (Journal of Product Innovation Management, 1999)	Input: Practices (recording information, filling information, reviewing information, goal clarity, goal stability, vision support, new product development process); Process: Learning (information acquisition, information implementation); Output: Speed, new product success
Olson/Walker/Ruekert (Journal of Marketing, 1995)	Input: Amount of experience with the new product, Mediators: Task difficulty, Interdependence, Resource flows, Formalness of coordination mechanisms, Fit (Amount of experience with the new product, Formalness of coordination mechanisms); Output: Outcomes (Product/Process, Psychosocial)
Pelled/Eisenhardt/Xin (Administrative Science Quarterly, 1999)	Input: Diversity (functional background, tenure, age, gender, race); mediators: intragroup task conflict, intragroup emotional conflict; output: cognitive task performance; moderators: task routineness, group longevity
Reagans/Zuckerman (Organization Science, 2001)	Input: Demographic diversity; Mediators: Network density, Network heterogeneity; Output: Performance
Reagans/Zuckerman/McEvily (Administrative Science Quarterly, 2004)	Input: Demographic diversity; Mediators: Internal network density, External network range; Output: Performance

Selected empirical studies with high implications for team selling	
Authors (journal, year)	**Constructs examined (original designation)**
Sarin/Mahajan (Journal of Marketing, 2001)	Input: Equal rewards, position-based rewards, outcome-based rewards, process-based rewards; Output: Self-rated performance, team member satisfaction, speed to market, innovation, adherence to budget and schedule, product quality, market performance; Moderators: Ease of individual evaluation, length of development cycle, project/product complexity, project risk, competitive intensity, industry dynamism
Sethi (Journal of Marketing, 2000)	Input: Team factors (information integration, functional diversity), contextual influences (customers' influence, quality orientation, product innovativeness, time pressure); Output: Product quality; Moderators: Information integration, quality orientation
Sethi (Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 2000)	Input: Autonomy, Outcome interdependence, Task interdependence, Physical proximity, Team longevity, Interdepartmental connectedness; Mediator: Superordinate identity; Output: New product performance; Moderators: Task interdependence, Interdepartmental connectedness
Sethi/Nicholson (Journal of Product Innovation Management, 2001)	Input: Structural factors (physical proximity, team longevity, outcome interdependence), contextual factors (interdepartmental connectedness, senior management encouragement to take risks, exposure to customer input, extent of competition, quality orientation); mediator: charged behaviour; output: new product market performance
Sethi/Smith/Park (Journal of Marketing Research, 2001)	Input: Contextual influences (extent of project monitoring, customers' influence, encouragement to take risks), team characteristics (social cohesion, superordinate identity, functional diversity); output: innovativeness; moderators: social cohesion, functional diversity, encouragement to take risks
Further work with implications for team selling	
Ancona/Caldwell (1990), Ancona/Caldwell (1992a), Ancona/Caldwell (1992b), Brown/Eisenhardt (1995), Denison/Hart/Kahn (1996), Högl (1998), Högl/Weinkauf/Gemünden (2004), Katz (1982), McDonough III (2000), McDonough III/Kahn/Barczak (2001), Olson/Walker/Ruekert/Bonner (2001)	

Table 2-3: Empirical studies considered in the field of new product development teams

2.3.5 Further work on teams in organisations

We now come to the lowest level in our review of relevant empirical research findings with regard to the sales teams we are investigating. In the previous section, we had already left the sales team context. In the empirical work we will present in this section, two further characteristics of our research object are not necessarily present: a multifunctional composition and mutual dependence of team members with regard to the completion of team tasks (interdependence). In order to ensure that the research results can be sufficiently transferred to our investigation, we will only retain the restriction that the teams examined must be integrated into a company context (e.g. production teams, project teams, service teams or top management teams).

that the teams studied must be embedded in a corporate context (e.g., production teams, project teams, service teams or top management teams). We thus agree with the view that an organisational context has a significant influence on the mechanisms of action of embedded teams (Hackman 1990, p. 11; Hackman/Walton 1986, p. 84).

Business research into the success factors of groups in organisations began in the early 1980s (Arrow/McGrath/Berdahl 2000, p. 11 ff.; Goodman/Ravlin/Argote 1986, p. 14 ff.). This field of research incorporated the extensive findings of small group research, whose roots in social psychology date back to the end of the 19th century (for more details on small group research, see Fischer/Wiswede 1997, Schneider 1985, Shaw 1981). Here, too, we will focus on the findings relevant to our study and summarise the research results on the short-term and long-term factors that can be influenced in team selling. More comprehensive and different literature reviews in this field of research can be found in Bettenhausen (1991, p. 345 ff.), Högl (1998, p. 10 ff.), Stock (2003, p. 21 ff.), Yeatts/Hyten (1998, p. 57 ff.) and, in particular, Cohen/Bailey (1997, p. 239 ff.).

Studies on the effects of democratic **leadership** in teams have a long tradition in social psychology research. It has been confirmed several times that a participatory leadership style leads to higher satisfaction among team members (Preston/Heintz 1949, Shaw 1955, Rosenbaum/Rosenbaum 1971). Charles Manz and Henry Sims introduced this success factor into business research in the 1980s (Manz/Sims 1986, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1993): "The most appropriate leader today is one who can lead others to lead themselves" (Manz/Sims 1991, p. 18).Cohen/Chang/Ledford (1997, p. 290 ff.) confirm the factor postulated by Manz/Sims, "team self-management leadership," as a second-order construct consisting of six dimensions. Contrary to their expectations, however, they cannot prove that this variable has any effect on the success of traditional work teams. In autonomous teams (self-managing work teams), self-management even has negative effects (Cohen/Ledford/Spreitzer 1996, p. 664). The work of

Wageman (2001), on the other hand, points to a strongly positive effect of self-management in autonomous teams on team success. Self-management is primarily determined by the quality of coaching outside the team, i.e. a team must first be guided towards democratic leadership (Wagemann 2001, p. 572).

Furthermore, it has been shown that the influence that team members can exert on the decisions of the team leader has positive effects (Korsgaard/Schweiger/Sapienza 1995, p. 76; Liden/Wayne/Sparrowe 2000, p. 413). In multifunctional teams in particular, the influence of a team member on team decisions depends primarily on the value of the functional experience they bring to the team (Bunderson 2003, p. 469).

Social psychological research into the mutual dependence or **interdependence** of individuals in groups began in the 1950s. The following examples of findings were generated: (1) In cooperative situations, groups are more successful and interpersonal relationships are better than in competitive situations (Blau 1954, Deutsch 1949); (2) the possibility of obtaining greater rewards through cooperation leads to coalitions of individuals (Gamson 1961a, 1961b); (3) Increasing goal interdependence leads to greater commitment on the part of team members in groups with interdependent tasks (Berkowitz 1957); (4) In school classes, a high degree of task interdependence leads to better learning outcomes. These effects can be further enhanced by group rewards (Mesch et al., 1988); (5) in general, increasing task interdependence in groups leads to more communication, greater mutual assistance and better information sharing (Crawford/Haaland 1972); (6) Group rewards reinforce cooperative behaviour (Miller/Hamblin 1963); (7) in highly interdependent tasks, individual or hybrid rewards lead to relatively weak group performance compared to team rewards (Rosenbaum et al. 1980); (8) Positive interdependence leads to constructive conflicts in groups and increases group effectiveness, whereas negative interdependence leads to destructive conflicts and reduces group performance (Johnson et al. 1981, Tjosvold/Deemer 1980, Tjosvold/Field 1983, Tjosvold/Wedley/Field 1986): "In the case of positive interdependence, conflict issues are accompanied by a perceived positive relationship between the attainment of one's own and the others' goals: if one party swims, the others also swim.

goals: the parties involved stand or fall together. In the case of negative interdependence, conflict issues are accompanied by a perceived negative relationship between the attainment of one's own and the others' goals: if one party swims, the others must sink" (Janssen/Van de Vliert/Veenstra 1999, p. 117 f.).

In research on teams in organisations, two aspects of interdependence have been particularly prominent. First, the effects of mutual dependence among team members were examined (Bishop/Scott 2000, Campion/Papper/Medsker 1996, Steward/Barrick 2000) and, secondly, how the balance between task and goal interdependence can be optimally configured (Van der Vegt/Emans/Van de Vliert 2001, Van der Vegt/Van de Vliert/Oosterhof 2003, Wageman 1995). The perceived task interdependence in a team has a positive influence on both the commitment of the team members to their team and their organisational commitment (Bishop/Scott 2000, p. 446). In the case of conceptual team tasks, there is a U-shaped relationship between interdependence and team performance, whereas in primarily executive team tasks there is an inverted U-shaped relationship (Steward/Barrick 2000, p. 143). Particularly when task-related and personal conflicts arise in teams, positive interdependence leads to an improvement in the integrative behaviour of team members, better team decisions and also to greater affective acceptance (Janssen/Van de Vliert/Veenstra 1999, p. 134).

With regard to striking an optimal balance between task interdependence and goal interdependence in a group, we consider the work of Wageman (1995) to be groundbreaking. Increasing task interdependence can influence the quality of cooperation in particular, whereas goal interdependence determines the commitment of group members. Groups are most successful when the tasks and goals are either only individual (i.e. low task and low goal interdependence) or only group-related (i.e. high task and high goal interdependence). Hybrid constellations (i.e. high task interdependence with low goal interdependence or vice versa), on the other hand, reduce the quality of group processes and lead to dissatisfaction among group members (Wagemann 1995, p. 145). Van der Vegt/Van de Vliert/Oosterhof (2003) emphasise the negative influence of a hybrid constellation.

Only in this hybrid constellation does the level of information-related heterogeneity among team members have a negative impact on both team spirit and mutual social behaviour. Information-related heterogeneity results from differences between team members in terms of education and functional area. Social behaviour includes both mutual assistance and loyal behaviour on the part of each individual that is subordinate to the common team goal (Van der Vegt/Van de Vliert/Oosterhof 2003, p. 715 ff.). Finally, Van der Vegt/Emans/Van de Vliert (2001) examine the interaction between task interdependence, goal interdependence and individual satisfaction among team members. In contrast to purely rational performance criteria, the consideration of the affective facet of satisfaction is so important because it is a direct expression of the mental and physical well-being of each individual team member and thus enables the long-term survival of a team as a social system in the first place (Sonnentag 1996). The authors show that the degree of task interdependence only has a positive effect on team member satisfaction if there is also a high degree of goal interdependence within the team (Van der Vegt/Emans/Van de Vliert 2001, p. 63 f.).

The extent to which a team is independent of management outside the team is primarily based on the work of Hackman (1987). The higher the degree of **autonomy,** the greater the influence teams have on their own success. This leads to a distinction between three basic types (Hackman 1987, p. 331):

- Manager-led teams: Teams with a low degree of autonomy merely carry out specific tasks.

- Self-managing teams: Teams with a medium degree of autonomy can design and monitor the process of their performance themselves.

- Self-designing teams: Teams with a high degree of autonomy can also design their team as a performance unit themselves (e.g. setting goals, structuring tasks or composing the team).

The medium level of autonomy subsequently became a focus of research. Self-managing teams were associated with higher productivity (Cohen/Ledford 1994, p. 13), higher satisfaction and organisational commitment among team members (Cordery/Mueller/Smith 1991, p. 473) and higher quality teamwork (Seers/Petty/Cashman 1995, p. 18). However, the meta-analysis by Wagner (1994) and the findings of later research suggest that the optimal degree of autonomy should be determined on a case-by-case basis. According to Janz/Colquitt/Noe (1997, p. 877), the positive influence of autonomy on motivation decreases as the interdependence of team members increases. The results of Liden/Wayne/Bradway (1997, 175 f.) point in the opposite direction. Here, the positive relationship between a team's decision-making autonomy and its performance is reinforced by increasing task interdependence among team members. We consider the study by Stewart/Barrick (2000, p. 141 ff.) to be particularly relevant. The authors show that in conceptual team tasks there is a linear positive correlation between the degree of autonomy and team performance, whereas in primarily executive tasks there is a linear negative correlation.

The more a team is supported by resources, e.g. in the form of information systems or training measures, the more successful it is. There is consensus on this point in empirical research (Campion/Papper/Medzker 1996, p. 449; Magjuka/Baldwin 1991, p. 804 f.; Vinokur-Kaplan 1995, p. 316). However, it is more difficult to make a statement about the effects of **support** from management outside the team. Some studies show positive effects (Campion/Papper/Medzker 1996, Lechler 1997). Wageman (2001) takes a somewhat more differentiated view of the support provided to self-managed teams. She examines the effects of coaching, understood as the direct influence of a team-external manager on a team. The aim is to improve the team process and thus generate higher team performance. Her results show that good coaching leads to better self-management behaviour and higher quality group processes, but not to higher team performance and greater satisfaction among team members (Wageman 2001, p. 570).

Let us now turn our attention to the insights gained for our long-term factors in team selling. Early social psychological research generated a wealth of insights into the personal characteristics and **abilities of group members**. We would like to highlight a few results that we consider particularly relevant to our research project. Interpersonal attraction, which is extremely important for the functioning of group work, is largely determined by the similarity of the inner attitudes of the group members (Byrne 1961, Byrne/Nelson 1964). Socially empathetic people (Bouchard 1969), well-balanced group members (Cervin 1956, Haythorn 1953) and individuals who generally tend to be more interested in other people than in material things (Haythorn 1953) are conducive to group work. Furthermore, the positive effect of the following facets of heterogeneity in groups has been confirmed: Different personality profiles of group members (Hoffman 1959, Hoffman/Maier 1961), heterogeneity in terms of relevant skills (Goldman 1965, Laughlin/Branch/Johnson 1969) and gender differences in groups (Eskilson/Wiley 1967, Reitan/Shaw 1964). In particular, the involvement of female group members appears to be beneficial, as they behave less competitively (Uesugi/Vinacke 1963) and are also more likely to agree with the majority opinion of the group (greater ability to reach consensus) than men (Reitan/Shaw 1964). Finally, social psychological research emphasises the great importance of compatibility between group members. Above all, the individual needs and personal characteristics of the individuals in the group should complement each other (Schutz 1955, Shaw 1959, Shaw/Harkey 1976).

In empirical research on teams in organisations, the findings from social psychology have been partly replicated and partly extended to the corporate context. The following positive personal characteristics of team members were identified
For example: quality of intellectual abilities (Barrick et al. 1998, p. 386; Neumann/Wright 1999, p. 376), personal openness (Amason/Sapienza 1997, p. 509 f.), self-confidence (Neumann/Wright 1999, p. 376), conscientiousness, agreeableness, extroversion and emotional stability (Barrick et al. 1998, p. 386). Long-term employment of team members also promotes consistency in a team's work (Finkelstein/Hambrick 1990, p . 494 f .). Finally

the quality of information sharing within the team can be improved if the team members are not just specialists but also have broad functional experience (Bunderson/Sutcliffe 2002, p. 888).

The effects of demographic **heterogeneity** have been examined primarily in the context of top management teams (TMTs). Some studies point to rather positive effects, for example Hambrick/Cho/Chen (1996, p. 673 ff.) for differences in the functional background, education and length of service of team members, and Elron (1997, p. 393 ff.) for cultural heterogeneity in TMTs. Other studies have found both positive and negative consequences of heterogeneity, influenced not least by the situational context of the team (Carpenter 2002, p. 280 ff.; Carpenter/Fredrickson 2001, p. 540 ff.). It is also interesting to note that the ability to reach strategic consensus in a TMT suffers as the demographic heterogeneity of its members increases (Knight et al. 1999, p. 456). Leaving the context of TMTs aside, other studies also show that increasing heterogeneity has both positive and negative side effects. The following facets, for example, turn out to be a double-edged sword: age differences (Chattopadhyay 1999, p. 284), gender differences (Chatman/O'Reilly 2004, p. 198) and heterogeneity with regard to the functional identity of team members (Randel/Jaussi 2003, p. 771).

These conflicting results can be explained by the fact that heterogeneity inevitably leads to internal team conflicts. For example, differences in gender and length of service in the company lead to harmful emotional conflicts within the team (Pelled 1996, p. 239). The complexity of this issue is particularly evident in the work of Jehn/Northcraft/Neale (1999, p. 752). The authors highlight the complex interdependencies between the various facets of heterogeneity and the resulting positive task-related conflicts and harmful relationship conflicts.

The teams we examined are heterogeneous in composition. Consequently, research that generates insights into how the potential of heterogeneity can be optimally exploited and

keep the costs of coordination within the team to a minimum. Examples of facets identified here are the quality of verbal communication within the team (Simons/Pelled/Smith 1999, p. 668), the mutual affective compatibility of team members (Barsade et al. 2000, p. 824 ff.) and the decentralisation of power distribution within the team (Bunderson 2003, p. 469).

The empirical studies in this field of research do not make a direct contribution to our malleable **facets of corporate culture**. The studies by Kirkman/Shapiro (1997, 2001) do, however, make an indirect contribution. The authors examine the influence of national cultural facets on the level of resistance that members of self-managed teams show towards teamwork and self-management. These two types of resistance decrease the higher the cultural facets of collectivism ("the tendency to value group welfare more than one's own"; Kirkman/Sharpiro 2001, p. 558) and performance orientation ("doing orientation...the extent to which people have a strong work ethic and are goal-oriented"; Kirkman/Sharpiro 2001, p. 558) in a country are pronounced (Kirkman/Shapiro 2001, p. 563).

Let us turn to the **team process**. Here, three aspects from social psychology research are of particular interest to us. First, the effects of cohesion have been extensively studied. Higher group cohesion enhances communication between individuals (French 1941, Lott/Lott 1961), improves the pattern and content of their interactions (Shaw/Shaw 1962), increases their motivation and satisfaction (Exline 1957), but also increases the pressure on group members to conform (Berkowitz 1954, Schachter 1951, Wyer 1966). Three comprehensive meta-analyses confirm the positive correlation between the degree of group cohesion and group performance (Evans/Dion 1991, Mullen/Copper 1994, Gully/Devine/Whitney 1995). Secondly, it has been found that behavioural norms inevitably emerge in groups, allowing the group to control the behaviour of its members. Individual violations of these norms initially lead to group sanctions, while serious and persistent violations result in the rejection of the offender or even their exclusion from the group (Farrell 1979, Geller et al. 1974, Levine/Saxe/Harris 1956, Schachter 1951). Thirdly, centralised and decentralised

communication networks in groups have been examined for their impact on efficiency. Decentralised communication structures are more suitable for complex group tasks, while centralised structures are more suitable for simple group tasks (Guetzkow/Simon 1955, Leavitt 1951, Mulder 1960, Shaw 1954).

Empirical studies on teams in organisations initially emphasise the high importance of **cohesion**. Here, the meta-analysis by Beal et al. (2003), based on 64 studies, indicates that cohesion has a greater positive influence on the quality of the team process (performance behaviours) than on group success (performance outcomes). With regard to the two dimensions of success, effectiveness and efficiency, it also emerges that cohesion primarily increases group efficiency (Beal et al. 2003, p. 989 ff.).

Furthermore, this field of research generates interesting findings on a construct that is very relevant to us: **team learning** ("team learning...an ongoing process of reflection and action, characterised by asking questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, reflecting on results, and discussing errors or unexpected outcomes of actions"; Edmondson 1999, p. 353). The quality of this team learning has a significant influence on team success (Edmondson 1999, p. 367). An important determinant of this factor is the perceived psychological safety of the team members ("team psychological safety...a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking"; Edmondson 1999, p. 354). This construct is further enriched by the work of Austin (2003) and Bunderson/Sutcliffe (2003).

Finally, this field of research examines the complex **conflicts** that inevitably arise when individuals interact in groups ("conflict is an awareness on the part of the parties involved of discrepancies, incompatible wishes, or irreconcilable desires"; Jehn/Mannix 2001, p. 238). Jehn's (1995, 1997) division into an affective, interpersonal conflict component (relationship conflict) and a cognitive, task-related conflict component (task conflict) is helpful. Jehn/Mannix (2001) describe these components based on extensive preliminary work in social psychology (including Guetzkow/Gyr 1954, Wall/Nolan 1986) as follows:

- "Relationship conflict... an awareness of interpersonal incompatibilities, includes affective components such as feeling tension and friction. Relationship conflict involves personal issues such as dislike among group members and feelings such as annoyance, frustration, and irritation...

- Task conflict...an awareness of differences in viewpoints and opinions pertaining to a group task. Similar to cognitive conflict, it pertains to conflict about ideas and differences of opinion about the task" (Jehn/Mannix 2001, p. 238).

Early empirical studies suggest that cognitive, task-related conflicts promote performance. This is particularly the case when teams are faced with complex, non-routine tasks that naturally require greater interaction between individuals, higher quality team decisions or greater joint creative performance (Amason 1996, p. 135 ff., Jehn 1995, p. 271 ff.).

However, this simplified view is refuted by the meta-analysis by De Dreu/Weingart (2003). The analysis included 30 high-quality empirical studies published between 1991 and 2001. The authors show that although the two conflict components are distinct, they are highly correlated. The intensity of one conflict component inevitably leads to the intensity of the other conflict component. Furthermore, affective conflicts correlate strongly negatively with the satisfaction of team members and, to a lesser extent but still significantly, with team performance. Cognitive, task-related conflicts correlate less strongly but also significantly negatively with the satisfaction of team members. It is particularly interesting that, contrary to expectations, task-related conflicts also correlate negatively with team performance on average across all studies. The meta-analysis also shows that the negative effects of task-related conflicts are significantly lower when the correlation between the two conflict components is weak (De Dreu/Weingart 2003, p. 744 ff.).

Given the considerable heterogeneity of the research results in the meta-analysis by De Dreu/Weingart (2003), we believe that this topic cannot be reduced to simplified and universally applicable rules.

the sales teams we examined, we are primarily interested in how the potential of task-related conflict between team members can be tapped. Some studies show ways in which the inevitable conflicts can be channelled into a performance-enhancing direction. In principle, three approaches can be distinguished. First, the connection between task-related and affective conflicts can be weakened. Simmons/Peterson (2000, p. 107) identify a negative moderating effect of internal team trust in this regard. Second, conflict effectiveness within the team ("Conflict efficacy...the team's beliefs that it can deal with issues to manage the team's conflicts productively; Alper/Tjosvold/Law 2000, p. 627) can be increased by addressing conflicts within the team in a cooperative rather than competitive manner (Alper/Tjosvold/Law 2000, p. 634). The potential of task-related conflicts can be realised particularly well when cooperative norms are strongly established in a team (De Dreu/West 2001, p. 1191; Jehn 1995, p. 274; Simons/Peterson p. 107 f.) and the team members feel a high level of psychological safety within the team (Edmondson 1999, p. 366). A third approach is to strive for performance-enhancing conflict structures that shift over the course of teamwork. A longitudinal study shows which conflict structures distinguish successful teams from less successful teams (Jehn/Mannix 2001, p. 247 ff.).

Finally, we take a look at work of overarching relevance. Here we focus in particular on studies that highlight the effects of very broad, multidimensional constructs of teamwork. These meta-constructs form an overarching thematic framework for several constructs. A very important example is the construct **of team empowerment**, which could be roughly translated as the perceived empowerment of a team. The construct comprises four dimensions: effectiveness ("Potency...the collective belief of a team that it can be effective"; Kirkman/Rosen 1999, p. 59), meaning ("Meaningfulness...refers to a team's experiencing its tasks as important, valuable, and worthwhile"; Kirkman/Rosen 1999,
p. 59), autonomy and influence ("Team members experience impact...when a team produces work that is significant and important for an organisation"; Kirkman/Rosen 1999, p. 59). The positive effects of empowerment on the performance of individuals (Spreitzer 1995, p. 1460, Spreitzer/Kizilos/Nason

1997, p. 695 ff.) could also be transferred to the empowerment of teams (Kirkman/Rosen 1999, p. 69; Liden/Wayne/Sparrowe 2000, p. 407). In particular, the high importance of the empowerment facet **"potency"** for the success of teams has been comprehensively confirmed (see the results of a meta-analysis based on 64 studies: Gully et al. 2002). Furthermore, there is a reciprocal relationship between potency and team effectiveness. This means that past team success increases the perceived effectiveness of a team and thus also has a positive influence on future team success (cf. the longitudinal study by Pearce/Gallagher/Ensley 2002, p. 117 f.). Other overarching, performance-enhancing constructs include the "quality of employee involvement context" (Cohen/Ledford/Spreitzer, p. 651 ff.) and the "quality of team design" (Wagemann 2001, p. 562).

For the sake of completeness, we refer to further empirical studies with overarching implications. On the one hand, these are studies that compare the effects of success factors for teamwork in stable and turbulent team environments (e.g. Eisenhardt/Schoonhoven 1990, Keck 1997, West/Schwenk 1996). On the other hand, the work of Weinkauf/Woywode (2004) examines the success factors of virtual teams. These teams are characterised by the fact that the team members are geographically dispersed and work on a task in an interdependent manner across national and organisational boundaries (Weinkauf/Woywode 2004, p. 393).

Finally, Table 2-4 provides an overview of the empirical work from this field of research that we have used for our work.

Selected empirical studies with high implications for team selling	
Authors (journal, year)	**Constructs examined (original designation)**
Alper/Tjosvold/Law (Personnel Psychology, 2000)	Input: Cooperative conflict resolution, Competitive conflict resolution; Mediator: Conflict efficacy; Output: Supervisory effectiveness rating
Amason (Academy of Management Journal, 1996)	Input: Cognitive conflict, Affective conflict; Output: Decision quality, Commitment to decisions, Understanding of decisions, Affective acceptance of TMT members
Amason/Sapienza (Journal of Management, 1997)	Input: TMT size, TMT openness, mutuality among TMT members; Output: Cognitive conflict, affective conflict; Moderator: Mutuality among TMT members
Barsade et al. (Administrative Science Quarterly, 2000)	Input: Individual affect, Affective team composition; Output: Individual attitudes, Group processes, Performance
Bunderson (Academy of Management Journal, 2003)	Input: Metafunctional expertise, functional background similarity; Output: Workflow centrality, decision involvement; Moderator: Power centralisation
Cohen/Ledford/Spreitzer (Human Relations, 1996)	Input: Group task design, Encouraging supervisory behaviours, Group characteristics, Employee involvement context; Output: Quality of work life, Team rating of performance, Manager rating of performance, Absenteeism
Edmondson (Administrative Science Quarterly, 1999)	Input: Context support, Team leader coaching; Mediators: Team psychological safety, Team efficacy, Team learning behaviour; Output: Team performance
Janssen/Van De Vliert/Veenstra (Journal of Management, 1999)	Input: Positive interdependence; Mediators: Integrative behaviour, Distributive behaviour; Output: Decision quality, Affective acceptance; Moderators: Task conflict, Person conflict
Jehn (Administrative Science Quarterly, 1995)	Input: Relationship conflict, Task conflict; Output: Team member satisfaction, Team member liking of other group members, Team member intent to remain in the group, Individual performance, Group performance; Moderators: Type of task (routine, non-routine), Task interdependence, Group conflict norms
Jehn/Mannix (Academy of Management Journal, 2001)	Input: Group value consensus; Mediators: Group atmosphere, Intragroup conflict (Process conflict, Relationship conflict, Task conflict); Output: Group performance
Jehn/Northcraft/Neale (Administrative Science Quarterly, 1999)	Input: Social category diversity, value diversity, informational diversity; mediators: task conflict, process conflict, relationship conflict; output: group member morale, group performance; moderators: value diversity, social category diversity, task type (complex, routine), task interdependence
Kirkman/Rosen (Academy of Management Journal, 1999)	Input: External team leader behaviour, Production/service responsibilities, Team-based human resources policies, Social structure; Mediator: Team empowerment (Potency, Meaningfulness, Autonomy, Impact); Output: Productivity, Proactivity, Customer service, Job satisfaction, Organisational commitment, Team commitment
Kirkman/Shapiro (Academy of Management Journal, 2001)	Input: Collectivism, Power distance, Doing orientation, Determinism; Mediator: Resistance to teams, Resistance to self-management; Output: Job satisfaction, Organisational commitment; Moderator: Country

Selected empirical studies with high implications for team selling	
Authors (journal, year)	**Constructs examined (original designation)**
Knight et al. (Strategic Management Journal, 1999)	Input: Location, functional diversity, age diversity, educational diversity, employment tenure diversity; mediators: interpersonal conflict, agreement seeking; output: strategic consensus
Korsgaard/Schweiger/ Sapienza (Academy of Management Journal, 1995)	Input: Leader's consideration of team members' input; Mediators: Procedural fairness; Output: Decision commitment, Attachment to group, Trust in leader; Moderator: Team members' influence over final decision
Liden/Wayne/Bradway (Human Relations, 1997)	Input: Group control, Output: Group performance, Moderator: Task interdependence
Liden/Wayne/Sparrowe (Journal of Applied Psychology, 2000)	Input: Job characteristics, Leader-member exchange, Team-member exchange; Mediator: Empowerment (Meaning, Impact, Competence, Self-determination); Output: Work satisfaction, Organisational commitment, Job performance
Randel/Jaussi (Academy of Management Journal, 2003)	Input: Functional background identity; Output: Individual performance in cross-functional teams; Moderators: Dissimilarity with other team members, Membership in a team's minority or majority
Simons/Pelled/Smith (Academy of Management Journal, 1999)	Input: TMT diversity (team age diversity, company tenure diversity, functional background diversity, educational level diversity, environmental uncertainty diversity); Mediator: Decision comprehensiveness; Output: Organisational performance; Moderator: TMT debate
Simons/Peterson (Journal of Applied Psychology, 2000)	Input: Task conflict; Output: Relationship conflict; Moderators: Intragroup trust, Aggressive conflict management tactics
Stewart/Barrick (Academy of Management Journal, 2000)	Input: Interdependence, team self-leadership; Mediator: Intra-team processes; Output: Work team performance; Moderator: Task type (conceptual tasks, behavioural tasks)
Van der Vegt/Emans/Van de Vliert (Personnel Psychology, 2001)	Task interdependence, goal interdependence, job satisfaction, team satisfaction
Van der Vegt/Van de Vliert/Oosterhof (Academy of Management Journal, 2003)	Informational dissimilarity (educational level, educational background, functional speciality), task interdependence, goal interdependence, team identification, organisational citizenship behaviour (helping behaviour, loyal behaviour)
Wageman (Administrative Science Quarterly, 1995)	Input: Task interdependence (individual, hybrid, group), outcome interdependence (individual, hybrid, group); output: group performance, group norms, quality of group process, experienced interdependence, work satisfaction, work motivation, learning; moderator: preference for autonomy
Wageman (Organization Science, 2001)	Input: Team design (direction, optimal diversity, appropriate size, stability of membership, task interdependence, task goals, core strategy norms, group rewards, available information, available training, material resources), leader coaching behaviour (cues/rewards for self-management, problem-solving consultation, process consultation, negative signals, intervention in the task, identifying team problems); Output: Collective responsibility, Monitoring own performance, Managing own performance, Overall self-management, Overall performance, Quality of process, Member satisfaction

Further work with implications for team selling
Austin (2003), Banker et al. (1996), Barrick et al. (1998), Beal et al. (2003), Bishop/Scott (2000), Bunderson/Sutcliffe (2002), Bunderson/Sutcliffe (2003), Campion/Papper/Medsker (1996), Carpenter (2002), Carpenter/Fredrickson (2001), Chatman/O'Reilly (2004), Chattopadhyay (1999), Chen/Klimoski (2003), Cohen/Chang/Ledford (1997), Cohen/Ledford (1994), Cordery/Mueller/Smith (1991), De Dreu/Weingart (2003), De Dreu/West (2001), Eisenhardt/Schoonhoven (1990), Elron (1997), Finkelstein/Hambrick (1990), Gully et al. (2002), Hambrick/Cho/Chen (1996), Iaquin-to/Fredrickson (1997), Janz/Colquitt/Noe (1997), Keck (1997), Kidwell/Mossholder/Bennett (1997), Lechler (1997), Magjuka/Baldwin (1991), Michel/Hambrick (1992), Neumann/Wright (1999), Pearce/Gallagher/Ensley (2002), Pelled (1996), Peterson et al. (2003), Robinson/O'Leary-Kelly (1998), ce/Gallagher/Ensley (2002), Pelled (1996), Peterson et al. (2003), Robinson/O'Leary-Kelly (1998), Seers (1989), Seers/Petty/Cashman (1995), Smith et al. (1994), Sparrowe et. al. (2001), Vinokur-Kaplan (1995), Weinkauf/Woywode (2004), West/Schwenk (1996)

Table 2-4: Empirical studies on teams in organisations

2.3.6 Summary

We now conclude our review of the empirical research findings relevant to our investigation and summarise the **insights gained** with regard to the positioning of our own work.

The core of our work is the derivation and empirical verification of input-process-output models for sales teams in B2B business relationships. In section 2.3.2, we presented the insights gained from business relationship research for the output side of our team models. These results confirm the importance of several emotional facets (social exchange, trust, social bonding) and rational facets (task-related exchange, mutual adjustment of tasks and goals, structural bonding) of the relationship component of B2B business relationships. In addition, previous research points to a phased development, mutual interdependence and a cyclical evolution of the relationship facets. For our work, we see the following **research gap on the output side of team models:**

1) There is a lack of empirical work that takes a broad, integrative view of multiple emotional and rational relationship facets.

2) To date, no explicit division of relationship facets into emotional and rational relationship components has been made.

3) Success in business relationships has so far been conceptualised as the absolute level of expression of various success facets. This approach can be adapted to reality by understanding success as the exploitation of potential, i.e. conceptualising it relative to the existing potential in the business relationship.

be adapted to reality by understanding success as the exploitation of potential, i.e., conceptualised relative to the potential available in the business relationship.

We then went on to build a bridge between business relationship research and team research. In the course of our presentation of the research work on team selling in section 2.3.3, it became clear that only two pieces of research are closely related to our work in terms of content: Helfert (1998) and Stock (2003). We have drawn a distinction here by outlining the weaknesses of these studies with regard to the positioning of our work.

The results of the team research presented in sections 2.3.3 to 2.3.5 confirm the central importance of several of the team factors we examined that can be shaped. These are the constructs of decentralised leadership, task and goal interdependence, autonomy, support, team member skills and the process variable of teamwork quality. Furthermore, we can derive insights for the conceptualisation and operationalisation of these constructs from this work. Specifically, we see the following **research gap on the input side of team models** for our work**:**

1) To date, there has been very little research that is highly relevant to management in that it examines an integrative, comparative analysis of several malleable factors of teamwork. The study by Stock (2003) and the work on new product development teams by Sethi (2000a, 2000b), Sethi/Nicholson (2001) and Sethi/Smith/Park (2001) come closest to meeting this requirement. An explicit subdivision and separate consideration of short-term and long-term factors has not yet been made.

2) The effects of the constructs communication decentralisation, team orientation and performance orientation of corporate culture, as well as asymmetry in business relationships, have not yet been investigated in the context of teamwork. For the constructs of leadership centralisation, task and goal independence, and autonomy, our review shows that the research results are highly inconsistent.

2.4 Empirical foundations

Having laid the conceptual foundation for our work in the previous chapters, we now turn to the empirical foundations of our work. These include

- methodological foundations of construct measurement and the analysis of dependencies between constructs (section 2.4.1) as well as

- the data basis for our empirical study (section 2.4.2).

2.4.1   Methodological foundations

Our work is based on a positivist approach that is widely used in contemporary marketing research (Homburg 2000a, p. 53). This view is based on the conviction that observation and experience are essential sources for discovering the truth (Schischkoff 1982, p. 550). We will therefore examine the questions raised in our work empirically. In addition, we are guided by the principles of **scientific realism,** which assumes the existence of a reality outside consciousness that can be approached by empirical-inductive means (Hunt 1990, p. 9). This approach contrasts with the critical rationalism of Popper (1959, 1963), which only allows deductive reasoning.

In accordance with scientific realism, we will confront **hypotheses** with empirical reality. If a hypothesis is consistent with observation, we speak of the confirmation of this hypothesis. Together with other scientific work in this field, this paper thus pursues the goal of increasingly approaching the truth in a cumulative process (principle of stepwise increasing confirmation; Carnap 1953, p. 48).

Finally, scientific realism assumes the **imperfection of measurement** (Hunt 1990). The variables under investigation are so-called latent constructs (Homburg/Giering 1996), which can be measured by means of imperfect indicators (Hunt 1991, p. 386). The methodology used in this paper

of causal analysis used in this paper, this measurement error problem can be explicitly taken into account (Bagozzi 1980, Jöreskog/Sörbom 1982).

Our hypotheses deal with the causal relationships between theoretical **constructs**. According to Bagozzi/Fornell (1982, p. 24), a theoretical construct is an "abstract entity which represents the true nonobservable state of nature of a phenomenon".

In order to be able to grasp a construct, it is first necessary to develop its relevant dimensions. This is referred to as the **conceptualisation** of the construct. Based on this, suitable scales must be developed to measure the construct: the **operationalisation** of the construct (Homburg 2000a, p. 13).

Such constructs (also known as latent variables) cannot be measured directly. It is therefore necessary to measure them indirectly using empirically measurable **indicator variables** (also known as indicators or items). In our work, we use reflective indicators, i.e. the respective construct causes the characteristics of the indicator variables assigned to it (Homburg/Giering 1996, p. 6). In order to capture a construct as precisely as possible, we draw on an optimal selection of indicators that are possible in principle.

The **quality of the measurement** of our constructs is assessed on the basis of the dimensions of reliability and validity. According to Peter and Churchill (1986, p. 4), **reliability** is "...the degree to which measures are free from random error and thus reliability coefficients estimate the amount of systematic variance in a measure". The respective indicators represent a reliable measurement of a construct if a significant proportion of their variance (dispersion) can be explained by their relationship to this construct (Peter 1979, p. 7). In marketing research, reliability is primarily assessed on the basis of internal consistency reliability, which assesses the correlation between the indicators of a construct. We agree with this approach, as the assessment of other forms of reliability (e.g. repeatability) would require a more complex survey design (Hildebrandt 1998, p. 88).

A high quality of measurement in terms of **validity** is given "when the differences in observed scores reflect true differences in the characteristics one is attempting to measure and nothing else" (Churchill 1979, p. 65). Here, the conceptual correctness of a measurement is assessed. The respective indicators form a valid measuring instrument if they actually measure what one intends to measure (Homburg/Giering 1996, p. 7). Within the framework of our measurement models, we consider the following facets of validity to be relevant:

- Content validity: "Content validity focuses on the adequacy with which the domain of the characteristic is captured by the measure" (Churchill 1991, p. 490). A measurement instrument has high content validity if the content spectrum of a construct is adequately covered by the assigned indicators (Churchill 1991, p. 490). In our study, this is ensured by defining the constructs under consideration as precisely as possible in terms of quality and content (Parasuraman/Zeithaml/Berry 1988, p. 28).

- Convergent validity: "Convergent validity is the degree to which two or more attempts to measure the same concept are in agreement" (Bagozzi/Phillips 1982, p. 468). A high level of convergent validity of a measuring instrument is given when the indicators of a construct are strongly correlated with each other (Peter 1981, p. 136), which we check with the help of confirmatory factor analyses.

- Discriminant validity: "Discriminant validity is the degree to which measures of distinct concepts differ" (Bagozzi/Phillips 1982, p. 469). A measuring instrument fulfils this criterion if the constructs are distinct from one another. Here, we require that the indicators of a construct correlate more strongly with each other than with indicators of other constructs (Bagozzi/Yi/Phillips 1991, p. 425).

- Nomological validity: "Nomological validity represents the degree to which predictions based on a concept are confirmed within the context of a larger theory" (Bagozzi 1979, p. 24). Verification of this criterion requires the existence of a proven superordinate theory regarding the dependency relationships of the constructs under investigation (Homburg 2000a, p. 75). As this is not the case for our study, it is not possible to verify nomological validity.

If a measuring instrument is valid with regard to these facets, it is free of systematic errors. The fulfilment of reliability is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for this, as it assesses the absence of random errors (Carmines/Zeller 1979, p. 13). In order to meet the requirements of these two quality criteria, marketing research in particular calls for the use of multi-item scales for construct measurement: "Most constructs by definition are too complex to be measured effectively with a single item, and multi-item scales are necessary for appropriate reliability and validity assessment" (Peters 1979, p. 16). With one exception (asymmetry in the business relationship), all construct measurements in our study meet this requirement.

In order to assess the quality of the measurement in terms of reliability and validity, a distinction is made between first- and second-generation criteria, based on Homburg (2000a, p. 75). From the first-generation methods originating in psychology/psychometrics in the 1950s, we use the following local quality measures in our study to assess the quality of our factors and the indicators assigned to them (see construct measurement: sections 3.2.2, 3.3.2 and 3.4.2):

- exploratory factor analysis

- Cronbach's alpha and

- the item-to-total correlation.

First, the indicators are assigned to individual factors using **exploratory factor analysis**, whereby no a priori hypotheses regarding the factor structure are formulated. The aim is to discover the minimum number of factors underlying the entirety of the indicators (for more details on this method, see Backhaus et al. 2000; Hüttner/Schwarting 2000). According to the Kaiser criterion, the optimal number of factors to be extracted is equal to the number of factors with an eigenvalue greater than one (Kaiser 1974). The eigenvalue of a factor is calculated from the sum of the squared factor loadings of its assigned indicators.

Based on Homburg/Giering (1996, p. 8), initial statements regarding the convergence and discriminant validity of the measurement can be made on the basis of exploratory factor analysis. In the case of convergence validity, the individual indicators can be clearly assigned to a factor. We require a minimum value of 0.4 for their factor loadings. If discriminant validity is also present, these indicators load on all other factors with less than 0.4. Another decisive factor for the quality of our factor measurements is that they should explain at least 50% of the variance of their assigned indicators (Peterson 2000, p. 263 f .).

To assess the internal consistency reliability of our measurement, we use **Cronbach's alpha** (Cronbach, 1947). This criterion is one of the most commonly used first-generation reliability measures (Finn/Kayandé 1997, Voss/Stern/Fotopoulos 1998). The reliability of a measurement increases from zero (lowest possible value) to one (highest possible value). In our study, we will require a threshold value of 0.7 for acceptable internal consistency reliability for Cronbach's alpha, based on Nunnally (1978, p. 245).

To increase the Cronbach's alpha value for a factor, you can gradually eliminate its indicators with the lowest **item-total correlations** (Churchill 1979, p. 68 f.). This third quality criterion of the first generation is a measure of the degree of correlation between an indicator and the sum of the indicators belonging to the same factor. High values for all indicators also indicate a high degree of convergent validity (Nunnally 1978, p. 274), although no explicit threshold value is given in the literature.

Since research has identified numerous weaknesses in these first-generation quality criteria (Fornell 1986, Bagozzi/Yi/Phillips 1991), we can only make initial basic statements about the quality of the measurement of our model constructs on this basis (see sections 3.2.2., 3.3.2. and 3.4.2.).. In addition to very restrictive assumptions (Gerbing/Anderson 1988, p. 190) and criteria that are relatively difficult to understand (Bagozzi/Yi/Phillips 1991, p. 428), the lack of explicit estimation

of measurement errors and the impossibility of inferential statistical testing and assessment of validity aspects are particularly criticised (Homburg 2000a, p. 90).

In today's marketing research, **second-generation product criteria** are also used, which significantly improve reliability and validity testing (Homburg/Pflesser 2000a, p. 415). These criteria are based on confirmatory factor analysis (cf. Jöreskog 1966, 1967 and 1969 on this method), which is a special case of causal analysis (also known as covariance structure analysis) (Homburg 1989, p. 2; Diamantopoulos 1994, p. 105 f.). In confirmatory factor analysis, in contrast to exploratory factor analysis, the indicators are assigned to the individual factors in advance. This assignment (the measurement model) is then checked during model evaluation for consistency with the empirical data (Homburg/Baumgartner 1995b, p. 163).

In our study, we use the following second-generation local quality measures to assess the quality of our factors and the indicators assigned to them (see construct measurement: sections 3.2.2, 3.3.2 and 3.4.2):

- the indicator reliability

- the t-value of the factor loadings

- factor reliability

- the average variance explained (AVE)

- the χ^2 difference test

- the Fornell-Larcker criterion

Indicator reliability (increasing in a range from zero to one) is a measure of the amount of variance explained by an indicator through its underlying factor. The remaining variance is therefore due to measurement error. In our study, we will adhere to the threshold value of 0.4 for satisfactory indicator reliability as recommended by Bagozzi/Baumgartner (1994, p. 402). We will only go below this threshold value in exceptional cases if the indicator variable in question represents a facet of the underlying factor that is significant for us in terms of content

underlying factor (content spread of the factor). This approach is in line with opinions that fundamentally question the requirement for a minimum value for indicator reliability (Bagozzi/Yi 1988, p. 82; Homburg 1992, p. 506).

In addition, the factor loading of each indicator is tested for significance. In a one-tailed test, this is significantly greater than zero at the 5% level if the **t-value of the factor loading** is at least 1.645 (Homburg/Giering 1996, p. 11).

Once an optimal set of indicators has been identified that are sufficiently well measured by the factor of interest, the essential question must now be answered: How well is this factor measured by its indicators? One facet of this question is answered by **factor reliability (**on a scale from zero to one, increasing), which in our study, following Bagozzi/Yi (1988, p. 82), is considered satisfactory above a threshold value of 0.6.

The other facet of this question is the **average variance (DEV)** of a factor as measured by its set of indicators. Bagozzi/Yi (1988, p. 82) require a DEV value (ranging from zero to one) of at least 0.5. However, specifying blanket minimum values also appears problematic here: "...it is difficult to justify such a guideline without considering the context of a given measurement procedure" (Bagozzi/Baumgartner 1994, p. 403). Therefore, we do not consider it problematic if we have to fall slightly below this threshold value for one of the moderating factors we examined (see section 3.4.2).

Now that we can assess the reliability and convergent validity of our construct measurement using the local quality measures presented above, we will turn our attention to the assessment of **discriminant validity** using confirmatory factor analysis. By proving this, we ensure that the postulated content-related selectivity of the various constructs can be supported by our empirical data (Homburg/Giering 1996, p. 7). To check the discriminant validity, we use the

χ^2 difference test (Jöreskog 1977, p. 273; Homburg/Dobratz 1992, p. 123 f.) and the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell/Larcker 1981).

As part of the χ^2 **difference test,** we measure the same group of factors twice in succession in a construct composite. The difference between the two measurements is that we fix the correlation between two factors at one. In conjunction with this substantive equation of these two constructs, we formulate the null hypothesis that this model restriction does not lead to a significant deterioration in the fit of this model to our empirical data. The null hypothesis can be rejected at the 5% level if the difference between ^{the} $\chi^{(2)}$values of the two measurement models is greater than 3.841. If this is the case, it can be assumed that the two factors do not measure the same thing and that discriminant validity exists between them.

A much more restrictive criterion for assessing discriminant validity is the **Fornell-Larcker criterion**. According to Fornell/Larcker (1981, p. 46), the content-related selectivity between two factors is only complete if the two values for their average variance are greater than the squared correlation between them.

Below, we provide an overview of the local quality measures used in our study and the associated levels of requirement. We will use these measures in particular when assessing the quality of the construct measurement (see sections 3.2.2, 3.3.2 and 3.4.2). It should be noted that the overall picture of the measurement across all criteria is decisive for assessing the quality of the construct measurement. A minor violation of individual criteria therefore does not directly lead to the rejection of a measurement model (cf. Homburg/Baumgartner 1995b, p. 172).

Local quality measures used	Level of requirement
Explained variance of the exploratory factor analysis	≥ 0
Cronbach's alpha	≥ 0
Item to total correlation	No minimum value. Elimination of indicators with low values to increase Cronbach's alpha.
Indicator reliability	≥ 0
t-value of factor loading	≥ 1.64
Factor reliability	≥ 0.6
Average variance captured (DEV)	≥ 0.5
χ^2 difference test	Difference between χ^2 values ≥ 3.841
Fornell-Larcker criterion	DEV (factor i) squared correlation between factor i and factor j for all $i \neq j$

Table 2-5: Local quality measures for assessing construct measurement

Having laid the methodological foundations for understanding our construct measurement, we now turn to the relationships between the constructs we are investigating. Our first two research questions deal with the analysis of dependency relationships between factors that can be influenced by management and the success of sales teams. To analyse these directed dependencies between the factors, our study uses one of the most powerful multivariate dependency analysis methods: causal analysis (Homburg 1992, p. 499).

Causal analysis allows conclusions to be drawn about the dependency relationships between unobserved variables (latent variables or constructs to which the indicators are assigned in advance) by calculating the covariances of the observed variables (the measurable indicators) (Homburg 1989, p. 2). Causal analysis is particularly suitable for the present study because it provides information about the direction and strength of direct and indirect effects within causal chains. A limitation of this method is that the complexity of a causal model to be analysed must be limited (Homburg/Baumgartner 1996). We have taken this into account in the models presented in sections 3 .2.1 and
3.3.1.

We conducted the causal analysis on the basis of **the** widely used **LISREL approach** (Homburg/Sütterlin 1990, Jöreskog 1978). The evaluations of our study were carried out using the LISREL-8.5.4 software. Following this approach, a causal model is specified by two measurement models and a structural model, which are written in LISREL notation as follows (cf. Jöreskog/Sörbom 1982 for further details):

$y = \Lambda y \eta + \varepsilon$ and $x = \Lambda x \xi + \delta$ and (measurement

models) $\eta = B\eta + \Gamma\xi + \zeta$ (structural model)

The two **measurement models** determine which constructs are included in a causal model and how they are measured. The vector y contains the indicators of the latent endogenous (dependent) variables η, while the vector x contains the indicators of the latent exogenous (independent) variables ξ. Λy and Λx represent the matrices of the factor loadings of these indicator variables, while the vectors ε and δ represent their measurement errors. Accordingly, the indicators represent error-prone measurements of the underlying latent variables.

The **structural model** contains our hypotheses regarding the postulated relationships between the exogenous and endogenous constructs in the respective causal model. B, the matrix of structural coefficients β_i, describes the effects between the endogenous variables. Γ, the matrix of structural coefficients γ_i, models the effects of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variables. The vector ζ represents the error terms of the structural model.

At this point, the central advantage of causal analysis for the present study becomes very clear. It allows the investigation of postulated directed dependencies between constructs. These constructs are measured using two models of confirmatory factor analysis, a method borrowed from psychometrics. This combines causal analysis with structural equation modelling, which originated in econometrics and allows the investigation of directed dependencies.

Based on a causal model postulated by us in advance, the **covariance matrix** Σ of the empirically measured indicator variables x and y can be expressed as a function of eight parameter matrices under suitable conditions. Φ, Ψ, $_{\theta\varepsilon}$ and $_{\theta\delta}$ represent the covariance matrices of the vectors ξ, ζ, ε and δ already introduced (Homburg 1989, p. 153):

$\Sigma = \Sigma(B, \Gamma, _{\Lambda y}, _{\Lambda x}, \Phi, \Psi, _{\theta\varepsilon}, _{\theta\delta}) = \Sigma(\alpha)$, α = matrix of all parameters to be estimated

As part of the causal analysis, a vector α' of **parameter estimators** is now generated and iteratively optimised until the covariance matrix $\Sigma' = \Sigma'(\alpha')$ generated by the model is sufficiently similar to the empirically determined covariance matrix of the indicators (S). The LISREL software solves a non-linear minimisation problem, which is represented as a discrepancy function of two symmetrical covariance matrices as follows (see Homburg 1989, p. 170; Homburg/Pflesser 2000b, p. 645 for details):

$_{Fs}(\alpha) = F(S, \Sigma(\alpha)) \rightarrow$ min.

The exact form of this discrepancy function depends on the **estimation method** used (for a comparison of different estimation methods, see Homburg 1989, p. 167 ff.). In our study, we used the standard method of least squares, also known as ULS (unweighted least squares). The main advantage of this estimation method for our work is that it has proven to be relatively robust against small sample sizes (Balderjahn 1986).

If the covariance matrix of the indicators contains sufficient information for an unambiguous estimation of the model parameters, the causal analysis can identify the pre-specified model (Homburg/Baumgartner 1995b, p. 175). However, this is not possible if there is another covariance matrix that differs from the empirical covariance matrix and leads to the same parameter estimation (Bagozzi/Baumgartner 1994, p. 390). A necessary condition for the **identification of a model** is that the number of parameters to be estimated (t) must not exceed the number of empirical variances and covariances:

$$\leq \frac{1}{2} \, q(+ 1)$$

A sufficient criterion for model identification is not yet known. In addition, we have looked for further indications of unidentified models (e.g. negative error variances) in our study (Bollen 1989, p. 326 ff.).

In addition to the local quality criteria of the second generation already mentioned for assessing the measurement quality of individual indicators and factors, there are also a number of **global quality measures of the second generation**. We use these criteria to check how well the totality of the relationships postulated in the respective causal model (our hypotheses) is consistent with our empirical data (see sections 3.2.1, 3.2.3, 3.3.1 and 3.3.3). We will use the following global quality measures:

- the chi-square test (χ^2 test)

- the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA)

- the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)

- the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI)

The χ^2**test** is used to assess the accuracy of a specified model. It is based on the null hypothesis that the model is correct and that the empirical and model-generated covariance matrices therefore match (Homburg 1989, p. 188). The $\chi^{(2)}$value is assessed based on the probability (p) of obtaining a $\chi^{(2)}$value greater than the value actually determined, even though the specified model is correct. With a p-value of at least 0.05, the model cannot be rejected at the 5% level (Homburg 2000a, p. 92). The $\chi^{(2)}$measure is controversial, especially for relatively small samples (Homburg 1989, p. 188). We follow the recommendation to use the quotient of the χ^2 value and the number of degrees of freedom as a descriptive measure and to require a value lower than three for a good model fit (Homburg 2000a, p. 93). Descriptive fit measures are not based on statistical tests, as is the case with χ^2 test

test and RMSEA, but are essentially based on rules of thumb (Homburg/Baumgartner 1995b, p. 166).

The global quality measure **RMSEA** (Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation, Steiger 1990) is one of the most meaningful global quality measures (Diamantopoulos/Siguaw 2000, p. 85). The RMSEA value indicates "...how well would the model, with unknown but optimally chosen parameter values, fit the population covariance matrix if it were available" (Browne/Cudeck 1993, p. 137). This measure makes a statement about the degree of approximation of a model to reality, explicitly taking into account the complexity of the model. Following Browne/Cudeck (1993), we require that the RMSEA value does not exceed the threshold of 0.8 for an acceptable model fit.

The **Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)** is a global descriptive measure of fit. With the help of the GFI value, we can assess how well our postulated model reproduces the covariance matrix resulting from our empirical data. The goodness increases in the GFI value range from zero to one. Following Hom-burg/Baumgartner (1995b, p. 167 f.), we require a minimum value of 0.9 for sufficient goodness of our causal models.

The **Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)** differs from the GFI only in that it takes into account the number of degrees of freedom of a model. Models with a large number of degrees of freedom are rewarded, while overparameterised models are penalised (Homburg/Giering 1996, p. 10). We also adhere to the minimum value of 0.9 for the AGFI value, as is generally required in the literature (Homburg/Baumgartner 1995b, p. 167 f.).

Below, we provide an overview of the global quality measures used in our empirical study and the corresponding levels of expectation. We will refer to these in particular when assessing the quality of our causal models (see sections 3.2.3 and 3.3.3).

Global quality measures used	Requirement level
X^2/df	≤ 3
RMSEA	≤ 0
GFI	≥ 0
AGFI	≥ 0

Table 2-6: Global quality measures for evaluating causal models

Having laid the foundations for assessing the quality of our construction measurement and the quality of our causal models, we now turn to the explanatory power of our models (see sections 3.2.3. and 3.3.3.). Here, we first consider the **squared multiple correlation (R^2)** of the endogenous (dependent) variables of interest. The R^2 value indicates the proportion of the variance of the endogenous variables (η_j) that is explained by the variables acting on them (ξ_i or η_i, with $j = \neq i$) (Homburg 1992, p. 505). The $R^{(2)}$value ranges from zero (proportion of explained variance = 0%) to one (proportion of explained variance = 100%).

In addition to the proportion of explained variance of an endogenous variable, the direction and strength of the effects that other latent variables exert on it are also important. The standardised beta coefficients (β_{ij}) and Yamma coefficients (γ_{ij}) estimated by the LISREL software provide information on this. A statistical significance is given for each of these effects, on the basis of which we either accept or reject the underlying hypothesis (Homburg/Krohmer 2006, p. 366 f.).

In addition to examining direct and indirect effects using causal analysis, our empirical study also considers **moderating effects**. We use the method of moderated regression analysis for this purpose. In the following, we will first discuss the bivariate regression analysis on which our chosen method is based.

Bivariate regression analysis is a special case of linear regression analysis, which is one of the most flexible and frequently used statistical analysis methods in business research (Backhaus et al.

2003, p. 46). Bivariate regression analysis is used to examine the effect of an independent variable x on a dependent variable y:

$$y = a + b \cdot x$$

When considering a moderating effect in the context of bivariate regression analysis, it is assumed that the strength of the effect (b) that variable x has on variable y is influenced by a **moderator** z (for more details on moderators, see McClelland/Judd 1993, p. 376 f.). Mathematically expressed, b is therefore a function of z ($b = c + d \cdot z$) and the original bivariate regression equation takes the following form when substituted:

$$y = a + (c + d \cdot z) \cdot x = a + c \cdot x + d \cdot z \cdot x$$

In the case of a **positive moderating effect** of z, the regression parameter d is positively significant. The effect of the independent variable x on the dependent variable y is then stronger at high values of the moderator z than at low values. Conversely, if z has a **negative moderating effect**, the regression parameter d is negatively significant. The effect of the independent variable x on the dependent variable y is then weakened at high values of the moderator z.

The respective significance of the parameter c is also important in the context of our investigation. This provides information on whether the variable x also has an effect on y that is independent of the moderating variable. Since these respective base effects are also examined in our causal models, the results of the two methods should correspond accordingly.

2.4.2 Data basis

We answer our three research questions on the basis of empirical investigations. In this section, we discuss the data basis for our empirical investigations. We first look at our unit of analysis, then at the respondents we surveyed and the selected survey method.

Finally, we describe the effective sample on which we will empirically test our hypotheses.

When collecting data, it is crucial to define the **unit of analysis**. The aim is to describe the object of analysis precisely. Our analysis unit is represented by sales teams in B2B business relationships with particularly important customers, known as key account management teams (KAM teams). In line with our definition of a sales team in section 2.1.1, our effective sample only includes KAM teams with a minimum of three and a maximum of twelve members. Furthermore, a certain degree of shared identity among the team members must be ensured. This means that the members of a KAM team are recognised as a team by outsiders and perceive themselves as members of this team. Finally, we ensure that the teams in our sample are also involved in sales or sales support for a key customer.

This brings us to our **contact persons**. We interview team members from KAM teams as informants. Following the recommendation of Narus and Anderson, we therefore obtain our data from key informants (cf. Brown/Lusch 1992, Kumar/Stern/Anderson 1993, Phillips 1981) from the supplier company: "...given the difficulty in obtaining responses from both sides of the dyad, researchers might choose to survey only one side of the dyad (e.g. supplier teams)...however, researchers might also choose to have respondents speculate on the structure and framing of their counterpart team. Such an approach has been used frequently and productively in marketing channels research" (Narus/Anderson 1995, p. 38). In order to increase the validity and reliability of our data basis, we survey two team members in each case and then aggregate the data at the individual level by calculating the average for the team level. This approach is widely used in empirical team research (Sarin/Mahajan 2001, p. 41).

We will now look at our survey form and, in this context, discuss the data collection method, sampling and the specific procedure of our survey. The **data collection method** should primarily depend on the objective of the study. Our intention

is to derive cross-industry recommendations for the optimal design of team selling in B2B business relationships. This requires a representative cross-industry sample, which also necessitates a certain sample size. The need for a relatively large sample also arises from the planned use of second-generation statistical methods, which we will use to assess validity and reliability (see section 2.4.1). The underlying confirmatory factor analysis is based on asymptotic statistical approximation methods (Jöreskog 1969), which are problematic for small samples (Homburg/Baumgartner 1995a). We considered a written survey to be the most suitable method for generating a large sample. Other advantages of this form of survey include the relatively low time commitment and comparatively low costs (for a detailed discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of methods for generating data bases, see Berekoven/Eckert/Ellenrieder 2001, p. 93 ff.; Hom-burg/Krohmer 2006, p. 262 ff.).

In our survey, we combined quantitative and qualitative methods. Marketing research is often criticised for relying too heavily on quantitative inferential statistical methods (see, for example, Deshpandé 1983, p. 105 ff., Bonoma 1995, Tomczak 1992) and that qualitative methods such as unstructured or semi-structured interviews, case studies (Eisenhardt 1989) or focus groups (Calder 1977) tend to be neglected. We agree with Homburg (2000, p. 61) that qualitative and quantitative research methods should complement each other in a meaningful way. Following this line of thinking, we first conducted extensive semi-structured interviews with experts from the business world before creating our questionnaire. Quantitative and qualitative elements were then interwoven in **the questionnaire** itself. For example, respondents were asked to rate how strongly each individual facet of the designable factors (e.g. the facets of the factor "centralised management") is pronounced in their KAM team. We asked for this rating on an ordinal scale (quantitative part). For each factor that can be shaped in team selling, the respondents could also answer an open question about specific measures in their companies (qualitative part). For example, with regard to the factor autonomy, we asked the question

"What specific measures are taken to ensure the independence (autonomy) of the team in your company?"

Sampling is particularly important in empirical research. It is based on the definition of the population. For us, this is represented by all teams on the company side that are permanently (i.e. without time limitation) involved in B2B business relationships with key accounts at the interface with customers and whose number of members is between three and a maximum of twelve. The industry focus was on automotive suppliers, computer/electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, chemicals and consumer goods. In addition, only companies that were among the 100 with the highest turnover within these five industries were to be included. This requirement arose because smaller companies often do not have team structures at the customer interface. In most cases, these small companies only have one key account manager, who may be supported by an assistant.

Let us now turn to the exact **procedure of our investigation**. We collected our data between February 2003 and January 2004. First, the 100 companies with the highest turnover in the five target industries mentioned above were identified using the Hoppenstedt company database, and then the names and addresses of the respective sales managers were verified by telephone. In March, we conducted 20 semi-structured telephone interviews with key account managers who were part of a KAM team. The results were incorporated into the written questionnaire, the final version of which was available at the end of March. Between then and November 2003, sales managers were contacted in writing and then persuaded by telephone to participate in the study. Each participating sales manager was asked to name two team members from a maximum of five of their KAM teams to be interviewed. The minimum requirements for these teams were: (1) three to a maximum of twelve members, (2) a common team identity, and (3) sales or sales support activities of the team members for a common, anonymous key account. As an incentive to participate, both the sales managers and the team members surveyed were offered two free copies of the "Management Know-how" series published by the Institute for Market-Oriented Management (IMU) at the University of Mannheim, worth approximately €50. In addition, a report on the results of the study was promised.

(IMU) at the University of Mannheim, worth approximately €50. In addition, a report on the results of the study was promised. As soon as two team members were named by a sales manager, an individualised questionnaire was sent to each of these persons. Finally, we conducted a comprehensive telephone follow-up of the questionnaires between June 2003 and January 2004. A total of 448 questionnaires were sent out, of which 344 were returned. This corresponds to an effective response rate of 77%, which we consider to be very satisfactory. Subsequently, all questionnaires that did not meet our minimum requirements for a KAM team or that had very extensive gaps in their answers were restrictively sorted out.

279 questionnaires from 155 KAM teams from 71 companies ultimately form our effective sample and thus the basis for our empirical analyses. The industry distribution of these 155 teams is as follows: Automotive suppliers (32 teams), computer/electrical engineering (18 teams), mechanical engineering (30 teams), chemicals (29 teams), consumer goods (31 teams) and others (15 teams). Two team members could be interviewed in 124 teams and only one team member in 31 teams.

Table 2-8 lists further key data on the KAM teams surveyed and their respective business areas. It is clear that we were able to generate a sample from very large companies. The business areas of the teams surveyed have an average turnover of €250-500 million, employ approximately 2,000 people and are characterised by a very high concentration of turnover on a few key accounts. We would like to emphasise that without the excellent reputation of Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Christian Homburg and the University of Mannheim, it would not have been possible to persuade these companies to participate in the study. To our knowledge, this provides us with the most high-quality data on team selling in B2B business relationships in German-speaking countries to date. A selection of the 71 participating companies illustrates this: Adidas, ABB, BASF, Basell, Bayer, Bosch Siemens, Bosch Rexroth, Celanese, Continental, Coca Cola, Degussa, Deutz, Diehl, Dynamit Nobel, ExxonMobil, Festo, Getrag, Henkel, Homag, Infineon, IWK, Klüber, Karmann, Kraft Foods, Knorr-

Bremse, Kolbenschmidt, L'Oréal, Lucent, MAN Roland, Melitta, Nestlé, Oetker, Osram, Otis, Peguform, Philip Morris, Philips, Rohde & Schwarz, RWE, Procter & Gamble, ThyssenKrupp, Schindler, Schwarzkopf & Henkel, Siemens, SKF, Voith Siemens, Wacker, Webasto, Wella, ZF Friedrichshafen.

Number of team members	Average: 6.6, standard deviation: 2.7
Share of customer in total turnover of Business area in which the team operates (share of total revenue: share of teams)	<1%: 3.0%, 1-5%: 19.5%, 5-10%: 25.9%, 10-20%: 21.1%, 20-35%: 17.7%, 35-50%: 8.6%, 50-75%: 1.9%, >75%: 2.3%
Customer's revenue ranking	Average: 4, standard deviation: 3.3
Customer's revenue rank	Average: 5, standard deviation: 3.3
Share of the 3 largest customers in total revenue of the business segment	1-5%: 2.8%, 5-10%: 8.0%, 10-20%: 6.8%, 20-35%: 27.2%, 35-50%: 22.4%, 50-75%: 22.8%, >75%: 10.0%
Revenue of the business segment (€ million) in which The team is active	<10: 7.8%, 10-20: 6.3%, 20-50: 7.4%, 50-100: 12.5%, 100-250: 14.8%, 250-500: 15.2%, 500-1000: 18.2%, >1000: 17.3%
Number of employees in the business unit	Average: 2150
Number of employees in sales	Average: 140
Average annual growth rate of of business unit revenue (last 3 years)	>30%: 2.8%, 20-30%: 4.0%, 10-20%: 17.7%, 5-10%: 24.9%, 0-5%: 36.5%, 0 - -5%: 5.2%, -5% - -10%: 5.6%, < -10%: 3.2%
Professional experience of respondents (number of years)	Average: 15, standard deviation: 9

Table 2-7: Description of the sample of 155 key account management teams

3   Empirical investigation

In the previous chapter 2, we laid the foundations for our empirical study. Here, we first focused on defining the constructs we examined (section 2.1). We then laid the lowest foundation of our work with three theoretical reference points (section 2.2). The next level of foundation was formed by selected empirical studies within several relevant research areas (section 2.3). The empirical foundations in section 2.4 rounded off the chapter.

(! Paragraph to be revised) We now turn to our empirical investigation. First, we look at the output side of the emerging models, i.e., the two success components "relationship success" and "economic success" in the business relationship. We will conceptualise and operationalise these success components and then discuss the quality of their measurement (Section 3.1). In the following sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4, we then formulate hypotheses on factors that can be shaped in the short term (section 3.2.1), factors that can be shaped in the long term (section 3.3.1) and moderating effects (section 3.4.1). Ideally, we can base a hypothesis on a strong foundation, i.e. it is supported by our theoretical reference points and the results of other empirical work. A hypothesis is less well-founded if we can only support it with conceptual scientific contributions. A hypothesis has the weakest foundation if it can only be supported by our own rational considerations and by expert discussions conducted in the run-up to the investigation.

(! revise paragraph) The chosen data analysis method forces us to keep the complexity of the causal models under investigation within limits and thus also to limit the number of constructs examined (cf. Baumgartner/Homburg 1996). At the same time, we strive to achieve a balance between scientific rigour and practical relevance in our investigation (Varadarajan 2003, p. 369). We attempt to meet this requirement by formulating hypotheses on traditional constructs of team research whose high significance has already been proven by many scientific studies (increasing rigour)

and, on the other hand, by balancing these with hypotheses about comparatively new constructs that have a relatively weak scientific foundation (increasing relevance).

Following the formulation of our hypotheses, we discuss the conceptualisation/operationalisation and the quality of the measurement of our selected constructs (sections 3.2.2, 3.3.2 and 3.4.2). The empirical results of our investigation conclude each section (sections 3.2.3, 3.3.3 and 3.4.3). Here, we will show whether each of our hypotheses can be confirmed or rejected on the basis of our sample. Furthermore, the multivariate data analysis methods used also allow statements to be made about the strength of the respective effects.

3.1 Success in business-to-business relationships

We first look at the output that sales teams generate in B2B business relationships. In section 2.1.3, relationship success in business relationships was introduced as a modal goal and economic success in business relationships as the final goal of a sales team. We understand relationship success to be the extent to which the relationship potential in the business relationship is exploited, and economic success to be the extent to which the economic potential in the business relationship is exploited.

In our review of empirical research on success in B2B business relationships in section 2.3.2, we found that relationship success essentially involves shaping three facets of the emotional relationship component (social exchange, trust, social bonding) and the rational relationship component (factual exchange, adaptation of tasks and goals, structural bonding) between a supplier company and a customer company. We have transferred these six facets into a two-axis diagram (see Figure 3-1), in which both components are expressed in three identical phases: Phase 1 "Communication", Phase 2 "Coordination" and Phase 3 "Integration" (for these three phases, see also

Gemünden/Helfert 1997, p. 251, Narus/Anderson 1995, p. 22 f., Rucker/Walker 1987, p. 3). From a rational point of view, communication involves a mutual exchange of relevant information (e.g. exchange of information about own costs, target figures or new products) and, from an emotional point of view, a mutual personal or social exchange that goes beyond the purely business-related. The communication level forms the basis for a mutual coordination mechanism. Emotionally, this involves building mutual trust and, rationally, mutually adapting tasks and goals with a view to jointly exploiting the potential of the business relationship. At the highest level, this ultimately leads to long-term integration or networking between both business partners. Emotionally, this is supported by mutual social bonds or affective commitment (! 2 sources on affective commitment). The rational part of integration, the structural bond, comprises business relationship-specific investments by both partners that are necessary for jointly exploiting the potential of the business relationship (e.g. mutual adaptation of systems, processes, products or technologies). This rational bond can also be interpreted as a calculative commitment on the part of the business partners (2 sources on calculative commitment).

We assume that every B2B business relationship is characterised by a customer-specific potential of these individual rational and emotional relationship facets and that, therefore, every business relationship follows an individual development path within these two axes over time. Without sufficient emotional potential, for example, it can be assumed that the business relationship will develop towards the most efficient possible handling of joint transactions. We consider an optimal starting point for high joint exploitation of the latent economic potential in the business relationship to be given when both components have great potential. In this case, we postulate the ideal development of a business relationship with regard to the greatest possible joint value creation, as shown in Figure 3-2. In line with other empirical research findings, we also assume that the expression of an emotional facet (in particular mutual trust) forms the basis for

the development of the corresponding rational facet (Ganesan 1994, p. 1; Jap 1999, p. 461; Miyamoto/Rexha 2004, p. 317).
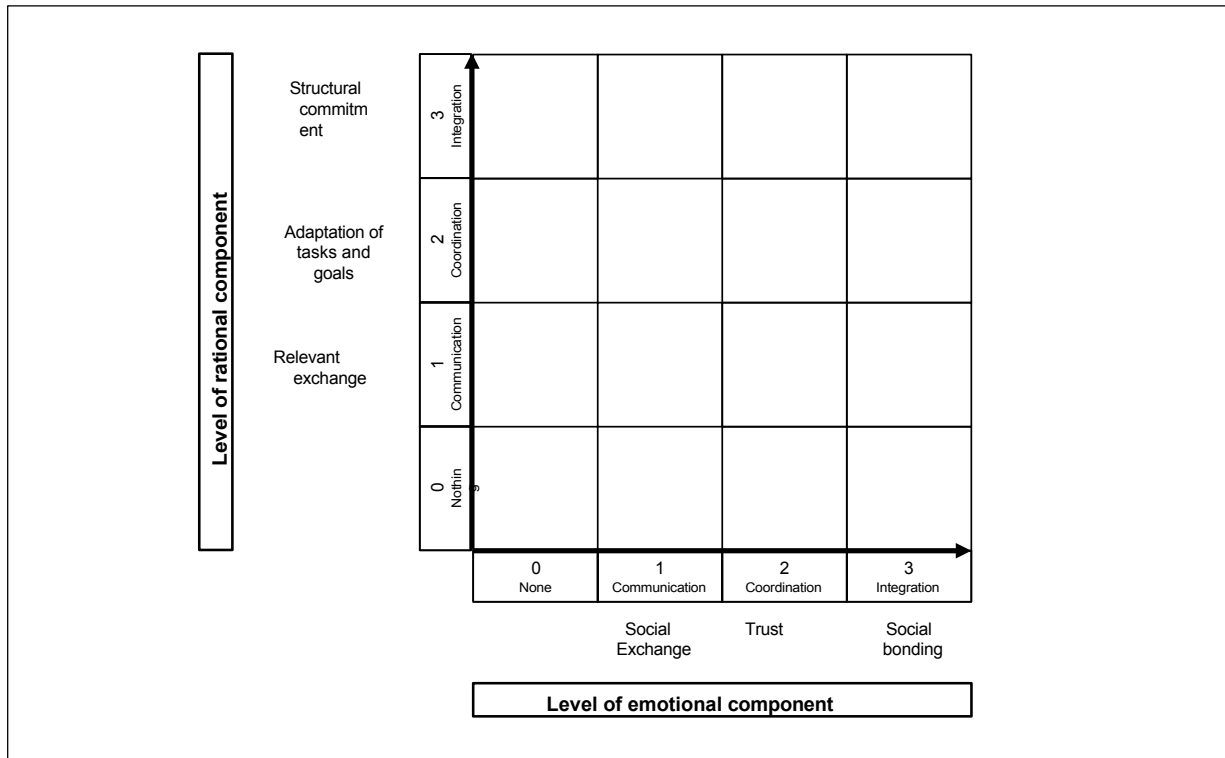
Figure 3-1: Conceptualisation of relationship success in a business relationship

We now come to the conceptualisation and operationalisation of relationship success in business relationships. We conceptualise relationship success as the extent to which the relationship potential in a business relationship is exploited. For us, this relationship potential is the maximum willingness of a customer company with regard to the rational and emotional components in the business relationship with a supplier company. The rational component comprises the mutual exchange of relevant information, the mutual adaptation of tasks and goals, and the mutual structural commitment. The emotional component includes mutual social exchange, mutual trust and mutual social commitment.

Figure 3-2: Presumed ideal progression of a business relationship with high relationship potential

If only one facet of the relationship is considered, the success of a sales team cannot be measured by the absolute level of this facet, but rather by **the extent to which its potential is exploited** at the customer company. We calculate the potential exploitation as the quotient of the level achieved in this facet in the business relationship (numerator of the quotient) and the absolute level of the customer's willingness (denominator of the quotient). For each of our six relationship facets, the team members we surveyed had to assess the maximum potential of a customer and the level achieved by their team in this business relationship. The maximum potential referred to the customer's maximum fundamental willingness. This willingness applies in principle to all of the customer's business relationships with its suppliers and is therefore independent of the relationship between the team surveyed and this customer. Participants were encouraged to give their best possible personal assessment. They then assessed the current level of their relationship with this customer. The upper limit for the value of the level was therefore the value estimated by the participants for the maximum potential with this customer. This can be illustrated using the emotional facet of trust as an example. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with the following two statements on an 11-point scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree):

agreement with the following two statements on an 11-point scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree):

A) Maximum potential of the customer: The customer is generally very willing to build trust with their suppliers.

B) Your current level: We have a very good relationship of trust with the customer.

With a maximum potential of 8 (participant agreement with statement
A) and a level of 4 (agreement of this participant with the statement
B)), the potential utilisation is calculated as 4/8= 0.5. The value range for potential utilisation is therefore between 0 (0% potential utilised) and 1 (100% potential utilised).

Let us return to the two-axis diagram for relationship success shown in Figure 3-1. In order to distinguish between relationship success in terms of the rational component and relationship success in terms of the emotional component, there must be a clear distinction between the content of these two axes. This discriminant validity is assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (section 2.4.1). Table 3-1 shows that the squared correlation between the two success components is significantly greater than their average variance. This means that the distinction between these two relationship components is not sufficiently clear. We consider this result to be very relevant for practice. It indicates that the emotional and rational relationship facets in a business relationship are very closely interlinked. For a supplier company, this means that, if at all, it must specifically design both relationship components in the business relationship with a customer company.

Designation of constructs		1	2
	DEV	0.5	0.55
1. Exploiting the potential of the emotional component in the business relationship	0.55	-	
2. Exploitation of the potential of the rational component in the business relationship	0.55	**0.69**	-

Table 3-1: Assessment of discriminant validity between the emotional and rational components in the business relationship

Due to the lack of discriminant validity, we aggregated the three facets of the rational component and the three facets of the emotional component into a construct, namely **relationship success in the business relationship**. The results of the measurement of this construct are shown in Table 3-2. With the exception of one detail, all quality criteria for construct measurement meet our required standards (see Table 2-5 in Section 2.4.1). Only the indicator reliability of the potential utilisation of mutual social exchange, at 0.38, falls slightly short of the required minimum value of 0.4. However, our considerations regarding content, as already outlined above, suggest that this indicator should be retained.

Information on the indicators of the factor "relationship success in the business relationship"			
Name of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of factor loading
Potential exploitation of mutual exchange of relevant information	0.59	0	27
Potential exploitation of mutual adaptation of tasks and goals	0	0	32
Potential exploitation of mutual structural ties	0.64	0	31.82
Potential utilisation of mutual social exchange	0.57	0.38	24.69
Potential exploitation of mutual trust	0	0	22
Potential exploitation of mutual social ties	0.68	0.54	31.01
Information on the factor "Relationship success in business relationships"			
Cronbach's alpha:	0.85	Explained variance:	0.57
Factor reliability:	0.86	Average variance captured:	0.50

Table 3-2: Measurement of the construct "relationship success in the business relationship"

We defined the ultimate goal of relationship success, namely **economic success**, as the extent to which the economic potential of the business relationship is exploited. The six indicators used to measure this construct are shown in Table 3-3. Following the recommendation of Smith/Barclay (1993, p. 9), both objective and subjective criteria were used to operationalise this construct. Objective, directly quantifiable measures of economic success in the business relationship are turnover, sales and the resulting profit. On the other hand, the amount of joint value added, the success of new product launches with customers

and customer satisfaction are variables that are assessed more or less subjectively. These variables are causally upstream of economic success and are therefore levers for sustainably securing economic success in a business relationship (1 source). Overall, measuring economic success in a business relationship using these six indicators fulfils all our quality criteria.

Information on the indicators of the factor "Economic success in the business relationship"			
Name of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of factor loading
Over the last three years, we have fully exploited the sales potential of this customer.	0.84	0	104.71
Over the last three years, we have fully exploited the profit potential (earnings potential) of this customer.	0.73	0	91.4
Over the last three years, we have fully exploited the sales potential of this customer.	0.84	0.81	104.46
Over the last three years, we have achieved high joint value creation with this customer (exploiting the joint potential of the business relationship together with the customer).	0.88	0	100.1
Over the last three years, we have introduced new products to this customer with great success.	0.67	0.44	92
Over the last three years, we have achieved a high level of customer satisfaction with this customer.	0.62	0	61.8
Information on the factor "Economic success in the business relationship"			
Cronbach's alpha:	0.91	Explained variance:	0.70
Factor reliability:	0.92	Average variance captured:	0.66

Table 3-3: Measurement of the construct "Economic success in the business relationship"

3.2 Model of factors that can be influenced in the short term in team selling

After conceptualising and operationalising the success components, we now look at factors that influence this success and that can be shaped relatively easily or in the short term by management. In section 3.2.1 below, we formulate hypotheses in this regard. Each hypothesis is followed by its derivation. We first argue for each hypothesis purely rationally (lowest level of substantiation of a hypothesis). We then support the hypothesis with selected theories (see section 2.2). The highest level of substantiation is formed by...

results of other empirical studies (see section 2.3). We will then conceptualise and operationalise the constructs and measure them on the basis of our sample (section 3.2.2). Finally, we will comprehensively assess the quality of our resulting model of factors that can be influenced in the short term in team selling (section 3.3.3).

3.2.1 Hypothesis formation

Our first two hypotheses relate to the effects of democratic leadership in a sales team on the quality of teamwork and on the success of business relationships. We defined **leadership decentralisation** as the extent to which team leadership is shaped jointly by the entire team (high leadership decentralisation) as opposed to team leadership by a central team leader (low leadership decentralisation). The quality of teamwork describes the quality of cooperation within a team and the quality of a team's interaction with its intra-organisational environment (boundary management). Relationship success was introduced as the extent to which the relationship potential in a business relationship is exploited (see section 2.1). We assume the following effects:

$H1$: *Decentralised leadership in the team has a positive influence on the quality of teamwork.*

$H2$: *Decentralised leadership within a team has a positive influence on relationship success in business relationships.*

In section 2.1.2, we already explained that we use the construct of teamwork quality, based on Homans (1960, p. 60), to refer to the quality of interaction in the sales team. We see relationship success in the business relationship, on the other hand, as the result of the sales team's activity (cf. Homans 1960, p. 58). We rationally justify hypothesis H1 by arguing that democratic leadership increases the involvement of all team members, which inevitably leads to stronger interaction between team members. In hypothesis H2, we argue that democratic leadership makes it easier for all team members to contribute their expertise, which in turn leads to better results from the team's activities, i.e. to greater relationship success.

their expertise, which in turn leads to better results from the team's activities, i.e. to greater relationship success.

Our conceptual reference points (see Section 2.2) also support these hypotheses. According to Group Syntality Theory, increasing leadership decentralisation can unlock the latent leadership potential of all team members, i.e. each team member then has the opportunity to optimally influence all facets of the group's potential (Cattell 1951a, p. 26; Cattell 1951b, p. 175). Furthermore, Cohen's input-output model (see section 2.2.3) also emphasises that the performance of a team can be improved by strengthening its self-management (encouraging supervisory behaviours) and involving all team members.

Finally, empirical results also provide evidence for these correlations. De Jong/de Ruyter/Lemmink (2004, p. 26) demonstrate the positive influence of decentralised leadership (tolerance for self-management) on the customer orientation of sales teams in the financial services sector. According to the study by Lovelace/Shapiro/Weingart (2001, p. 786 ff.), high-quality team leadership in new product development teams (NPE teams) increases the motivation of team members to contribute their own objections or doubts to the teamwork and at the same time reduces harmful task-related conflicts within the team. It has also been confirmed several times that a participatory leadership style leads to higher satisfaction among team members (Preston/Heintz 1949, Shaw 1955, Rosenbaum/Rosenbaum 1971). The study results of Stock (2003), on the other hand, point to a reverse U-shaped relationship between leadership decentralisation and success. For teams at the interface between suppliers and customer companies, it shows that both excessive influence and overly passive leadership behaviour on the part of a team leader have a negative impact on the extent of cooperation and on the process quality of decision-making within the team (Stock 2003, p. 287). Here, support for the team by a coach from outside the team has proven to be a success factor in helping a team maintain its orientation, especially in the initial phase of democratic leadership (for the success factor coaching, see Stock 2000, Wageman 2001).

Let us now turn to the factor **of task interdependence** within the team. This construct was defined in section 2.1.4 as the extent of cooperation required between individual team members in order to complete team tasks (joint work products). We formulate the following hypotheses:

$H3$: *Task interdependence within the team has a positive influence on the quality of teamwork.*

$H4$: *Task interdependence within the team has a negative influence on relationship success in the business relationship.*

With regard to $H3$, we argue that a high degree of task interdependence means that members of a sales team are highly dependent on each other. This increases the need for interaction within the team. At the same time, however, we also assume that without such overlap, the tasks can be performed more smoothly by the team members. The degree of task interdependence is largely determined by the complexity of the sales task, i.e. by the customer's requirements. The higher this customer-driven task interdependence within the team, the more difficult it will be for the sales team responsible to manage this complexity. We therefore assume that task interdependence has a negative impact on the results of a sales team's activities, i.e. on the success of the business relationship (*H4*).

Let us turn to the theoretical basis for this assumption. On the one hand, the input-output model developed by Shea/Guzzo (1987) postulates that task interdependence significantly determines the effectiveness of a group (see section 2.2.3). Thibaut/Kelley (1959) argue in their theory of group interaction that the need for joint commitment to achieve a goal promotes a "sense of unity" within the team. This sense of unity represents a social reward for the team members (Thibaut/Kelley 1959, p. 66).

We draw empirical support for $H3$ in particular from the work on NPE teams by Wageman (1995, p. 145), according to which increasing task interdependence can improve the quality of cooperation within a team. $H4$ is supported by the

early work of Shaw and Briscoe (1966). The researchers were able to demonstrate that group performance correlates negatively with the cooperation requirements of the group task (Shaw 1981, p. 387). Later work indicates that, on the one hand, it is crucial for team success that more participatory coordination mechanisms (more complex team structures) are used as task interdependence increases (Olson et al. 2001, p. 258). On the other hand, interdependence should be perceived as positive by the team members (Janssen/Van de Vliert/Veenstra 1999, p. 134).

Let us consider the second facet of interdependence, which can be shaped by managers in the short term. **Goal interdependence** within a team describes the extent to which the responsibility, assessment and remuneration of individual team members are based on the achievement of team goals (see section 2.1.4). We postulate:

$H5$: *Goal interdependence within the team has a positive influence on the quality of teamwork.* $H6$: *Goal interdependence within the team influences the success of relationships in the*

business relationship.

Even with a higher degree of goal interdependence within the team, it is intuitively obvious that team members are more dependent on each other and therefore need to cooperate more closely than if they were only pursuing individual goals. Since the objectives of a sales team also include business relationship-specific goals (e.g., targets for sales or customer satisfaction), this should also have a positive impact on the success of the business relationship.

These hypotheses are theoretically grounded in the Group Syntality Theory (see Section 2.2.2). Cattell sees monetary team incentives as a primary means of directing the dynamic energies in a group in the desired direction. This allows the action patterns that generate the greatest possible reward for the team to be consolidated (Cattell 1948b, p. 59). The team models of Cohen (1994), Hackman (1988), Shea/Guzzo (1987) and Sundstrom/DeMeuse/Futrell (1990) also postulate positive influences of this factor on the team process and on team success (see section 2.2.3). Furthermore, the social loafing theory should be mentioned here (see Latané/Williams/Harkins 1979,

Williams/Harkins/Latané 1981, Williams/Karau 1991, Williams et al. 1989). This theory deals with the causes and effects of individual loss of motivation, which is colloquially referred to as "free riding". Social loafers or free riders participate in the success of the group without making a corresponding effort themselves (Comer 1995, p. 649). The social loafing effect can be counteracted, among other things, by ensuring that the common goal is of high value to each individual team member as well as to the team as a whole (see the meta-analysis of 70 studies by Karau/Williams 1993). Further empirical studies demonstrate the positive effects of a high degree of goal interdependence on the commitment of team members (Berkowitz 1957; Wageman 1995, p. 145) and on the quality of the team process (Sethi/Nicholson 2001, p. 164).

We now turn to three factors that managers can use to shape the team context in the short term. The first is team **autonomy**, introduced in section 2.1.4 as the extent to which a team is independent of team-external management with regard to the process of performance delivery (external decision autonomy). We assume the following effects:

$H7$: *Team autonomy has a positive influence on the quality of teamwork.* $H8$:

Team autonomy has a positive influence on relationship success in the business relationship.

We rationally argue that it is a reward or a sign of trust for team members when their team is granted a certain degree of independence by senior management. This will lead to higher motivation for each individual in the team. Furthermore, we also assume that the sales team has greater business relationship-specific expertise than management outside the team. Consequently, it will be beneficial for the quality of decisions if the decision-making authority also lies with the sales team.

The effects of autonomy are discussed by Hackman (1988) in his normative model of group effectiveness (see section 2.2.3). According to Hackman, the degree of autonomy a team has increases the range of strategies the team can use to increase its success

(Hackman 1988, p. 331). This postulate is further corroborated by the statements of Boundary Theory (see Adams 1976, Aldrich/Herkner 1977). Among other things, this theory deals with the reduction of uncertainty at inter-organisational boundaries. It argues that uncertainty is greater in inter-organisational transactions than in intra-organisational transactions. If an organisation fails to reduce this uncertainty, it can, in extreme cases, even jeopardise its survival. Boundary Theory identifies the decision-making autonomy of an organisation's boundary employees as a key starting point for reducing this uncertainty (Adams 1976, p. 1195).

Let us now turn to the empirical basis. Our review of empirical studies in section 2.3 showed a broad empirical consensus on the positive effects of team autonomy on the quality of team interaction and on team success. The results of the work by Helfert (1998, p. 149 ff.), Stock (2003, p. 251 ff.) and Kirkman et al. (2004, p. 181 ff.) are examples of this in the field of team selling. According to Stock, autonomy primarily influences success indirectly through the quality of the team process. However, it has also been shown that a high degree of team autonomy is only beneficial for complex or conceptual tasks (Steward/Barrick 2000, p. 141 ff.) and that the positive effects of autonomy increase with increasing task interdependence (Liden/Wayne/Bradway 1997, p. 175 f.). Consequently, the optimal degree of autonomy should be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the team task (cf. the meta-analysis by Wagner 1994).

The positive effects of decision-making autonomy are also emphasised in the literature on the concept of empowerment (Burpitt/Bigoness 1997, Ford/Fottler 1995). In the context of empowerment, team members are generally given more influence and control over their work (Levi 2001, p. 142). There is now sufficient evidence that empowerment both promotes interaction between employees and has a positive influence on team success (Kirkman/Rosen 1999, p. 69; Liden/Wayne/Sparrowe 2000, p. 407).

The second context factor that can be shaped in the short term is team **support**, defined as the extent to which senior management provides the team with the necessary power and resources (cf. section 2.1.4).

H1: Empowerment promotes team success.

H9: Team support has a positive influence on the quality of teamwork. H10: Team

support has a positive influence on relationship success in the

  business relationship.

We consider it intuitively obvious that a business relationship can be better structured if the supporting team on the supplier side has the necessary internal assertiveness and can quickly access the required resources. From a theoretical perspective, this postulate is supported by several team models (see section 2.2.3). External support can increase group synergy and at the same time reduce process losses in group work (Hackman (1988, p. !). Supporting teams through team training measures, resources, power and adequate access to information is an integral part of the organisational context (Sundstrom/DeMeuse/Futrell 1990, p. !; Cohen 1994, p. !).

From an empirical perspective, these hypotheses are based in particular on two studies from the field of team selling research. The findings of Helfert (1998, p. 149 ff.) show that supporting a team with resources improves the team process and increases the success of customer service teams. Workman/Homburg/Jensen (2003, p. 14) identify a key account team's access to marketing and sales resources as a key success factor in B2B business relationships. However, work in other fields of research (see 2.3.4 and 2.3.5) also provides evidence that there is a very fine line between positive, supportive team coaching and harmful excessive influence by senior management (Bonner/Walker/Ruekert 2002, p. 240; Sethi/Smith/Park 2001, p. 78 ff.; Wagemann 2001, p. 570).

The last context factor that can be shaped in the short term is the **decentralisation of communication** within a team, defined as the extent to which several team members from the supplier company interact with the customer company.

stand (section 2.1.4). We assume the following effects of this factor:

H11: The decentralisation of communication within the team has a positive influence on the quality of teamwork.

H12: The decentralisation of communication within the team has a positive influence on the success of the business relationship.

The central importance of communication decentralisation in a sales team stems from the expert interviews we conducted in the run-up to our empirical study (see section 2.4.2). The company representatives we interviewed argued that interaction between representatives of different functions in the sales team only works properly when these people are also in direct contact with the customer company. Only then can they form their own picture of the customer's requirements and the resulting starting points for joint value creation (*H11*). Furthermore, the experts noted that it also pays off in terms of the quality of the relationship with the customer company if not just one key account manager but several people from the sales team are in direct contact with the members of the buying centre. This would particularly improve the quality and speed of inter-organisational communication and the extent to which tasks and goals are mutually aligned (*H12*).

A theoretical indication for these hypotheses can be found in the IPO team model by Tannenbaum/Beard/Salas (see section 2.2.3). There, intergroup relationships are seen as one of the organisational and situational characteristics that holistically overlay all effects in the team model. In connection with these intergroup relationships, we would also like to refer to the theory of real conflict (see, among others, Sherif 1951, Sherif et al. 1961, Sherif/Sherif 1953). According to this theory, intergroup cooperation only occurs when the groups involved perceive a mutual dependence with regard to the achievement of their goals (Sherif 1966, p. 75). Applied to our work, we see the sales team on the supplier side interacting with the purchasing team on the customer side.

The more people in the sales team have direct contact with customers, the better the team will understand this mutual dependency. We find empirical evidence for $_{H12}$ in Nielsen (1998, p. 455). According to this, personal contact between "several" function holders from both companies in a business relationship generates interpersonal closeness, which in turn has a positive influence on the mutual exchange of information and on the quality of cooperative work.

Let us leave the factors that can be shaped in the short term and turn to **teamwork** and the output of a sales team in a B2B business relationship. In terms of output, we distinguished between relationship success and economic success in a business relationship. Economic success describes the extent to which the economic potential of the business relationship is exploited (see section 2.1.3). We propose the following hypotheses:

$_{H13}$: *The quality of teamwork within the team has a positive influence on relationship success in the business relationship.*

$_{H14}$: *The quality of teamwork positively influences economic success in the business relationship.*

Here, we argue that the need for cooperation in the sales team arises from the complexity of the tasks. This complexity is largely determined by the requirements of the customer company. The higher the quality of interaction between the employees in the sales team, the better these tasks can be accomplished. This will naturally have a positive influence on the result of the team's activity, i.e. its success with the customer. The Group Syntality Theory from section 2.2.2 emphasises that the size of a team's total energy vector, which results from the individual energies of its members, is decisive for the achievement of group goals. The less individual energy is lost in group friction (i.e. the higher the quality of teamwork), the greater this total energy vector is (1 source). Furthermore, the positive influence of the quality of the team process on

team success is postulated by all input-process-output models presented in Section 2.2.3.

From an empirical perspective, the positive effects of high-quality teamwork on the success of a sales team can also be regarded as scientific consensus (see sections 2.3.3 to 2.3.5). We therefore assume that our empirical results will confirm hypotheses H_{13} and H_{14}. What interests us most here, and what to our knowledge has never been investigated before, is a comparison of the strength of these two direct effects of teamwork quality. We want to know how strongly the success of a business relationship (if this is indeed the goal) can be positively influenced by high-quality teamwork in the sales team. In direct comparison with the strength of this effect, our empirical findings should also show how strongly economic success in a business relationship can be directly and positively influenced by the quality of teamwork in the sales team, even if the supplier company does not strive for relationship success with the customer company.

Finally, we postulate the following effect between our two **success components**:

H_{15}: *Relationship success in the business relationship has a positive influence on economic success in the business relationship.*

From a rational point of view, we assume that a high level of relationship success is the only way for a supplier company to tap into the economic potential of the business relationship that can only be exploited "jointly" with the customer company. Examples of this would be savings in logistics through mutual adaptation of systems or the joint development of new products.

Our theoretical basis for H_{15} is the business relationship approach (see Section 2.2.1). This argues that a win-win situation (Day 1999, p. 134) with a customer company can only be achieved if a relationship with that company is systematically built up (see Figure 2-2 in Section 2.2.1).

Empirical evidence for this correlation can be found in business relationship research (see Section 2.3.2). Here, the positive correlation between customer proximity and economic success has been confirmed several times (Jap 1999, p. 1; Homburg 2000a, p. 199; Kalwani/Narayandas 1995, p. 1; Workman/Homburg/Jensen 2003, p. 14). H_{15} is also supported by empirical work on team selling. Based on a sample of software manufacturers and advertising agencies, it was shown that the fulfilment of business relationship tasks by a customer relationship team leads to greater effectiveness in the business relationships it manages (Helfert 1998, p. 162).

Figure 3-3 concludes with an overview of all hypotheses within our model of factors that can be shaped in the short term in team selling. In the following, we will examine whether we can empirically confirm the postulated relationships H1 to H_{15} (confirmatory part of our empirical analysis). We will also compare the respective strengths of the direct and indirect effects (exploratory part of our empirical analysis).
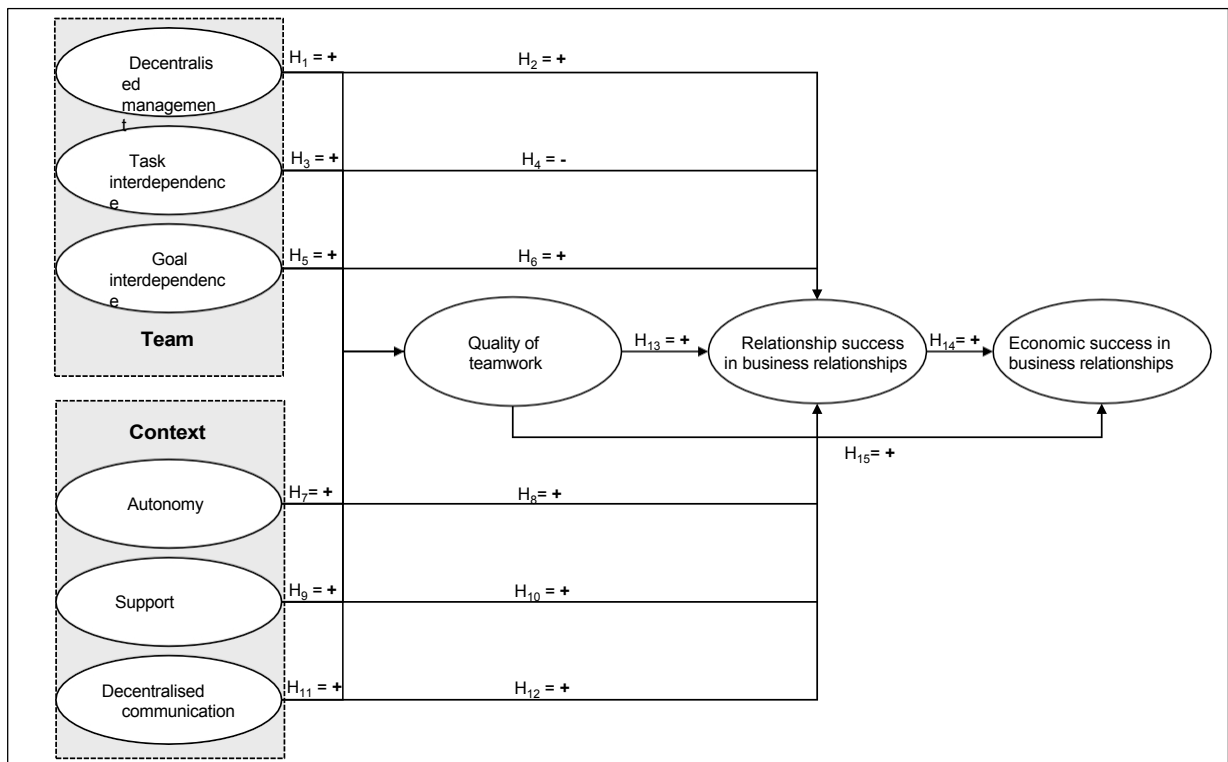

Figure 3-3: Overview of the hypotheses of the model of factors that can be influenced in the short term in team selling

3.2.2   Construct measurement

The factor **of leadership decentralisation**, which can be shaped in the short term, describes the extent to which team leadership is shaped jointly by the entire team (high leadership decentralisation) as opposed to team leadership by a central team leader (low leadership decentralisation). This construct is operationalised in accordance with Högl/Gemünden (2000, p. 55). We consider both characteristics of common goal orientation (goal quality and feedback) and the internal decision-making structure of the team. Table 3-4 shows that all indicator reliabilities are well above the threshold value of 0.4. The threshold values for Cronbach's alpha (0.7), the explained variance of the exploratory factor analysis (0.5), the factor reliability (0.6) and the average variance captured (0.5) are also significantly exceeded.

Information on the indicators of the factor "centralised management"			
Name of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of factor loading
The team's goals are set jointly by all team members.	0.70	0	52.2
The team's performance is assessed jointly by the entire team.	0.73	0.73	52
The team usually makes important decisions for the team (e.g. task organisation within the team, setting sub-goals for the team, important factual issues, etc.) together.	0.65	0	52
Information on the factor "centralised leadership"			
Cronbach's alpha:	0.83	Explained variance:	0.75
Factor reliability:	0.83	Average variance captured:	0.62

Table 3-4: Measurement of the construct "centralised management"

Let us now turn to the two factors that can be used to shape the interdependence of team members in the short term: **task interdependence** and **goal interdependence**. Task interdependence describes the extent to which individual team members need to cooperate in order to complete team tasks (joint work products). Goal interdependence was introduced as the extent to which the responsibility, evaluation and remuneration of individual team members are based on the achievement of team goals. Both factors are operationalised in

based on Sethi (2000b, p. 342 f.). Our measurement results for both factors, presented in Tables 3-5 and 3-6, meet all the required quality criteria.

Information on the indicators of the factor "task interdependence"			
Name of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of factor loading
The team tasks can only be completed if the team members work closely together.	0.64	0.65	2
Team tasks can only be completed if team members make important decisions together.	0.58	0	25
Team tasks can only be accomplished if different functional areas work closely together.	0.61	0	25
Information on the factor "task interdependence"			
Cronbach's alpha:	0	Explained variance:	0.69
Factor reliability:	0.78	Average variance captured:	0.54

Table 3-5: Measurement of the construct "task interdependence"

Information on the indicators of the factor "goal interdependence"			
Name of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of factor loading
Team members tend to pursue common team goals rather than individual goals.	0.63	0	58.1
Team members are more responsible for achieving common team goals than for achieving individual goals.	0.76	0	71
Team members are evaluated based on the performance of the entire team rather than their individual performance.	0.76	0	74
Team members are remunerated based on the achievement of team goals rather than individual goals.	0.67	0	74
Information on the factor "goal interdependence"			
Cronbach's alpha:	0.85	Explained variance:	0.70
Factor reliability:	0.86	Average variance captured:	0.60

Table 3-6: Measurement of the construct "goal interdependence"

Let us now look at three factors that can be shaped in the short term and can be used by management to optimise the team context. We defined the first factor, the **autonomy** of the sales team, as the degree of independence of a

team from management outside the team with regard to the performance delivery process (external decision-making autonomy). The first three indicators are formulated based on the operationalisation of autonomy in new product development teams by Sethi (2000b, p. 342) (see Table 3-7). Another criterion that is particularly relevant to the sales context comes from our expert interviews. According to these, the extent to which contact with customers actually runs through the team and not through managers who are not part of the team is also crucial for the autonomy of a sales team. Although the indicator reliability of this fourth indicator is below the required minimum value of 0.4, we have complied with this content enrichment of the construct. All other quality criteria are fully met.

Information on the indicators of the factor "autonomy"			
Name of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of factor loading
Managers who are not part of the team rarely interfere in the team's work.	0.68	0	41
The team can make decisions regarding performance (the "what") on its own, i.e. without interference from managers who are not part of the team.	0.61	0	41
The team can organise teamwork (the "how") independently, i.e. without interference from managers who are not part of the team.	0.71	0	38
The company's contact with customers is primarily through the team and not through managers who are not part of the team.	0.52	0	30
Information on the "autonomy" factor			
Cronbach's alpha:	0	Explained variance:	0.64
Factor reliability:	0.82	Average variance captured:	0.53

Table 3-7: Measurement of the construct "autonomy"

The next contextual factor is sales team **support**, defined as the extent to which senior management provides the team with the necessary power and resources. The operationalisation of this factor includes the following facets: support through the power of senior management (Brown/Eisenhardt 1995, p. 346) and support through centralised resources (Gemünden/Helfert 1997, p. 251; Work-

man/Homburg/Jensen 2003, p. 14.). All quality criteria for construct measurement are met (see Table 3-8).

Information on the indicators of the "support" factor			
Name of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of factor loading
The team is well supported by its own company organisation (quality of external support in terms of power, human resources and material resources).	0.74	0	50.99
The team is well supported by external management in terms of hierarchy (support through power).	0.75	0	51
The team is well supported by external personnel.	0.81	0.80	54.55
The team receives good material support from outside sources.	0.76	0	54
Information on the factor "support"			
Cronbach's alpha:	0.89	Explained variance:	0.76
Factor reliability:	0.89	Average variance captured:	0.68

Table 3-8: Measurement of the construct "support"

Let us now turn to the last of our factors that can be shaped in the short term: **communication centrality**. This describes the extent to which several team members from the supplier company are in contact with the customer company (see section 2.1.4). To our knowledge, this construct has not yet been investigated in scientific team research. The inspiration for this construct came from our expert interviews. The operationalisation of this breadth of communication in terms of personnel was based on the two facets of task-related information exchange and social or personal exchange, following Nielson (1998): "Successful relationships are viewed as involving extensive person-to-person contact by numerous functional participants from each firm that results in close personal and working relationships" (Nielson 1998, p. 443). The results of the measurement of the factor "communication decentralisation" are shown in Table 3-9.

Information on the indicators of the factor "communication decentralisation"			
Name of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of factor loading
Several team members engage in a relevant exchange of information with the customer.	0.57	-	-
Several team members are engaged in social interaction with the customer.	0.57	-	-
Information on the factor "centrality of communication"			
Cronbach's alpha:	0.73	Explained variance:	0.79
Factor reliability:	-	Average variance captured:	-
*: For two indicators, a confirmatory model has a negative number of degrees of freedom. A confirmatory factor analysis is therefore not possible.			

Table 3-9: Measurement of the construct "communication decentralisation"

Let us leave the input side of our model and move on to the team process and team output. The team process is represented by the construct **"quality of teamwork"**. It describes the quality of cooperation within the team and the quality of the team's interaction with its intra-organisational environment. For operationalisation, we refer to the six internal facets of teamwork identified by Högl/Gemünden (2001, p. 443): communication, coordination, balance of member contributions, mutual support, commitment and cohesion. We enrich this operationalisation with an external facet of teamwork, namely the frequency of external communication (for boundary management, see Ancona/Caldwell 1992a, p. 660). We retain the content enrichment of the construct, although the indicator reliability of this indicator is below the required minimum value of 0.4. However, all other quality criteria for construct measurement are fully met (see Table 3-10).

Finally, we check whether the content-related selectivity between all constructs in our model of factors that can be shaped in the short term in team selling is guaranteed. **Discriminant validity,** assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (see Table 3-11), is fully satisfied. The squared correlation between two factors is smaller than their average variance (DEV) in each case.

Information on the indicators of the factor "quality of teamwork"			
Name of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of factor loading
The quality of teamwork is high.	0.78	0.67	41.8
Teamwork is characterised by good communication within the team (sufficiently frequent, informal, direct and open communication).	0.75	0	43
During teamwork, the work assignments of the individual team members are well structured and coordinated.	0.78	0.66	47.12
All team members are able to contribute effectively to teamwork (balance of member contributions).	0.78	0.65	45.9
During teamwork, team members support each other in completing their tasks.	0.73	0	52.9
Team members are fully committed to teamwork.	0.77	0.66	49
Teamwork is characterised by a high degree of team spirit (cohesion).	0.82	0	54.6
The team communicates frequently with members of the company who are not part of the team (frequency of external communication).	0.54	0	36
Information on the factor "quality of teamwork"			
Cronbach's alpha:	0.92	Explained variance:	0.66
Factor reliability:	0.93	Average variance captured:	0.61

Table 3-10: Measurement of the construct "quality of teamwork"

Constructs		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	DEV	0.61	0.50	0.66	0.62	0.54	0.60	0.53	0.68	0.61
1. Quality of teamwork	0.61	-								
2. Potential exploitation in the business relationship	0.5	0.12	-							
3. Economic success in the business relationship	0.66	0	0	-						
4. Centralised management	0	0	0	0.12	-					
5. Task interdependence	0	0	0	0.07	0.44	-				
6. Goal interdependence	0	0	0	0.08	0.23	0.37	-			
7. Autonomy	0	0	0.01	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.09	-		
8. Support	0.68	0.31	0.04	0.10	0.18	0.10	0.15	0.31	-	
9. Communication decentralisation	0.61	0	0	0.14	0.16	0.35	0.12	0.03	0.03	-

Table 3-11: Results of the discriminant validity test for the model of factors that can be influenced in the short term in team selling

3.2.3 Empirical results

Our hypotheses H_1 to H_{15}, which together form our model of short-term factors that can be influenced in team selling, are examined using causal analysis (see section 2.4.1). In the underlying causal model (see Figure 3-4), these controllable factors form the exogenous variables ξ_1 to ξ_6 and explain the team process and the relationship success in the business relationship (see the endogenous variables η_1 and η_2). These two endogenous variables in turn explain the final goal of a sales team, namely economic success in the business relationship (cf. the endogenous variable η_3). Our structural model thus encompasses not only the directed dependency relationships between six exogenous variables and two endogenous variables (γ_{11} - γ_{26}), but also the directed relationships between the endogenous variables (β_{21}, β_{31} and β_{32}).

The results of the empirical testing of our model are shown in Figure 3-4. Overall, the global measures for **assessing model quality** show generally good values (x^2/df = 2.03; RMSEA = 0.084; AGFI = 0.95; GFI = 0.96), which, with the exception of a very slight deviation in the RMSEA (a maximum value of 0.08 was required), are within the limits recommended in the relevant literature (see Table 2-6 in Section 2.4.1). We consider the fact that this model is identified by the Lisrel software after only a very small number of iterations to be a further quality criterion. Consequently, the model describes the structures found in our empirical data well overall.

We consider the squared multiple correlations of the dependent variables as local quality measures. These correspond to the variance share of the relevant variables (R^2) explained by the structural model. Overall, the short-term factors we selected for team selling explain 47% of the variance in the quality of teamwork in a sales team. In terms of success, 31% of relationship success and as much as 50% of the variance in economic success in the business relationship can be explained by these six variables alone. These values can be described as very good (for a precise interpretation of explanatory power in causal models, see Homburg/Pflesser 2000b, p. 650 ff.). This means that

We have really succeeded in identifying "central" factors in team selling that can be influenced in the short term.

Let's take a look at our hypothesis framework and the strength of the respective effects identified. For the sake of simplicity, we will refer to an effect as very strong (relative to the other effects in the model) if the value of a path coefficient is greater than 0.3. A value greater than 0.15 is considered a strong effect, while lower significant values are simply referred to as an effect.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 are confirmed. There is a strong positive correlation between the extent to which team leadership is jointly shaped by the entire sales team and the quality of its teamwork. Furthermore, relationship success in business relationships is also very strongly and positively influenced by **decentralised leadership** in the sales team.

Our hypotheses regarding the influence of **task interdependence** and **goal interdependence** ($H3$ - $H6$) are also empirically proven. Both factors enhance the quality of teamwork in the sales team, with the strong positive influence of goal interdependence dominating. The success of business relationships is only positively influenced by the degree of goal interdependence. Here, the very strong negative influence of task interdependence is dominant. In other words, the greater the degree to which the tasks resulting from the business relationship require cooperation between the individual team members, the lower the success of the business relationship. In other words, this result means that the complexity that a customer company brings to a supplier company should be reduced. In this context, management should ensure that task overlaps between individual members of the sales team are specifically "unbundled".

Let us now turn to the degree of influence of senior management on a sales team, represented by the variables **autonomy** and **support**. The autonomy of a sales team has a positive effect (confirmation of $H7$), and the extent of support from senior management even has a very strong positive effect on the quality of teamwork (confirmation of $H9$). Contrary to our expectations, however,

that both factors do not have a positive effect, but rather a slightly negative effect on the success of the business relationship. Based on our data, we cannot confirm H_8 and H_{10}. This result suggests that the degree of autonomy of a sales team and the extent of support from management should be carefully designed. We see this result in line with two other empirical studies. Steward and Barrick (2000, p. 141 ff.) show that a high degree of team autonomy is only beneficial if the team task is conceptual rather than purely operational in nature. Bonner, Ruekert and Walker (2002, p. 242) demonstrate that only a "supportive" role on the part of senior management has a positive impact on the success of NPE teams. As soon as this support tips over into influential or directive behaviour, it has a negative impact.

Let us now turn to the effects of **communication decentralisation**, i.e. the extent to which several team members from the supplier company interact with the customer company. Both hypotheses, H_{11} and H_{12}, are confirmed. Communication decentralisation has a strong positive effect on the quality of teamwork and even a very strong positive effect on the success of the business relationship. This last effect (γ_{26}) is the strongest single effect in the entire model. We find this remarkable in that, to our knowledge, this design factor has not yet received any attention in research on team selling.

Let us consider the hypotheses regarding the interdependencies between the endogenous factors in the model. Here, hypotheses H_{13} and H_{14} are confirmed. The **quality of teamwork** in the sales team has a strong positive influence on the success of the business relationship and even a very strong direct positive influence on the economic success of the business relationship. We consider this result to be very important. Even if no relationship with the customer company is sought or if there is no relationship potential on the customer side, the quality of teamwork in the sales team is still very important for the economic success of the business relationship. Finally, is confirmed by and H_{15}. The **relationship success in the**

business relationship has a very strong positive impact on economic success in the business relationship.

Let us now briefly analyse the effects of our six factors that can be shaped in the short term. It is striking that the quality of the team process can be improved primarily through the factors of support, decentralised leadership, goal interdependence and decentralised communication. The success of the business relationship can be positively influenced primarily by reducing task interdependence in the sales team. At the same time, the sales team should then be specifically "opened up to the customer" by increasing leadership decentralisation and communication decentralisation. We will discuss the direct and indirect effects in our model of factors that can be influenced in the short term in team selling in more detail at a later stage as part of our impact versus level analysis (see section 4.3).
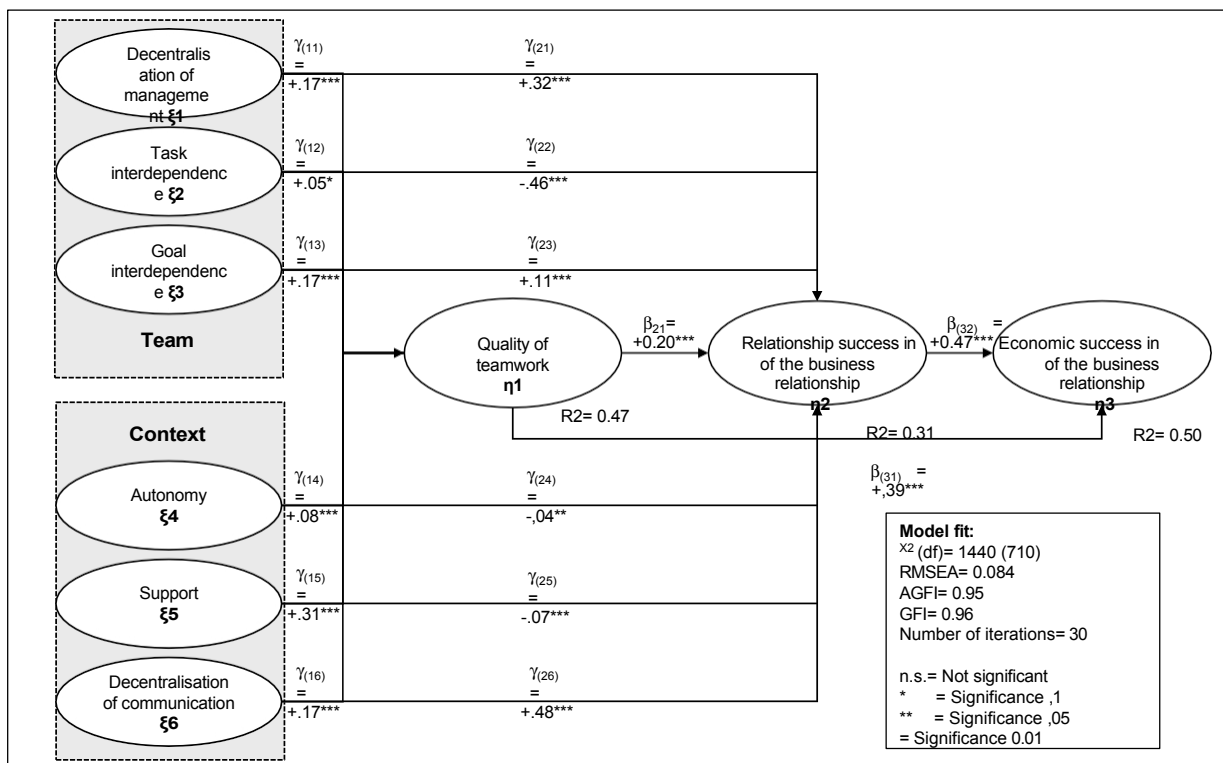

Figure 3-4: Results of the hypothesis test for the model of factors that can be influenced in the short term in team selling

3.3 Model of long-term factors in team selling

We now turn to factors in team selling that are difficult or impossible for management to influence in the short term. First, we formulate the following in the next section **3.3.1** Hypotheses regarding these factors. We first justify these with purely rational arguments, then substantiate them with selected theories (see section 2.2) and results from other empirical studies (see section 2.3). The constructs are then conceptualised/operationalised and measured on the basis of our sample (section 3.3.2). The final section deals with the empirical results for our model of factors that can be shaped in the long term in team selling (section 3.3.3).

3.3.1   Hypothesis formation

The first two hypotheses focus on the **skills of the members of a sales team**. The construct describes the professional skills and personal characteristics of the individual team members that are suitable for fulfilling the team task, as well as the extent to which they complement each other (see section 2.1.5). We postulate the following effects with regard to the quality of interaction in the sales team ($_{H16)}$ and with regard to the result of a sales team's activity ($_{H17)}$:

$_{H16}$: *The skills of the team members have a positive influence on the quality of teamwork.*

$_{H17}$: *The skills of the team members have a positive influence on the success of the business relationship.*

(! Revise paragraph) The postulated effects are intuitively very obvious. We assume that the quality of interaction within the team is primarily determined by the appropriate personal and social characteristics of the individual team members and the extent to which they complement each other. Furthermore, we argue that the appropriate professional skills of the team members primarily influence the rational facets of relationship success in the business relationship

(e.g. the degree of mutual alignment of tasks and goals). We believe that the emotional aspects of relationship success (e.g. the degree of mutual trust) are determined more by the personal characteristics of the team members. With these two hypotheses, we are primarily interested in the exploratory results of our empirical study, i.e. the direct comparison of the strength of these two effects.

For Raymond B. Cattell, the total energy of a group is primarily determined by the individual energies of the group members, i.e. their abilities (see Group Syntality Theory, Section 2.2.2). Group syntality theory also emphasises the importance of compatibility between team members. This means that the less energy is required to maintain group cohesion, the greater the effective energy of a team (cf. Cattell's remarks on "maintenance synergy" in groups; Cattell 1948b, p. 55). Further theoretical support for H_{16} and H_{17} is provided by the team models discussed in Section 2.2.3. Both the team process (e.g. McGrath 1964) and team success (e.g. Cohen 1994) are significantly determined by the abilities of the team members. This postulate is also supported by the empirical studies discussed in Sections 2.3.3 to 2.3.5. The results of Helfert (1998, p. 162) and Stock (2003, p. 249 ff.) are exemplary for the research field of team selling.

Let us now turn to **corporate culture** as a factor that can be shaped over the long term in team selling (see section 2.1.5). We postulate the following effects for the extent to which team-related and performance-related values of corporate culture are pronounced in a company:

H_{18}: *The team orientation of the corporate culture has a positive influence on the quality of teamwork.*

H_{19}: *The team orientation of corporate culture has a positive influence on relationship success in business relationships.*

H_{20}: *The performance orientation of the corporate culture has a positive influence on the quality of teamwork.*

H_{21}: *The performance orientation of corporate culture has a positive influence on relationship success in business relationships.*

These four hypotheses are primarily based on the conceptual explanations of Brodbeck/Frese/Javidan (2002, p. 16), according to which successful companies in the 21st century will be characterised by a high level of balance between team orientation and performance orientation in their corporate culture. Furthermore, we assume that the team orientation of the corporate culture will primarily have a positive influence on the quality of interaction within the sales team, while the result of the activity (the success of the business relationship) will be significantly influenced by the performance orientation of the corporate culture.

Group syntality theory posits positive effects of the cultural tradition in which a group is embedded. Cultural tradition determines the potential of a group by shaping the individual characteristics of the group members and the structural relationships between the team members (Shaw/Costanzo 1970, p. 304). This overarching influence of corporate culture on the work of teams is also confirmed by two team models. Tannenbaum/Beard/Salas (see Figure 2-6 in Section 2.2.3: Organisational climate as a facet of organisational characteristics) and Sundstrom/DeMeuse/Futrell (see Figure 2-9 in Section 2.2.3: Organisational culture as a facet of the organisational context).

From an empirical perspective, we see the positive effects of both cultural facets on the quality of teamwork (H_{18} and H_{20}) supported by the results of the largest international study to date on success factors in key account management. Team spirit (esprit de corps) in the key account management team proved to be the determinant with the greatest influence on the effectiveness of the respective business relationship. The authors see team spirit as being largely driven by a customer-oriented corporate culture (Workman/Homburg/Jensen 2003, p. 10 ff.). This type of corporate culture is best reflected in the so-called
"Adhocracy culture" (cf. Mintzberg 1979, Mintzberg 1991, Mintzberg/McHugh 1985), which combines team orientation and performance orientation at a high level

(Cameron/Freeman 1991). We base the positive effects of both cultural facets on the results of a sales team's activities (H_{19} and H_{21}) on the findings of Homburg (2000, p. 198 f.), according to which companies with an adhocracy culture achieve the highest level of customer proximity.

Finally, we arrive at an external factor that is difficult or impossible for management to change in the long term: **asymmetry** in the business relationship. This describes the extent of the imbalance between the supplier company and the customer company in terms of the mutual alignment of tasks and goals (see section 2.1.5). We assume the following effects:

H_{22}: *Asymmetry in the business relationship has a negative impact on the quality of teamwork.*

H_{23}: *Asymmetry in the business relationship has a negative impact on the success of the business relationship.*

These two hypotheses are based on our expert interviews conducted in the run-up to our empirical study. The company representatives argued that a high degree of asymmetry in the business relationship is an expression of a high degree of unilateral dependence or a strong power imbalance. This would reduce the motivation of a supplier company to tap any remaining relationship potential at the customer company (H_{23}). In the course of this reduced cooperation between the supplier and the customer company, the customer-related tasks of a sales team would naturally also become less complex. This would reduce the importance of optimal interaction within the team (H_{22}).

Conceptual evidence for these hypotheses can be found in Narus/Anderson (1995, p. 30): "the more balanced the dependence within a collaborative relationship, the more positively that supplier team and a customer team will frame their relationship". Empirical evidence can only be found to a limited extent in business relationship research (section 2.3.2). Here, for example, a lack of goal congruence

was linked to reduced coordination efforts between two companies (Jap 1999, p. 470).

Figure 3-5 provides an overview of all hypotheses within our model of factors that can be influenced in the long term in team selling. We have adopted the hypotheses between the constructs on the process and output sides of this model (H_{13}, H_{14} and H_{15}) unchanged from Section 3.2.
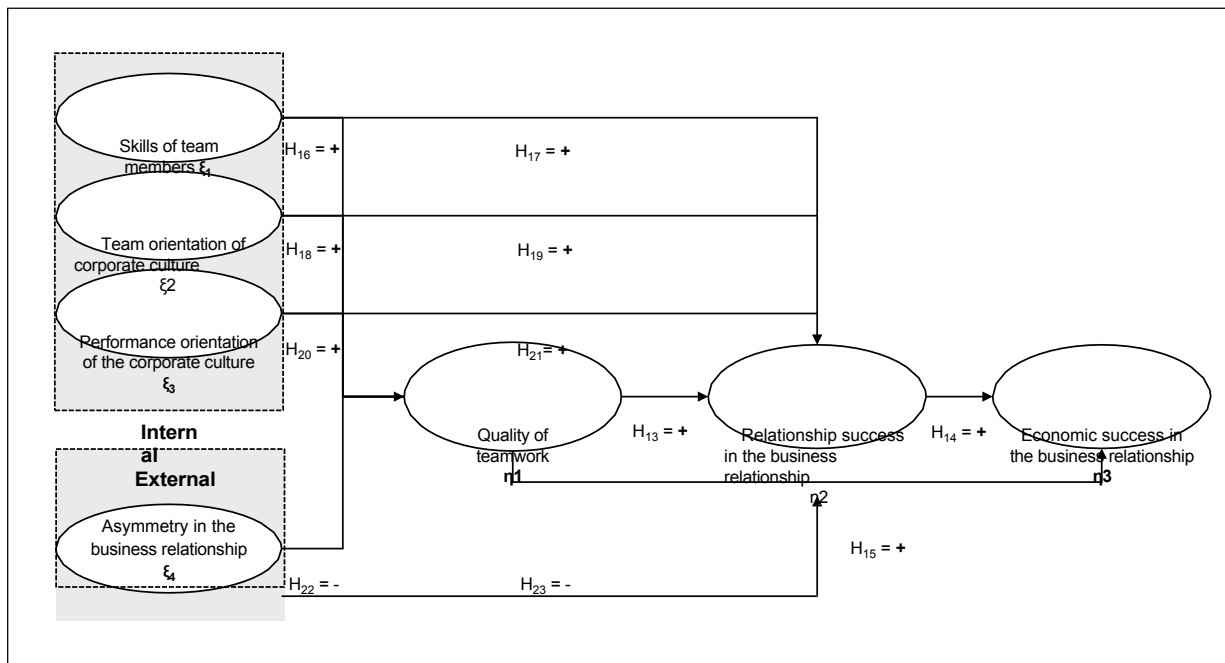
Figure 3-5: Overview of hypotheses of the model of long-term factors in team selling

3.3.2 Construct measurement

(! Revise paragraph, establish reference to conceptualisations in Gemünden/Helfert (1998, p. !) and Gemünden/Högl (1998, p. !). We defined our first long-term factor, the **quality of the team members' skills,** as the extent to which the individual team members possess the professional skills and personal characteristics required to fulfil the team task, as well as the extent to which they complement each other (see section 2.1.5). This highly multifaceted construct is operationalised in a very comprehensive manner using twelve indicators.

In the area of technical skills of team members, sales-related skills are considered, such as acquisitive skills (2 sources) or the ability to negotiate (2 sources). On the other hand, it is about skills that generally result from the personal experience of team members with customer business relationships (2 sources) and from relationships with other important employees in the company (! 2 sources). In terms of the personal skills of team members, the following are assessed: teamwork (! 2 sources), communication skills (! 2 sources), personal empathy (! 2 sources), creativity (! 2 sources) and the ability to deal appropriately with professional and personal conflicts (! 2 sources). Another facet is the compatibility or extent to which these professional and personal characteristics of the team members complement each other (Schutz 1955, Shaw 1959, Shaw/Harkey 1976). All indicator reliabilities meet the required standard of 0.4. The minimum values required for Cronbach's alpha (0.7), the explained variance of the exploratory factor analysis (0.5), the factor reliability (0.6) and the average variance captured (0.5) are also significantly exceeded.

Within **corporate culture**, we consider the two value dimensions of team orientation and performance orientation. We have defined these as the extent to which team-related and performance-related values are pronounced in the corporate culture (see section 2.1.5). These two factors are operationalised based on O'Reilly/Chatman/Caldwell (1991, p. 505). Tables 3-13 and 3-14 summarise the results of the construct measurement. All quality criteria are fully met.

Let us now consider the last of our long-term factors, **asymmetry** in the business relationship. The construct describes the extent of imbalance between a supplier company and a customer company with regard to the mutual alignment of tasks and goals. We calculated the value for asymmetry as follows: The team members surveyed were asked to rate their agreement with the following two statements on an 11-point scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree):

Information on the indicators of the factor "Quality of team members' skills"			
Name of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of factor loading
The technical skills of the team members complement each other well.	0.64	0.44	32.8
The personal skills of the team members complement each other well.	0.68	0	39.02
The team's ability to sell is high (acquisition skills).	0.68	0	31.49
The team has a high level of experience in customer relations.	0.66	0	29.8
The relationships between team members and other important employees in the company are good.	0.67	0.51	33
The team members have the ability to work well with other people (teamwork skills).	0.75	0.64	34
The team members have the ability to communicate well with other people.	0.76	0.68	32
The team members have the ability to empathise well with other people (personal empathy).	0.77	0	37
Team members have the ability to develop creative solutions for customers.	0.72	0	36
The team members have the ability to negotiate well with customers.	0.63	0.47	30.5
The team members have the ability to deal well with technical conflicts.	0.75	0.58	30
The team members have the ability to deal well with personal conflicts.	0.72	0.57	32.78
Information on the factor "Quality of team members' skills"			
Cronbach's alpha:	0.93	Explained variance:	0.57
Factor reliability:	0.93	Average variance captured:	0.54

Table 3-12: Measurement of the construct "team member skills"

A) Adaptation of the provider company: "We have adapted our tasks and goals to the customer."

B) Adjustment by the customer company: "The customer has adapted its tasks and objectives to us."

The asymmetry value is calculated from the difference between these two ratings. We illustrate this calculation with an example: If a participant gives a rating of 7 for statement A and a rating of 3 for statement B, the asymmetry value is calculated as follows

$\lvert$ 7-3 $\rvert$ = 4. The value range for asymmetry is therefore between 0 (lowest possible asymmetry) and 10 (highest possible asymmetry).

Information on the indicators of the factor "team orientation of the corporate culture"			
Designation of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of factor loading
Our corporate culture is characterised by a strong team orientation.	0.75	0	37
Our company is very employee-oriented.	0.72	0	36.8
In our company, great importance is attached to cooperation between individual employees.	0.84	0.84	37.5
In our company, we work a lot in teams.	0.74	0.63	34
Information on the factor "Team orientation of the corporate culture"			
Cronbach's alpha: 0.89		Explained variance:	0.75
Factor reliability: 0.89		Average variance captured:	0.68

Table 3-13: Measurement of the construct "team orientation of corporate culture"

Information on the indicators of the factor "Performance orientation of corporate culture"			
Designation of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of factor loading
Our corporate culture is characterised by a high level of performance orientation.	0.70	0.63	38.2
In our company, great importance is attached to the rapid implementation of approved measures.	0.65	0.56	39
In our company, there are high expectations regarding the performance of individual employees.	0.75	0	36
In our company, the performance of individual employees is measured against clear results.	0.74	0	41.7
In our company, high performance requirements are placed on individual employees.	0.79	0.83	38
Information on the factor "performance orientation of the corporate culture"			
Cronbach's alpha: 0.90		Explained variance:	0.74
Factor reliability: 0.89		Average variance captured:	0.61

Table 3-14: Measurement of the construct "performance orientation of corporate culture"

Let us now analyse the content-related selectivity between all constructs in our model of factors that can be shaped over the long term. We first assess **discriminant validity** using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (see Table 3-15). We

that our model cannot fully satisfy this very restrictive criterion. The squared correlation between the two factors "team member skills" and "quality of teamwork" is 0.76, which is greater than the respective average variances (DEV) of these two constructs (0.54 and 0.61). In order to assess whether the distinction between these two constructs is sufficiently clear, we additionally use the $\chi^{(2)}$difference test (see section 2.4.1). Fixing the correlation between these two factors at 1.0 results in a $\chi^{(2)}$value of 1937. The increase in the $\chi^{(2)}$value is 197, which is many times higher than the critical value of 3.841 ($\chi^{(2)}$distribution with one degree of freedom). The result of the $\chi^{(2)}$difference test thus proves that the two factors do not measure the same thing and that sufficient discriminant validity is therefore given. The risk of any multicollinearity problems is therefore within acceptable limits (for the problem of multicollinearity, see Berry/Feldman 1985, p. 43, Mason/Perreault 1991, p. 270).

Constructs	DEV	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		0.61	0.50	0.66	0.54	0.68	0.61	-
1. Quality of teamwork	0.61	-						
2. Potential exploitation in the business relationship	0.50	0.12	-					
3. Economic success in the business relationship	0.66	0	0	-				
4. Skills of team members	0.54	0	0	0.24	-			
5. Team orientation of the corporate culture	0.68	0	0	0.17	0.30	-		
6. Performance orientation of the corporate culture	0.61	0	0	0.17	0.42	0.40	-	
7. Asymmetry in the business relationship	-	0.01	0.06	0.02	0	0.00	0	-

Table 3-15: Results of the discriminant validity test for the model of long-term factors

3.3.3 Empirical results

Taken together, the hypotheses in our model of long-term factors in team selling (H_{13}-H_{23}) again form a dependency structure in the form of causal chains. We therefore use the causal analysis approach again to test them (see section 2.4.1). Our causal model shown in Figure 3-6 contains our four long-term factors that can be influenced in team selling as exogenous variables (ξ_1–ξ_4). The three endogenous variables (η_1–η_3) comprise the factors to be influenced: the quality of teamwork, relationship success and economic success in the business relationship. Furthermore, the model shows the path coefficients described in Lisrel notation. They describe the effects of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variables (γ_{11}-γ_{24}) and the effects of the endogenous variables on each other (β_{21}, β_{31} and β_{32}).

Let us first assess the overall **fit** of our empirical model using the global goodness-of-fit measures (see Table 2-6 in Section 2.4.1). The values are at a good level (x^2 /df = 2.12; RMSEA = 0.087; AGFI = 0.97; GFI = 0.97). With the exception of a very slight deviation in the RMSEA, all values meet our required standards. This model is also identified by the Lisrel software after only a very small number of iterations. Consequently, our model of long-term factors in team selling provides a good overall description of the structures found in our empirical data.

Our model also uses the respective squared multiple correlation (R^2) of the dependent variables as a local measure of quality. The values for the explained variance of relationship success in the business relationship (27%) and for economic success in the business relationship (45%) can be considered good. We consider it an outstanding result that these four factors, which can be shaped over the long term, explain a full 84% of the variance in the quality of teamwork (for an interpretation of explanatory power in causal models, see Hom-burg/Pflesser 2000b, p. 650 ff.). This means that we have also fulfilled our claim

to identify "central" factors in team selling that can be shaped in the long term.

The postulated effects between the three endogenous variables (β_{21}, β_{31} and β_{32}) have already been proven in the previous model of short-term factors in team selling. The renewed verification in this model with modified exogenous factors underscores this result. Let us now turn to our hypotheses regarding the influence of our four long-term factors. In terms of the strength of the effects identified by the Lisrel software, we are again talking about a very strong effect in relative terms if the path coefficient is greater than 0.3. A value greater than 0.15 indicates a strong effect, while smaller significant values indicate only an effect.

Hypothesis 16 is confirmed, i.e. there is a very strong positive correlation between the **quality of the team members' skills** and the quality of a sales team's teamwork. The high value of the path coefficient (+0.77) underlines the high relevance of this long-term factor in team selling. However, we cannot confirm the postulated direct positive correlation between the quality of the team members' skills and the success of the business relationship; the path coefficient γ_{21} is not significant. However, the following qualifying remarks must be made regarding this finding that this factor primarily has an indirect effect on success via the process construct. The slight problem of multicollinearity in this model (see section 3.3.2) can lead to the indirect effects γ_{11} and β_{21} being amplified, thereby disproportionately weakening the direct effect γ_{21} in our model.

Let us consider the effects of our two cultural facets. Hypotheses 18 and 19 are confirmed. The **team orientation of the corporate culture** has a very strong positive influence on the quality of teamwork and a positive, but only weakly significant, direct effect on the success of business relationships. With regard to **the performance orientation of the corporate culture**, only hypothesis 21 can be confirmed. This construct has a very strong positive influence on the success of business relationships. However, we cannot confirm the postulated positive influence of this factor on the quality of teamwork. Contrary to our expectations, there is even a strong negative correlation between these two variables. To explain this result in part, we refer to the

positive influence of this factor on the quality of teamwork. Contrary to our expectations, there is even a strong negative correlation between these two variables. To explain this result to some extent, we refer to the operationalisation of the construct (see Table 3-14). This assesses the performance orientation of the corporate culture primarily with regard to the individual employee. It could be argued that a high level of this factor promotes "lone wolf" behaviour in a company. Although this could adversely affect the quality of interaction within the sales team, it could also have a positive influence on the team's success by increasing the motivation of each individual team member. Taken together, our results suggest that both facets of corporate culture are important for the success of a sales team. The team orientation of the corporate culture promotes the quality of interaction within the team, and the performance orientation of the corporate culture has a decisive influence on team success. We see this result in line with other work in this field, which suggests the need for a balanced expression of these two culture-related facets in a company (cf. the comments on "adhocracy culture" in Homburg 2000, p. 198 f.).

Let us now turn to the factor **of asymmetry in business relationships**, which can be shaped over the long term. We can confirm both of our hypotheses 22 and 23. Asymmetry in the business relationship has a negative impact on the quality of teamwork in the sales team and a strong negative impact on the success of the business relationship. Thus, a high degree of imbalance between a supplier company and a customer company in terms of the degree of mutual alignment of tasks and goals has a negative impact, namely a direct negative impact, on the success of this business relationship.

Looking at all the interdependencies in Figure 3-6, it is striking that the quality of the team process can be influenced in the long term primarily by two factors: improving the skills of team members and increasing the team orientation of the corporate culture. The success of the business relationship, on the other hand, can be shaped in the long term primarily by the other two factors: increasing the performance orientation of the corporate culture and reducing asymmetry in the business relationship.

and reducing asymmetry in the business relationship. We will discuss the direct and indirect effects in this model in more detail in our impact versus level analysis (see Section 4.4).
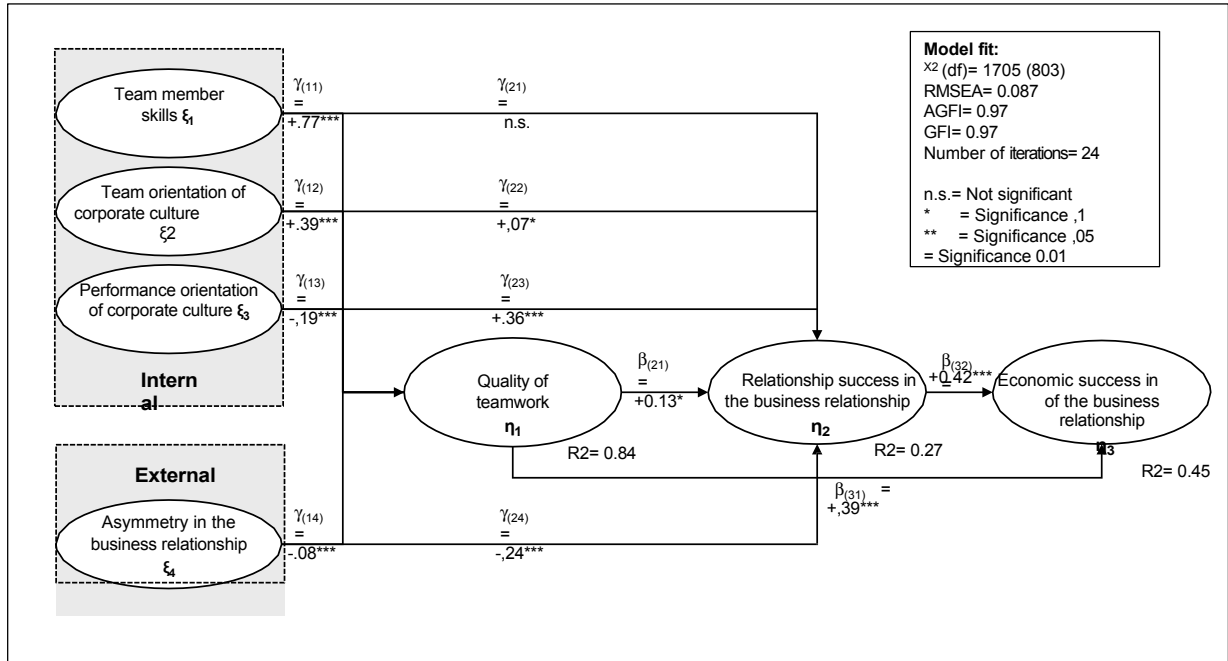

Figure 3-6: Results of the hypothesis test for the model of long-term factors in team selling

3.4 Moderating effects

In this section, we examine moderating effects on selected dependency relationships within our two causal models. We are therefore interested in whether a moderator variable strengthens or weakens an already proven relationship between two other factors. First, we will formulate hypotheses in this regard (section 3.4.1), then discuss the construct measurement in section 3.4.2, and finally present the empirical results in section 3.4.3.

3.4.1 Formulation of hypotheses

Due to the large number of possible moderating effects within our models, we have chosen an exploratory research approach. This means that we have examined a large number of possible effects that seemed reasonable to us based on rational considerations alone. This approach is in line with common research practice in studies of a similar scope (see Homburg 2000, Kumar/Scheer/Steenkamp 1993). We have selected three hypotheses that are of interest for business practice and briefly outline our rationale for them.

Our first hypothesis relates to the connection between the two interdependence constructs from our model of factors that can be influenced in the short term in team selling:

H24: *The higher the task interdependence within the team, the stronger the correlation between goal interdependence within the team and the success of the business relationship.*

We rationally justify this correlation as follows: We believe that the extent of cooperation required among members of the sales team is largely determined by the requirements of the customer company. The higher the customer-driven task interdependence within the team, the more important it is for the success of the business relationship that the responsibilities, performance appraisal and remuneration of the team members reflect this interdependence.

Our second hypothesis relates to the importance of the quality of teamwork depending on the relationship potential in the business relationship:

H25: *The higher the relationship potential in the business relationship, the stronger the correlation between the quality of teamwork and the success of the business relationship.*

Here, we argue that as the customer company's willingness to engage in rational and emotional relationship facets in the business relationship with the supplier company increases, so does the complexity of the range of tasks for the sales team. This should be accompanied by an increase in the importance of good team interaction in order to adequately cope with these interdependent tasks.

Our final hypothesis relates to the importance of the quality of teamwork depending on the skills of the team members:

$H26$: *The higher the skills of the team members, the weaker the correlation between the quality of teamwork and the success of the business relationship.*

We believe that a sales team can partially compensate for the synergy gains that lie in internal team interaction by having very good employees. For example, the synergy effects in multi-functional sales teams should be partially compensable by the multi-functional experience of the individual employees in the team.

Figure 3-7 provides an overview of these three selected moderating effects.
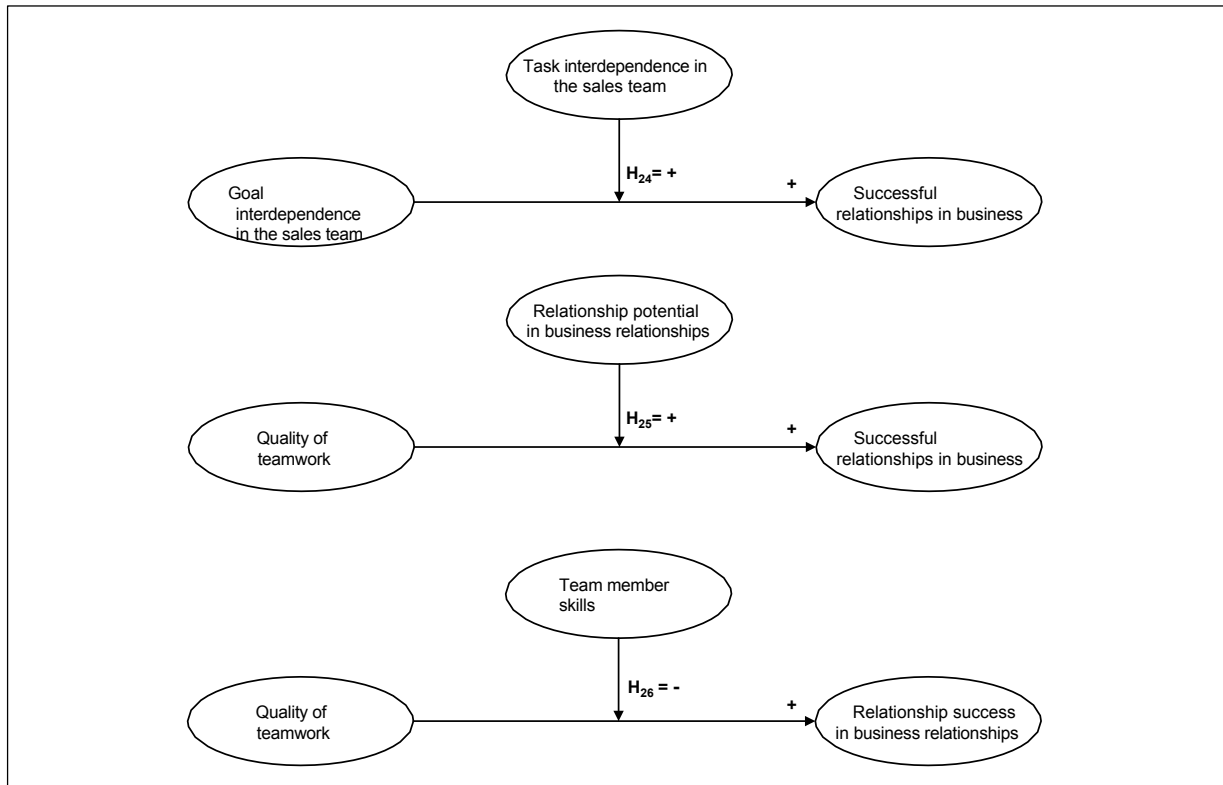
Figure 3-7: Overview of hypotheses on moderating effects

3.4.2 Construct measurement

With the exception of the **relationship potential in the business relationship,** we had already operationalised and measured all constructs of hypotheses $H24$ to $H26$ in the previous sections (see sections 3.2.2 and 3.3.2). We define relationship potential as the maximum willingness of a customer company with regard to the expression of rational and emotional relationship facets in the business relationship with a supplier company. In section 3.1, we had already derived the six relationship facets of this construct. The results of measuring the relationship potential in the business relationship are shown in Table 3-17. With this moderator, we accept slight compromises with regard to our required quality criteria (see Table 2-5 in Section 2.4.1). For three facets, the indicator reliability values fall slightly below the required minimum value of 0.4. The average variance recorded for this construct also falls short of the required minimum value by 0.06. All other quality criteria are fully met.

are fully met. Ultimately, we agree with Homburg/Baumgartner (1995b, p. 172) that a minor violation of individual criteria is acceptable if the overall picture of the measurement is consistent.

Information on the indicators of the factor "relationship potential in the business relationship"			
Name of indicators	Item to total correlation	Indicator reliability	t-value of the factor loading
The customer is generally very willing to exchange relevant information with their suppliers (e.g. information about their own costs, target figures, new products).	0.5	0	3
The customer is generally very willing to mutually adjust tasks and goals with its suppliers with regard to tapping the potential of the business relationship.	0.71	0	38
The customer is generally very willing to invest in unlocking the potential of the joint business relationship with its suppliers (e.g. willingness to mutually adapt systems, processes, products, technologies).	0.52	0	36
The customer is generally very willing to engage in social interaction with its suppliers (personal interaction, including beyond business matters).	0.57	0	3
Customers are generally very willing to build trust with their suppliers.	0.62	0.50	35
The customer is generally very willing to establish a long-term social bond with their suppliers (long-term personal relationship).	0.55	0	38
Information on the factor "Relationship potential in the business relationship"			
Cronbach's alpha:	0.81	Explained variance:	0.53
Factor reliability:	0.82	Average variance captured:	0.44

Table 3-16: Measurement of the construct "relationship potential in the business relationship"

3.4.3 Empirical results

To empirically investigate the postulated moderating effects, we use moderated regression analysis (see Section 2.4.1). A separate regression equation was established for each of the three hypotheses. The results are illustrated graphically in Figure 3-8.

We can confirm hypothesis H_{24}, i.e. the higher the **task interdependence** in the sales team, the stronger the positive effect of goal interdependence on

relationship success in the business relationship. If we consider this moderating effect together with the already proven, very strong negative direct impact of high task interdependence on success, the very high practical relevance of this result becomes immediately apparent. Since task interdependence is primarily caused by the customer company, the management of a supplier company can increase success not only by unbundling tasks, but also by specifically increasing goal interdependence in the sales team. This can be achieved, for example, by designing adequate team-based incentive systems.

Hypothesis $H25$ is also empirically proven. The higher the **relationship potential in the business relationship**, the stronger the positive effect of the quality of teamwork in the sales team on the success of the business relationship. Let us draw on the confirmation of Hypothesis $H13$, the direct positive effect of the quality of teamwork on the success of the relationship, to arrive at this conclusion. The inherent importance of the quality of interaction within the sales team for the success of the business relationship is thus further reinforced when the customer has a high relationship potential or a high willingness to develop the relationship facets.

Finally, we can also confirm the moderating effect postulated in Hypothesis $H26$. The higher the **quality of the team members' skills**, the weaker the positive influence of the quality of teamwork in the sales team on relationship success in the business relationship. Put simply, this result means that "good people can do it alone" (quote from Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Christian Homburg during the presentation of the empirical results). A supplier company can therefore compensate for weaknesses in teamwork within the sales team by deploying employees with very high skills at the customer interface.

It is also worth noting the fact shown in Figure 3-8 that all base effects are significant (i.e. the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable that is not influenced by the moderator; see also section 2.4.1). The effects postulated in

the effects postulated in hypotheses [H6] and [H13] can thus be confirmed again in the context of moderated regression.
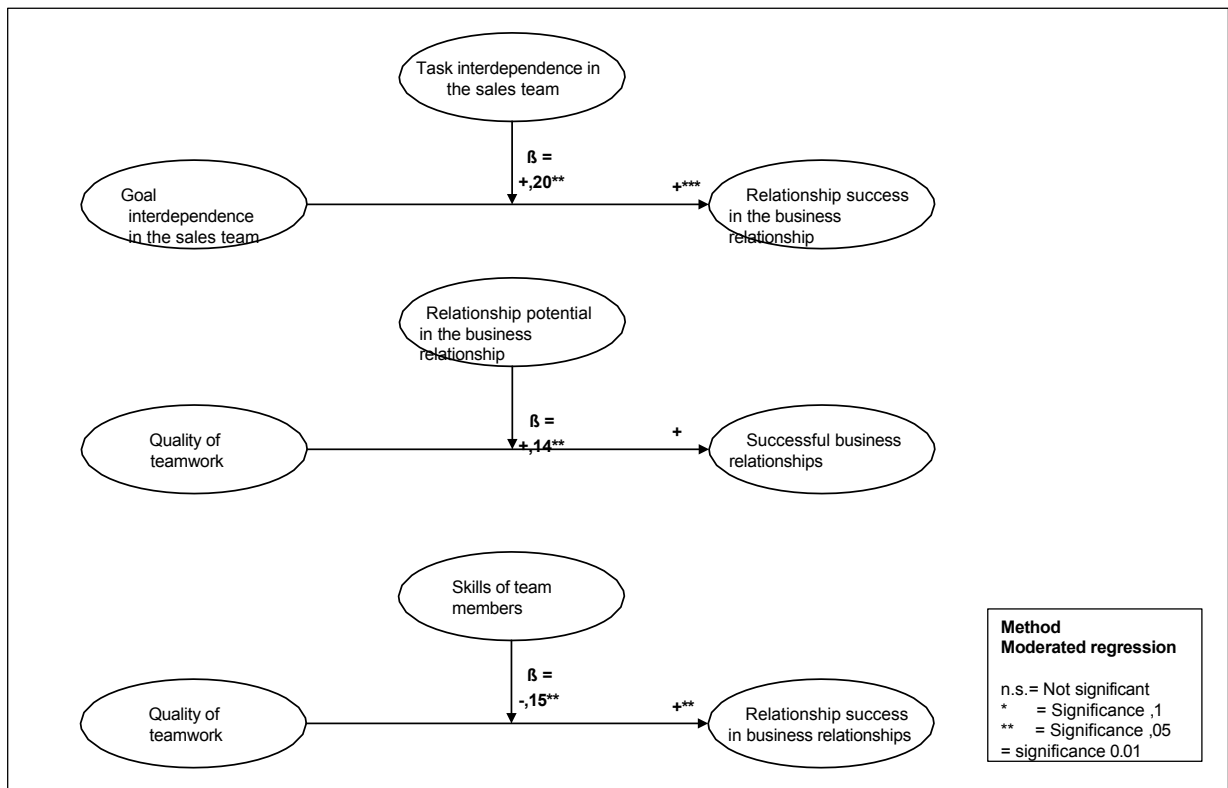

Figure 3-8: Results of the hypothesis test for moderating effects

4   State of practice

In the previous chapter, we briefly presented the empirical results for our two causal models. Now we will discuss in detail the direct and indirect effects of the individual constructs and the characteristics of their individual facets in business practice. First, we discuss the state of practice with regard to the quality of teamwork (section 4.1) and success in B2B business relationships (section 4.2). To this end, we use the respective mean values (MW) of the individual facets of our measured constructs (see the tables on construct measurement in sections 3.2.2, 3.3.2 and 3.4.2). All mean values refer to our standard scale from 0 (lowest value) to 10 (highest value). We will specifically address those facets that are below average in practice and where there is therefore a concrete need for action. We then discuss the factors that can be shaped in the short term in section 4.3 and those that can be shaped in the long term in section 4.4. Based on the characteristics of these constructs in practice and their respective direct and indirect effects, we will make a rough classification according to their priority. We will then highlight the facets of these factors where there is the greatest need for action. Chapter 4 is rounded off with measures for the concrete design of the individual factors. In this context, we discuss the evaluation of the qualitative part of our state-of-practice survey. Here, we received 6,290 individual responses from team members on company-specific measures with regard to the concrete design of the individual factors.

4.1 Quality of teamwork

Our empirical results have shown that a sales team can increase the success of its business relationship with its customer company by improving the quality of its teamwork. The higher the relationship potential in the business relationship, the stronger the positive influence of the quality of teamwork. In addition, the quality of teamwork has direct and indirect positive effects on the economic success of the business relationship.

The respondents rate the quality of teamwork in their sales team as medium to high (mean = 7.7). Looking at the mean values of the individual indicators of this construct (see Table 3-10 in Section 3.2.2), the following facets reveal a need for action:

Mutual support among team members in completing work tasks is the lowest (mean= 7.2). There is also a need for action in structuring and coordinating the work assignments of individual team members (mean = 7.4). Furthermore, team spirit and cohesion within the team (MW = 7.6) lag slightly behind the average quality of teamwork. The balance of member contributions in the sales team is at the same level (MW = 7.6). Looking at these facets as a whole, it becomes clear that there are two core issues. From a rational point of view, the task-related networking of team members should be optimised, and from an emotional point of view, team spirit in the sales team should be specifically enhanced through appropriate training measures.

4.2 Success in business-to-business relationships

Our empirical results demonstrate a very strong positive correlation between relationship success and economic success in B2B business relationships. Looking at the extent to which these two success components are present in practice, the teams surveyed believe that they generally achieve a high **level of relationship success** in their business relationships with their key accounts (mean = 8.5), but that the **economic success** of these business relationships is rather moderate to low (mean = 6.3). It should also be noted that these assessments of success should be regarded as upper limits, as respondents generally tend to overestimate their own success (2 sources).

The lowest value of all **facets of relationship success** is mutual structural commitment (MW= 8.0). In practice, there is therefore a certain

reluctance to make business relationship-specific investments, i.e. to adapt systems, processes, products or technologies to the respective business partner in order to better exploit the potential of the joint business relationship. In section 2.3.2, we already pointed out the risk that a business partner could exploit the dependency resulting from these investments (opportunistic behaviour). Our empirical findings suggest that this risk is clearly recognised in practice and deliberately kept within limits, even if this means sacrificing some of the potential economic benefits of the joint venture. Starting points for hedging the risk of relationship-specific investments include, for example, building mutual trust (Ganesan 1994, p. 1; Miyamoto/Rexha 2004, p. 317), particularly customer-oriented interaction behaviour (Homburg 2000, p. 151), in the establishment of common business relationship norms (Rokkan/Heide/Wathne 2003, p. 221) or in the conclusion of explicit joint contracts (Jap/Ganesan 2000, p. 241). Another below-average relationship facet is the mutual alignment of tasks and goals between the supplier and customer companies (MW = 8.3). This is also critical, of course, as it is only in the course of this coordination process that two companies jointly identify ways of enlarging the "shared pie" of their business relationship (cf. the comments on "pie expansion efforts" in Jap 1999).

Looking at the individual **facets of economic success in** business relationships, one facet is particularly weak in corporate practice: the exploitation of profit or earnings potential (MW = 5.7). The exploitation of sales and revenue potential (MW = 6.1 in each case) and joint value creation with customers are also at a low level (MW = 6.2).

We see our findings in line with other scientific findings on the relationship between **customer proximity and profitability** in business relationships (cf. Homburg 2000, p. 168; Simon 1991, p. 271). According to these findings, companies tend to operate below the optimal level of customer proximity. The economic success of business relationships can therefore be further increased by

improvement in the relationship between the companies and through higher quality customer-related teamwork on the part of the sales team responsible for the customer. Since there is no question that customer proximity incurs costs, the ultimate goal is for companies to optimise their customer proximity depending on the situation rather than maximising it (Simon 1991, p. 271). In the area of very high customer proximity values, there is even a negative association between customer proximity and profitability,

i.e. a company can also be too close to its customers (Homburg 2000, p. 168).

4.3 Factors that can be shaped in the short term in team selling

We will now discuss the practical implications of our model of factors that can be shaped in the short term in team selling and carry out a detailed **impact versus level analysis**. This means that we will combine the mean values of the characteristics of these factors with their direct and indirect effects and thus derive priorities for shaping these factors.

The **priorities for the factors that can be shaped in the short term in team selling** are shown in Table 4-1. The first two columns show the individual factors that can be shaped and the mean values of their characteristics. These mean values refer to our standard scale from 0 (lowest possible characteristic) to 10 (highest possible characteristic). This is followed by three columns showing the overall effects that the individual factors have on the quality of teamwork (Q.d.T.), on the success of the business relationship (B.i.d.G.) and on the economic success of the business relationship (W.E.i.d.G.). These overall effects are obtained by adding the standardised path coefficients of all direct and indirect effects in our causal model (see Figure 3-4). The scale ranges from

-1 (strongest possible negative effect) to +1 (strongest possible positive effect). For example, the effect of the factor "centralised management" on the success of the business relationship (+0.35) is obtained by adding the direct effect between the two constructs (+0.32) to the product of the two path coefficients of the indirect effect via the mediator "quality of teamwork" (0.17 X 0.20= 0.03). To discuss the strength of the effects, we will again use the terminology introduced in section 3.2.3. For an effect greater than

0.3, we again speak of a very strong effect in relative terms, for a value greater than 0.15 of a strong effect, and for smaller significant values only of an effect. Based on the characteristics of the individual factors in practice and their respective overall effects, we have provided a rough classification of their priority in terms of design in the last column. Below, we will discuss the constructs in order of priority and highlight the most important areas for action in their individual facets (see the tables on construct measurement in section 3.1).

Factor	Characteristic (0 ≤X≤10)	Overall effect on: (scale: -1≤X≤1)			Priority (1≤X≤6)
		Q.d.T.	B.i.d.G.	W.E.i.d.G.	
Decentralisation of management in the sales team	5	+0.17	+0.35	+0.2	2
Task interdependence in the sales team	7	+0.05	-0	-	1
Target interdependence in the sales team	5	+0.17	+0.14	+0.1	3
Autonomy of the sales team	7	+0.08	-0.02	+0.02	6
Support of the sales team	6	+0.31	-0.01	+0.12	5
Centralisation of communication within the sales team	6	+0.17	+0.51	+0.31	4
Q.d.T. (Quality of Teamwork)= Quality of teamwork, B.i.d.G. (Business Success)= Success in business relationships, W.E.i.d.G.= Economic success in the business relationship					

Table 4-1: Priorities of factors that can be influenced in the short term in team selling

The highest priority should be given to reducing **task interdependence** in the sales team. Task interdependence is relatively high in key account management teams and has a very strong negative impact on relationship success and a strong negative impact on economic success in the business relationship. We see this as a clear indication that the sales teams are overwhelmed by the interdependent tasks resulting from their business relationships and remain in a rather reactive position. The customer-related coordination mechanism chosen by the companies does not do justice to the complexity of the tasks (cf. the comments on the optimal fit in Olson/Walker/Ruekert

1995, p. 48 ff.). In other words, the buying centre on the customer side (which creates task interdependence) and the selling centre on the supplier side (which has to manage task interdependence) are not optimally aligned. Let us consider the mean values of the individual facets of the task interdependence construct. It is striking that team tasks can only be fulfilled if members of different functional areas work closely together (mean value = 8.4). This suggests that the requirements of the respective customer and the functioning of the organisation itself are mutually exclusive, i.e. the functional areas involved are not set up in such a way that they can adequately handle customer-related processes. Furthermore, it is also very clear that team tasks can only be fulfilled if the team members work closely together (MW = 8.1). One possible starting point would be to disentangle the tasks between the team members and thus ensure greater customer focus when distributing tasks within the team. Further starting points for overcoming task interdependence can be found, for example, in the discussions on designing positive interdependence in teams (Deutsch 1973, Janssen/Van De Vliert/Veenstra 1999, Tjosvold 1991a) and on mirroring teams on the supplier and customer sides (Hutt/Johnston/Ronchetto 1985, p. 37), on the design of interdependencies between these teams (Zerbe 2000, p. 251 ff.) and, in general, the scientific findings on adaptive orientation in sales (Boorom/Goolsby/Ramsey 1998, Hutt 1995, Weitz 1981, Weitz/Sujan/Sujan 1986).

The second highest priority should be to increase **leadership decentralisation** in the sales team. The involvement of all team members in the management of the sales team is relatively low in practice, although it has a strong positive influence on the quality of teamwork and on the economic success of the business relationship. The success of business relationships is even more strongly influenced by the degree of leadership centralisation. We would like to combine this finding with an insight from the work of Stock (2003). The author shows that a central team leader has a positive influence on the extent of cooperation and the process quality of decision-making in a sales team to a certain extent, but that too much influence has a negative effect (Stock 2003, p. 287 f.). Together with our findings, this indicates that

in practice, the main task is to reduce the generally excessive influence of a central team leader and thus specifically strengthen the sales team's self-management. If we analyse the individual facets of this construct, the greatest need for action lies in two areas. First, team performance should be assessed to a greater extent by all team members together (MW = 4.6). Second, all team members should also be more closely involved in setting team goals (MW = 5.2).

Third on our list of priorities is the design of **target interdependence**, i.e. the extent to which the responsibility, assessment and remuneration of the members of the sales team are based on the achievement of team goals. In practice, goal interdependence (MW = 5.6) is relatively low compared to task interdependence (MW = 7.6), although it has a strong positive influence on the quality of teamwork and also positively influences the two success components. The central goal in designing interdependence is ultimately to achieve the highest possible degree of cooperation within the sales team. It can be regarded as a proven scientific finding that cooperative efforts by individuals lead to better results than competitive or individualistic efforts (see a summary of the results of 378 studies on this subject; Johnson/Johnson 1989, p. 170). Due to the high level of task interdependence determined by customer requirements, the breeding ground is extremely favourable for adjusting goal interdependence accordingly. This can improve cooperation between team members and lead to greater potential exploitation in business relationships (see our findings on the moderating effect of task interdependence in section 3.4.3). It is a paradoxical situation that the interdependence of key account management teams in practice is primarily hybrid, i.e., high task interdependence combined with low goal interdependence. Improving this situation, which we see as a prerequisite of the lone wolf culture in sales, is certainly one of the greatest opportunities for increasing the performance of sales teams (see our comments on the problem of hybrid teams in section 2.3.5). Finally, let us analyse the mean values of the individual facets of goal interdependence. It is striking that the remuneration of team members is much more strongly oriented towards the achievement of team goals than towards the achievement of individual goals

(mean = 4.1). Team performance is also not used enough to assess individual team members (mean = 5.1).

The next item on our priority scale is increasing the **decentralisation of communication** within the sales team. This means that several members of the sales team should be in direct contact with the customer company. This construct has a significant influence on the success of the relationship and also has a strong impact on the economic success of the business relationship. Furthermore, increasing decentralised communication also has a strong influence on the quality of teamwork. If we look at the two facets of this exchange between several team members and the contact persons on the customer side, communication that goes beyond purely business matters is particularly low (mean = 6.7). Personal connection with the customer therefore seems to be too limited in practice to the key account manager.

The last two priority items in our table are two factors where our results suggest that an optimal balance needs to be found: **support** and **autonomy** for the sales team. By support, we mean the extent to which senior management provides the team with the necessary authority and resources. Autonomy describes the extent to which a team is independent of management outside the team with regard to the process of service delivery. Both factors therefore relate to the influence that management outside the team exerts on the sales team. Both factors, especially the extent of support, improve the quality of teamwork. Through this process mediator, both factors also have a positive influence on economic success in business relationships. However, our results also indicate a weak but significant negative direct influence of both factors on relationship success in business relationships (see also Figure 3-2). This result is in line with other scientific studies that also point to the need for balanced influence by management external to the team (cf. Bonner/Ruekert/Walker 2002, DeCarlo/Agarwal 1999, Ford/Fottler 1995, Wagemann 2001). We are of the opinion

that, in terms of team coaching, these two factors should be shaped by senior management in such a way that the sales team itself becomes convinced that it is capable of performing the tasks (see also our comments on the "Potency" factor in section 2.3.5). Finally, we will point out individual facets of these constructs that are underrepresented. On the one hand, there is potential for optimisation in the support provided to the sales teams in terms of material resources (MW = 6.3) and human resources (MW = 6.4). On the other hand, the teams surveyed are granted relatively little autonomy by senior management when it comes to decisions regarding service provision (MW

= 6.4). Team members also agreed only to a very limited extent with the statement that managers from outside the team rarely interfere in their team's work (MW = 6.8).

4.4 Long-term factors in team selling

Let us now turn to the state of practice for the long-term factors in team selling that we examined. We will again use the **impact versus level analysis** presented in section 4.3 above. Table 4-2 summarises the results of this analysis: the characteristics or mean values of the long-term factors in our sample, their respective overall effect on the quality of teamwork (Q.d.T.), on relationship success (B.i.d.G.) and on economic success in business relationships (W.E.i.d.G.), as well as a rough prioritisation of these factors. We will now examine the individual constructs in detail in the order listed below.

In the long term, the highest priority should be given to improving the **quality of the team members' skills**. This construct has an overwhelming influence on the quality of teamwork in the sales team. The two success components are also positively influenced, with economic success in business relationships being determined in particular by the skills of the members of the sales team. We also demonstrated that the higher these individual skills are, the less important the quality of teamwork is for the success of a sales team (see section 3.4.3). Similar to the

factor	Merkmal (0 ≤X≤10)	Overall effect on: (scale: -1≤X≤1)			Priority (1≤X≤4)
		Q.o.T.	B.i.d.G.	W.E.i.d.G.	
Quality of team members' skills	7.9	+0.77	+0.10	+0.34	1
Team orientation of the corporate culture	7	+0.39	+0.12	+0.20	3
Performance orientation of corporate culture	7	-0.19	+0.34	+0.07	4
Asymmetry in the business relationship	3.9	-0.08	-0.25	-0.14	2
Q.d.T. (=) Quality of teamwork, B.i.d.G. (=) Relationship success in business relationships, = Economic success in the business relationship					

Table 4-2: Priorities of factors that can be shaped in the long term in team selling

When discussing the success values, we assume here too that the team members surveyed tended to overestimate their own abilities. Facets whose mean values lag behind the other facets are therefore particularly interesting. These are primarily the personal empathy of the team members (mean = 7.4) and their ability to deal well with personal conflicts (mean = 7.4). The compatibility or mutual complementarity of the personal characteristics of the team members is also at a comparatively low level (mean = 7.7). Overall, we believe that the more highly developed technical and rational skills should be better balanced with the social and emotional characteristics of the team members. Finally, we refer to further work on beneficial technical skills and personal characteristics of team members (including Barry/Steward 1997, Brown/Mowen/Donavan/Licata 2002, Henning-Thurau/Thurau 1999, Kohli 1989) and on the high importance of mutual compatibility between individuals in a team (including Belbin 1981, Belbin 1993, Polzer/Milton/Swann 2002, Prichard/Stanton 1999).

The second priority in the long term should be to reduce **asymmetry** in the business relationship. We defined asymmetry as the extent of imbalance between the supplier company and the customer company in terms of the degree of mutual alignment of tasks and goals. Our further analyses also confirmed our assumption that

asymmetry is highly pronounced to the detriment of supplier companies. The greater the asymmetry in a business relationship, the lower the quality of teamwork in the sales team and the less successful the business relationship. The negative influence of asymmetry on relationship success is particularly pronounced here. In our view, asymmetry reflects the power relations in a business relationship. Since these are difficult to influence, the weaker side ultimately has only one option. In personal discussions, the business partner must be constantly shown the joint value creation potential that results from a balanced adjustment of tasks and goals (see also Brennan/Turnbull/Wilson 2003, Buvik/Reve 2001, Joshi/Stump 1999,

Scheer/Kumar/Steenkamp 2003, Sengupta/Krapfel/Pusateri 1997).

The comparatively low level of **team orientation in the corporate culture** compared to the high level of **performance orientation** supports the following quote: "Effective German leaders are characterised by high performance orientation... [and] low team orientation... A 'tough on the issue, tough on the person' leadership approach appears to explain Germany's economic accomplishments in the second half of the 20th century. However, it does not seem to be a promising approach to meet the challenges of globalisation in the 21st century... A 'tough on the issue, soft on the person' leadership approach seems to be the answer."[th] century. However, it does not seem to be a promising approach to meet the challenges of globalisation in the 21[(st) century]... A 'tough on the issue, soft on the person' leadership approach seems to be the right recipe for German managers" (Brodbeck/Frese/Javidan 2002, p. 16).

The team orientation of corporate culture, which is neglected in practice, has a very strong positive effect on the quality of teamwork in the sales team, a strong positive effect on economic success and also positively influences the success of business relationships. The employee orientation facet in companies is relatively weak here (MW = 6.7). The performance orientation of corporate culture has a strong negative influence on the quality of teamwork, which is contrary to team orientation. However, both success components are positively influenced by performance orientation, with relationship success in business relationships being particularly influenced by performance orientation. In this construct, two facets are relatively weak compared to the other facets. These are the measurement of employee

in terms of clear results (mean = 7.3) and the extent to which companies value the rapid implementation of approved measures (mean = 7.5). For additional practical recommendations regarding the individual facets of corporate culture, we refer to further work in this area (including Ellemers/De Gilder/Van den Heuvel 1998, Homburg/Pflesser 2000c, Jaworski/Kohli 1993, Pflesser 1999, Ridnour/Lassk/Shepherd 2001, Skinner 2000).

4.5 Measures for shaping team selling

In addition to quantitative questions, our questionnaire also included **qualitative questions** aimed at specific measures for shaping the individual factors. One question, for example, was: "What specific measures ensure optimal team leadership?" We received an average of 629 responses per question (1.83 responses per question and participant) to ten such questions from the 344 questionnaires included. The responses were clustered into topic areas and then sorted by importance. We will discuss the most important clusters, i.e. topic areas that generally accounted for more than ten percent of the responses, below. In addition, we will further increase the practical relevance of our comments by listing measures at the end of the summary for each question that only appeared sporadically but which we consider innovative and therefore trend-setting.

The respondents see concrete measures for optimal **team leadership** primarily in the area of communication. Good communication is characterised by the direct, fast, open and regular sharing of relevant information. In this context, regular meetings, clear communication structures and an established reporting system are also mentioned. Another key cluster of measures is a participatory/democratic management style in the sales team. A flat hierarchical structure, a high degree of delegation of responsibility and the strong involvement of all team members in decision-making processes are at the forefront. It is interesting to note that in the course of the development of

Despite the democratic aspects of leadership, the existence of a team leader still seems important. However, the role of this person is shifting. The team leader is expected to provide support, intervene in critical situations, offer situational coaching, conduct team training and provide regular feedback to team members. Team leadership should be rounded off by clearly defined and, if possible, jointly agreed team tasks and team goals. Finally, we see the joint definition of standard procedures for frequent processes (known as "standard operating procedures" or "SOPs" for short) as an innovative measure to relieve the burden on team leadership.

Measures that promote close **cooperation** between members of a key account management team should primarily start with a regular and structured exchange of information between all team members. When defining tasks and goals, involving all team members is conducive to subsequent cooperation. Particular attention should be paid to the need for a precise definition of responsibilities and processes when defining and distributing tasks. Adequate physical proximity between team members is also beneficial. Innovative measures here include the introduction of team-based remuneration systems. Furthermore, it is beneficial for team members to have access to shared databases, for their IT systems to be networked and for CRM programmes to be shared. Finally, internal team interaction can also be increased by explicitly communicating to customers that they can contact any team member directly, depending on their concern.

Granting a certain degree of decision-making autonomy is the most important measure for ensuring the **independence** of a sales team. Respondents understand this to mean freedom of decision-making and independent action within specified areas of responsibility and explicit limits and budgets. Organisational aspects of autonomy form a second large cluster. These include the respective sales team having a clear place within the company and, as a result, organisational boundaries being established. Specific measures include, for example, physical separation of the team, integration into an independent sales division and

clear customer allocation. This can go as far as the sales team acting as an independent profit centre. Team-specific target agreements are another frequently mentioned measure for increasing the independence of sales teams. An innovative measure in the context of independence is to give the team direct access to management. This also highlights the close connection that respondents see between the degree of independence and support.

Let us turn to measures designed to ensure adequate **support** for a sales team. The provision of human resources is the first priority here. Cross-team and cross-departmental meetings and, if necessary, the subsequent provision of personnel should make it easier for the sales team to access the necessary resources in research and development, marketing, market research, logistics and other special support areas. Support through authority is provided through direct reporting by the team to senior management, the assignment of mentors or the direct secondment of team representatives to the company's management circle. Secondly, the team is supported with material resources, such as adequate financial budgets and IT resources. Support through a suitable organisational structure is also mentioned. Starting points here are the integration of the team into a matrix organisation, process-based organisational structures and customer- or sales channel-oriented structures. When serving international customers, the integration of the team into a cross-border or global sales organisation is mentioned, as well as support from a coordinating global key account manager. Companies also frequently mention that, due to their high level of customer orientation, the importance of each customer is implicitly present within the company at all times and that this results in automatic, proactive support for the sales team from within the organisation. The reflection of the customer- or sales channel-oriented structure of the sales department in other support functions (e.g. sales channel-oriented structure of market research) is innovative. Furthermore, the assignment of team mentors as contact persons for other functional areas and the circulation of monthly reports on important or escalating customer-related issues are helpful.

When asked about measures to increase **team orientation** in the companies of the participants surveyed, three main areas emerged. First is the extent to which teamwork is generally anchored in the various functional areas of the company (e.g. in the form of cross-functional project teams, management teams, global teams, etc.). Secondly, frequent training measures aimed at improving the quality of teamwork among employees were mentioned. Thirdly, the extent to which tasks and goals are formulated at the team level, as opposed to individual targets, is crucial. One innovative measure is to promote teamwork within the company by deliberately highlighting team successes to the outside world. Articles in a regularly published employee newsletter are a good way of doing this.

Performance orientation in the company results primarily from the quality of the target agreements. Care should be taken to ensure that the company goals, team goals and personal goals are clearly visible to every employee and that these objectives are also consistent with each other. Motivational measures include linking individual targets to regular target reviews, performance appraisals in the form of personal feedback meetings and performance-related remuneration systems. Team-based remuneration systems and incentive measures were mentioned as innovative measures (quote: "Celebrating successes together").

Let us consider measures that influence **the** emotional and **rational facets of the business relationship** with a customer. First, we asked about specific measures to enhance two rational facets: the exchange of factual information and the mutual alignment of tasks and goals. The most frequently mentioned aspect is contact and information exchange with the customer. This should be personal and regular. Furthermore, contact persons from different functional areas on both sides should be able to communicate directly with each other (increasing decentralisation of communication). Finally, a continuous automated data exchange with the customer should also be established. A second cluster of measures involves physical meetings between both parties in the form of personal customer visits. Here, too, regularity

regularity and the direct involvement of different functional areas and hierarchical levels are important. Regular presentations can, for example, make the business relationship more transparent for both sides. In subsequent workshops, joint process optimisations or joint future actions can then be initiated. This can extend to joint target agreements and the formulation of joint strategies aimed at long-term mutual value creation for both parties. An innovative measure is the involvement of representatives of the business partner in one's own creativity processes, e.g. in the form of joint brainstorming sessions on new products.

Measures to strengthen structural ties with the customer company are primarily seen in the area of mutual adaptation or networking of IT systems. The advice here is very industry-specific. Overall, they generally aim to increase the efficiency of processes within the jointly designed area of the value chain (supply chain management). Secondly, there are adjustments at the product level. The measures range from customer-specific product packaging and services to customer-specific product modifications and joint new product developments. Innovative measures to promote this close customer relationship are very diverse. One option is to offer financing models that make it easier for partners to make large business relationship-specific investments (e.g. financing offers for silos in the chemical industry). Another approach that we consider particularly forward-looking is aimed explicitly at strengthening the customer's position in its competitive environment. This can be achieved, for example, by tying the customer exclusively to a specific area of the company's product range.

Let us now turn to the **emotional aspects of the business relationship** with a customer company. Our first question here concerned measures that the sales team surveyed uses to promote a relationship of trust with their respective customers. The most important activities in this regard are those that enhance the quality of personal interaction with the customer. Regular, long-term contact with consistent contact persons at different hierarchical levels and early or proactive communication are particularly important in this context.

at various hierarchical levels and early or proactive communication. The second major cluster of measures illustrates the very close interlinking of rational and emotional aspects in a business relationship. The customer's perception of the company's own performance determines the level of trust it places in the company. This performance is about reliability (measured by the degree of delivery reliability) and the general commitment to promises made. It also includes product quality, value for money, the quality of customer service and general technical competence. Openness and honesty are almost as important. Fair and open communication, clear and transparent behaviour, and honesty when problems arise are required. The latter also includes explicitly admitting one's own mistakes. An innovative measure that sends a strong signal of decisiveness is granting a high degree of decision-making authority to the responsible sales team on site.

Finally, we also asked about specific measures that companies use to shape social interaction and long-term personal relationships with their customers. Joint activities play a dominant role, especially invitations that are not directly related to business, such as joint dinners, cultural events or invitations to sporting events. This is followed by personal meetings with a business focus, for example in the form of customer events or trade fairs. Another package of measures is specifically aimed at improving the quality of personal relationships with individual contacts on the customer side. It is important to signal an interest in the individual. Maintaining personal customer data, regular meetings and individual gestures (e.g. sending flowers when someone is ill) play a major role. Finally, it is emphasised that changes in customer contact personnel are critical and should be avoided if possible. Innovative measures to strengthen emotional closeness include complex joint activities ranging from golf or tennis to skiing and short breaks together.

5 Implications of the work

In this chapter, we first summarise the key findings of our study (section 5.1). We then discuss the implications of our work for further scientific research on team selling (section 5.2). Finally, we provide concise management recommendations for the optimal short-term and long-term design of team selling in B2B business relationships (section 5.3).

5.1 Summary of key findings

Our work began with the realisation that, in practice, supplier companies in B2B business relationships usually operate below the optimal level of customer proximity in terms of profitability. This customer proximity or closer relationship building is particularly important for customers where, in addition to pure transactions, there are also opportunities for joint value creation. To put it bluntly, these business relationships are not just about sharing the "common pie" with the customer, but about working with the customer to make the pie bigger and then sharing it. To make matters more difficult, large customers (key accounts) in particular expect a supplier company to mirror their multifunctional and multi-personnel buying centre, which is also able to optimally handle the complexity of the tasks at hand. This leads to the problem of adequate multi-personnel staffing on the supplier side, i.e. team selling. Management is faced with two core challenges here. Firstly, the employees in the sales team must interact optimally with each other,
i.e. high-quality teamwork is required. Second, this team must shape the relationship with the customer company and secure the resulting business. The high practical relevance of team selling is accompanied by a glaring **research gap** in this field. This is where our work comes in.

This study pursued three objectives. First, we wanted to identify key factors that can be influenced by management in the short and long term with regard to the design of team selling. Second, we wanted to quantify the strength of the influence of these individual factors on the success of the business relationship and compare the effects with each other. Third, we wanted to assess the state of practice, i.e., generate statements about the extent to which the individual facets of these factors are already pronounced in corporate practice and where there is therefore a need for action. These objectives formed the basis for the formulation of three **research questions** (section 1.2).

To answer the questions raised, we drew on three theoretical points of reference (section 2.2) and conducted a systematic review of empirical work on teams in organisations (section 2.3). This approach led to an increasingly refined scientific **positioning** of our work. In addition, we were able to systematically confirm the relevance of the modifiable factors we investigated (section 2.3.6). We formulated 26 hypotheses regarding the effects of these factors. Taken together, these form our model of short-term factors that can be influenced in team selling (section 3.2), our model of long-term factors that can be influenced in team selling (section 3.3) and moderating influences on selected effects within these models (section 3.4).

As part of the **empirical study**, 279 team members from 155 key account management teams were surveyed in writing. These teams were recruited from the 100 largest companies within five industries. We evaluated this sample using multivariate data analysis methods (e.g., causal analysis) and descriptive statistics. We can now answer our research questions:

Research question 1: How do central factors that can be relatively easily or quickly influenced by management affect the success of sales teams in business-to-business relationships?

The answer to this research question can be divided into three areas: conceptualising success, identifying key design factors and quantifying the strength of these factors' influence.

Success in B2B business relationships can be divided into two key dimensions: relationship success in the business relationship and economic success in the business relationship. Relationship success describes the extent to which the relationship potential is exploited. This relationship potential is the maximum willingness of a customer company with regard to the rational and emotional components in the business relationship with a supplier company. Based on the findings of existing research, we have conceptualised these two components using key variables. The rational component comprises the mutual exchange of relevant information, the mutual adaptation of tasks and goals, and the mutual structural commitment. The emotional component includes mutual social exchange, mutual trust and mutual social commitment.

Our empirical results reveal that the distinction between the rational and emotional components is not sufficiently clear. For a supplier company, this means that, if anything, it must specifically shape both relationship components with a customer company. The six facets of these two components were then aggregated into a construct, relationship success in the business relationship.

In our work, we have identified six **key factors that** can be **shaped relatively easily or in the short term by management**. Three of these factors relate to team design:

- **Decentralised leadership** in the team: the extent to which team leadership is shaped jointly by the entire team.

- **Task interdependence** within the team: the extent to which individual team members need to work together to complete team tasks.

- The **interdependence of goals** within the team: the extent to which the responsibility, assessment and remuneration of team members are based on the achievement of team goals.

Three further factors relate to the design of the team context:

- Team **autonomy**: the extent to which a team is independent of management outside the team with regard to the process of performance delivery.

- Team **support**: the extent to which senior management provides the team with the necessary power and resources.

- The **decentralisation** of **communication** within the team: the extent to which several team members from the supplier company are in contact with the customer company.

Let us now quantify the strength of these factors' influence on the **quality of teamwork**, on the success of the business relationship and on the economic success of the business relationship. We were able to show that all six factors have a positive influence on the quality of teamwork in the sales team. The team process is most strongly determined by the support provided to the team by senior management. The factors of leadership centralisation and goal interdependence within the team, as well as the context-related factor of communication decentralisation, also have a strong influence in this regard. Relative to the other factors, the quality of teamwork is most positively influenced by task interdependence within the team and by the autonomy of the team.

The two factors of leadership centralisation within the team and communication decentralisation within the team make a significant positive contribution to **the success of the business relationship**. By shaping these factors, management can, in a sense, "open up" the sales team to the customer. The design of a high degree of goal interdependence also has a positive influence. In addition, we can show that task interdependence within the team has a very strong negative influence on relationship success. It should be noted here that the task-related overlap between team members is caused to a large extent

by the complexity of the sales task, i.e. by the requirements of the customer company. Management is therefore encouraged to disentangle these task interdependencies accordingly.

Contrary to our expectations, both team autonomy and team support have a slightly negative effect on relationship success in business relationships. The balance between support and autonomy ultimately manifests itself in the influence that senior management exerts on the sales team. Our results suggest that the optimal level of this influence should be determined very carefully. Finally, we can empirically confirm that the quality of teamwork in the sales team has a strong positive influence on relationship success in business relationships.

We can confirm the direct positive effects of teamwork quality and relationship success in the business relationship on economic success in the business relationship that we postulated. Both effects are even very pronounced. Adding up the indirect effects of all factors that can be shaped in the short term on **economic success in the business relationship**, the following picture emerges. The decentralised communication within the team has a very strong positive effect, the decentralised leadership within the team has a strong positive effect, and the factors of goal interdependence, autonomy and support have a positive effect on economic success. This is counteracted by a strong negative influence of the factor of task interdependence within the team (see Table 4-1 in Section 4.3).

Research question 2: *How do central factors that are difficult or impossible for management to influence in the long term affect the success of sales teams in business-to-business relationships?*

To answer this research question, we identified key factors that can be shaped in the long term and quantified the influence these factors have on the team process and team success.

We identified the following key factors that can be shaped in the long term:

- The **quality of team members' skills**: the extent to which individual team members possess the professional skills and personal characteristics required to perform the team task, as well as the extent to which they complement each other.

- The **team orientation of the corporate culture**: the extent to which team-related values are pronounced in the corporate culture.

- The **performance orientation of the corporate culture**: the extent to which performance-related values are pronounced in the corporate culture.

- The **asymmetry in the business relationship**: the extent of the imbalance between the supplier company and the customer company in terms of the degree of mutual alignment of tasks and goals.

We can show that the **quality of teamwork** is overwhelmingly determined by the quality of the team members' skills. The team orientation of the corporate culture also has a very strong positive influence here. This is counteracted by a strong negative influence of the performance orientation of the corporate culture. The asymmetry in the business relationship also has a negative influence on the quality of teamwork in a sales team.

However, when it comes to shaping **relationship success in business relationships**, the picture is different. Relationship success is largely driven by the performance orientation of the corporate culture. The team orientation of the corporate culture also has a positive direct influence. This is counteracted by a strong negative influence of the asymmetry factor in the business relationship. The direct positive influence of the quality of the team members' skills on the success of the business relationship, as postulated by us, proves to be insignificant, i.e. the positive influence of this factor manifests itself indirectly through the improvement of the quality of teamwork.

We then added up all the indirect effects that the respective long-term factors have on the economic success of the business relationship. This results in a very strong positive influence of the quality of the team members' skills

team members, a strong positive influence of team orientation in the corporate culture and a positive influence of performance orientation in the corporate culture. This is counteracted by a negative effect of asymmetry in the business relationship (see Table 4-2 in Section 4.4).

We have formulated three hypotheses on **moderating effects** for two selected interdependencies in our models, all of which were confirmed in the moderated regression analysis:

- The higher the task interdependence in the team, the more important the design of goal interdependence in the sales team is for relationship success in the business relationship.

- The higher the relationship potential in the business relationship, the more important the quality of teamwork in the sales team is for relationship success in the business relationship.

- The higher the quality of the skills of the team members in the sales team, the less important the quality of teamwork is for relationship success in the business relationship.

Research question 3: What is the current state of practice?

To answer the third research question, we conducted a descriptive analysis of the variables in our two research models. Our aim was to determine the current state of corporate practice with regard to the characteristics of the individual factors and their respective facets.

The companies surveyed rate the **quality of teamwork** in their sales teams as medium to high. The following facets of teamwork are underrepresented: mutual support among team members, coordination of work assignments, team spirit (cohesion) and the balance of member contributions within the team.

With regard to the success achieved by the sales teams, it should be noted that although **relationship success** is generally seen as high in practice, economic success in business relationships tends to be at a medium to low level. Among the relationship-related facets, structural commitment has the lowest value, i.e. there is a general reluctance to make business relationship-specific investments. The mutual alignment of tasks and goals is also disproportionately low. When looking at the facets of **economic success**, it is particularly striking that the profit and earnings potential of customers cannot be sufficiently tapped by the supplier companies.

As part of an "impact versus level analysis," we then compared the extent to which the factors that can be influenced can be shaped in practice with their respective effects. This resulted in **the** following **order of priority** for **factors that can be influenced in the short term** in team selling:

1. Reduction of task interdependence within the team

2. Increase leadership decentralisation within the team

3. Increasing target interdependence within the team (especially when there is a high degree of task interdependence within the team)

4. Increase communication decentralisation within the team

5. Ensuring the optimal (not the maximum) level of support for the team from senior management

6. Grant the team the optimal (not the maximum) level of autonomy

Our impact versus level analysis revealed the following order of priority for **factors that can be shaped in the long term** in team selling:

1. Increasing the skills of team members

2. Reduction of asymmetry in the business relationship

3. Increasing team orientation in the corporate culture

4. Increasing performance orientation in the corporate culture.

5.2 Implications for science

We will now evaluate the contribution our research makes to scientific understanding in the field of team selling. We are primarily concerned with implications that go beyond our purely empirical findings. Specifically, we will discuss conceptual, empirical and methodological aspects of our work.

The central **conceptual contribution** of our work lies in linking previous research on teams in organisations with business relationship research. In our two integrative research models, we consider both variables borrowed from team research (e.g. leadership decentralisation in teams) and constructs from business relationship research (e.g. mutual trust in business relationships). Our work is unique in conceptual terms due to its division into the two success components of relationship success and economic success in business relationships, but especially due to its conceptualisation of relationship success as the "potential exploitation" of central rational and emotional relationship facets. Furthermore, to our knowledge, there is no other work in team research that distinguishes between factors that can be shaped in the short term and those that can be shaped in the long term. In addition, the theoretical anchoring of the work in Raymond B. Cattell's syntality theory is a novelty in the field of team selling research.

We see two overarching **empirical contributions** of our work that go beyond the empirical findings already presented. First, our work provides an empirical model of short-term factors in team selling that is independent of the personnel composition of a sales team (i.e., independent of the abilities of the team members). In practice, the problem in team selling often arises in precisely this way, i.e., the members of a sales team are already in place and the short-term priority for management is to optimise the team structure. The second empirical contribution of our work lies in the investigation of constructs that, to our knowledge, have not yet been considered in research on team selling. Specifically, this concerns the constructs of communication decentralisation, team orientation and

performance orientation of corporate culture, as well as the construct of asymmetry in business relationships.

We see the central **methodological contribution** of our work in the data basis of our empirical study and in the data analysis methods we have chosen. Our data basis gives us a unique position in the field of team selling research. Our large sample consists exclusively of key account management teams from the 100 largest companies in five target industries. We also deliberately limit the team size to between three and a maximum of twelve team members in order to rule out the risk of the research unit breaking down into sub-teams. Together with the multi-informant approach we have chosen (usually two informants per team), this procedure ensures a high degree of validity and transferability of our results. We use causal analysis, a very powerful method of dependency analysis, to evaluate the empirical data. The use of this relatively complex and time-consuming statistical method allows us to make a quantifiable distinction between direct and indirect effects within multi-level causal chains.

Our work is also subject to certain restrictions, which at the same time offer a **starting point for further research**. A first restriction lies in the limitation of the sample to German-speaking countries. Here, the author sees starting points for future work, which could, for example, aim to verify the findings obtained for the American and Asian regions.

A second restriction relates to the study design. A useful extension of our multi-informant approach could be a complete dyadic approach, combining supplier-side data with customer-side data. This work is also based on a static design. Research that takes a dynamic approach would be very interesting here. For example, phase models of the formation, development and stabilisation of sales teams could be examined.

Another restriction arises directly from the chosen data analysis method. Causal analysis suggests that we should keep the complexity of the investigation models to a minimum. This means that we consciously limit ourselves to a few factors that can be influenced.

. This means that we have deliberately limited ourselves to a few factors that can be influenced. We would like to invite subsequent researchers to supplement this work by considering other factors that can be shaped in the short and long term at Team Sel-ling. Here, it would be useful to include the interaction between the various sales teams in a company (e.g. best practice transfer as a facet of inter-team coordination).

A fourth restriction lies in the limitation of our investigation to monotonous linear causal relationships. The constructs of autonomy and support are particularly suitable for a more detailed investigation of non-linear relationships. Our empirical results suggest that the effects of these variables are inversely U-shaped. The author would be very interested to know where the respective saturation point lies and how this balanced influence can be specifically targeted by senior management.

Further research is also needed based on our finding that the rational component in a business relationship is very closely intertwined with the emotional component (problem of lack of discriminant validity). It would be desirable to conduct a study that describes these two components in greater detail, distinguishes between them and analyses their respective determinants and effects on success.

5.3 Management-relevant recommendations

Finally, we would like to provide managers who are concerned with optimising team selling in their companies with specific recommendations for action that result directly from our study. The most important finding of our work is that the quality of teamwork and the success of a sales team can be significantly improved by means of the short-term and long-term factors we have identified.

As a starting point for improving the quality of team selling in a company, the author recommends first assessing the quality of teamwork in the sales team and the success of the business relationship. We have identified suitable measurement indicators for this purpose (see Tables 3-2, 3-3 and 3-10). In order to improve the quality of team selling in a targeted manner, our work provides management with the following six factors that can be shaped **in the short term**:

1. **Priority: Reduce task interdependence in the sales team**. This is understood as the extent to which individual team members need to cooperate in order to complete team tasks. Since task interdependence is determined in particular by the complexity of the sales task (i.e. by the requirements of the customer company), management is encouraged to specifically disentangle this task interdependence between team members. This applies in particular to team tasks that can only be accomplished if different functional areas work closely together (decoupling of functional task interdependence).

2. **Priority: Increase leadership decentralisation in the sales team**, i.e. the extent to which leadership is shaped jointly by the entire team. This primarily concerns the joint assessment of team performance and the joint setting of team goals by all team members.

3. **Priority: Increase goal interdependence in the sales team**, defined as the extent to which the responsibility, assessment and remuneration of individual team members are based on the achievement of team goals. In practice, the greatest need for action lies in the creation of team-based assessment and remuneration systems. Increasing goal interdependence is particularly important when task interdependence within the team is very strong.

4. **Priority: Increase the decentralisation of communication within the sales team**. This describes the extent to which several team members from the supplier company are in contact with the customer company. By

designing decentralised communication, management can open up the team to the customer in a targeted manner.

5. **Priority: Designing an optimal level of support for the sales team** by senior management. This refers to the extent to which senior management provides the team with the necessary authority and resources. In view of the requirements of the team's respective sales tasks, sufficient support in terms of material and human resources should be ensured.

6. **Priority: Designing an optimal level of team autonomy**. This refers to the degree of independence a team has from senior management with regard to the process of service delivery. In practice, the greatest deficits are found here in the degree of decision-making autonomy granted to a sales team and in the extent to which managers from outside the team interfere in the team's work.

In addition, we recommend that managers specifically influence the following factors **that can be shaped in the long term**
factors in team selling:

1. **Priority: Increase the quality of team members' skills**. We understand this as the extent to which individual team members have the professional skills and personal qualities required to fulfil the team's tasks, as well as the extent to which they complement each other. In practice, sales teams show the greatest deficits in their ability to deal with personal conflicts, in personal empathy and in the compatibility of personal skills within the team. These need to be developed in a targeted manner over the long term through appropriate team-related training measures. Our finding that weaknesses in teamwork can be compensated for by a higher quality of skills among team members is also important here.

2. **Priority: Reduce asymmetry in the business relationship**. This describes the extent of the imbalance between a supplier company and a customer company in terms of the degree of mutual alignment of tasks and goals. This asymmetry, which is detrimental to joint value creation, is usually pronounced in practice to the detriment of the supplier company.

is usually pronounced to the detriment of the supplier company.

3. **Priority: Increase the team orientation of the corporate culture**. This describes the extent to which team-related values are pronounced in the corporate culture. This is where companies need to take the most action in terms of employee orientation.

4. **Priority: Increase the performance orientation of the corporate culture**, i.e. the extent to which performance-related values are pronounced in the corporate culture. Managers can remedy the two biggest practical deficits here by measuring the performance of their employees against clear results and by attaching importance to the rapid implementation of measures once they have been adopted. Furthermore, care should be taken to ensure that the team orientation of the corporate culture is balanced with the performance orientation of the corporate culture at a high level.

At the beginning of our work, we recognised that team selling already exists in some form in most companies before it is even specifically designed by management. In summary, our work has shown how team selling can be optimally designed in the short and long term. Interested managers now have a tool to align their sales teams with a view to optimally exploiting the potential of their business relationships.

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