The Art of Keeping a Contractor

-A Study of How to Strengthen the Thread that Ties a Contractor to a Competence Agency

Isabelle Lindgren

Examensarbete LIU-IEI-TEK-A--09/00683--SE
Institutionen för ekonomisk och industriell utveckling
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Tutor at Linköping University: Karin Bredin
Examiner at Linköping University: Jonas Söderlund
Student reviewers: Martina Oppstedt & Göran Rydgård

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Abstract
This thesis explores the fields of contracting and competence agencies. It focuses on the relationship between contractors and their agencies, and aims to identify the expectations that contractors have on competence agencies and the activities that can be undertaken by the agencies in order to improve and strengthen the relation. A case study was made of a Danish competence agency and of the contractors within its network. The qualitative part of the study included interviews with five contractors and a questionnaire directed to the organization. From the conclusions of the qualitative study and relevant theories, a set of hypotheses were formulated. The quantitative part consisted of a survey that was sent out to the contractors in the network. The survey aimed to test the hypotheses and the results from the survey were analysed in Excel.

The conclusions that were drawn from the outcome of the quantitative study were that contractors join agencies because of the access to big companies that are granted by agencies, because they do not have time to promote themselves so they need someone to do it for them and because of the possibility to create networks and that contractors join more than one agency because they do not believe that one agency alone can supply them with full time occupation. Further on, it was also concluded that certain HRM as well as SHRM activities had a positive impact on the relationship, and that employer branding strengthened the bonds between the contractors and the competence agency.

Key words: contractor, competence agency, HRM, employer branding
Forewords

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Isabelle Lindgren

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1. Introduction
This chapter contains an overview of the subject as well as the purpose of the study derived into research questions.

1.1. Background
Consulting business in Denmark experienced a bonanza year in 2005 (Andersen & Jensen, 2006) and the market for consulting activities in Denmark has continued to grow ever since (Dansk Management Råd (DMR), 2007a, b). The augmented demand was initially caused by an overheated economy that put pressure on Danish companies, but lately the overall positive results generated in cooperation with Danish consulting businesses has had an essential impact on the growth (Andersen & Jensen, 2006).

A report published in 2007 by the Danish Society of Engineers (IDA) along with the Danish Association of Lawyers and Economists (DJØF) states that the number of consultants turning independent has rose significantly for the last 10 years. In 2007, half of IDA’s independent members and two out of three of DJØF’s independent members were considered independent consultants, or so called contractors. Between 1997 and 2007, the number of independent members of DJØF and IDA increased with 50 percent and 20 percent respectively. (IDA &DJØF, 2007)

The same report identifies the reason for this growth as the general development towards a higher demand of well-educated labour in addition to the expansion of ‘the knowledge society’. Donnelly (2006) declares that the emergent category of contractors is representative of new employment patterns. Other research also indicates the growing need for labour flexibility as an important factor (Van Breugel et al., 2005). Furthermore, the report declares that the approached organizations having hired freelancing specialists were very satisfied with the results (IDA &DJØF, 2007).

Around this freelancing phenomenon, a ‘broker business’ (Garsten, 1999) has developed. This business will from here on be referred to as ‘competence agencies’ since the term ‘broker business’ has additional definitions. (The definition of a competence agency is found in section 1.3.)

Today seven competence agencies make up 72 percent of the Danish contractor market, a market that is clearly growing (Molin, 2008). According to Latamore (2000, p 12), the tight job market forces the temporary staffing industry to meet challenges on two sides. “While companies need more temps to fill vacant
positions, staffing firms are scrambling to recruit scarce workers. Demand exceeds supply for temporary specialist workers, providing these workers with excellent opportunities, whether they want to remain temporary workers long-term or move into full-time jobs.”

In conclusion, there are many actors on the Danish competence agency market who compete for contractors with specialist skills. Generally, the ability to provide a wide spectrum of competent contractors is vital so as to maintain and attract clients. In order not to lose contracts with big clients, being able to offer all the kinds of contractors the clients need is essential. Big client does not only bring economic safety to the agency; they are also beneficial for the reputation. As stated by Czerniawska (2007, p35) “Even in lean times, the competition for experienced people who can build client relationships and win new business is intense”. This situation increases the importance of attracting and retaining contractors for competence agencies.

The question is how it is done. Of course, there’s a great chance to keep the contractors from going to other agencies by offering them a better salary than the competitors, but not all agencies have that option. Are there any alternative actions that can be undertaken in order to ensure that the contractors will stay? Is it possible to create a long term relationship between contractors and agencies? What do the theories say about this kind of relationships? What are the contractors expecting from their agencies? Why do they choose to join agencies in the first place? This is a fundamental question that needs to be addressed in order to understand the contractors’ expectations on the competence agencies. Another important question is why so many contractors do not settle with one agency, but join several different networks. The aim of this thesis is to find answers to all these questions, but firstly, some definitions need to be made.

1.2. What is a contractor?

Connelly and Gallagher (2004, p 96) define independent contractors or “freelance” workers as “self-employed individuals who sell their services to client organizations on a fixed-term or a project basis”. They have found that lately, the use of independent contractors has become very visible in information technology (IT) and other knowledge-based occupations. According to Garsten (1999, p 608), contractors are generally freelance engineers or other skilled professionals. She further explains another term for contractors, the “career temps”. Temps are temporary employees, and career temp are people “who have been in the industry for a while and are highly skilled. They have made a
reputation for themselves and can count on steady work, whether they take long-
term or short-term assignments”. Garsten defines a career temp as someone
“who turns down fulltime positions in favour of remaining a temp”. Evans,
Kunda and Barley (2004, p 6) agree on Garsten’s definition of contractors and
declare that “technical contractors are the epitome of free agents. They include
engineers, software developers, technical writers, and information technology
(IT) specialists who sell their services to firms on a project-by-project basis for
an hourly wage or a set fee. Their contracts typically last from three to eighteen
months. When a contract expires, they move on to another client organization”.
Barley & Kunda (2006) reached the conclusion that contractors are nomadic
experts and social pioneers who take part in a way of life and a culture of work
that challenges the existing theories and entrenched practices of employment.

Contracting is one of the work arrangements that belong under the title
contingent work. In an article, Connelly and Gallagher (2004) present an
overview of the contingent work literature. According to their research, the
most commonly used definition of contingent work is the one stated by the U.S.
Bureau of Labor Statistics, that defines contingent work as any job in which an
individual does not have an explicit or implicit contract for long-term
employment or one in which the minimum hours worked can vary in a non-
systematic manner. In their research, Connelly and Gallagher found four broad
groupings of work arrangements that readily fit this definition. These are (1)
temporary help service firms or temporary staffing agencies, (2) independent
contractor or contractor, (3) direct-hire or in-house arrangements and (4)
workers directly hired by an organization but working on a seasonal contract.
They hereby classify temporary staffing agencies as a work arrangement
separated from contracting. Moreover, in the definitions of contractors or
technical contractors brought up above no connections to competence agencies
are made. However, the contractors of interest in this thesis are the ones that get
assigned to projects in various organizations by joining networks of one or
multiple competence agencies. Therefore, the definition of contractors in this
thesis is “self-employed individuals with specialist skills, who sell their services
of solving defined, time limited tasks without taking on responsibility for
business risk to client organizations in the private and public sectors”. The
contractors in focus in this study are those with specialist skills in the fields of
engineering, software and information technology (IT) who sell their services
via competence agencies.
1.3. What is a competence agency?

The Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of competent is “having the necessary skill or knowledge to do something successfully”. Their definition of agency is “an organization providing a particular service” (Oxford University Press, 2009). It would thus make sense to define a competence agency as an organization providing necessary skills or knowledge for success. However, in order to fully explain the function and purpose of such organizations, a more comprehensive definition is required. Hence, in this thesis, a competence agency is defined as “an organization providing clients with contractors possessing skills or knowledge necessary for successfully performing assignments”.

1.4. The relationship between contractors and competence agencies

As the skills, knowledge and expertise held by contractors tend to be highly valued in the market place (Horwitz, Heng & Quazi, 2003) competence agencies are highly dependent upon contractors to provide client services. In order to retain its competitive advantage and provide clients with new services, the competence agency needs to take good care of its contractors. As much as the contractor depends upon the competence agency for employment and access to clients, the consultancy firm depends upon its contractors, as they form its core asset. (Donnelly, 2006)

The relationship between contractors and competence agencies is in many ways different than the one between an employer and an employee. Since the contractor is not employed by the agency, there is a risk for a lower commitment than if he or she had been employed. For the same reason, the agency may not feel obliged to offer the same kind of support and benefits it would have done for a regular employee. Research has shown that contractors receive little support concerning human resource (HR) activities such as access to training, career development, employment benefits and organizational identification from the organization that owns the project they are working on (Burgess and Connell, 2006). This fact may open up for competence agencies to gain market shares. If an agency manages to compensate for their client’s lack of HR activities toward the contractor, it may be able to tie the contractor closer to its own network.

According to Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall (2003), HR activities can contribute to creating sustained competitive advantage not only by enriching a firm’s resource base but also by ensuring that these talents are embedded in
networks of relationships that are difficult for competitors to observe, understand, or imitate. Thus, it is possible that HR activities play an important role when it comes to successfully competing for contractors.

Traditionally, the management of HR, the so called human resource management (HRM), has focused on the internal, employed labour and since contractors are not formally hired by the organization HRM has not been adapted to their needs (Bredin, 2008). However, it is possible that some of the existing theories on HRM are adaptable to competence agencies.

When it comes to competition, employer branding is a concept gaining more and more attention (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). It may not be enough to offer the employees good conditions if you cannot communicate these in the right way. By marketing the company as an attractive employer organizations can attract the right kind of employees and thus gain market shares (Sutherland, Torricelli & Karg, 2002). Considering how competitive today’s market is, employer branding may be a useful tool for competence agencies.

Little research has been addressed to the relations between contractors and brokers (Felfe et al., 2008; Burgess & Connell, 2006; Connelly & Gallagher, 2006; Van Breugel et al., 2005), so this thesis aims to put the situation under the spotlight by studying a competence agency located in Herlev outside Copenhagen, Denmark.

1.5. The agency

The investigated competence agency requested to be anonymous in this report and is from here on referred to as “The agency”. The agency is a company in the competence agency business that makes an interesting case study since the board is in a phase where it is trying to develop the agency’s ability to attract new contractors and create long term relations with the contactors within its network.

The agency provides recruitment and contractors within IT, engineering and support functions (see figure 1.1 below), targeting IT and engineering intensive clients in Denmark. The company was founded in 2002 by Jens Jensen and in the spring 2004 Mads Madsen and Christian Christiansen became partners. Today, the agency has 14 employees and offices in Copenhagen and Aarhus.

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1 This chapter was based on interviews with Christian Christiansen and Jens Jensen, as well as on material provided by them. Due to the anonymity request all names have been changed, and thus the names in the report are fictitious.
The agency has been awarded several times (Dagbladet Børsen A/S, 2008, IDG Danmark A/S, 2008) and it is one of the suppliers for Statens og Kommunernes Indkøbs Service (Statens og Kommunernes Indkøbs Service A/S, 2009).

The agency is based on an automated end-to-end IT business system, which includes a network of more than 4000 highly-qualified contractors in IT, engineering and telecom of which 1,500 are currently active. The agency has more than 50 competitors on the Danish market, a market share of 5 percent in 2008. The customer base is made up of more than 400 different companies, both from the private and the public sectors in Denmark.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the agency’s business area. It is defined by the duration of the job function and the role importance for the clients' success. The agency provides specialists, as compared to other agencies that may provide employees or managers. The specialists are provided on a monthly, so called interim basis, whilst other agencies provide temps on a daily basis or permanent staff.

In its network, the agency has contractors in an age range from 22 to 68 years old. The average contractor at the agency is 45 years old, has 18 years of experience and uses the service of more than one competence agency. Assignment on a project typically last for 10 months. Usually, a project starts out with a 3 months assignment that gets prolonged. The agency’s profile for contractors specifies that they should be highly educated with skills of professional specialists. There are high requirements for specific technical and methodological skills, as well as a broad experience. The agency has high demands on their personalities, attitudes and values. Moreover, the account and resource managers at the agency have many years of experience from the
business. They are “specialists who work with specialists”, both on the client and candidate side.

The agency’s mission is to become the leading company and strategic supplier providing recruitment and contractor professionals within IT, engineering, and support functions targeting IT and engineering intensive clients in Denmark. The agency’s vision is being the strategic partner for the IT and engineering intensive clients in Denmark. The mission will be accomplished by broadening the specialist concept. The agency will use the brand, IT setup, processes and capital to become the leading company within recruitment and contractors amongst knowledge workers, in Denmark instead of having a sole focus on contractors towards the IT and telecom area.

1.5.1. Privileges for contractors
There is a benefit program called Benefits for the contractors, including a broad range of discounts on various products and services. The contractors receive a Benefits card that they show in shops connected to the program in order to receive a discount. These kinds of programs are not usually offered by competence agencies but rather by bigger companies. The program is offered in co-operation with LogBuy (www.logbuy.eu), and the two-year contract was signed one year ago. It costs the agency 70000 DKK a year, but the statistics for the last 6 months (Bisgaard, 2009) show that only a total of 338 contractors have logged on to the website where the benefits are presented. The agency has not established if it is appreciated by the consultants or if it’s just an unnecessary expense to the company and would thus like to know if the program is worth keeping. Benefits is currently the only activity undertaken at the agency in terms of manpower caring for the contractors.

1.6. The Case
The board has identified a call for specialist competence among the agency’s target clients, and has therefore analysed its ability to supply this need. The board members came to the conclusion that the factor hindering the agency from supplying their clients’ need for specialists is the access to contractors and consequently that factor is the focus of this study.

The board of the agency wanted advice on how to

- create long term relationships with contractors
- attract contractors that are currently also using the services of competing brokers
in order to increase the agency’s market share.

Furthermore, the board wanted to know

- whether there are any strategies or activities that can help the agency gain competitive advantages in terms of contractor relations
- what the nature of these advantages would be.

In case advantages are to be gained, the board also wanted advice on how to achieve them.

1.7. Purpose

The purpose of this master thesis was to develop the understanding and the knowledge of the relations between contractors and competence agencies. The purpose was also to detect issues that may contribute to successful relations and a competitive advantage in the competence agency business.

A special interest was taken in the contractors’ preferences concerning agency services, as well as in strategies and activities in terms of manpower care and strengthening of bonds between agencies and contractors.

1.8. Delimitations

The study aimed to give clarity on how to build long term relations to contractors, so the research was composed with the contractors in the spotlight, and the customer’s perspective was out of scope.

Furthermore, the study aimed to convey how to attract contractors that were currently not only assigned to the agency, but also used the services of other agencies. The contractors that fitted this profile were of a special interest in this study since they had a relation to the agency as well as to other agencies and therefore also had a perspective of the issue. Thus contractors that did not use the service of any agency, as well as contractors that only used the service of the agency were out of scope.

Finally, the study focused on the agency and its conclusions may therefore mainly be relevant for the kind of competence agencies that resemble the agency, since there may be differences in the relations between contractors and agencies depending on the size of the organization, the competences within the network and the background of the contractors.
1.9. Research Questions
In order to fulfil the purpose of this report, the following research questions were addressed:

Q1: What makes a contractor use the service of a competence agency?
Q2: What makes a contractor use more than one competence agency?
Q3: What makes a contractor use the service of the same competence agency on a long term perspective?
Q4: Are there any strategies and/or activities that can lead to a competitive advantage for a competence agency in terms of contractor relations and if so, what are their nature?
2. Theoretical framework

In order to determine how to find answers to these questions, a theoretical framework was created. An extensive literature study led to the conclusion that theories regarding contractors, HRM, HRM in Project Based Organisations, commitment, SHRM, Employer Branding and the Psychological Contract were of importance in the matter of the relationship between contractors and competence agencies, and thus these are the topics of this framework. The theories have been carefully chosen for their relevance and reliability. They have been formulated by renowned authors within the field, and published in trustworthy journals. However, the area of research is relatively new and, as previously mentioned, much of it remains unexplored. The reader should bear in mind that these theories are merely giving a raw picture of the complicated reality.

At the end of this chapter, a reference model is presented. Its purpose is to clarify the relations between the presented theories, and to show the direction for the research to be conducted.

2.1. Contractors

To begin with, the concept of contracting was explored in order to get a picture of the contractors’ working situation and to better understand their expectations on the competence agencies.

Garsten (1999, p 606) found that “some people regard the temp lifestyle as a preferable choice to getting a full-time, regular job, because it allows you freedom to choose when and where to work. Even if that freedom is seldom made use of, it is the potential, rather than the actual experience, of it that is attractive.” Analogously, Barley & Kunda (2006) discovered that even though clients occasionally tried to tempt contractors back into regular employments, most were unwilling to return and leave their flexible lifestyle.

There are nevertheless downsides to the contractor’s lifestyle. Burgess and Connell (2006) have found that temporary workers remain detached from an ongoing relationship with the organization where they work. They argue that this detachment can extend to factors associated with a lack of any access to training, career development, employment benefits and organizational identification.

For the competence agency, contractors compose a risk as well as a business opportunity. In order for the competence agency to maintain its competitive
advantage, some degree of stability and durability of relations will have to exist for the contractors to stay on, even if no promises can be made in terms of placement. (Garsten, 1999) To counteract the lack of stability and loyalty that follows fixed term contracts, Garsten (p 612) found that temporary agencies “play on notions of inclusiveness and communitarian strivings to enhance effective commitment and to draw temporaries more closely into the normative organizational order”.

In an exploratory study Horwitz, Heng and Quazi (2003) state that new HR systems and skills are required to employ this kind of workers.

2.2. What is HRM?

It was previously mentioned that HRM theories have not been adapted to the situation of contractors in competence agencies, but the existing theories may still be able to contribute to this study. Thus, HRM theories were explored; both general aspects of HRM and more specified theories on HRM in non-conventional organisations such as competence agencies, and particular aspects such as commitment and loyalty, as well as strategic HRM. To begin with, the concept of HRM was investigated.

In mainstream HRM literature, the core areas of HRM are the management of human resource flow, of performance, of participation and communication, the management and development of competencies and the management of change (Bredin, 2008).

*The management of human resource flow* is the area that deals with the in and out flows of human resources and can be divided into human resource planning, selection, recruitment and deployment. Human resource planning is about matching the organization’s demand for quantity and quality of workers with the available supply. (Bredin, 2008 and McKenna & Beech, 2008, pp 5-7) In the case of the agency, this could translate into identifying the type of contractors their clients ask for and compare their profiles to the contractors available in their network in order to be able to plan which kind of contractors they need to recruit. As stated under the headline The Case, this has already been done by the board of the agency. The selection part would be the part where the agency picks out the contractors of interest, and the recruitment would be the interview process. Deployment would mean assigning the contractors with clients’ projects.
The management of performance includes design of work systems, facilitation of knowledge utilisation, sharing and creation, and appraisal and reward systems. Performance appraisal is a technique of measuring the performance of employees against agreed targets, based on continuous interviews. The technique is not universally accepted, but the outcome can give indications of the need for training and in some cases rewards. (Bredin, 2008 and McKenna & Beech, 2008, pp 5-7) To a competence agency, this area can be confusing since it is the client company that sets the targets and has the full responsibility for the targets to be met. However, the agency would not want the contractor not to meet the target since that might have a negative impact on the future relations with the client. Also, in order to maintain a well-performing contractor within the network, rewards may be necessary. So, appraisal and rewards may be applicable on the agency. When it comes to the facilitation of knowledge utilisation, sharing and creation, the responsibility does not really lie with the competence agencies since the knowledge belongs to the individual contractor and thus is up to her or him to deal with. Since contractors compete with their special skills, they may not be too keen on sharing their knowledge.

The management of participation and communication is directed towards the individual’s influence on the organization’s operations. It includes communicating relevant information to the employees and arranging for employees to participate in the process of the company. It also contains employee relations such as collective bargaining, grievance procedures and employment legislations. Collective bargaining is the negotiations between the employer and employee, represented by a HRM specialist and a trade union official respectively. (Bredin, 2008 and McKenna & Beech, 2008, pp 5-7) In the case of the agency and other competence agencies, the need for the individual’s influence on organizational operations is different to that in a “traditional” organization, where the individuals are actually employed. Nevertheless, participation and communication can be important for the motivation and commitment of the contractors. For example, grievance procedures and employment legislations as well as communicating relevant information to the contractors should probably not be neglected in order for the contractor to build confidence to its agency.

The management and development of competencies contains competence planning, mapping and development, careers and career structures (Bredin, 2008). Competence planning is not an issue for competence agencies in matters
of their contractors, since they do not employ them. For the same reason, neither are career structures. Though, competence mapping could be important since keeping track of the contractors’ qualities and capabilities may facilitate the selection process. Agencies do generally not offer its contractor internal competence development. Instead, it has the possibility of offering interesting assignments where the contractor gets the opportunity of developing her/his competences. If the agency succeeds in presenting stimulating assignments, the contractor may find the management of competence development satisfying and thus stays with the agency. Career guidance may also contribute to a positive view of the agency which may increase commitment.

*The management of change* concerns identification of needs for change. It contributes to business strategy development, facilitating change implementation. (Bredin, 2008) This is an area that does not directly concern the contractors of a competence agency, and is hence out of scope. However, this is not an area to be abandoned by agencies since business strategy development probably is essential in this type of fast growing business.

### 2.2.1. HRM in non-conventional organizations

Most of the existing literature on HRM is written with large, stable organizations in mind. Little research has been conducted on HRM in other kinds of organizations (Huemann, Keegan & Turner, 2007), such as competence agencies. However, (Huemann, Keegan & Turner, 2007) as well as Bredin (2008) writes about HRM in project based organizations (PBOs). Contractors work solely in projects, and the contractors are the essence of a competence agency, so it may very well be regarded as a PBO. According to Bredin, PBOs are characterised by features like knowledge intensity and temporality. Bredin describes knowledge intensity as competences and skills of employees having more importance than other inputs; the majority of employees being highly qualified; and work involving complex problem-solving. Temporality is referred to as when people perform most of their work in time-limited temporary projects (Bredin, 2008). This description also fit competence agencies; hence competence agencies can be referred to as a type of PBO. This implies that the little there is of PBO related HRM research could be applicable on the agency. Thus, a selection of the existing theories on HRM in PBOs is presented in this section.

Huemann et al. (2007, p 315) have presented a model of critical HRM aspects of PBOs. They argue that “due to specific characteristics of the project-oriented
company, particularly the temporary nature of the work processes and dynamic nature of the work environment, there exist specific challenges for both organizations and employees for HRM in project-oriented companies”.

In their model, they have summarised the previously mentioned HRM activities into three main segments; selection, employment and release. For HRM in PBOs, they have further dissected the employment block into assignment to project, employment on project and dispersement from project. The employment activities occur in cycles as the employee continuously gets assigned to new projects during her/his stay in the organization. This is illustrated in figure 2.1 below.

![Image of a diagram showing HRM in the classically managed company compared to HRM in PBOs. Source: Huemann et al., 2007.](image)

Finally, the employment on project-subsector is broken up into performance and appraisal. Appraisal initiates rewards and development that affects the future performance of the employee. Again, the process is cyclic in PBO’s. This is illustrated in figure 2.2 on the next page.
For every step of the process, from selection to release, the authors have found aspects that to various extents differentiate PBO procedure from that of “classically managed companies.”

Starting with the selection processes, search and selection can be done for the company in general but for a PBO it can also be done for a specific project or program (Huemann, Keegan & Turner, 2007). Applied to a competence agency, selection can be done for the network in general, or for a specific position offered by a customer.

Regarding employment, the difference between PBOs and a classically managed company is that the opportunity of climbing up the career ladder does not exist and therefore every new project needs to provide a career challenge (Huemann, Keegan & Turner, 2007). This process is further explained after the section on the release process.

According to the authors, there are two key elements in the release process. These are organizational learning and individual review and feedback. They stress the importance of remaining in contact with the released freelance workers and the importance of maintaining the organization’s network in order to make future co operations possible. (Huemann, Keegan & Turner, 2007) A competence agency does not seek to release a contractor unless the cooperation has been dissatisfying. The release procedure is rare and the individual review and feedback-issues do not take place in that process but at the end of an assignment. It will be further discussed later on in this section, in the description.
of the dispersement phase. So will remaining in contact with contractors. For that reason, only organizational learning may apply to competence agencies in the release process. This step may help the agency avoid the future establishment of other dissatisfying relationships with contractors and is important for the organizational development but in this thesis it is out of scope.

The assignment to the project can for PBOs be compared to the selection process described in the section on general HRM activities. For a competence agency, there is no actual hiring – only matchmaking. In a PBO, HR management “consciously seek to make project personnel allocation decisions based on an assessment of what personnel are available and what projects may provide specific development needs, expertise, experience to work with particular clients, etc” (Huemann, Keegan & Turner, 2007, p 320). A competence agency does not make such allocations, but still may need to match contractors in its network to projects that satisfy the contractor’s as well as the customer’s needs.

Under the headline employment in the project, the authors imply that managers in PBOs have additional responsibilities to managers in traditional organizations, such as project evaluation and support for career development. (Huemann, Keegan & Turner, 2007) Concerning contractors, the areas of responsibility are slightly more diffuse. The contractor bears the responsibility of her or his own career development, but certainly a supportive competence agency that provides appraisals initiating rewards and development may have an advantage to agencies that do not. According to Donnelly (2006), the only sustainable bargain a competence agency can offer their contractors in return for their commitment is the opportunity for them to continuously develop their skills. Contractors gain from such arrangements as their personal value is augmented in external markets due to the recognised value of their enhanced skills (Donnelly, 2006). In other words, offering developing assignments can raise the level of commitment from the contractor.

Dispersement from the project is a process that is not widely recognized neither in the literature on projects nor on HRM. Huemann et al. (2007) list the options for the PBO at this point as immediately assigning the employee to a new project; assigning the employee to a project starting sometime in the future where her or his skills will be better used; or holding the employee in abeyance because there is no project for her or him to be assigned to at the moment. They further state that “it is at the end of a project that core workers are most
vulnerable to leaving the organization, especially if faced with a period of 'sitting on the bench'.” (p 321) They suggest that core workers should be debriefed about their experiences at the end of a project, and counselled about the future. A competence agency, however, cannot deal with dispersement in the same way. When a contractor in the network of an agency has completed a project for one of the agency’s customer, it is up to the contractor to decide if she/he wants to apply for another project right away. If the contractor wants a new assignment, the agency needs to have an interesting offer or the contractor may go to another agency. If the contractor wants a period off, it is important for the contractor to maintain the relationship until the next assignment. In order to be able to offer the right kind of project for the contractor’s next assignment, the debriefing and counselling aspects of the dispersement process can apply to HRM in agency business as well as in PBOs. An evaluation of the experience gained from the latest assignment combined with the contractor’s notion on future projects should give the appropriate guidance for the agency to find a new, suitable assignment for the contractor.

2.2.2. Contractor’s loyalty and commitment toward the competence agency

According to Garsten (1999), many temp agencies stage social events and parties to encourage temps to get to know each other, their placement staff, and the goals and directions of the company. She found that staff at the temp agencies often stresses the value of bringing the temps together on a regular basis, and making them feel that they are 'their' employees and part of their work community. Unfortunately, Garsten also found that the temps themselves often speak of such occasions as rather boring, unrewarding events, since they only have shallow relations with, and knowledge of, their temping colleagues. Perhaps a competence agency that made an effort in finding alternative activities to offer its contractors would obtain a stronger commitment.

To increase commitment and enhance attachments to the competence agency an 'extended organizational identity' is strived for. The consequence of this identity is that the individual behaves and reacts in many ways as if the organization were a part of her-or himself. Within management circles it is known as loyalty. (Garsten, 1999)

Van Breugel, Van Olffen and Olie (2005) identify two forms of commitment. The first form; continuance commitment, is a form of psychological attachment to an organization, which reflects the degree to which an individual experiences a sense of being locked in place because of the high costs of leaving. The second
form; affective commitment, is a kind of moral commitment which refers to a sense of obligation to remain with the organization. Among their findings where the fact that both types of commitment are positively influenced by agency supportiveness, reflected in the way the agency deals with problems, the career support it provides, and the way it keeps in close contact with its temporary workers.

In the case of agency working, which is a structure involving a three party employment relationship whereby the agency intermediates between the worker and the user firm; it is not overly clear who bears the responsibility of an employer and where the commitment and loyalty of the agency worker lies. (Burgess & Connell, 2006)

Past research has demonstrated the importance of commitment as a predictor of important employee behaviours. (Gallagher & Sverke, 2005) A number of authors have argued that today’s companies need to develop strategies that foster employee commitment in order to remain competitive. It is likely, therefore, that the competitive advantage of staffing agencies will be increasingly determined by their capacity to attract and retain a capable and committed workforce of contractors. However, employees in non-permanent work settings have a predominantly transactional rather than relational contract with their organizations and as a consequence; workers are unlikely to have high levels of commitment. (Van Breugel, Van Olffen & Olie, 2005) Thus, attracting, motivating and retaining contractors are quite a challenge.

In their research on HR in knowledge intensive firms (KIFs), Horwitz, Heng and Quazi (2003) investigated and distinguished between successful and non-working strategies on attracting, motivating and retaining contractors.

The most (+) and the least (-) efficient attraction strategies were found to be:

+ offering a very competitive pay package
+ internal talent development
+ having a reputation as employer of choice
− online web recruitments
− advertising jobs
− head hunters

The most and least efficient motivation strategies proved to be:
+ offering freedom to plan work
+ challenging work
+ access to leading-edge technology or products
  − flexible work practices
  − employment of large groups of contractors
  − generous funding for conference studies

Finally, the most and least efficient strategies on retention were:

+ challenging work
+ highly competitive pay packages
+ performance incentives or bonuses
  − flexible work practices
  − a critical mass of knowledge workers
  − transparent pay and benefit decisions

2.2.3. Strategy and HRM

Strategic HRM (SHRM) is a special branch of HRM that may be of interest in this study. It is defined by Bratton & Gold (2003, pp 37-38) as “the process of linking the human resource function with the strategic objectives of the organization in order to improve performance”. They further state that” for organizational practitioners who are looking for ways to gain a competitive advantage, the implication of HR strategic choices for company performance is certainly the key factor”. With the aim of this thesis in mind; regarding how to gain competitive advantages and the possible benefits of HRM, SHRM theories seem to be of high relevance.

From an analysis of the literature on strategic human resource management, Truss and Gratton (1994) found some key aspects of the SHRM process that they thought should be included in any model of SHRM. Among these key aspects were the external environment, the internal environment and the business strategy.

*The external environment* provides opportunities and constraints within which HRM must operate (Truss & Gratton, 1994). This includes competitors, employment legislations etc. *The internal environment* is the organizational context within which SHRM operates, including structure and culture (Truss & Gratton, 1994). Since the contractors are not physically a part of the competence agency, they are not likely to be affected by the organizational culture. *Business*
strategy includes the strategic aims of the organization that both affect, and are affected by, the SHRM process (Truss & Gratton, 1994). This can be translated to the mission and vision of the agency.

Boxall and Purcell (2000, p. 186) claim that “most research and theoretical debate in strategic HRM has been consumed with a contest between two normative models of how firms should make strategic choices in labor management”. The models they refer to are the 'best-fit' and the 'best practice'.

The best fit school argues that HR strategy will be more effective when it is adapted to the specific context of the organization (Boxall & Purcell, 2000). It seems as if the previously mentioned model of Truss & Gratton (1994) belongs to this school. The best practice school promotes that all firms will be better off if they identify and adopt 'best practice' in the way they manage people. This may sound simpler but brings questions about how best practice is defined. In the article, Boxall & Purcell (2000) summarize the most influential set of definitions down to employment security, selective hiring, self-managed teams or team working, high pay contingent on company performance, extensive training, reduction of status differences and sharing information. It is difficult to find relevancy to competence agencies among these definitions. For example, there is no employment security since the contractors are not employed by the customer company, no team working between contractors at an agency, no information sharing since the contractors may compete for the same assignments and no extensive training is offered by the agency. Since this study is permeated by the approach that HRM should be adapted to the context of the organisation, the “best fit” is a better fit for competence agencies.

To sum up on SHRM that applies to competence agencies, the main factors to take in account are competitors, employment legislations, organizational structure, and the mission and vision of the agency. Since neither the competitors nor the organizational structure directly affect the relationship between an agency and its contractors, out of these four factors the ones that apply to this thesis are employment legislations and the agency’s mission and vision.

2.3. Employer Branding and the Psychological Contract
According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, p. 501), "employer branding represents a firm’s efforts to promote, both within and outside the firm, a clear view of what makes it different and desirable as an employer”. Furthermore, Sutherland,
Torricelli, and Karg (2002, p 13) state that “attracting knowledge workers is recognised as a critical success factor by organizations. In order to succeed in the war for talent many organizations realise they need to brand themselves as employers of choice”. Even though Sutherland et al. are referring to traditional organizations, the statement might as well be applied to competence agencies looking for contractors.

The popularity of employer branding is increasing among firms. It is used as a tool for attracting recruits and to assure that current employees are engaged in the culture and the strategy of the firm. Effective employer branding leads to competitive advantage through the foundation of a workforce that is hard for other firms to imitate, and helps in retention of employees by using the brand to emphasize the concept of quality employment and thereby contributing to employee motivation to stay with the organization. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) Since gaining competitive advantage for attracting and retaining skilled contactors is what the agency seeks, employer branding theories may contribute to reaching their goal.

Even though the popularity of the employer branding practice is growing, there are only a few academic articles published on the topic. As a result, the core theoretical foundation for employer branding has not been completely developed. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004)

However, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) suggest three important aspects of successful employer branding. First, a firm should develop a so called value proposition. It is to be embodied in the brand. In this thesis, the value proposition was interpreted as communicating an appealing vision. Secondly, the firm should market the value proposition to the target group of potential employees, recruiting agencies, placement counsellors and so on. In the case of a competence agency, the target group consists of contractors that fit the description laid out in the human resource planning. The external marketing of the employer brand is first of all carried out in order to attract the target population, but is also to support and enhance the corporate brand. The third aspect of employer branding is internal marketing of the employer brand, where the firm brands itself towards its employees. Through internal branding employees can develop an increased commitment to the values and organizational goals of the firm. For a competence agency, this could translate into committed contractors and long lasting relationships with them.
Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) argues that the theory of the psychological contract and its effect on the employee organizational relationship provides a second foundation for employer branding. They identify the traditional notion of the psychological contract between workers and employers as a promise of loyalty from the workers to the firm in exchange for job security. However, the authors have found that new trends such as downsizing and outsourcing calls for a new kind of psychological contract, in which employers provide workers with marketable skills through training and development in exchange for effort and flexibility from the employees. In this case, the agency would provide the contractors with development opportunities and challenges in exchange for sought-after skills. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) explains that to handle the negative perceptions of downsizing and outsourcing, where the job security is lost, firms use employer branding to advertise the benefits they still offer, such as training, career opportunities, personal growth and development. Even though there is no such thing as job security in the agency’s case, where all of the contractors are temporarily assigned to projects, the agency could still advertise their benefits towards the contractors so that they may feel a sense of safety in their situation.

Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) further defines an employee’s perception of the organization breaking a promise on its obligations as a violation of the psychological contract. They state that violations have been shown to correlate positively with turnover and intentions to quit, reduced job satisfaction, reduced organizational trust, and decreased job performance. This is not very surprising, and it is why a realistic job preview is important. The authors identify a realistic job preview as one that provides negative as well as positive information about the employment assignment. Thus, the agency could gain from clearly stating the frames of an assignment when it is offered to a contractor, in order not to create false pretentions. Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) claim that there is research indicating that a realistic job preview reduces turnover, increases trust and perceptions of honesty and reduces role ambiguity, so a realistic job preview could lead to stronger bonds between the agency and its contractors.
2.4. Reference model

In order to clarify and illustrate the relationship between the theories presented in the frame of reference, a reference model in two pieces was created. The model for merging the theories was adapted to competence agencies and is presented in figure 2.3 and figure 2.4 below.

Figure 2.3: Layers of a competence agency and contractors in this context

Figure 2.3 describes a competence agency in two ways. It aimed to simplify the context of contractors in competence agency business in terms of theories regarding internal and external branding as well as SHRM. The left part of figure 2.3 shows the different layers of the competence agency related to the theories of Truss and Gratton (1994) and interpreted through the eyes of the author. The external environment that consists of employment legislations surrounds the competence agency. The core of the organization is their business idea, containing mission and vision. They form the basis for the employer branding’s value proposition (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) that is a part of the business strategy. Surrounding the business strategy is the internal environment, which is the outermost layer of the agency. The right part of the figure illustrates how the competence agency consists of different main areas, contractors being one of them. Other main areas are the employees, the board etc, but since contractors are the focus in this study, the other areas are left out.
Figure 2.4 illustrates the ones of Huemann et al.’s (2007) different phases of HRM that can be applied to competence agencies. The left part of figure 2.4 demonstrates the process concerning contractors. Note that *employment* from Huemann et al.’s model has been exchanged into *deployment*, since contractors are not employed but deployed by competence agencies. Also, *release* has been replaced by *retaining*, since release is rare and retaining is crucial in this business.

Except from the phase of attracting contractors, the process is cyclic. Depending on whether the competence agency is trying to attract the contract for their network in general or for a client in particular, there are two different paths to choose from, hence the two arrows origin in *attracting*. If the contractor fits the profile for an existing assignment, she/he will subsequently move on to the assignment phase. If the contractor has the qualities needed in the network in general, but no assignment fits for the moment, the assignment phase will have to wait. The contractor will remain in the network until a matching assignment turns up in the selection phase. She/he will then enter the cycle of assignment, deployment, dispersment, retention, selection, assignment and so on.

The right part of figure 2.4 is a slightly modified version of Huemann et al.’s the relationship between performance and appraisal, reward and development. They are part of the deployment phase, but also the dispersing phase since the appraisal is conducted when the assessment is completed.
As previously mentioned, according to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) the competence agency can use external employer branding to show off its qualities when attracting a contractor. This is the phase where the psychological contract is outlined, so it is probably of great importance that the competence agency gives an accurate description of itself and of what it has to offer the contractor. According to Horwitz, Heng and Quazi (2003) and noted in the theoretical framework, offering a very competitive pay package and internal talent development as well as having a reputation as employer of choice are the most efficient attraction strategies. Online web recruitments, advertising jobs and head hunters are strategies to be used with caution.

In the assignment phase, the agency is executing recruitment for a client. If the matchmaking is well performed, both the contractor and the client will hopefully be satisfied which may vouch for long term relations between the competence agency and the contractor as well as the client. It should thus be very important that the agency makes an effort to understand the competences, experiences, needs and preferences of the contractor so that the first assignment makes a good impression.

The deployment phase is where the contractor is performing its assignment at the client’s. In this phase, the agency can try to motivate the contractor to do a good job. By using internal employer branding (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004), it can improve its status in the eyes of the contractor. Since one of the most efficient motivation strategies proved to be challenging work, the agency should stress its ability to offer that in the branding. Also, taking an active interest in grievance procedures and employment legislations can have a positive effect on the contractor’s confidence in the competence agency, which may increase affective commitment and subsequently may increase motivation. It should be important to inspire the contractor to do a good job since a well-performed task will please the client and create a good reputation for both the agency and the contractor.

The dispersing process contains appraisal (of the work performed by the contractor) in the shape of evaluation, debriefing and counselling. This appraisal is conducted in order to document the development of the contractor and her/his attitude towards, and preferences for, the next assignment, as well as for giving an input on further development possibilities and discovering the level of rewards deserved. An additional effect of the appraisal is that it may help
building the contractor’s confidence in the competence agency, which (as previously mentioned), may increase continuance commitment.

In order to retain the contractor within the network, the competence agency can once again use internal employer branding to remind the contractor of all its benefits. As seen in the theoretical framework, the most efficient strategies on retention seem to be challenging work, highly competitive pay packages and performance incentives or bonuses, which is why the agency should strive to offer this. Also, the work that leads to increased commitment in previous phases can be benefited from in this phase.

The selecting phase precedes the next assignment for the contractor. Here, much effort should be put in finding a suitable, developing assignment for the contractor to make her/him satisfied and thus create a long term relation.
3. Methodology

This chapter includes theories regarding appropriate research methods that pointed out the direction of the continued work. It also contains a description of each of the steps that were taken in order to reach to conclusions regarding the purpose of the thesis.

3.1. Theories on research methods

In the research for methods proposed for situations like the one in this thesis, a number of authors seemed to conclude that a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods was advantageous. For example Shah and Corley (2006) claim that there are many contexts where qualitative and quantitative methods can be used in conjunction to build and refine theory. Little research has been addressed to the relations between contractors and brokers (Felfe et al., 2008; Burgess & Connell, 2006; Connelly & Gallagher, 2006; Van Breugel et al., 2005), so there was a need for building theory in this case. Further on, Shah and Corley (2006, p 1824) state that “Qualitative methods are a set of data collection and analysis techniques that can be used to provide description, build theory, and to test theory.” Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005, p 384) are on the same track, writing that “combining quantitative and qualitative research helps to develop a conceptual framework, to validate quantitative findings by referring to information extracted from the qualitative phase of the study, and to construct indices from qualitative data that can be used to analyze quantitative data”. Thus, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods seems to be an appropriate choice for this thesis.

According to Lilford and Braunholtz (2003) qualitative work not only determines the form that quantitative research should take, but that it can quite properly contribute to our beliefs on the effects of interventions. Moreover, Shah and Corley (2006, p 1824) state that qualitative methods provide a means for developing an understanding of complex phenomena from the perspectives of those who are living it. “The primary benefits of qualitative methods are that they allow the researcher to discover new variables and relationships, to reveal and understand complex processes, and to illustrate the influence of the social context.” In this thesis, it was of importance to understand the contractors’ as well as the agency’s situation in order to define their relationship. Hence, a qualitative study of the contractors and the agency was chosen.

Since the requirements from the agency on the study were measurable results and implementable recommendations, a survey was requested in order to get
some quantitative figures. Hanson and Grimmer (2007) compared methods of research in major marketing journals from 1993-2002 and found that a way of mixing the quantitative and the qualitative ones could be when a modest number of interviews were used to orient questions for a survey. Interviewing the contractors in order to determine what kind of questions should make up the survey seemed to fit the time and resource limit of this study and thus this method was chosen.

3.2. The multistage model
The approach in this thesis was to conduct qualitative research through interviews with contractors and a questionnaire directed to the agency followed by quantitative research through a survey directed to the contractors. The results from the interviews and the questionnaire in the qualitative research were analysed and led to a conceptual research model and a set of hypotheses that were tested by the survey in the quantitative research. The results from the survey were analysed with the help of Excel, and conclusions were drawn from the outcome of the quantitative analysis. The conclusions led to recommendations regarding measures that the agency could take in order to improve their relations with the contractors in their network. This multistage model is illustrated in figure 3.1 below.

![Figure 3.1: The multistage model](image)

3.2.1. Interviews
First, five contractors tied not only to the agency but also to other agencies, were interviewed. The choice of using five contractors was based on the time limit of
the thesis combined with difficulties in finding contractors that had time to participate. The agency made the selection of who to interview, and this might have influenced the outcome of this part of the qualitative research, but since it was in the agency’s best interest that the interviews properly contributed to the study it is likely that this selection was carefully done. The only criterion the agency had to work with was that the contractors needed to be located in the Copenhagen area in order to facilitate the possibilities of arranging the interviews face-to-face.

For interview questions, see Appendix 1. The questions were open-ended in order to keep the interviews as open as possible. The aim of these interviews was to get an understanding of the contractors’ situation and their perception of their relation with the agency. The contractors were picked out from the agency’s database of contractors that were currently or had previously been assigned to projects via the agency. The agency did the selection of which contractors to contact for the interview proposal. To facilitate the meetings, all the contractors that were chosen lived or worked in Copenhagen. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, and they were recorded in order not to lose any important information. Unfortunately, none of the five contractors had worked for more than one of the agency’s clients, but most of them had been working on more than one project for the same client, or they had their project prolonged. Furthermore, only one of them had terminated his assignment with the agency. However, they were still able to give their opinion on how they would like the evaluation process to be performed. The negative impact on the research, due to the fact that no contractor had been assigned to more than one client and that only one of the contractors had terminated a project, is that the interviews cannot give an insight of how the contractors perceive the difference in efforts from the agency in the first assignment compared to the following assignments. Neither can it give a picture of how the contractors see the agency’s efforts in keeping them in their network between assignments. Due to the costs of travelling and the time limit of this thesis, no additional interviews could be conducted to fill in those gaps.

**3.2.2. Questions to the agency**

Open-ended questions similar to those posed in the interviews were also answered by the agency in order to get a picture of how they perceived the different situations. The questionnaire is found in Appendix 2. The questions were sent out to all the owners of the agency, but due to hectic schedules they
were only answered by Jens Jensen. However, he was instructed to reply in
manners that reflected the view of all of the owners.

3.2.3. Qualitative analysis
The results from the interviews and the questions directed to the agency were
concluded and compared with the reference model in order to better adapt it to
the actual situation. This led to the creation of a new reference model.

3.2.4. Hypotheses
Building on this new reference model a set of hypotheses was generated, and the
complex hypotheses were illustrated in a conceptual research model. The model
aimed to describe the connection between the theories that the interviews and
the questions directed to the agency had proven to be relevant, and the
relationship between the contractors and the agency.

3.2.5. The survey
Based on the hypotheses, a web survey was created. For survey questions, see
Appendix 3. SurveyMonkey was used as a tool for creating and distributing the
survey, as well as for collecting the answers and compiling the results.
(www.surveymonkey.com). In the construction of the survey, Dr. Mandar
Dabhilkar, Assistant Professor at the Department of Industrial Economics and
Management at the Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden gave his opinion
and helped formulate the survey so that its results could be properly analysed.

The survey was sent via email, accompanied by a personalized letter, to all
contractors within the agency’s network that were currently - or had previously
been - assigned to projects via the agency, except for those who had already
been interviewed. It was sent out to 94 contractors, but one of the emails
bounced so only 93 contractors received the survey. Two reminders were sent
out, and they both generated additional replies. Within the time limit of one
month, 40 contractors completed the survey which generated a response rate of
43 %. It was of Jens Jensen’s belief that the fact that the survey invites were not
sent out via an email address from the agency’s own domain could explain the
low response rate, and he regretted that he had not provided one. The low
response rate probably affected the accuracy of the representation. However,
Saunders et al. (1997, p247) stated that a response rate of 30% is considered
reasonable. Ilieva et al. (2002) compared research articles regarding email
surveys and they found that the response rate to this type of survey varied
between 25 % and 50 %, which would imply that the rate in this study was
acceptable. They also found research that showed rates for academic email
surveys on around 40.8% which still is below the outcome of this survey. The authors stated the advantages of email surveys as the speed of data collection, the low cost to the researcher and the instant access to a wide audience, irrespective of their geographical location. It is nevertheless important to remember that responding to a survey could be a result of a high commitment to the organization. Therefore, the contractors that responded to the survey may not be representative for all of the contractors within the agency’s network.

The main part of the questions in the survey where of the type “To what extent do you agree with the following statement?” The answers to chose from ranged from “I fully disagree” to “I fully agree”, where “I fully disagree” was weighted the value 1 and “I fully agree” was weighted to 5 and the choices in-between were rated 2, 3 and 4. The average weight of each of these kinds of questions is called “rating average “. A rating average of 3 meant that the contractors were neutral to the statement; whereas an average above 3 meant that they agreed and an average less than 3 indicated disagreement. There was also a choice for those who had no opinion, and that answer had no weight.

3.2.6. The quantitative analysis
The results of the survey were analysed in Excel. Conclusions were drawn from the findings of the analysis, and in these conclusions the research questions were answered to the extent possible. The main issue that was analysed was which ones of the different activities from the conceptual research model that had an impact on the relationship between the contractors and the agency. Thus, the correlation between the results from the questions regarding those activities and the ones that measured the relation needed to be calculated.

Correlation is one of the most widely used statistical techniques (Beri, 2008). Correlation occurs when two variables vary together. The correlation coefficient, r, quantifies the direction and magnitude of correlation. It ranges from -1 to +1 where 1.0 means perfect correlation, 0 to 1 that the two variables tend to increase or decrease together, 0.0 that the two variables do not vary together at all, 0 to -1 that one variable decreases as the other increases and -1 means perfect inverse correlation. (Waters, 2002, p 190) However, in this case there were only correlations between 0 and 1.

The best way to interpret the value of r is to square it to calculate r2. It is has a value that ranges from zero to one, and is the fraction of the variance in the two variables that is shared. For example, if r2=0.59, then 59% of the variance is
shared between the two variables. (Waters, 2002, p 190) According to Freund, Wilson and Sa (2006, p 103) there is no rule or guideline as to what value of r2 signifies a “good” regression. However, they have found that in behavioural science, coefficients of 0.3 are often considered quite “good”.

A correlations analysis using Excel was done. Firstly, the response rates for question 39 and 40 from each contractor were summarized so that 39 a to e generated one common rating instead of five, the same for question 40 a to e. Secondly, the questions from the survey that regarded the contractors view on how the agency handled the different activities from the conceptual research model were distinguished. Finally, the correlations analysis was conducted on each of the selected questions and the summarized ratings for question 39 and 40. Tables of the results from the correlation analysis can be found in Appendix 5.
4. Findings from the interviews
The findings from the five interviews are summarized under nine different headlines that were chosen so as to follow the order of the interview questions. The interviews generated many interesting inputs on the contractors’ situations and their point of views on the relation with the agency. The interview questions can be found in Appendix 1.

4.1. Background
The interviewed contractors ranged in age from 37 to 54 years. They were all men, and most of them had a background in computer science or IT, but there was also an electro-engineer, and one of the contractors had started out as a real estate broker. Depending on their age, they had been freelancing for 3 – 15 years, and they joined the agency 1 – 7 years ago.

4.2. Joining competence agencies
The reasons for joining a competence agency were the help in job hunting offered, the access to big clients that only hired through agencies, the possibility to create internal networks as well as the fact that an agency will “sell” the consultant in the sense of making him an attractive choice to the client. One contractor stated that “it is hard to find the time to look for new offers when you’re in a project”.

The main reason for joining more than one agency was to spread the awareness of their competences so that they would get more job offers. As one of the contractors said, “The agency cannot keep me employed to 100 percent”.

According to the interviewed contractors, the different agencies they have joined have much in common. However, a co-occurring answer was that compared to the agency, other agencies seem to focus more on the contractors, for example by helping them optimising their CV or negotiating higher salaries for the contractors than what the regular employees receive. One of the contractors thought that the handling of invoices was better at the agency than at other agencies.

Most of the contractors signed up for the agency in hope of getting a project, only one of them signed up after being offered a specific assignment. The ways that lead to their first contact with the agency varied. Some of them knew people from the agency, others found out about the company on the Internet; either through Google or from the top 100 list on Computerworld. Yet another one was recommended the agency from a colleague on a project.
4.3. First impressions
The contractors’ first impressions of the agency were generally good, although there was one contractor that had never visited the agency’s office. The online registration process was easy and the ones that had actually met the partners of the agency were under the impression that it was a professional – one even said well renowned, organisation with high skills.

4.4. Promises and expectations
When it comes to whether or not the agency lived up to its promises, the contractors had different opinions. Some thought that the agency most certainly fulfilled its promises, while others were disappointed or had no opinion whatsoever. The disappointment lied mainly in the lack of vowed seminars, benefits and a big network. The ones that had no opinion did not hear about any promises from the agency, but signed up anyway. One contractor was disappointed that there was no insight in wage negotiation for the contractors. The agency failed to inform him about the fact that the client cut the pay check for all contractors. This was brought to his attention by another contractor and when he confronted the agency they said that they had not thought that the information would be important to him. The one thing they seemed to agree on was that the payment works flawlessly.

In terms of their own expectations, the agency seemed to satisfy the contractors. This fact was explained by some of the contractors as a result of that they know the business and thus did not have high expectations. Consequently, their expectations were not based on the promises made by the agency.

4.5. Assignments
The reason the contractors took on their assignment with the agency, other than that they needed the job, was that it seemed to be a good match to their profile. Also, the agency presented it as an exciting assignment.

The first assignment with the agency had been satisfying for all of the contractors. Accordingly, the assignments had also matched their expectations to a great extent. In some cases, the original assignment was cancelled, and a new – better one was offered. One of the contractors even said that his assignment with the agency was the best one he has had so far in his career. Another contractor was satisfied with the assignment, but not with the client. Although the contractors were all pleased with their projects, only one of them believed that he had the agency to thank for the good match. The others believed that the
good fit of the assignment to their profile was a lucky coincident as opposed to a result of efforts from the agency. As one of the contractors put it “The agency did not endeavour to get to know me well enough to make that kind of match. If I had not received this offer right after signing up for the agency’s network, I doubt that I would have gotten such a well-matching assignment later on since the agency has so many contractors in their network and probably wouldn’t have remembered me”. However, he believed that the situation is the same at other agencies; the contractors the agency remembers the best will get the assignments. In order to keep the contractors pleased with future tasks, the agency should make an effort in finding assignments that suit their profile. “They shall be good matchmakers.” Also, more contact with the agency would be appreciated.

Regarding the effort the agency puts into understanding their competence, experience, needs and preferences, only one of the contractors was pleased. Some of them said that the agency lives up to what they expect from the business. “There was an interview of one hour, kind of like a job interview. Not enough for getting a good picture of me, but it seems to be the same at other agencies. They did not “know” me after that meeting, but after the interview for the assignment they knew me better. If I would get the chance to meet with the agency before the end of a project, I think that my chances to get a new assignment will grow.” Another contractor believed that “they manage their relations with their clients much better than the one with their contractors”.

Despite the perceived lack of effort from the agency, some of the contractors were pleased with the way things are. They know the business and simply do not expect more than a CV review and a short interview. Others would have greatly appreciated a bigger effort such as a longer interview or a better attempt to “sell” their expertise to potential clients. One of the contractors said, that if he would have gotten more time with the agency they would have gotten to know him better, so that when there was a new offer from a client the chances of the agency remembering him and thinking of him as a good candidate would be greater.

The questions about motivation were met with confusion. There seem to be no such activities from the agency’s part, and no expectations from the consultants. As one of them put it; “I don’t perceive the agency as an employer, thus I am not interested in being motivated by them”. Another client said that “money is the most important motivational factor”. He would have appreciated a pay raise
since he had been with the same client for four years and yet did not earn more now than when he started on the assignment. Others also mentioned the salary as critical factor in the choice of agency or assignment.

According to the interviewed contractors, the agency handles complaints and employment legislations very well. The contractors’ issues have been taken seriously and the agency has made an effort to sort things out.

4.6. Evaluations
As mentioned, only one of the interviewed contractors had reached the end of his project with the agency. In that case, the contractor handled the finishing phase himself – the agency only contacted the client to thank them for the cooperation. In the cases where projects were prolonged, the agency handled the administration around the process. It was up to the contractors to negotiate the prolongations.

In connection to the prolongations, some of the contractors had an evaluation of their work together with the client. Others had continuous evaluation during their project. Mostly, the evaluation involved only the client but in one case the agency was represented when the contractor presented his work. None of the contractors had any evaluation concerning their own development or preferences; the focus was on the result and the satisfaction of the client in all cases. Some of the contractors claimed that they had no need for evaluations, while others were interested in feedback both from the agency and the client with tips on how to improve their personality and work. One of the contractors said that he does not see how the agency or the client would be interested in an evaluation at the end of a project since the agency does not even know what he is working on and the client will not need his services anymore. However, he would have liked to get feedback on his performance. He was also interested in an evaluation regarding how the assignment fitted his profile.

4.7. Counselling
All of the contractors were interested in getting counselling from the agency regarding their career, although one of them stressed that the counselling must be voluntarily. Another one said that in order to be able to offer him counselling, the agency would have to get to know him better. He believed that the possibility of getting counselling would attract more contractors to the agency, but that it would mainly be interesting for young people.
There were different opinions on how the counselling should be performed. Some contractors thought that there should be a performance review once a year where the contractor should get advices on payment rates, job statuses, contracts and practical issues. The review could for example be web based. Other would have liked to hear from clients what they seek for in a contractor, for example what courses they require. “This is something that both the contractors and the client would benefit from since the client would get contractors that fulfil their requirements and the contractors will get hired.” One contractor wanted active feedback on his resume. When he had asked the agency for advice on how to rephrase his resume he has gotten no substantial answers. “Other agencies are much better at this.” Yet another suggestion was counselling from other, more experienced contractors within the network. Finally, one contractor would have appreciated if the agency had helped him creating 2-3 resumes for different purposes so that he could sell himself better. This idea came from another agency to which he was assigned.

4.8. Staying with the agency
The contractors that were at the end of their assignments had not yet noticed any signs of the agency making an effort to keep them in their network. One of them explained that during the last 6 months he had received only two phone calls from the agency. The other one stated that “no news is good news” when it comes to messages from the agency. Over all, there was not much communication.

Efforts that the contractors would like to see were some personal contact, phone calls, signs of appreciation and most of all that the agency would have a new project waiting for them when the previous one was finished. One of the contractors said that at the end of the project, unless the client wanted to prolong, he would contact the agency to see if they had any new assignment. He believed that if he were to take an assignment from another agency when the project with the agency was due, his chances of getting re-assigned by the agency later on would diminish since they may forget about him over time.

4.9. Benefits
A refreshment of the reader’s memory: “Benefits” is the agency’s benefits program for the contractors. Each contractor received a card that upon displaying in connection with certain purchases could generate a discount.
None of the contractors had used the Benefit card more than once. Only two of them thought of the Benefits program as a good idea, but that it needs further development such as bigger discounts or a wider range of offers to suit all contractors within the network. One contractor said that the agency is not giving enough information about the program, there is no promotion and that the information is hard to find. “The benefit program is almost a secret.” Another contractor stated that “the card is not unique. It does not make me choose the agency before other agencies”.

The contractors that did not support the Benefits program had suggestions for alternative activities. Some would have preferred tickets to football games, or workshops such as consultant-nights twice a year with motivational guest speakers and information on new development within the different fields of business amongst the contractors. Another would have liked to know more about the agency’s different clients to get an overview of what they can offer him. There was one contractor who would have liked to see a network that connected him to other contractors, not just the ones that worked with the same client as him. Other agencies he worked for had this. Finally, one contractor was interested in the discounted courses and would have liked to see that part developing. He found the discount fussy, and he would have liked to see a forum, such as Nokia’s University, where all the courses are listed so that all the contractors have to do is check the ones they are interested in to be signed up for the next course start. “There should also be a discussion forum where contractors can post questions for the agency and colleagues.” On this “Agency University”, he would like to see more information for the contractors than what the home page of the agency has to offer today. “The agency’s home page is nice but still not working properly.”
5. Findings from the questionnaire directed to the agency

The questionnaire directed to the agency generated an interesting input regarding not only what the agency considers to be its target groups and its responsibilities towards its contractors, but also how the organization perceives itself. Aside from determining the agency’s target group, the purpose was to get a picture of how the agency perceived different activities from the reference model, whether they assumed they had them under control or whether there were some activities that were generally considered redundant by the business. The questions were answered by Jens Jensen, but his answers aimed to reflect the general opinion of the three owners of the agency. The findings from the questionnaire are summarized in this chapter.

5.1. Target groups

The agency does not have a target group in matters of age. Instead, it is the professional competence that is relevant. Regarding the contractors’ educational backgrounds, the agency prefers a middle long to long academic education such as a bachelor, candidate or master degree from a renowned university. Competence is seen as a mixture of a relevant education, preferably within the fields of engineering or computer science, at least 5 years of work experience and experience from relevant assignments. On top of this, the agency has a preference for contractors that have been freelancing for at least 2 years.

5.2. Attracting contractors

To get in contact with new contractors, the agency advertises on the Internet or utilizes the networks of its own contractors by having those forwarding emails to potential contractors. In order to promote itself towards potential contractors, and also to promote itself in general, the agency makes visible that they have “the jobs” and a big share of the market. To attract contractors, the agency argues that they represent many clients and thus covers an essential part of the market.

The first impression that the agency wants for its contractors is mainly that it represents many clients and has a big market share, but also that the agency is a sound cooperation partner.

5.3. Assignment

The agency lets the contractor qualify her- or himself to an assignment by emailing a job description that is as detailed as possible. Before the interview
with the client, the agency prepares the contractor by informing about dress code and information about who to meet. The interview is immediately followed up with feedback on the contractor’s performance.

To please the contractors concerning their assignments, the agency supports them in practical issues such as dress code at the client’s, time sheets, canteen systems and corporate information. There is also a follow-up on how the introduction has been at the client’s and on how the everyday work proceeds in order to see that everything is working out with the assignment.

When it comes to handling the competences, experiences, needs and preferences of a contractor, the agency makes sure that the contractor’s resume reflects these factors properly by conducting an interview with the contractor before offering her/him an assignment. In many cases, this interview leads to a rephrasing of the resume in order to better describe the contractor.

In the agency’s opinion, a professional contractor rarely needs active motivation from its agency. Thus, the agency does not see motivation of contractors as its task. Neither does it deal with complaints or employment legislations. Such contentions are regulated by the contract between the contractor and the client, unless they are regulated by the law. According to the agency, contentions are rare.

5.4. Evaluations and counselling

At the end of an assignment, the agency evaluates the course of events and updates the contractor’s resume in order to find a new assignment that suits the contractor. There is also an evaluation of the contractor as well as the client.

Counselling is only offered if the contractor brings it up. In order to keep its contractors in the network between assignments, the agency regularly arranges activities such as project management seminars and educational events twice a year.
6. Hypotheses and conceptual research model

Together with the frame of references, the findings from the interviews and the questions directed to the agency generated a set of hypotheses. In order to illustrate some of these hypotheses a conceptual research model was formed. The hypotheses and the research model are presented in this chapter.

First of all, the interviews and the answers from the agency implied that the reference model needed further adjustment to fit competence agencies. For example, in the agency’s opinion a professional contractor rarely needs active motivation from its agency. Since this is consistent with the opinion of the interviewed contractors there was no further research on this subject in this study. Also, contentions are very rare and regulated by the contract between the client and the contractor, thus there was no further research on the handling of complaints and employment legislations in this case. Consequently, a new reference model; one for HRM activities in competence agencies was needed. This model was named ‘HRM in CAs’, where CA stands for competence agencies.

6.1. HRM in CAs

Some restructuring was made regarding the previous reference model in figure 2.4. These changes are illustrated in figure 6.1 below.
The main segments of HRM in CAs were identified as recruitment, deployment and retainment. These segments are shaped as squares in figure 6.1. The interviews and the information from the agency indicated that most contractors are assigned to the agency in connection to a specific assignment, but that the agency also tried to attract skilled contractors in general through advertising. The recruitment segment could thus be further divided into attracting, selecting and assigning, and according to the qualitative research these phases are undergone in that specific order, so the arrow in figure 2.4, between attracting and assigning, was removed. The deployment segment could be split into appraising and dispersing. Neither reward nor development was according to the interviews and the agency’s answers, but they seemed to be of interest to the interviewed contractors so they were kept in the model as sub factors in appraising and dispersing. While the previous models were based on theories, this new model was based on both theories and on the actual situation of the contractors and the agency. It is revealed in figure 6.2.

![Figure 6.2: HRM in CAs](image)

The purpose of this new model was not only to illustrate the activities that, according to the interviews with the contractors and the agency, actually seemed to be of importance for the relationship, but also to facilitate the creation of hypotheses regarding HRM.

*Attracting* is the first of the HR activities the contractors will get in contact with, and the first interaction between the contractors and the competence agency. This activity is therefore very important for the contractors’ first impression of
the agency. It includes promoting the values, potential and benefits of the competence agency in a way that makes the contractors perceive it as a good assignment accommodator.

*Selecting* is the matchmaking activity. It consists of identifying the type of contractor the client asks for, and looking for a good match in the network to be able to offer the assignment to the right contractors. It is important that attention is paid to this activity since every new project needs to provide a career challenge for the contractor so that she or he will get a chance to develop. The agency should make an effort in understanding the contractor’s experience, competence, development needs and preferences.

*Assigning* consists of the interview process that serves to verify that the selected contractor is right for the assignment. Here, the contractor and the client meet, and if the matchmaking of the agency has been satisfying for both parts, the contractor is assigned to the project. Communicating relevant information to the contractor is vital in this phase. Assigning has been chosen to be a part of the recruiting process since the interview with the agency clarified that most contractors that are recruited to the agency are done so in direct connection to an assignment.

*Appraising* is the activity where the contractor gets feedback. It initiates personal development and rewards that affect future performance. This activity takes place at the end of an assignment.

*Dispersing* includes competence mapping in terms of debriefing the contractor about her or his experience and notion on future assignments, as well as counselling her or him about future careers moves. This activity serves to give appropriate guidance for the agency to find a new, suitable assignment for the contractor.

*Retaining* is all about maintaining a good relationship with the contractor after the termination of an assignment so that she or he will have a preference for the agency in the future. This is obtained by having a new project ready to offer the contractor at the end of the previous assignment, by personal contact that makes the contractor feel appreciated, and by reminding the contractor of the good things the agency has to offer.
6.2. Hypotheses

In order to clarify the connection between the research questions and the hypotheses, the research questions were used as headlines for the different parts of this section. The findings from the interviews led to hypotheses regarding research question 1 and 2. The new reference model, HRM in CAs, was the foundation of the hypotheses regarding research question 3 and 4.

Q1: What makes a contractor use the service of a competence agency?

Corresponding to the first research question and building on findings from the interviews, hypothesis 1 was formulated. Research question 1 regarded the reason why contractors join competence agencies, and the interviews with the five contractors pointed out three reasons for joining agencies. Thus, hypothesis 1 was divided into three sub-hypotheses.

**H1a:** Contractors join agencies because of the access to big companies that are granted by agencies.

**H1b:** Contractors join agencies because they do not have time to promote themselves so they need someone to do it for them.

**H1c:** Contractors join agencies because of the possibility to create networks.

Q2: What makes a contractor use more than one competence agency?

Hypothesis 2, which also built on findings from the interviews, was formulated in order to respond to research question number 2.

**H2:** Contractors join more than one agency because they do not believe that one agency alone can supply them with full time occupation.

Q3: What makes a contractor use the service of the same competence agency on a long term perspective?

Q4: Are there any strategies and/or activities that can lead to a competitive advantage for a competence agency in terms of contractor relations and if so, what are their natures?
In order to respond to research question 3 and 4, three additional hypotheses were formulated; H3, H4 and H5. (Note that they did not correspond to the research questions in the way that hypothesis 1 corresponded to research question 1 etc.) These hypotheses build on findings from both the interviews and the theories in the frame of references, as well as the revised model on HRM in CAs presented above. Their relationships were quite complicated, so a model to illustrate them – a so called conceptual research model – was created. It is found in figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3 was named conceptual research model since it illustrated the direction of the further research regarding hypotheses 3 to 5. The interviews had indicated that some of the theories in the frame of references had an impact on why a contractor stayed with an agency, and thus it was of interest to determine which factors in those theories, among the ones that had been selected for the reference model, that could affect the relationship between contractors and competence agencies.

With the intention of determining the importance of the different segments of HRM in CAs, hypothesis 3 was divided into three sub-hypotheses, one for each segment.

**H3a:** Recruiting activities have a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

**H3b:** Deploying activities have positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.
**H3c:** Retaining activities have positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

In the survey, the contractors’ view of recruiting activities was tested by questions concerning their first contact with the agency, their perception of matchmaking and their opinion on the assignments. These items corresponded to the attracting, selecting and assigning elements of recruiting. The views of deploying activities were tested by questions on feedback and rewards as well as on the termination of an assignment, corresponding to the appraising and dispersing elements of deploying. The opinion on retaining activities was tested on questions regarding the contractor’s perception of efforts from the agency between assignments.

Hypothesis 4 was formulated with the aim of determining the importance of SHRM activities. The activities that, according to the interviews, seemed to be of importance were the ones concerning mission and vision.

**H4:** SHRM, where mission and vision should reflect the aims of retaining the contractors, has a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

The contractors’ perception of these SHRM activities were measured by questions on whether or not they felt appreciated, since the mission and vision of the agency were supposed to reflect the aims of retaining the contractors.

Hypothesis 5 was divided into six sub-hypotheses due to the complexity of employer branding and the psychological contract. The contractors’ view on these elements was tested with questions on whether the agency communicated an appealing vision and kept the contractors updated on what they had to offer in terms of career opportunities, counselling and benefits as well as questions about information, promises and expectations. Communicating an appealing vision was referred to as the value proposition.

**H5a:** The value proposition has a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

**H5b:** External branding has a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

**H5c:** Internal branding has a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.
**H5d:** Realistic job previews have a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

**H5e:** Keeping promises has a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

**H5f:** Living up to expectations has a positive effect strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

In this thesis, the relationship was seen from the contractors’ point of view. The quality of the relationship between the agency and its contractors was thus defined by

- How attractive the contractors find the agency as a cooperation partner
- The extent to which the contractors want to stay with the agency in the future

The relationship qualifies as good if the contractors find the agency to be an attractive cooperation partner and are interested in staying with the agency. Good relationships vows for long term relations. In the survey, immediate attractiveness was tested by five items; the contractors’ opinion on the agency’s values, the agency’s ability to fulfil their needs in capacity of an agency, the extent to which they were pleased to work with the agency, to what extent they would chose an assignment from the agency over one from another agency and whether or not they would recommend the agency to other freelancers. The extent to which the contractors were willing to stay with the agency in the future was measured by their preferences for getting all assignments from one agency, how active they were in searches for other agencies, their opinion of the agency’s reliability, where they saw themselves in 3 years from the time of the survey and their commitment to the agency. These items were not based on any theory, but were merely explorative and chosen out of common sense. They might not properly have examined the relationship phenomenon, and this was a possible source of error in this survey.
7. Findings from the survey

The questions in the survey were phrased in order to respond to the hypotheses. The findings from the survey are presented below, and analysed in the chapter that follows after this. A detailed report of the results is found in Appendix 4. This chapter aimed to provide an interpretation of that data in order to facilitate the understanding of the results, so it is up to the reader to decide whether to read it or to study the tables in Appendix 4 instead.

The answers were interpreted as so that a majority of fours or fives was presented as a positive attitude to a statement, and a predominance of ones and twos was presented as a negative one. However, a rating average of 3 could have occurred of different reasons, e.g. when most of the contractors were neutral or when half of them fully disagreed and the other half fully agreed. Therefore, the total percentage that voted positive (4 or 5) or negative (1 or 2) was sometimes summarized in order to better illustrate the contractors’ answers. When there was a bigger percentage of positive answers than negative, the attitude was presented as neutral but leaning towards positive, and vice versa.

In some cases, the contractors had the opportunity to leave comments. Often, the comments were few and pointed in different directions and hence they did not affect the statistics. Therefore, only the comments that affected the statistics or contributed to a better understanding of the situation were presented.

7.1. Background

The first nine questions were posed in order to analyze similarities and differences in diverse groups of contractors’ view of their relation to the agency. These groupings were in part the classic ones based on age, gender and demography, but also based on the criteria that the agency stated for the “preferred contractor”, including work experience, freelancing experience and education. Only the questions regarding the preferred contractor were analyzed in this study, but the other groupings can be used for further analyses of the results and these questions were thus posed in order to give the agency this possibility.

However, it turned out that only a fraction of the contractors that answered to the survey questions belonged to the Aarhus office, in the same way that a very small part of the respondents was female. Such small groups may not be representative for the entire troop of contractors that are female or assigned to
the agency in Aarhus, and for this reason, no analyses may be conducted on these two groupings.

The contractors ranged in age from 31 to 65 years old. All of the contractors had 10 years or more of working experience, and only one of them had less than 2 years of experience from contracting. The majority of them had a middle long to long academic education. Prior to joining the agency, most of the contractors were self-employed. The majority of the contractors had had only one assignment with the agency.

7.2. Joining an agency
Question number 10 to 12 dealt with the reason why contractors join agencies. Question number 10 was made up of three statements regarding the reason why the contractors had chosen to join an agency like the agency. Some were neutral, but the main part of the contractors agreed to having joined an agency because of the access to big companies that are granted by agencies. The contractors also agreed to having joined an agency because they did not have time to promote themselves, so they needed someone to do it for them. Half of the contractors were neutral to having joined an agency because of the possibility to create networks, but as a total they tended to agree.

Question number 11 revealed that most of the contractors had chosen to join other agencies than the agency as well. On question number 12, the majority of the contractors fully agreed to having joined more than one agency because they did not believe that one agency alone could supply them with full time occupation.

7.3. HRM
Question number 13 to 32 regarded HRM activities.

7.3.1. Attracting
Question 13 to 19, with the headline Your first contact with the agency, examined the attracting phase.

Most of the contractors stated that they first got to know about the agency when the agency contacted them, or through on-line web recruitment. Google or a similar search engine, and a colleague’s recommendation got the same amount of votes as the third most common answer.

Generally, contractors were rather positive than negative to the statement that the agency offered a competitive pay package, but most of them were neutral.
Their attitude to the statement that the agency had a reputation of being a good agency was slightly more positive.

The main part of the contractors was neutral, but slightly positive to the statement that the agency gave a first impression of being an important player on their market, and a bit more positive to the statement that the agency gave a first impression of representing many clients. The main part of the contractors stated that the agency gave a first impression of being a reliable cooperation partner. Most of the contractors agreed to the statement that the agency gives a good first impression.

When it came to the Benefits program, the majority of the contractors were neutral to the statement that it was good. A remarkably high percentage had no opinion, but of the remaining votes most were positive to the program. The contractors were neutral and leaning towards not agreeing to the statement that the Benefits program makes them choose the agency over other agencies.

Regarding alternative activities, the contractors were not interested in tickets to soccer games or some such activities. They tended to prefer if the agency would invest in workshops with motivational speakers or offer a network for freelancers instead of the Benefits program. Many of the consultants would prefer if the agency would focus on informing freelancers about the clients in the network as a substitute for the Benefits program, and almost as many were positive to whether the agency should create a web forum where freelancers easily could sign up for discounted courses, enter discussions with the agency and colleagues and access information regarding their careers as a replacement for the Benefits program.

It seemed to be important to the contractors that the agency gave a good first impression, but they were more neutral to benefits. The arrangement of activities tended to be important.

7.3.2. Selecting

Questions 20 to 22, headlined Matchmaking, examined the selecting phase. The majority stated that they chose the assignments the agency offered because they matched their experiences, and the very same amount of contractors stated that they chose the assignments the agency offered because they matched their competences. Many of them were neutral to the statement that they had chosen the assignments the agency offered because they matched their development needs and preferences, but more of them were positive. The attitudes were the
same to having taken on the assignments because they needed the job, but slightly fewer of the contractors agreed on having chosen the assignments the agency offered because the salary was good.

When it came to whether the agency put a satisfying effort in understanding the contractors’ experience and competence, the contractors were positive. Half of the contractors were neutral, but the overall verdict was positive to the agency’s effort in understanding the contractors’ development needs. The positive voices were a bit more numerous regarding the agency’s effort in understanding the contractors’ preferences.

On the question regarding the importance of the agency offering an assignment that matched the contractors’ experience, competence, development needs and preferences, the main part of the contractors agreed that it was important.

7.3.3. Assigning
Questions 23 and 24, under the headline Your assignments with the agency, examined the assigning phase. Most contractors fully agreed on that generally, assignments with the agency and interviews that preceded their assignments had been satisfactory. The contractors were also mainly positive to the statement that generally, the information they were given about assignments was satisfactory. All of the above mentioned factors were very important to the contractors.

7.3.4. Appraising
Feedback and rewards was the headline for the two questions, number 25 and 26, which investigated the appraising phase.

The contractors were generally neutral to the statement that the agency offered them satisfying feedback at the end of an assignment, to support their personal development. They did not experience that the agency provided rewards, e.g. a raise, for a good performance. However, both feedback and rewards were considered important by the contractors.

7.3.5. Dispersing
The following three questions, 27 to 29 under the headline The termination of an assignment aimed to examine the dispersing phase. According to the results of the survey, most of the contractors did not perceive that the agency took time to evaluate their experiences at the end of an assignment. As a whole, the contractors were neutral but the biggest share of votes was positive to the statement that the agency asked them about their preferences for future assignments. The main part of the contractors did not experience that the agency
offered counselling about their future career. It turned out that the contractors thought of all three of these issues as important.

The contractors were mainly positive to counselling offered in a performance review, counselling in terms of advices on courses to take, that are requested by clients and to counselling offered in terms of feedback on their résumés, but only slightly positive to counselling offered by more experienced contractors within the agency’s network.

7.3.6. Retaining

Question 30 to 32, on the topic *Between assignments*, evaluated the retaining phase. The contractors did not perceive that the agency usually had a new offer ready for them at the end of an assignment. They were neutral, only slightly positive to the statement that the agency kept in touch with them between assignments and neutral in general to the statement that the agency made a satisfying effort to keep them in the network after an assignment. Nevertheless, all these issues were considered important by the contractors.

When asked about the qualities that tempted them to stay with the agency, the contractors were mostly neutral to the statement that they stayed because of the performance incentives. They were generally neutral but tended to agree that they stayed because of the development opportunities and they tended to agree that a reason for staying with the agency was the good salary. Additional comments were that they stayed because of the satisfactory or challenging assignments, the trust and loyalty from the agency or simply because the agency found projects for them.

7.4. SHRM

Question 33 and 34, with the headline *Feeling appreciated*, regarded SHRM. Most of the contractors agreed on that the agency gave an impression of valuing them, but they were neutral to the statement that in comparison to other agencies, the agency focused more on the relationship with contractors than the relationship with clients. They concurred to having been treated well by the agency’s staff.

When asked if there was someone in particular from the staff that had had a special impact on their impression of the agency, a number of names were mentioned. The agency was informed of the names, but due to the anonymity request they were not printed in the report.
It was important to the main part of the contractors that the agency communicated to them that they were valued.

7.5. Employer Branding and the Psychological Contract
Questions 35 to 38 had the heading Information, promises and expectations. They aimed to measure the contractors’ opinion on the agency’s employer branding and the psychological contract.

The majority of the contractors were neutral but many tended to agree or fully agreed that when they first signed up, the agency communicated an appealing vision. They agreed that the agency provided relevant information, positive as well as negative, about an assignment. Furthermore, they were very positive to the statement that the agency fulfilled its promises, and that the agency lived up to their expectations. They were neutral to the importance of communicating an appealing vision, but all of the other issues were considered important by the majority of the contractors.

When it came to whether the agency kept the contractors updated on what they had to offer them in terms of career opportunities and counselling, most of the contractors were not satisfied. They were a bit more pleased with the information about benefits. Nevertheless, all of the issues were considered important by many of the contractors, although some of them were neutral in this question.

7.6. Attractiveness
The two final questions, number 39 and 40 were constructed with the purpose of evaluating the agency’s attractiveness in the eyes of the contractors. The headline was Your relation to the agency, and the attractiveness was divided into immediate attractiveness and attractiveness on a long term perspective, with five statements for each part.

Regarding the immediate attractiveness, even though some were neutral the contractors tended to agree on that the agency’s values were good and that in capacity of an agency, the agency fulfilled their needs. They were generally pleased to work with the agency, and they tended to agree on that they would recommend the agency to other freelancers, but they were rather neutral, however slightly positive to choosing an assignment with the agency over one from the other agencies that they were familiar with.
The statements regarding the long term perspective did not generate as high scores as the one regarding immediate attraction, except for the one stating that the agency is a reliable agency which most of the contractors agreed on. They were also mainly positive to the statement that they saw themselves still working with the agency 3 years from now. The contractors were generally neutral but slightly negative to getting all their assignments from the same agency and to not actively search for other agencies to work with. They were also neutral, but slightly more positive to the final statement of the survey; “I feel committed to the agency.”
8. Analysis
A lot of information could be obtained from studying the answer rates from the survey, but in order to fulfil the purpose of the study, additional analysing had to be executed. This was done by exploring the output from SurveyMonkey in Excel. The outcome of the analysis is presented below.

8.1. The target group
Not all of the contractors that answered the questions in the survey fulfilled the criterions that were stated by the agency in section 5.1. Thus, it was of interest to see if the answers from the “ideal” contractors differed from the general opinion of all contractors that took part in the survey. The contractors that did not fulfil the criterions were filtered out and new rating averages were calculated using Excel. When the rating averages of the filtered responses were compared to the rating averages of the unfiltered ones, no significant difference was found. The biggest difference that was detected was only at 7.2%. It regarded question 39 d, “I would choose an assignment with the agency over one from the other agencies that I am familiar with” and the rating averages were 3.558824 and 3.319149 respectively. Thus, the rest of the analyses were conducted on all of the respondents that had completed the survey, including the ones that did not belong to the target group.

8.2. Rating averages for the immediate attractiveness and the long term perspective of the relationship
The rating average for all contractors for question 39 and 40 were calculated. Question 39 generated a rating average of 3.72 and question 40 a rating average of 3.24.

The collected rating average for the questions regarding immediate attractiveness implied that the contractors found the agency attractive as an agency, but that there are still one issue in particular to improve. The contractors were neutral to choosing an assignment with the agency over one from the other agencies that they were familiar with. This confirms the agency’s suspicions, but hopefully the situation will improve if the recommendations presented in the next chapter are followed.

The rating average for the questions regarding the long term perspective was a bit lower than the one for immediate attractiveness. The only factor that got a high score was the one stating that the agency is a reliable agency. The statement that the contractors saw themselves still working with the agency 3
years from now also got a decent score, but it seems as though the agency still has some improvements to execute before the contractors are willing to make a long term commitment.

8.3. Hypothesis testing
In order to evaluate the hypotheses by analysing which ones of the different activities from the conceptual research model that had an impact on the relationship between the contractors and the agency, a correlation analysis was conducted.

8.3.1. HRM
The questions that aimed to measure the impact of HRM activities on the relationship between the agency and its contractors are found under the headlines below.

Attracting
The results from question 14 to 16 were analysed in order to examine whether the attracting phase of HRM had an impact on the relationship between contractors and competence agencies. Question 14 regarded offering a competitive pay package and having a reputation of being a good agency, which were the strategies that Horwitz, Heng and Quazi (2003) found to be among the most effective ones in this phase. Question number 15 regarded giving a first impression of being an important player on their market, a first impression of representing many clients and a first impression of being a reliable cooperation partner. Those were the strategies that the agency claimed to use in order to attract contractors. Finally, question number 16 simply asked whether the agency gave a good first impression.

The correlation analysis showed that offering a competitive pay package and having a reputation of being a good agency was positively correlated both to the immediate attractiveness and the long term perspective of the relationship between the contractors and the agency, although the correlation was stronger for the immediate attractiveness. However, when looking at the r2 values it turned out that the long term perspective was not really that affected by these factors. The rates were only 13% and 19% respectively, but for the immediate attractiveness they were 39% and 50%. Thus, offering a competitive pay package and having a reputation of being a good agency were important for the immediate attractiveness and therefore for the relationship between the contractors and the agency.
Giving a first impression of being an important player on their market, a first impression of representing many clients and a first impression of being a reliable cooperation partner turned out to have a lesser impact on the relationship. The r values landed around 0.5 for most of the questions, both in relation to question 39 and 40, so the r² values only reached 20%, 33% and 34% for immediate attractiveness and 20%, 25% and 13% for the long term perspective. This implied that giving a first impression of being an important player on their market was not very important for the relationship. Giving a first impression of representing many clients was more important, both for immediate attractiveness and for the long term perspective, and giving a first impression of being a reliable cooperation partner was quite important for the immediate attractiveness.

**Selecting**

To examine the impact of selecting activities, the results from question 20 and 21 were analysed. Question 20 regarded reasons for choosing an assignment that the agency offered, e.g. because it matched the experience, competence, development needs or preferences of the contractors, or because they needed the job, or because the salary was good. Question 21 concerned the effort that the agency put into understanding the contractors’ experience, competence, development needs and preferences.

The correlation analysis showed that reasons for choosing an assignment that the agency offered basically had no impact on the long term relationship between the contractors and the agency, and only a slightly higher one on immediate attractiveness. The only issue that is worth bringing up is that assignments that matched the contractors’ experience had an influence of 23% on immediate attractiveness. As for the analysis of the impact of the effort that the agency put into understanding the contractors’ experience, competence, development needs and preferences, the results were similar. Only the effort put into the contractors’ experience generated a percentage above 20 (23%) for the immediate attractiveness, so that seemed to be the only activity that had somewhat of an impact on the relationship.

**Assigning**

The results from question 23 were analysed in order to determine the impact of assigning activities on the relationship. The question aimed to measure the levels of satisfaction regarding assignments with the agency, interviews that preceded assignments and the information about assignments.
The correlation analysis implied that satisfaction regarding assignments with the agency and the information about assignments had a considerable impact on the immediate attractiveness, 51% and 52%, and a lower one, 23% and 26% on the long term relationship. Satisfaction regarding interviews that preceded assignments had very little impact.

**Appraising**
In order to measure the effect of appraising activities, results from question 25 were correlated to question 39 and 40. Question 25 regarded whether the agency offered satisfying feedback to support the contractors’ personal development and whether the agency provided rewards (e.g. a raise) for a good performance.

It turned out that these issues had little impact on the immediate attractiveness. It was higher on the long term perspective, where offering satisfying feedback to support the contractors’ personal development scored 28%.

**Dispersing**
The effect of dispersing was measured by a correlation analysis on question 27 and 39 and 40 respectively. The question regarded the agency’s actions at the end of an assignment, and whether the agency took time to evaluate the contractors’ experiences, ask them about their preferences for future assignments and offering them counselling about their future career.

The correlation analysis showed that none of these activities correlated particularly strongly with the perception of the relationship between the contractors and the agency.

**Retaining**
To measure the impact of retaining activities, question 30 and 31 were analysed. Question 30 concerned whether the agency usually had a new offer ready for the contractors at the end of an assignment, whether the agency kept in touch with the contractors between assignments and whether the agency made a satisfying effort to keep the contractors in the network after an assignment. Question 31 regarded the qualities that tempted the contractors to stay with the agency, e.g. development opportunities, a good salary and performance incentives, which were the strategies that according to Horwitz, Heng and Quazi (2003) were the most effective ones in this phase.

No strong or even moderately strong correlation was found for any of these activities except for having a new offer ready for the contractors at the end of an assignment that had a 21% impact on immediate attractiveness.
8.3.2. SHRM
The effect of SHRM activities was measured by correlation analysis including question 33. The question regarded whether the agency gave an impression of valuing its freelancers, whether the agency in comparison to other agencies focused more on the relationship with contractors than the relationship with clients and whether the contractors had been treated well by the agency’s staff.

The correlation analysis showed an r² value of 23% for giving an impression of valuing its freelancers and immediate attractiveness, a value of 50% for being treated well by the agency’s staff and immediate attractiveness, and a value of 22% for being treated well by the agency’s staff and the long term perspective of the relationship. Focusing more on the relationship with contractors than the relationship with clients did not seem to affect the relationship.

8.3.3. Employer Branding and the Psychological Contract
The last two questions that were analysed, number 35 and 36, were constructed to measure the effect of Employer Branding and the Psychological Contract. Question 35 regarded whether the agency communicated an appealing vision, provided relevant information about an assignment, fulfilled its promises and lived up to the expectations of the contractors. Question 36 concerned the extent to which the agency kept the contractors updated on what they had to offer them in terms of career opportunities, benefits and counselling.

Most of the questions generated rather high r² values. Communicating an appealing vision and providing relevant information about an assignment seemed to influence both immediate attractiveness and the long term perspective of the relation with r² values of 47% and 43% for immediate attractiveness, and 37% and 42% for the long term perspective. Fulfilling promises and living up to expectations mainly affected the immediate attractiveness, with r² values of 31% and 53%. Keeping the contractors updated on what the agency had to offer them in terms of career opportunities, benefits and counselling scored a bit lower, but still enough to affect the immediate attractiveness for all three issues, 36%, 32% and 30%, and the long term perspective for career opportunities and benefits, 21% and 25%.

8.3.4. Cautions
It is important to keep in mind that, as stated by Waters (2002, p 190), “correlation can occur by coincidence, or because of the influence of another variable that influences both the measured variables.”
9. Conclusions
The findings from the survey and the qualitative analysis are summarized and interpreted below. The research questions (Q1-4) are found in the subtitles just like in section 6.2 and the corresponding hypotheses (H1-5) are repeated in order to facilitate the reading and understanding of the chapter. Each section that has explored a research question, and thus one or more hypotheses, is followed by a discussion regarding the accuracy of the hypothesis and the answer to the research question, but first of all the purpose of this thesis is repeated:

“The purpose of this master thesis was to develop the understanding and the knowledge of the relations between contractors and competence agencies. The purpose was also to detect issues that may contribute to successful relations and a competitive advantage in the competence agency business.

A special interest was taken in the contractors’ preferences concerning agency services, as well as in strategies and activities in terms of manpower care and strengthening of bonds between agencies and contractors.”

9.1. Why contractors join agencies
Research question 1 and 2 regarded why contractors care to use the services of competence agencies.

Q1: What makes a contractor use the service of a competence agency?
As previously mentioned in section 6.2, this research question was broken down into three parts, each with a corresponding hypothesis; H1a to c.

H1a: Contractors join agencies because of the access to big companies that are granted by agencies.
H1b: Contractors join agencies because they do not have time to promote themselves so they need someone to do it for them.
H1c: Contractors join agencies because of the possibility to create networks.

As concluded in section 7.2, the main part of the contractors agreed to the statements in the hypotheses and thus, all three of the hypotheses were confirmed. These verified assumptions were not based on theories since no relevant ones were found, but solely on the findings from the interviews. The fact that contractors join agencies because of the access to big companies implies that the contractors have expectations regarding projects with this kind
of clients. Competence agencies need to be aware of that contractors probably expect to get to work with big organisations and may therefore not be too excited if they are offered a project with a smaller client. Further on, it seems like contractors expect their agency to promote them against possible clients and if this is not done the contractor may feel disappointed. Finally, the contractors apparently expect to create new networks when joining an agency. This can be interpreted in two ways; either they want to create networks regarding their fellow contractors within the agency’s network or regarding their clients. Thus, it is important that competence agencies provide an opportunity for contractors in their networks to meet, and that they provide assignments that allow the contractors to make new acquaintances.

Q2: What makes a contractor use more than one competence agency?

According to the agency, most contractors belong to more than one network and this was also verified by the survey. Hypothesis 2 aimed to investigate why this phenomenon was so common.

H2: Contractors join more than one agency because they do not believe that one agency alone can supply them with full time occupation.

The results of the survey showed that most contractors joined more than one agency because they feared that one agency on its own could not keep them fully occupied and this confirmed the hypothesis. If a competence agency could somehow assure its contractors that they can rely completely on the agency to keep them occupied on a full time basis, this could probably lead to that the contractors no longer feel the need to look for other agencies. However, building up a trust like that is not done easily but if the agency strives to provide its contractors new assignments immediately after the previous ones are completed they may be able to gradually build that kind of faith.

9.2. The impact of the activities on the relationship between the contractors and the agency

This section is divided after the different activities that were examined; HRM, SHRM and Employer Branding and the Psychological Contract, and research questions 3-4 concern all of these activities.
Q3: What makes a contractor use the service of the same competence agency on a long term perspective?

Q4: Are there any strategies and/or activities that can lead to a competitive advantage for a competence agency in terms of contractor relations and if so, what are their natures?

9.2.1. HRM

One assumption that was based on theories from the research model and from the findings in the qualitative research was that HRM activities could lead to stronger relations. The impact of the different HRM activities is presented under the headlines Recruiting, Deploying and Retaining. One of the hypotheses regarding employer branding, H5b, is also presented here because its context has more to do with recruiting activities than with the questions that the rest of the employer branding hypotheses are connected to.

Recruiting and external branding

H3a: Recruiting activities have a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

H5b: External branding has a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

Attracting

Most of the contractors stated that they first got to know about the agency when the agency contacted them, or through on-line web recruitment. Head hunting and online web recruitment were two of the least efficient attraction strategies according to Horwitz, Heng and Quazi (2003) so these methods of approaching the contractors should be adjusted.

The contractors were generally neutral to the statement that the agency offered a competitive pay package, but the correlation analysis showed an r2 value of 39% for immediate attractiveness implying that it affects the relationship. Thus, improving the pay package could lead to better relations with the contractors.

The contractors were slightly positive to the statement that the agency had a reputation of being a good agency, and the analysis showed that the r2 value was 50% for immediate attractiveness. This implies that the contractor-competence agency relationship could benefit from an improvement of the agency’s reputation. A reputation is not easily changed but hopefully, it will improve if the recommendations that follow this section are attended to.
The contractors were neutral to the statement that the agency gave a first impression of being an important player on their market, and the analysis showed that it was not very important for the relationship. This is thus a strategy that the agency could abandon. The contractors were a bit positive to the statement that the agency gave a first impression of representing many clients, and it was also more important, both for immediate attractiveness and for the long term perspective. The fact that giving a first impression of representing many clients affects the long term perspective was a bit surprising, and raised the question on whether the correlation results from a poorly formulated question. This result was thus not repeated in the conclusion. the agency gave a first impression of being a reliable cooperation partner, and it was quite important for the immediate attractiveness.

It was important to the contractors that the agency gave a good first impression, and they agreed on that the agency did so.

**Selecting**
Offering assignments that matched the contractors’ experience had an influence of 23% on immediate attractiveness. The majority of the contractors stated that they chose the assignments the agency offered because they matched their experiences, so all for the agency to do in this issue is to keep up the good work. None of the other activities in the selection phase seemed to affect the relationship, even though the main part of the contractors agreed that it was important that the agency offered assignments that matched their experience, competence, development needs and preferences. They concurred to having chosen the assignments the agency offered because they matched their competences but they were quite neutral to the statement that they had chosen the assignments the agency offered because they matched their development needs and preferences. In combination with the fact that these issues were considered important, this implies that the agency still has some work to do on matching their contractors with the assignments. Even if the analysis did not show a correlation, those are clearly important issues for the contractors. The fact that the contractors were quite neutral to having taken on the assignments because they needed the job can be interpreted as that they were in a situation where they could afford to let an un-interesting job offer down and thus that the offer from the agency was appealing enough not to reject. However, this does not mean that the agency should relax, because not so many of the contractors agreed on having chosen the assignments the agency offered because the salary
was good. This may mean that the agency’s assignments are interesting enough for the contractors to overlook the fact that the salary is too low, hence the agency has to put energy into keep offering attractive assignments.

Furthermore, it seemed as the only effort made by the agency that generated an impact on the relationship was the one put into the contractors’ experience. It had an r² of 23% for the immediate attractiveness. The contractors were positive to the agency’s efforts in this area, so the agency should keep putting that much effort into the contractors’ experience. The contractors were also positive to the effort put into understanding their competences, but quite neutral to the agency’s effort in understanding their development needs, and slightly more positive regarding the agency’s effort in understanding their preferences. Since those factors did not affect the relationship, they may not be of top priority but the facts are still worth noticing. The lack of satisfaction on these points could have impacts that the study failed to measure, and the agency should strive to keep their contractors satisfied on all points.

**Assigning**
Satisfaction regarding assignments with the agency and the information about assignments had a significant impact on the immediate attractiveness, and a lower but still notable one on the long term relationship. Most of the contractors fully agreed on that those issues had been satisfactory, and they were also considered very important to the contractors. So was the information they were given about assignments, and it was satisfactory as well but it did not seem to have an impact on the relationship. It seems like the agency did well on assigning activities and that it is in their interest to keep performing on this level in the future.

**Conclusions on recruiting activities and external branding**
In conclusion, both the hypothesis regarding recruiting activities and the one regarding external branding was confirmed. The fact that attracting, selecting and assigning activities are important is consistent with the findings of Bredin (2008), McKenna and Beech (2008) and Huemann et al. (2007). The importance of external branding supports Backhaus’ and Tikoo’s (2004) theories. The contribution of these findings to the research area is that the activities affect the relationship.

As for recruiting activities, the ones that have an impact on immediate attractiveness are offering a competitive pay package, having a reputation of
being a good agency, giving a first impression of representing many clients, giving a first impression of being a reliable cooperation partner, offering assignments that matches the contractors’ experience, putting an effort into understanding the contractors’ experience, offering satisfactory assignments and offering satisfactory information about assignments. The recruiting activities that have an impact on the long term perspective are offering satisfactory assignments and information about assignments.

The external branding activities that have an impact on the immediate attractiveness are having a reputation of being a good agency as well as giving a first impression of representing many clients and of being a reliable cooperation partner, and the external branding activity that has an impact on the long term perspective is giving a first impression of representing many clients.

**Deploying**

**H3b:** Deploying activities have a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

**Appraising**

Offering satisfying feedback at the end of an assignment had an impact on the long term perspective on the relationship between the contractors and the agency, but the contractors were generally neutral to the statement that the agency offered them this. They did not experience that the agency provided rewards either, but this issue did not affect the relationship. However, both feedback and rewards were considered important by the contractors. Thus, it may be beneficial for the agency to take action in offering feedback and rewards.

**Dispersing**

The contractors did not perceive that the agency took time to evaluate their experiences at the end of an assignment, they were neutral to the statement that the agency asked them about their preferences for future assignments and they were negative to the statement that the agency offered counselling about their future career. None of these activities correlated particularly strongly with the perception of the relationship between the contractors and the agency, but the contractors thought of all three of these issues as important. Consequently, the lack of correlations aside, the agency may need to consider offering a thorough evaluation and a dialogue about future assignments together with the contractors at the end of an assignment in order to keep them satisfied. Furthermore, the
contractors were positive to counselling offered in a performance review, counselling in terms of advices on courses to take and to counselling offered in terms of feedback on their résumés, so the agency may gain from offering these alternatives to their contractors.

**Conclusions on deploying activities**

The hypothesis regarding deploying activities was confirmed. Appraising and dispersing activities are considered important by the contractors, which supports the findings of Bredin (2008), McKenna and Beech (2008) and Huemann et al. (2007). However, only appraising activities affect the relationship and this is a contribution to the field of research. The specific activity that has an impact on the relationship is offering satisfying feedback at the end of an assignment, and it has a positive effect on its long term perspective.

**Retaining**

**H3c:** Retaining activities have a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

Having a new offer ready for the contractors at the end of an assignment was the only activity that had some impact on immediate attractiveness, but the contractors did not perceive that the agency usually had a new offer ready for them. They were neutral to the statement that the agency kept in touch with them between assignments and neutral to the statement that the agency made a satisfying effort to keep them in the network after an assignment. Nevertheless, all these issues were considered important. This implies that the agency could strengthen the relationship with its contractors by putting more effort into having a new offer ready for them at the end of an assignment. Keeping in touch between assignments and making a satisfying effort to keep the contractors in the network after an assignment are strategies that may not directly affect the relationship but may create a beneficial added value in the eyes of the contractors.

The contractors were neutral to the statement that they stayed because of the performance incentives, which is consistent with the results from the appraising segment above where it was concluded that they did not get rewards. They were equally neutral to staying because of the development opportunities, which may be connected to the dispersing segment above. There, it was concluded that no satisfying evaluation was offered; hence the possibilities of developing in the contractor role may be diminished. However, the contractors tended to agree that a reason for staying with the agency was the good salary. This may seem
contradictory, since it was concluded in the attracting segment that the contractors were neutral to the statement that the agency offered a competitive pay package, and in the selecting segment that the contractors generally did not choose the assignments the agency offered because the salary was good. However, this is a question of interpretation. A neutral attitude to the competitiveness of the pay package could mean that the package is similar to the ones the competitors are offering, and thus the contractors do not find it worse, neither better than other packages that they have been offered. The fact that the contractors did not choose the assignments because the salary was good may simply mean that they chose the assignment for other reasons. The really interesting question is why the contractors really stayed with the agency.

**Conclusions on retaining activities**
The hypothesis regarding retaining activities was confirmed. These activities are, in consistency with the findings of Bredin (2008), McKenna and Beech (2008) and Huemann et al. (2007), important. They are also considered to be so by the contractors. Having a new offer ready at the end of an assignment has an impact on the immediate attractiveness.

**9.2.2. SHRM**

**H4:** *SHRM, where mission and vision should reflect the aims of retaining the contractors, has a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.*

Most of the contractors agreed on that the agency gave an impression of valuing them, and it was important to the main part of them that the agency did so. The correlation analysis showed a connection between this action and immediate attractiveness, so it should be important for the agency to keep up this communication.

The contractors concurred to having been treated well by the agency’s staff, and the analysis showed an obvious correlation with immediate attractiveness, and also a correlation with the long term perspective of the relationship. It seems that a good treatment by the staff equals better relationships, so even though the agency are doing well on this point, it might be a good idea to communicate to the staff the importance of their attitude towards the contractors and the positive effect it has on the organisation.
The contractors were neutral to the statement that in comparison to other agencies, the agency focused more on the relationship with contractors than the relationship with clients, but that action did not seem to affect the relationship.

**Conclusions on SHRM**

Hypothesis number 4 was confirmed. The fact that communicating the strategic aims was considered important by the contractors supports Truss and Gratton’s (1994) theories on the importance of business strategy. This study’s contribution to its field of research is that SHRM activities have a positive effect on the relationship between contractors and competence agencies. Communicating to the contractors that they are valued has an impact on immediate attractiveness, and staff that treats the contractors well affects the long term perspective.

**9.2.3. Employer Branding and the Psychological Contract**

**H5a:** The value proposition has a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

**H5c:** Internal branding has a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

**H5d:** Realistic job previews have a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

**H5e:** Keeping promises has a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

**H5f:** Living up to expectations has a positive effect on strengthening relations between the agency and its contractors.

The majority of the contractors were neutral to the statement that when they first signed up, the agency communicated an appealing vision, and they were neutral to the importance of the issue as well. However, it seemed to influence both immediate attractiveness and the long term perspective of the relation. Thus, the agency could benefit from putting an effort into communicating an appealing vision.

Most of the contractors were not satisfied when it came to whether the agency kept them updated on what they had to offer in terms of career opportunities and counselling. They were a bit more pleased with the information about benefits. Keeping the contractors updated on what the agency had to offer them in terms of career opportunities, benefits and counselling all affected the immediate
attractiveness, and career opportunities and benefits affected the long term perspective. All of the issues were considered important by many of the contractors. Thus, a greater effort in keeping the contractors up to date on offers could generate a stronger relationship.

The contractors agreed that the agency provided relevant information, positive as well as negative, about an assignment, and it was considered important too. It also appeared to have an impact on both immediate attractiveness and the long term perspective. Accordingly, the agency should attempt to keep the information flow on this satisfying level.

Fulfilling promises and living up to expectations mainly affected the immediate attractiveness. It was considered important and the contractors were very positive to the agency’s effort. Seeing these facts, the agency’s staff should be proud of themselves and aim to keep the level of satisfaction just as high in the future.

**Conclusions on Employer Branding and the Psychological Contract**

All five of the hypotheses were confirmed. The fact that employer branding activities and the psychological contract are important is consistent with the suggestions of Backhaus and Tikoo (2004). The contribution of these findings to the research area is that the activities also affect the relationship between the competence agency and its contractors.

The activities that affected the immediate attractiveness were communicating an appealing vision, keeping the contractors updated on what the competence agency has to offer them in terms of career opportunities, benefits and counselling, providing relevant information, positive as well as negative about an assignment, fulfilling promises and living up to expectations.

The activities that affected the long term perspective were communicating an appealing vision, keeping the contractors updated on what the competence agency has to offer them in terms of career opportunities and benefits and finally providing relevant information, positive as well as negative about an assignment.

**Answers to research question 3 and 4**

In conclusion, there were five specific activities that make a contractor use the service of the same competence agency on a long term perspective and there were eleven activities that affect the immediate attractiveness of a competence
agency in the eyes of a contractor. These activities can lead to a competitive advantage for the competence agency in terms of contractor relations.

The activities that make a contractor use the service of the same competence agency on a long term perspective are

- Communicating an appealing vision
- Offering satisfactory assignments and relevant information about assignments
- Offering satisfying feedback at the end of an assignment
- Having staff that treats the contractors well
- Keeping the contractors updated on what the agency has to offer them in terms of career opportunities and benefits

The strategies and activities that can lead to a competitive advantage for a competence agency in terms of contractor relations are

- Giving a first impression of representing many clients and of being a reliable cooperation partner
- Having a reputation of being a good agency
- Communicating an appealing vision
- Offering a competitive pay package
- Offering satisfactory assignments that matches the contractors’ experience and relevant information about assignments
- Putting an effort into understanding the contractors’ experience
- Having a new offer ready for the contractors at the end of an assignment
- Communicating to the contractors that they are valued
- Keeping the contractors updated on what the agency has to offer them in terms of career opportunities, benefits and counselling
- Fulfilling promises
- Living up to expectations

9.3. Benefits

Regarding the Benefits program, the contractors were neutral to the statement that it was good and not quite agreeing to the statement that it made them choose the agency over other agencies. This confirms the agency’s doubts about the program being a bit of a waste of money. However, the arrangement of activities tended to be important. As a replacement for the program, the contractors were interested in workshops with motivational speakers. Other suggestions of
interest were a network for freelancers or a web forum where freelancers easily could sign up for discounted courses, enter discussions with the agency and colleagues and access information regarding their careers as a replacement for the Benefits program. Most of the contractors would prefer if the agency would focus on informing freelancers about the clients in the network as a substitute for the Benefits program.

9.4. Discussion
Hopefully, this study has contributed to a better understanding of the relations between contractors and competence agencies and the issues that may lead to successful relations and a competitive advantage in the competence agency business. It has not only confirmed the importance of HRM, SHRM and employer branding activities in a non-conventional organisation such as the competence agency, but also found links between these activities and the improvement of the relationship between the agency and its contractors. Seeing the lack of research concerning this kind of relationship, the study may have made an important contribution within its field. As it seems, this is a field that is receiving more and more attention and thus, the importance of findings like these will be growing.

The most important finding may be that it does not take a great effort from the agency’s side to improve the relation; it is on the contrary the simple things such as showing interest regarding the contractors’ experience, communicating to the contractors that they are valued and offering relevant information about assignments that makes the difference.

The focus of this study was on the contractors’ preferences concerning agency services, but another interesting perspective for future research could be the clients’ preferences concerning the services, or concerning the contractors that are hired for a project.

9.5. Recommendations
In this final chapter, a list of recommendations of actions that may strengthen the relationship between a competence agency and the contractors within its network is provided. The recommendations are directed to the agency, but they may also be of interest to other competence agencies. The order of the recommendations is based on a balance of the importance of the activity and the agency’s capacity to execute it.
1. Offer feedback:
The study has shown that the contractors consider feedback important in order to improve their future performance. The agency could for example arrange a meeting with the contractor, a representative from the agency and one from the client at the end of the contractor’s assignment where the contractor would receive feedback on her or his performance. Another solution could be that the agency contacts the client to receive the feedback, and then pass it on to the contractor in a personal meeting. The feedback contains information that could be important to the agency when matching the contractor with her or his next assignment, so this should be a great opportunity to strengthen the relation with the contractor and gaining valuable information at the same time.

2. Keep the contractors updated on what you have to offer in terms of career opportunities, counselling and benefits:
According to the study, these were important aspects to the contractors and since it should not demand a particularly extensive amount of time or money it is recommended that the agency overlook their efforts in these areas.

3. Improve the pay package:
Not very surprisingly it seemed that a bigger pay check would generate a stronger bond between the contractor and the agency.

4. Strive to improve the first impression of representing many clients:
The analysis of the survey results pointed out that an agency that gives an impression of representing many clients is appealing to the contractors, but that there are room for improvements in this area at the agency.

5. Strive to communicate an appealing vision:
Although this was not considered important by the contractors, it correlated with a strong relationship so the agency could gain from spreading their vision to its contractors.
10. List of references


91


Jensen, J., [Interview], 2009-02-18


Christiansen, C., [Interview], 2009-02-09
Appendix 1
Interview questions

1. Age ...... F M

2. Education.......................................... Years freelancing......for the agency......

3. Why have you chosen to join a network like the agency’s?

4. Why have you chosen to join more than one network?

5. What are the best qualities of the other networks?

6. How did you first get in contact with the agency?

7. For what purpose were you assigned to the network (specific assignment/network in general)?

8. How was your first impression of the agency?

9. In your opinion, to what extent did the agency live up to its promises?

10. To what extent did the agency live up to what you expected of them?

11. What was your first assignment with the agency like?

12. How do you find the rest of the assignments you have been offered by the agency?

13. What made you choose the assignment the agency offered?

14. To what extent did the first assignments you were offered by the agency match your expectations?

15. To what extent do the rest of the assignments you have been offered match your expectations?
16. What efforts should be made by the agency to make you pleased with an assignment?

17. How would you describe the effort the agency puts into understanding your competence, experience, needs and preferences?

18. How would you like the agency to handle your competence, experience, needs and preferences?

19. In what way does the agency motivate you?

20. What activities do you think would be most effective in keeping you motivated?

21. In your opinion, how does the agency handle complaints or employment legislations?

22. What did the agency do for you at the end of your assignment with the client?

23. How was the evaluation performed?

24. How would you like the evaluation to be performed?

25. How would you like to get counselling from the agency regarding your career?

26. How would you like counselling to be performed?

27. What efforts have you noticed from the agency to keep you in their network between assignments from them?

28. What efforts would you like to see?

29. What is your opinion on the Benefits program?
Appendix 2

Questions for the agency

1. Concerning your contractors, do you have a target group in matters of age? If the answer is “yes”, what is the age range?

2. Concerning your contractors, do you have a target group in matters of education and experience? If the answer is “yes”, what is the preferred education and experience?

3. Do you have a target group in matters of the number of years a contractor has been freelancing? If the answer is “yes”, what is the preferred number of years?

4. How do you mainly get in contact with a contractor for the first time?

5. How do you promote the agency in general/towards potential contractors?

6. What is the first impression of the agency that you want for your contractors?

7. What arguments do you use to attract contractors?

8. What efforts do you make to please the contractors concerning their assignments?

9. What efforts do you make to handle the competences, experiences, needs and preferences of a contractor? E.g. how much time do you spend on each contractor, do you look at other factors than their resume, do they get a chance to explain their preferences etc.?

10. Do you try to motivate your contractors? If the answer is “yes”, how do you motivate them?
11. Do you deal with complaints or employment legislations? If the answer is “yes”, how do you handle complaints or employment legislations?

12. What do you do for your contractors at the end of an assignment?

13. Is there an evaluation at the end of an assignment? If the answer is “yes”, how is the evaluation performed?

14. Do you offer your contractors counselling regarding their career? If the answer is “yes”, how is the counselling performed?

15. What efforts are put into to keeping your contractors in their network between assignments?
Appendix 3
Survey questions

(1-5) = fully disagree, tend to disagree, neutral, tend to agree, fully agree

Your background
(Possible groups to differentiate between)

1. Age:

2. Gender: F/M

3. City: København/Århus

4. Your education (please chose highest level obtained): Master degree (including cand merc or similar), Bachelor degree, Courses/certifications, No academic education

5. Your professional background before joining the agency: self-employed, employee, other

6. Years of working experience:

7. Years freelancing:

8. Years freelancing for the agency:

9. Number of assignments with the agency:

(Q1-2)
Joining an agency

10. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
    I have chosen to join an agency like the agency
    a. because of the access to big companies that are granted by agencies. (1-5)/ no opinion
b. because I do not have time to promote myself, so I need someone to do it for me. (1-5)/ no opinion

c. because of the possibility to create networks. (1-5)/ no opinion

d. Other:

11. Have you joined other agencies as well? (Y/N)

12. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   a. I have joined more than one agency because I do not believe that one agency alone can supply me with full time occupation. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. Other:

(Q3-4)
(HRM)

Your first contact with the agency
(Attracting)

13. How did you first get to know about the agency?
   Online web recruitment, Google or similar search engine, I was recommended by a colleague, I have contacts in the organisation, the agency contacted me, advertising, DI’s Gazelle list, Computerworld’s top 100 list, other

14. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   When I first signed up for the agency
   a. the agency offered a competitive pay package. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. the agency had a reputation of being a good agency. (1-5)/ no opinion

15. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   a. the agency gave a first impression of being an important player on their market. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. the agency gave a first impression of representing many clients. (1-5)/ no opinion
c. the agency gave a first impression of being a reliable cooperation partner. (1-5)/ no opinion

16. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   a. the agency gives a good first impression. (1-5)/ no opinion

17. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   a. The Benefits program is good. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. The Benefits program makes me chose the agency over other agencies. (1-5)/ no opinion

18. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   Instead of the Benefits program, I would prefer if the agency would
   a. give out tickets to soccer games or some such activities. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. invest in workshops with motivational speakers. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. offer a network for contractors. (1-5)/ no opinion
   d. focus on informing contractors about the clients in the network. (1-5)/ no opinion
   e. create a web forum where contractors easily can sign up for discounted courses, enter discussions with the agency and colleagues and access information regarding their careers. (1-5)/ no opinion
   f. Other:

19. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   It is important to me that
   a. the agency gives a good first impression. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. the agency provides benefits. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. the agency arranges activities. (1-5)/ no opinion

Matchmaking
(Selecting)

20. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   I chose the assignment(s) the agency offered me because
   a. It/they matched my experience. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. It/they matched my competence. (1-5)/ no opinion
c. It/they matched my development needs. (1-5)/ no opinion
d. It/they matched my preferences. (1-5)/ no opinion
e. I needed the job. (1-5)/ no opinion
f. The salary was good. (1-5)/ no opinion

21. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
the agency puts a satisfying effort in understanding my
a. experience (1-5)/ no opinion
b. competence (1-5)/ no opinion
c. development needs (1-5)/ no opinion
d. preferences (1-5)/ no opinion

22. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
It is important to me that the agency offers an assignment that matches my
a. experience (1-5)/ no opinion
b. competence (1-5)/ no opinion
c. development needs (1-5)/ no opinion
d. preferences (1-5)/ no opinion

Your assignments with the agency
(Assigning)

23. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
a. Generally, assignments with the agency have been satisfactory. (1-5)/ no opinion
b. Generally, the interviews that precede my assignments, where I get
to meet the client, have been satisfactory. (1-5)/ no opinion
c. Generally, the information I get about assignments is satisfactory.
(1-5)/ no opinion

24. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
It is important to me that
a. the assignments the agency offers me are satisfactory. (1-5)/ no opinion
b. the interviews that precede my assignments are satisfactory. (1-5)/
no opinion
c. the information I get about assignments is satisfactory. (1-5)/ no opinion
Feedback and rewards
(Appraising)

25. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   a. At the end of an assignment, the agency offers me satisfying feedback to support my personal development. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. the agency provides rewards (e.g. a raise) for a good performance. (1-5)/ no opinion

26. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   It is important to me that
   a. the agency offers me feedback. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. the agency provides rewards for good performances. (1-5)/ no opinion

The termination of an assignment
(Dispersing)

27. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   At the end of an assignment, the agency takes time to
   a. evaluate my experiences. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. ask me about my preferences for future assignments. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. offer me counselling about my future career. (1-5)/ no opinion

28. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   I would appreciate counselling
   a. offered in a performance review. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. in terms of advices on courses to take, that are requested by clients. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. by more experienced contractors within the agency’S network. (1-5)/ no opinion
   d. offered in terms of feedback on my resume(s). (1-5)/ no opinion
   e. Other:

29. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   It is important that the agency takes time to
   a. evaluate my experiences. (1-5)/ no opinion
b. ask me about my preferences for future assignments. (1-5)/ no opinion

c. offer me counselling about my future career. (1-5)/ no opinion

**Between assignments**

*Retaining*

30. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   a. At the end of an assignment, the agency usually has a new offer ready for me. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. the agency keeps in touch with me between assignments. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. the agency makes a satisfying effort to keep me in the network after an assignment. (1-5)/ no opinion

31. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
The qualities that tempt me to stay with the agency are
   a. development opportunities. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. a good salary. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. performance incentives. (1-5)/ no opinion
   d. other:

32. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   It is important to me that
   a. the agency has a new offer ready for me at the end of an assignment. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. the agency keeps in touch with me between assignments. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. the agency makes a satisfying effort to keep me in the network after an assignment. (1-5)/ no opinion

**Feeling appreciated**

*SHRM*

33. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   a. the agency gives an impression of valuing its freelancers. (1-5)/ no opinion
b. In comparison to other agencies, the agency focuses more on the relationship with contractors than the relationship with clients. (1-5)/ no opinion

c. I have been treated well by the agency’s staff. (1-5)/ no opinion
d. Is there someone in particular from the staff that has had a special impact on your impression of the agency?

34. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   It is important to me that
   a. the agency communicates to me that I am valued. (1-5)/ no opinion

**Information, promises and expectations**
*(Employer Branding and the Psychological Contract)*

35. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   a. When I first signed up for the agency, they communicated an appealing vision. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. The agency provides relevant information, positive as well as negative, about an assignment. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. The agency fulfils its promises. (1-5)/ no opinion
   d. The agency lives up to my expectations. (1-5)/ no opinion

36. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   The agency keeps me updated on what they have to offer me in terms of
   a. career opportunities. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. benefits. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. counselling. (1-5)/ no opinion

37. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?
   It is important to me that
   a. the agency communicates an appealing vision. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. the agency provides realistic job previews with positive as well as negative information about an assignment. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. the agency fulfils its promises. (1-5)/ no opinion
   d. the agency lives up to my expectations. (1-5)/ no opinion
38. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? It is important to me that the agency keeps me informed on what they have to offer me in terms of
   a. career opportunities. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. benefits. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. counselling. (1-5)/ no opinion

**Your relation to the agency**
*(Immediate attractiveness)*

39. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   a. the agency’s values are good. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. In capacity of an agency, the agency fulfils my needs. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. I am pleased to work with the agency. (1-5)/ no opinion
   d. I would choose an assignment with the agency over one from the other agencies that I am familiar with. (1-5)/ no opinion
   e. I would recommend the agency to other consultants. (1-5)/ no opinion

*(Long term perspective)*

40. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
   a. I prefer to get all my assignments from the same agency. (1-5)/ no opinion
   b. I do not actively search for other agencies to work with. (1-5)/ no opinion
   c. the agency is a reliable agency. (1-5)/ no opinion
   d. 5 years from now, I see myself still working with the agency. (1-5)/ no opinion
   e. I feel committed to the agency. (1-5)/ no opinion
Appendix 4
Survey results

Some of the graphics derived from SurveyMonkey did not properly show the statistics they aimed to explain, and thus those has been replaced by charts that better fulfils the purpose. In some cases, the far right column is not fully displayed, due to a bug in SurveyMonkey. However, this column does not contain any information that is important for the understanding of the results of the study.

### 1. Age

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2. Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>86.8%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answered question</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped question</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3. To which office are you assigned?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kabulham</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artus</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answered question</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped question</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4. Your education (please choose highest level obtained)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master degree (including cand. mero or similar)</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses/certifications</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No academic education</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question 53

Skipped question 1

### 5. Your professional background before joining the agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question 53

Skipped question 1

### 6. Years of working experience

- 30-42: 13
- 20-29: 22
- 10-19: 18
10. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? I have chosen to join an agency like the agency...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Fully Agree</th>
<th>Tend to Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Tend to Disagree</th>
<th>Fully Disagree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...because of the access to big companies that are granted by agencies.</td>
<td>43.8% (20)</td>
<td>20.4% (10)</td>
<td>26.5% (13)</td>
<td>2.5% (1)</td>
<td>6.1% (3)</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...because I do not have time to promote myself, so I need someone to do it for me.</td>
<td>55.0% (28)</td>
<td>18.0% (9)</td>
<td>8.0% (4)</td>
<td>12.0% (6)</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...because of the possibility to create networks.</td>
<td>44.0% (22)</td>
<td>36.5% (13)</td>
<td>10.5% (5)</td>
<td>1.5% (3)</td>
<td>6.1% (3)</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you do not agree with the statement, please enter why you have chosen to join an agency.

- Answered question 50
- Skipped question 4

11. Have you chosen to join other agencies as well?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>97.3%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Answered question 49
- Skipped question 5
12. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>10.0% (5)</td>
<td>10.0% (6)</td>
<td>56.0% (28)</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you do not agree with the statement, please enter why you have chosen to join more than one agency.

answered question 50

skipped question 4

13. How did you first get to know about the agency?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online web recruitment</td>
<td>25.6% 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google or similar search engines</td>
<td>11.6% 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was recommended by a colleague</td>
<td>11.6% 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have contacts in the organization</td>
<td>6.3% 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The agency contacted me</td>
<td>27.0% 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>7.0% 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DT's Gazelle list</td>
<td>0.0% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computerworld's top 100 list</td>
<td>0.0% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>7.0% 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 43

skipped question 11
14. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? When I first signed up for the agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Fully Disagree</th>
<th>Tend to Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Tend to Agree</th>
<th>Fully Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>offered a competitive pay package.</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>14.0% (7)</td>
<td>38.0% (19)</td>
<td>20.0% (10)</td>
<td>14.0% (8)</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had a reputation of being a good agency.</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>10.0% (5)</td>
<td>40.0% (20)</td>
<td>26.0% (13)</td>
<td>12.0% (6)</td>
<td>8.0% (4)</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

15. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Fully Disagree</th>
<th>Tend to Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Tend to Agree</th>
<th>Fully Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gave a first impression of being an important player on their market.</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>10.0% (6)</td>
<td>28.0% (14)</td>
<td>20.0% (10)</td>
<td>14.0% (9)</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gave a first impression of representing many clients.</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>12.0% (6)</td>
<td>26.0% (13)</td>
<td>34.0% (17)</td>
<td>18.0% (9)</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gave a first impression of being a reliable cooperation partner.</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>12.0% (6)</td>
<td>38.0% (19)</td>
<td>32.0% (19)</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Fully Disagree</th>
<th>Tend to Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Tend to Agree</th>
<th>Fully Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gives a good first impression.</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>140.0% (17)</td>
<td>46.0% (23)</td>
<td>32.0% (16)</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Benefits program is good.</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>8.9% (4)</td>
<td>46.0% (23)</td>
<td>20.0% (10)</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>22.0% (11)</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Benefits program makes me choose it over other agencies.</td>
<td>24.9% (12)</td>
<td>22.0% (11)</td>
<td>42.0% (21)</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>20.0% (1)</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Instead of the Benefits program, I would prefer if I could...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...give out tickets to soccer games or some such activities.</td>
<td>34.7% (17)</td>
<td>15.4% (9)</td>
<td>22.4% (11)</td>
<td>10.2% (5)</td>
<td>6.1% (3)</td>
<td>8.2% (4)</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...invest in workshops with motivational speakers.</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>15.0% (6)</td>
<td>26.0% (13)</td>
<td>36.0% (15)</td>
<td>12.0% (6)</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...offer a network for freelancers.</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>14.0% (7)</td>
<td>32.0% (16)</td>
<td>26.0% (13)</td>
<td>14.0% (7)</td>
<td>8.0% (4)</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...focus on informing freelancers about the clients in the network.</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>26.0% (13)</td>
<td>42.3% (21)</td>
<td>14.3% (7)</td>
<td>8.2% (4)</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...create a web forum where freelancers can sign up for discounted courses, enter discussions with others and share information regarding their careers.</td>
<td>20.0% (1)</td>
<td>18.0% (9)</td>
<td>26.0% (13)</td>
<td>20.0% (10)</td>
<td>24.0% (12)</td>
<td>10.0% (5)</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other (please specify)  4
19. It is important to me that.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the agency gives a good first impression.</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>14.0% (7)</td>
<td>36.0% (15)</td>
<td>48.0% (23)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the agency provides benefits.</td>
<td>10.0% (5)</td>
<td>12.0% (6)</td>
<td>38.0% (19)</td>
<td>24.0% (12)</td>
<td>16.0% (8)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the agency arranges activities.</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>14.3% (7)</td>
<td>32.7% (16)</td>
<td>26.5% (13)</td>
<td>22.4% (11)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? I chose the assignment(s) offered me because.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>it matched my experience.</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>14.0% (7)</td>
<td>26.0% (14)</td>
<td>54.0% (27)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it matched my competence.</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>38.0% (19)</td>
<td>54.0% (27)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it matched my development needs.</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>6.1% (3)</td>
<td>30.6% (19)</td>
<td>36.7% (15)</td>
<td>22.4% (11)</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it matched my preferences.</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>32.7% (10)</td>
<td>30.5% (15)</td>
<td>39.9% (15)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i needed the job.</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>30.6% (10)</td>
<td>30.8% (15)</td>
<td>23.6% (14)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the salary was good.</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>14.0% (7)</td>
<td>44.0% (22)</td>
<td>28.0% (14)</td>
<td>8.0% (4)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? It puts a satisfying effort in understanding my...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>experience</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>12.0% (6)</td>
<td>18.0% (9)</td>
<td>36.0% (15)</td>
<td>23.0% (14)</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compliance</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>10.0% (5)</td>
<td>18.0% (9)</td>
<td>42.0% (21)</td>
<td>28.0% (14)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development needs</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>50.0% (25)</td>
<td>24.0% (12)</td>
<td>10.0% (5)</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preferences</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>40.0% (20)</td>
<td>32.0% (16)</td>
<td>14.0% (7)</td>
<td>6.0% (3)</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 50

skipped question 4

22. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? It is important to me that it offers an assignment that matches my...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>experience</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>100.0% (10)</td>
<td>27.0% (25)</td>
<td>69.0% (30)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compliance</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>100.0% (9)</td>
<td>20.0% (10)</td>
<td>65.0% (34)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development needs</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>28.0% (14)</td>
<td>24.0% (12)</td>
<td>48.0% (25)</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preferences</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>120.0% (15)</td>
<td>42.0% (21)</td>
<td>40.0% (20)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 50

skipped question 4
### 23. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Fully disagree</th>
<th>Tend to disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Tend to agree</th>
<th>Fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generally, assignments with have been satisfactory.</td>
<td>4.0% (2)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>8.9% (4)</td>
<td>38.3% (19)</td>
<td>46.0% (23)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally, the interviews that precede my assignments, where I get to meet the client, have been satisfactory.</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>6.1% (3)</td>
<td>10.2% (5)</td>
<td>18.4% (9)</td>
<td>61.3% (31)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally, the information I get about assignments is satisfactory.</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>8.2% (4)</td>
<td>16.3% (9)</td>
<td>36.7% (19)</td>
<td>30.6% (15)</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered question:** 50

**Skipped question:** 4

### 24. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? It is important to me that...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Fully disagree</th>
<th>Tend to disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Tend to agree</th>
<th>Fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The assignments offers me are satisfactory.</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>42.9% (21)</td>
<td>43.0% (24)</td>
<td>2.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The interviews that precede my assignments are satisfactory.</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>6.3% (3)</td>
<td>43.3% (21)</td>
<td>43.9% (21)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The information I get about assignments is satisfactory.</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>8.2% (4)</td>
<td>38.5% (19)</td>
<td>46.9% (23)</td>
<td>2.6% (1)</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered question:** 45

**Skipped question:** 5
25. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the end of an assignment, IC offers me satisfying feedback to support my personal development.</td>
<td>12.8% (6)</td>
<td>19.1% (9)</td>
<td>27.7% (13)</td>
<td>17.0% (8)</td>
<td>14.9% (7)</td>
<td>5.5% (4)</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC provides rewards (e.g. a raise) for a good performance.</td>
<td>12.5% (6)</td>
<td>22.6% (11)</td>
<td>35.4% (17)</td>
<td>10.4% (5)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>16.7% (8)</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 45

skipped question 0

26. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? It is important to me that...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the agency offers me feedback.</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>4.1% (2)</td>
<td>16.3% (9)</td>
<td>36.7% (18)</td>
<td>38.8% (19)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the agency provides rewards for good performances.</td>
<td>6.1% (3)</td>
<td>2.0% (1)</td>
<td>36.7% (18)</td>
<td>34.7% (17)</td>
<td>14.3% (7)</td>
<td>0.1% (3)</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 45

skipped question 0
### 27. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? At the end of an assignment... it takes time to...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Fully Agree</th>
<th>Tend to Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Tend to Disagree</th>
<th>Fully Disagree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate my experiences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14.9% (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask me about my preferences for future assignments.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12.3% (6)</td>
<td>25.5% (12)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer me counseling about my future career.</td>
<td>21.3% (10)</td>
<td>31.9% (15)</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>4.3% (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 28. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? I would appreciate counseling...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Fully Agree</th>
<th>Tend to Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Tend to Disagree</th>
<th>Fully Disagree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>offered in a performance review.</td>
<td></td>
<td>31.9% (15)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38.3% (13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in terms of advice on courses to take, that are requested by clients.</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>17.0% (8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42.9% (20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by more experienced contractors within my network.</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>42.6% (20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35.5% (12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>offered in terms of feedback on my resume(s).</td>
<td>4.3% (3)</td>
<td>25.5% (12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55.3% (23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other (please specify) 1
29. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? It is important to me that: takes time to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate my experiences.</td>
<td>21% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>14.9% (7)</td>
<td>46.3% (22)</td>
<td>34.0% (10)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask me about my preferences for future assignments.</td>
<td>21% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>12.8% (8)</td>
<td>42.8% (20)</td>
<td>42.6% (20)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer me counseling about my future career.</td>
<td>64.4% (3)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>19.1% (9)</td>
<td>44.7% (21)</td>
<td>29.8% (14)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 41

skipped question 7

30. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the end of an assignment, the agency usually has a new offer ready for me.</td>
<td>17.0% (9)</td>
<td>46.8% (22)</td>
<td>10.6% (6)</td>
<td>10.6% (6)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>14.9% (7)</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps in touch with me between assignments.</td>
<td>8.5% (4)</td>
<td>23.4% (11)</td>
<td>25.9% (12)</td>
<td>19.1% (6)</td>
<td>19.1% (9)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes a satisfying effort to keep me in the network after an assignment.</td>
<td>12.3% (6)</td>
<td>17.0% (6)</td>
<td>29.8% (14)</td>
<td>19.1% (9)</td>
<td>12.8% (6)</td>
<td>5.5% (4)</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 41

skipped question 7
### 31. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? The qualities that tempt me to stay will... are...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Fully Disagree</th>
<th>Tend to Disagree</th>
<th>Am Neutral</th>
<th>Tend to Agree</th>
<th>Fully Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...development opportunities.</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>8.5% (4)</td>
<td>40.4% (19)</td>
<td>23.4% (11)</td>
<td>17.0% (6)</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...a good salary.</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>25.5% (12)</td>
<td>38.3% (18)</td>
<td>23.4% (11)</td>
<td>4.9% (2)</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...performance incentives.</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>10.9% (5)</td>
<td>41.3% (19)</td>
<td>26.1% (12)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>13.0% (6)</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 41
skipped question: 1

### 32. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? It is important to me that...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Fully Disagree</th>
<th>Tend to Disagree</th>
<th>Am Neutral</th>
<th>Tend to Agree</th>
<th>Fully Agree</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the agency has a new offer ready for me at the end of an assignment.</td>
<td>6.5% (4)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>8.5% (4)</td>
<td>29.8% (14)</td>
<td>46.8% (22)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the agency keeps in touch with me between assignments.</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>12.8% (6)</td>
<td>34.0% (16)</td>
<td>46.8% (22)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the agency makes a satisfying effort to keep me in the network after an assignment.</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>17.0% (6)</td>
<td>38.3% (18)</td>
<td>38.3% (18)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 47
skipped question: 1
### 33. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The agency gives an impression of valuing its freelancers.</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>8.5% (4)</td>
<td>14.9% (7)</td>
<td>40.4% (19)</td>
<td>29.8% (14)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In comparison to other agencies, it focuses more on the relationship with freelancers than the relationship with clients.</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>17.0% (8)</td>
<td>36.2% (17)</td>
<td>25.5% (12)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>17.0% (8)</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been treated well by the staff.</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>8.5% (4)</td>
<td>37.7% (13)</td>
<td>51.8% (20)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there someone in particular from the staff that has had a special impact on your impression of the agency? **Answered question 6**

Is there someone in particular from the staff that has had a special impact on your impression of the agency? **Skipped question**

### 34. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? It is important to me that...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The agency communicates to me that I am valued.</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>23.4% (11)</td>
<td>42.8% (20)</td>
<td>29.8% (14)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is there someone in particular from the staff that has had a special impact on your impression of the agency? **Answered question 6**

Is there someone in particular from the staff that has had a special impact on your impression of the agency? **Skipped question**
35. To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I first signed up, the agency communicated an appealing vision.</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>40.4% (19)</td>
<td>20.8% (14)</td>
<td>14.9% (7)</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provides relevant information, positive as well as negative, about an assignment.</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>8.5% (4)</td>
<td>38.3% (17)</td>
<td>38.3% (18)</td>
<td>10.6% (6)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the agency fulfills its promises.</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>8.5% (4)</td>
<td>40.4% (19)</td>
<td>44.7% (21)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lives up to my expectations.</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>8.5% (4)</td>
<td>35.3% (23)</td>
<td>27.7% (13)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered question 47**

**Skipped question 7**

36. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? It keeps me updated on what they have to offer me in terms of...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>career opportunities.</td>
<td>10.6% (5)</td>
<td>42.6% (20)</td>
<td>21.3% (10)</td>
<td>17.9% (8)</td>
<td>6.4% (2)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>benefits.</td>
<td>10.9% (5)</td>
<td>14.9% (7)</td>
<td>21.3% (10)</td>
<td>42.8% (20)</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>counselling.</td>
<td>10.9% (5)</td>
<td>31.5% (15)</td>
<td>29.8% (14)</td>
<td>21.3% (10)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered question 47**

**Skipped question 7**
37. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? It is important to me that...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Fully disagree</th>
<th>Tend to disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Tend to agree</th>
<th>Fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The agency communicates an appealing vision.</td>
<td>21% (1)</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>426% (20)</td>
<td>36.2% (17)</td>
<td>10.6% (5)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The agency provides realistic job previews</td>
<td>1.3% (1)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>10.6% (5)</td>
<td>447% (21)</td>
<td>33.3% (18)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with positive as well as negative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information about an assignment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The agency fulfills its promises.</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4.3% (7)</td>
<td>23.4% (11)</td>
<td>73.9% (34)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The agency lives up to my expectations.</td>
<td>21% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>21.3% (10)</td>
<td>79.2% (33)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 47

Skipped question: 1

38. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? It is important to me that keeps me informed on what they have to offer me in terms of...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Fully disagree</th>
<th>Tend to disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Tend to agree</th>
<th>Fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career opportunities</td>
<td>22% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>23.9% (11)</td>
<td>38.3% (13)</td>
<td>41.9% (20)</td>
<td>2.2% (1)</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>21% (1)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>34.0% (10)</td>
<td>34.0% (10)</td>
<td>23.4% (11)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling</td>
<td>21% (1)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>19.1% (9)</td>
<td>40.4% (19)</td>
<td>34.0% (16)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 47

Skipped question: 1
### 36. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The agency's values are good.</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>34.0% (10)</td>
<td>46.8% (22)</td>
<td>12.8% (0)</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In capacity of an agency, fulfills my needs.</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>23.4% (11)</td>
<td>46.8% (22)</td>
<td>19.1% (9)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am pleased to work with the agency.</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>17.0% (8)</td>
<td>31.9% (15)</td>
<td>42.6% (20)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would choose an assignment with the agency over one from the other agencies that I am familiar with.</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>8.5% (4)</td>
<td>36.2% (17)</td>
<td>29.9% (14)</td>
<td>17.0% (8)</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend to other freelancers.</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>14.9% (7)</td>
<td>42.8% (20)</td>
<td>38.3% (18)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered question** 47

**Skipped question** 7

### 40. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>I fully disagree</th>
<th>I tend to disagree</th>
<th>I am neutral</th>
<th>I tend to agree</th>
<th>I fully agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to get all my assignments from the same agency.</td>
<td>17.9% (9)</td>
<td>12.6% (6)</td>
<td>31.9% (19)</td>
<td>29.9% (14)</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not actively search for other agencies to work with.</td>
<td>23.4% (11)</td>
<td>21.3% (10)</td>
<td>25.5% (12)</td>
<td>14.9% (7)</td>
<td>12.8% (6)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The agency is a reliable agency.</td>
<td>0.0% (0)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>19.1% (9)</td>
<td>23.4% (11)</td>
<td>53.2% (25)</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years from now, I see myself still working with the agency.</td>
<td>2.1% (1)</td>
<td>6.4% (3)</td>
<td>27.7% (13)</td>
<td>25.5% (12)</td>
<td>31.9% (15)</td>
<td>8.4% (3)</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel committed to the agency</td>
<td>8.5% (4)</td>
<td>8.5% (4)</td>
<td>40.4% (19)</td>
<td>27.7% (13)</td>
<td>10.9% (5)</td>
<td>4.3% (2)</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered question** 47

**Skipped question** 7

18
Appendix 5  
Tables of the correlation analysis

Table 1: Attracting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>14 a</th>
<th>14 b</th>
<th>15 a</th>
<th>15 b</th>
<th>15 c</th>
<th>16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0,625809</td>
<td>0,705546</td>
<td>0,448672</td>
<td>0,572467</td>
<td>0,579725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0,364714</td>
<td>0,438763</td>
<td>0,448672</td>
<td>0,495364</td>
<td>0,367858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r²</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>0,391637</td>
<td>0,497795</td>
<td>0,201307</td>
<td>0,327718</td>
<td>0,336081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0,133016</td>
<td>0,192513</td>
<td>0,201307</td>
<td>0,245386</td>
<td>0,13532</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Selecting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>20 a</th>
<th>20 b</th>
<th>20 c</th>
<th>20 d</th>
<th>20 e</th>
<th>20 f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>39</td>
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Table 3: Selecting

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Table 4: Assigning

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Table 6: Dispersing

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Table 7: Retaining

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Table 8: SHRM

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Table 9: Employer Branding and the Psychological Contract

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