



MÄLARDALEN UNIVERSITY
School of Sustainable Development
of Society and Technology
Västerås autumn 2008

How to be successful within the sports agent industry

Bachelor thesis in marketing
EF0225
23rd January, 2009

Group 2080

Jessica Bjälevik 860321
Maria Magnusson 791105

Tutor:

Carl G. Thunman

Abstract

Date: January 23rd, 2008

Level: Bachelor thesis in marketing, 15 ECTS

Institution: School of Sustainable development of society and technology,
Mälardalen University

Authors: Jessica Bjälevik
Aspvretsgatan 5 a
722 24 Västerås

Maria Magnusson
Södra allégatan 21
722 14 Västerås

+46 (0) 70 46 41 197

+46 (0) 70 71 74 580

March 21st, 1986

November 5th, 1979

Title: How to be successful within the sports agent industry

Tutor: Carl G. Thunman

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to describe the functions and characteristics of a sports agent, and get a more detailed knowledge about how it works in reality. There will be a discussion of different aspects of success connected to the profession as a sports agent, and recommendations are to be made.

Keywords: Sports agents (agency), success, sponsorship, athlete

Method: Writing the thesis has included an extensive use of secondary data, such as books, websites and articles. As a complement, experts from the sports industry were asked.

Conclusion: Throughout the thesis it has become obvious that some factors are essential. These are for example experience, education, contacts, be a good negotiator, marketing and passion for sports.

Summary What is a sports agent and what does a sports agent do? This is described in the thesis, through an explanation of the different functions and characteristics. It is also discussed how to use these functions and characteristics in the best way so that the sports agent can reach success. The complex concept "success" is also discussed so that it is adapted to this thesis and the profession of sports agents. Furthermore, the thesis contains recommendations of how to be successful in the sports agent business.

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	4
1.2 Purpose.....	6
2. Methodology	6
2.1 Secondary data.....	8
2.2 Primary data	8
2.3 The structure of the thesis	10
2.4 Framework	11
2.5 Interviews	12
2.6 Drop-out.....	12
2.7 Criticism of the methodology.....	12
3. Sports agents in general	13
4. Functions of a sports agency	15
4.1 Representing.....	15
4.2 Legal services.....	15
4.3 Financial services	16
4.4 Marketing	16
4.5 Brand building	17
4.6 Networking.....	19
4.6.1 Personal contacts.....	19
4.7 Sponsorship.....	19
5. Characteristics of a sports agency	21
5.1 Experience in the sport.....	21
5.2 Education.....	21
5.3 Sports agent license.....	22
5.4 Clients.....	24
5.5 Organisation and management.....	25
5.5.1 Podium - Sports and entertainment wealth management group.....	25
5.5.2 Sportyard	26
5.5.3 International Management Group (IMG)	27
5.5.4 Leigh Steinberg	28
5.5.5 Summary	29
5.6 Profitability.....	30
5.7 Marketing	30
6. How to be a successful sports agent.....	31
7. Recommendations	37
8. Conclusion	39

References
Appendix 1
Appendix 2

1. Introduction

Imagine having someone taking care of almost everything in the daily life, so that all your time can be spent on doing the most rewarding activities in life. This is the case for many athletes, who can spend all their time and efforts on the sports while someone else represents them, negotiates the best deals and does all the planning for them. Without any financial or marketing knowledge, the sportsmen still can get the best solutions. This is the sports agent's work; to always be there for the athlete and always be prepared when needed.

Being a sports agent means working with marketing; to market the agency as well as the clients. The clients, the athletes in other words, are some kind of products and the sports agent's role is communicator, promoter, negotiator and planner. This thesis is about how sports agents are working, what functions they have and what characteristics the companies have in order to run a successful business. The functions can for example be marketing and brand building but also more practical matters, such as booking and planning trips and meetings. Characteristics can be for example how the organisation is built or experience of the sports agent industry.

Success means that a purpose is fulfilled or that a task has been accomplished (Ask Oxford, 2008) and is complex since it means different things to different people. In the context of a sports agent, this means having well-performing athletes which lead to that they are usually more attractive to sponsors and other business partners. Good performance and advantageous sponsorship deals lead to profitability, which is another aspect of success. Profitability is a factor that cannot be neglected, since it gives more resources and most likely a higher motivation to the agent, who then is able to perform better and offer further services. Management and organisation are important within the sports agent industry, because it is a rather complex industry with many different components that have to be coordinated. A well-coordinated organisation gives advantages in the terms of stability. The aspects of success that are meant in this thesis are:

- **Profitability**
Profitability in this thesis means that the sports agent negotiates contracts that gain both the athlete and the sports agent economically. The contracts should also be favourable in terms of other conditions such as for example length and extent.
- **Well-performing athletes**
These athletes are performing in a good manner and achieve good results in competitions and tournaments.

- **Resources**

There is a need for educated and ethical personnel as well as financial resources in the organisation. This enables the sports agents to perform the best for the athletes. Other resources are for example legal and marketing services.

- **Contacts**

With a large network of contacts, the sports agents have good opportunities to find good deals and market the athletes in several contexts. Having many contacts facilitates the work with finding new clients to the agency.

The aim is to find conclusions that are helpful for actors that want to enter the market and develop their future business, but also for already existing companies within the industry. The sports agent industry is a large business; therefore, the paper will describe the agents and their work in general terms. Potential readers of this thesis are individuals or organisations that have an interest in the sports agent industry and might need information about this.

Sports agents, also called representatives, work as a negotiator between the athlete and sponsors, team owners and general managers. Their assignment according to Heitzmann (2004) is to make sure that the athlete gets the best financial and playing arrangements. The agents need to have great knowledge about financial and legal services and many of the representatives have therefore education or experience from business or law. To be profitable the representatives obtain a percentage, around 3 to 20 percent, of the athlete's income (Staudohar, 2006). This means a substantial amount of money when representing professional athletes like for example Michael Jordan¹. The income can for example be from sponsorships or payment when a player transfers to another team. An agent can also help the sportsman with financial services like making suggestions for investments. To have a representative means that the athlete fully can concentrate on the sport and leave all the "everyday assignments" to the agent. The agent should always work to create better conditions for the athlete as well as performing practical things, for example as booking airline tickets, planning trips etcetera (Billing, 2006).

The sports agent business is enormous and almost every professional athlete has an agent. The agents work in the "shadow" of the athlete, it is therefore difficult to see how large the industry is and how many actors that are active. A successful sports agent often starts to work in a large organisation, where he or she can get contacts and by that means start an own career. With the right connections and athletes, a sports agent can

¹ Michael Jordan is one of the most successful American basketball players, who played in the National Basketball Association (NBA), (NBA, 2008).

earn over a million dollars a year. The ways that agents make money is for example through commissions on contracts and endorsements. The sports agent is often only paid when the athlete is paid, and it is therefore important for both parties that the representative always tries to find new opportunities for the athlete. (Sports Agent guide, 2008).

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to describe the functions and characteristics of a sports agent, and get a more detailed knowledge about how it works in reality. There will be a discussion of different aspects of success connected to the profession as a sports agent, and recommendations are to be made.

2. Methodology

Here is the process of creating the thesis described. Different ways of collecting information will be stated and explained. There will be a description of how the models were made and an explanation why and how the interviews were used. Some criticism of the methodology will appear in the end of the chapter.

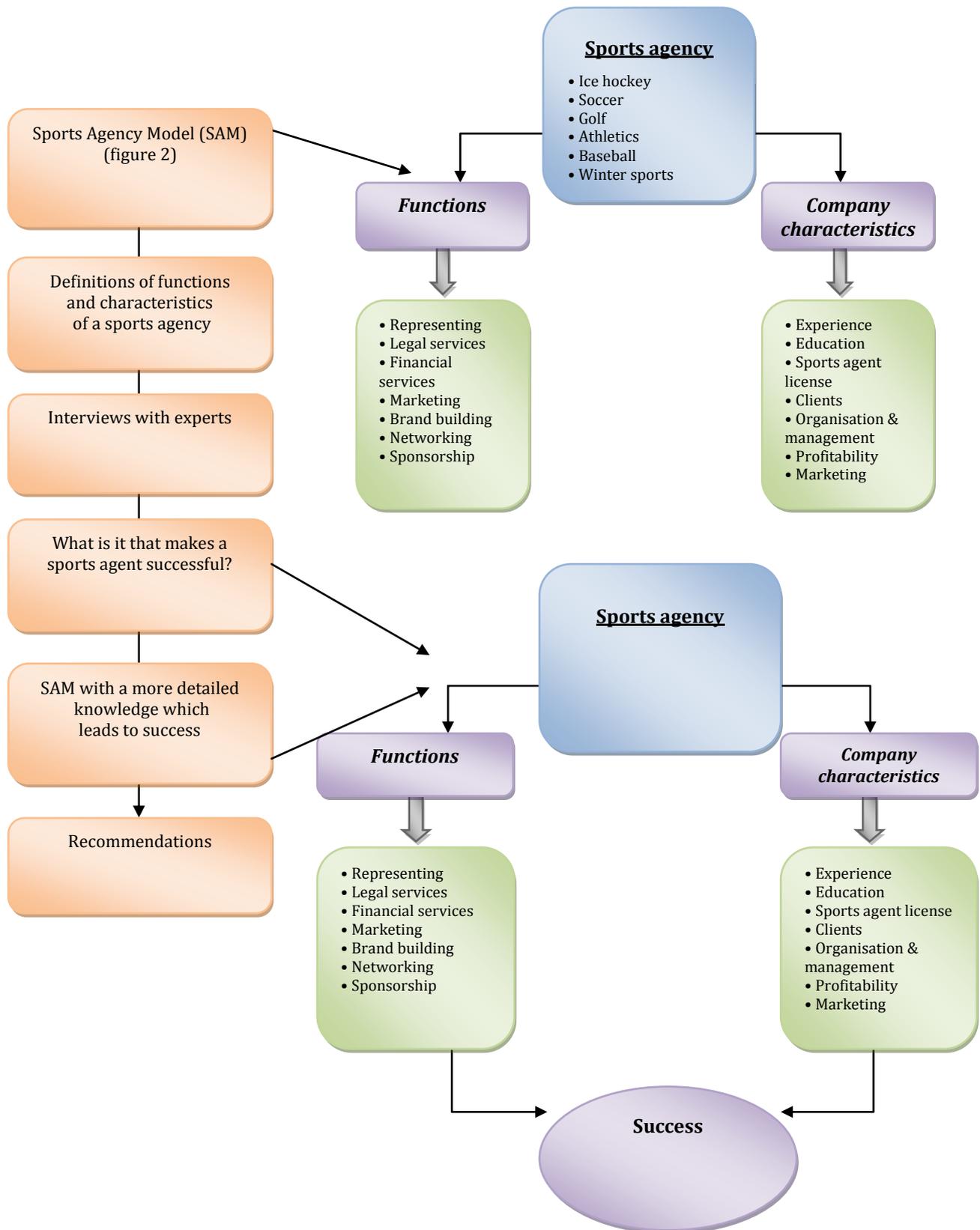


Figure 1, This model shows the different parts in the thesis and what parts that led to the models figure 2 and 3.

2.1 Secondary data

To be able to find out what makes a sports agent successful, there is a need to find out what a sports agent does. The way to find the different functions and characteristics of a sports agent, different sports agents' websites were visited and compared, in order to find the most common functions and characteristics. Other secondary data were also used to gather more neutral information about sports agents. Arbnor and Bjerke (1997) as well as Lundahl and Skärvad (1999) are stating that secondary data is material that has been gathered for another purpose than the actual thesis. These references are from books, articles and websites. Databases such as ABI/INFORM and ebrary have been used through Mälardalen University to find articles and books about sports management, sports agent, sponsorships, sports marketing and brand. In these databases there was information about these subjects, which was a start for the thesis. After finding a representative number of functions and characteristics, which were described by several sports agencies, a model was made; figure 2 (SAM – Sports Agent Model, the functions and characteristics of a sports agency). This model was made to structure the thesis and also to facilitate the work of describing the different parts. Also the interview questions were made based on this model, so that the questions asked would connect to the work based on secondary sources. The different sports agents' websites were also the most helpful sources when describing the functions and characteristics. To describe this better, case studies were used. These cases contain descriptions of four sports agents/sports agencies in Sweden and the United States of America. The main purpose of the cases is to exemplify organisation and management within the sports agencies. This is done due to the difficulties of giving a general description of how it works, since there are several kinds of structures that can lead to success. Although there is a focus on four agencies, there is information used from many other sports agent's websites as well. To use these four agencies as examples was considered helpful since they all have reached success in different terms. To end that chapter a small conclusion was made to compare and show how they can reach success in several ways, using different strategies.

2.2 Primary data

The information through secondary sources was not enough for the thesis to be complete; therefore interviews with experts were used as a complement. In this way, primary data could help the thesis to fill the some gaps where the information was missing. Primary data is information that has been collected for a special purpose, and this information can be obtained through for example observations or interviews (Björklund och Paulsson, 2003). The primary data for this thesis consists of interviews with people that are or have been active participants within different sports, managers or sports agents. A professor at Mälardalen University, Lennart Ytter, recommended

amongst others Leo Mylläri, Mats Vennberg and Peter Markstedt as resources when writing the thesis. They are or have been active in sports and know most likely much about the industry. The sports agents chosen were from Sportyard and Podium. During the work with the thesis, it has become clear that these companies are two of the most famous and successful sports agencies in Sweden, therefore they can hopefully give extensive and useful information about their functions and characteristics. Since all the interviewees are Swedish, the interviews are carried out in Swedish and thereafter translated into English. The interviewees are experienced within the business of sports and sports agencies. They have been active within at least one sport, which is to be considered as a great asset. It is then easier to understand the market and the success factors of a sports agency. These are the ones that were contacted:

- Johan Elliot, at the sports agency Sportyard, with the head office located in Stockholm, Sweden. He used to play soccer and then started with golf as a teenager, later he had the opportunity to play on a scholarship in an American university. He has a degree in marketing and business.
- Stina Funke, an employee at Podium, a sport agency situated among other places in Malmö, Sweden and Monte Carlo, Monaco. Podium has long time experience within the industry from representing athletes.
- Peter Markstedt, former soccer player from Västerås, Sweden. Until the age of 27 he has played in Västerås Sportklubb, VSK, and after that he played in the British football club Barnsley, the Swedish teams Helsingborg and Hammarby. Markstedt has experience of four sports agents.
- Leo Mylläri, manager at Bellevue sports facilities in Västerås. He is also coaching the Swedish national wrestling team.
- Mats Vennberg, employed at SISU Västmanland. SISU (Svenska Idrottsrörelsens Studieförbund), is the Swedish sports movement education association. Vennberg is working with consultancy within sports education, and he has been active within wrestling for 20 years.

In order to ask them if they were interested in answering some questions concerning the thesis, a request was sent via e-mail. The asked persons gave positive answers, and were willing to carry out the interviews. Through the answers, information was obtained, for example what makes a sports agent successful in their opinion.

Because many sources are used and compared when the functions and characteristics were described, it is likely that this is the way it is structured in many agencies. The

interviewees have great experiences in the industry; about how the business is working in reality. They have all been dealing with sports agents, and some of the interviewees are also sports agents. The interviews were given to sports agents, athletes and managers so that there were different perspectives of what makes a sports agent successful. First the functions and characteristics were analysed on the basis on the secondary sources and were complemented with the answers from the interviewees. After analysing the material gathered, a discussion about what it is that makes a sports agent successful was made. The main points from the interviewees' answers were gathered and analysed together with previous collected data. The material that was gathered that way was summed up in a discussion about the success factors and the different importance of the functions and characteristics was discussed. After finishing the discussion a more definite way of reaching success was formulated in the chapter of recommendations. In that section a description of the fundamental factors for reaching success is stated as a summary and guidelines for a good way of working as a sports agent. This is a good way of ending this thesis, giving guidance that sum up all the work and can help people succeed in the sports agent business.

The recommendations might not be applicable for every sports agent in the world, but they represent the most general and basic ideas for a sports agent to reach success, since the thesis is based on information from different actors in the business. Figure 2 is in the discussion revised and becomes figure 3. This model shows the connections to success and the discussion will therefore show how the functions and characteristics lead to it.

The profession "sports agent" is like in many other professions, the basics work almost the same but there are differences in how the work is carried out from company to company. The sports agent does have similar tasks although the workplace might be in Sweden or in the United States. To exemplify this, an accountant does about the same tasks and calculations independent of country or company. Therefore this thesis is rather general, although it might be a need for different specialisations in sports. But the accountant also has to specialise in certain companies and programs so the difference is not that large. It is still a profession which requires certain tasks and skills, but with different characteristics.

2.3 The structure of the thesis

The thesis starts by giving general information about what sports agents really are and briefly explain what they are doing. After describing that, a deeper explanation of the most important functions and characteristics that the agent performs was done. Thereafter a description of different sports agents that are active today was made and this was performed after figure 2. The agencies were described after the model to create an understanding for what they are doing and what services they are offering. After

explaining how the “real” agents work, the most important factors for success were looked into. After the discussion about success recommendations were drawn that also complete the thesis. The interviews were used in the thesis to complete secondary data and contribute to the discussion about success. Since the answers from the interviews were insufficient for making an extensive analysis, a discussion was made instead, where the most important parts from the interviews were be used. The information from the interviewees is presented in the discussion in chapter 6 “How to be a successful sports agent”. The interviews are also added in appendix 2.

2.4 Framework

Figure 2, as seen below, shows the functions and characteristics of a sports agent The sports mentioned in the figure, ice hockey, soccer, golf, athletics, baseball and winters sports, have been chosen to represent the sports that are most frequently represented by sports agents, according to the material studied for this thesis. The functions of a

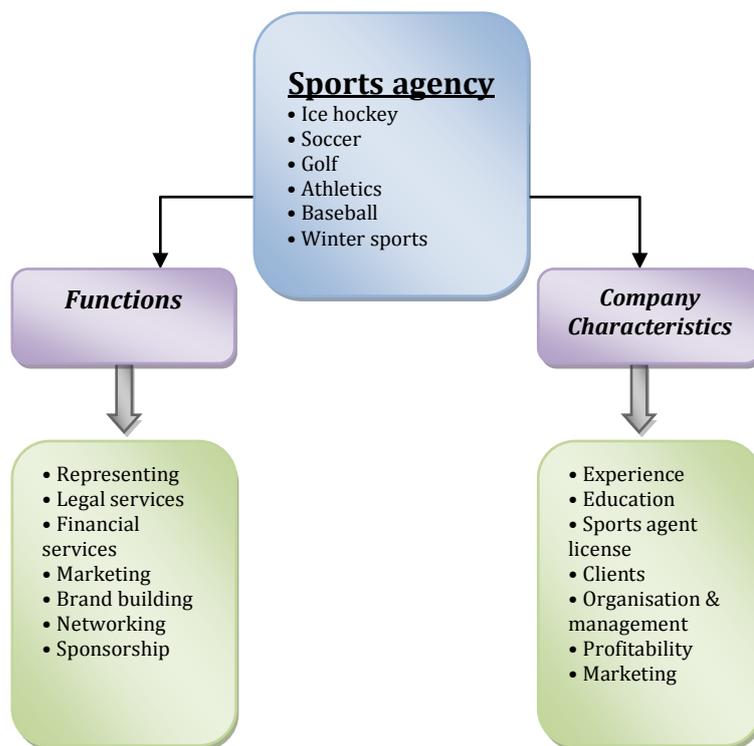


Figure 1, SAM (Sports agency model) *The functions and characteristics of a sports agency*

sports agent will be described more thoroughly in chapter 3.1. Functions in the model consists of the most common assignments of the sports agents and based on these categories the sport agencies are described. Company characteristics show what is different with the sports agencies and is more focused on organisation and how it is built. The subtitles in Company characteristics will also be thoroughly described in chapter 4. These are the functions and characteristics that are crucial if a sports agent want to reach success.

2.5 Interviews

When performing an interview, different techniques can be used. There are three main techniques, structured, semi-structured or unstructured. A structured interview means that the questions are constructed in advanced and they are asked in an order that is also made in advanced (Björklund and Paulsson, 2003). The technique used in this thesis is the structured interview, since the questions are sent to the interviewee and there will not be a chance for a discussion or resulting questions. Therefore the questions have to be clear, motivated and explained so that the interviewee understands what he or she is supposed to answer.

The interview is slightly different for the three parties. There are for example a few questions asked about the sports agent's organisation, which is difficult for the athlete and the manager to answer. The questions removed from the interview with managers and athletes are the questions number: 6, 7, 9, 11 and 12 (Appendix 1).

2.6 Drop-out

The interviews were sent out to five different individuals but only three of them answered the questions. The two remaining interviewees were contacted again but without any results. This means that the interview part has a drop-out rate of 40 per cent.

2.7 Criticism of the methodology

The information collected for the thesis comes from several websites whose information probably is biased. This might be because the facts are written by people in the same business or even the same sports agency, and they want to give only positive aspects of the industry and promote their own company. When executing the interviews, there were some problems with receiving answers from a few interviewees, despite their answers earlier that they would like to contribute. They might have considered not having time, interest or enough knowledge to answer the questions; this could be some reasons why they did not reply. An absence in replies occurred with two of the interviewees, one representative from a sports agent and one manager. Doing personal interviews or contacting the people even more maybe could have made them more interested and willing to answer.

The persons that did answer the questions did so with different depths. Some questions could be interpreted in different ways, which could have led to that useful answers went missing due to misunderstandings. Therefore the questions have to be clear, motivated and explained so that the interviewee understands what he or she is supposed to answer. There are no possibilities to explain the questions and the motives behind them

further in written interviews, which is a disadvantage with this method. On the other hand, written interviews can give the interviewees more time to consider the answers and think about relevant information. Due to the lack of time that some of the interviewees expressed, there was not any possibilities to get back to the persons and ask further questions when needed.

The plan was first to make personal interviews with certain people within the industry. It turned out to be rather difficult since the people who were supposed to be interviewed did not have time or thought that they were the right persons to ask. To be able to get better answers it would have been preferably to do personal interviews where the interviewer can ask resulting questions and also explain what was meant with each question. As mentioned earlier, some of the answers gathered through the method in this thesis were incomplete since the interviewees not always understood the questions. The interviewees could also have been better chosen since all of them did not answer. More carefully selected interviewees could have resulted in more useful answers that gave the thesis more depth and not only breadth. To interview sports agents are a good thing to do, but it also has to be taken into account that they are often very busy and cannot answer the questions as detailed as the interviewers would wish.

The reason that interviews were carried out in the first place, was to increase the information about sports agents in reality. The questions were given to different kinds of sport related people, who all were considered to be able to give several views of the work as a sports agent. This would give the thesis more width but also confirm the information gathered through the different websites used and compared.

3. Sports agents in general

A sports agent is responsible for many services such as promoting the athlete and arranges meetings with team owners and managers. Networking is a great part of the sports agents' day and they have to keep track of current and future trends and other information that can affect the athlete. Sports agents also deal with contracts and help the athletes to get good contracts regarding for example acceptable salaries, with possibilities to increase, and making provisions for injuries. They also recommend what the athletes should do, regarding long-term and short-term benefits. This means that the sports agents need to have knowledge about investments, business management, financial and risk analysis, but also be aware and know much about the sport. Therefore there are many different experts in the sports agency, each responsible for a part of the whole service. Sports agents do much negotiating for their clients and they have to be prepared to bargaining for better conditions for their athletes constantly. They also communicate with their clients regularly to keep the level of motivation high. The work of a sports agent does not only consist of paper work at a desk, but also travelling to

different countries and cities with the assignment of representing the athlete (Job profiles, 2003-2008).

The need for a sports agent can vary but when the athlete is in the beginning of his or her career, it might be a good way to get the contacts needed. It is also good for the new athletes to get help with contractual questions and negotiations in general, and here the legal experts get involved. Many sports agencies offer professional help in several areas outside the sport field. This can for example be finance, marketing, insurance, law and real-estate investment (Sports agent directory, 2008).

A sports agency works as a connection between the “sport world” and the “business world”. They want to assure the athlete that the right and fair image will be shown. To help the athlete choose the right marketing strategy is a job for the agent. Sports agents are often persons who have had a career in the actual sport and/or are educated business people. Sports agencies often have different experts from different areas as mentioned above, for example lawyers. Sports agents do not only help the athlete with practical things, they also develop the brand and, stated by Thomaselli (2006), the athlete’s personality. At the same time they make the understanding of sports management easier (Sportyard, 2008).

The role of an agent is changing more towards complete representation, the role is developing constantly and the number of services offered is increasing. Some agents are cooperating closely with labels within clothes, shoes, films, brokerage services. This is a kind of vertical integration that helps the athlete benefit in other areas than just his or her sport. The fee an agent earns is usually around three or four per cent but can also be up to fifteen per cent. The sports agent field is becoming more and more dominated by a few large groups, which buy out smaller firms. The advantage with a full-service agent is that the athlete gets complete representation without having to search in different places. This arrangement is also attractive to the agent itself, because it captures the whole business. Agents have to work hard though, to keep the clients and get new ones. There are relatively few athletes, and many agents that are willingly to work for them. Being a sports agent can be a challenge, with not only the competition but also with different requirements, certifications and regulations. (Staudohar, 2006, p 246). To have a strong work ethic as a sports agent is one of the competitive advantages, since the competition to get and keep the jobs is rather tough (Rhodes, 2006).

4. Functions of a sports agency

In this part the functions that a sports agency is dealing more often with are described more thoroughly.

4.1 Representing

The main task for a sports agent is to represent the client in all possible ways. This can be practical arrangements as well as networking and negotiating. Almost everything that a sports agent does refers to some kind of representing. The principal types of jobs in the professional athlete representation business are legal, consulting, sales and marketing (Rhodes, 2006).

A sports agent is a middle man between the sports world and the business world, for example are the work with finding sponsors and communicating with media facilitated by the agent. The athlete might not have the interest nor the time to do this him or herself. Representing an athlete also means talking about the client in a positive way in different contexts (Markstedt, 2008). In other words, the sports agent is working as some kind of personal PR manager for the athlete.

Sports agents are both agents and sales persons since they have to sell their services to the athletes and then they have to “sell” the athlete to teams and argue for the large amount of money the athlete is worth. The main goal for an agent is often to get the most money or the best deal for the athlete (Rhodes, 2006).

4.2 Legal services

In this part it is necessary to know what a contract is and therefore a definition from Beech & Chadwick (p. 302, 2004) is given: “A contract is a legally-binding agreement between two parties enforceable in law. It consists of various terms, including both implied and expressed, which can be both written and oral”.

There is a need for professional help considering law issues when an athlete for example is about to sign a contract. Other situations when legal services are needed are in “Sports and Media Law, Commercial Law and Contracts, International Business Law, International Estate Planning, Trust, Immigration Law, Intellectual Property and Trademarks” (Podium Sports and entertainment wealth management group, 2008). To be able to handle all these legal services it is preferable to have an attorney within the agency. It is also important that the attorney has the athlete’s best in mind and that the athlete trusts him.

4.3 Financial services

It is always preferable to have experience of sales when going into the business, even though it is only from a simple selling job (Rhodes, 2006). Heitzmann (2004) states that the sports representatives also serve as financial agents for players, which mean that they are making suggestions for investments or product endorsements and handling income taxes. To help the athlete with financial services it is important for a sports agent to have an education within business so that his advice is relevant and viable. In this section, trust is one of the key factors as well, considering the large amount of money they are usually dealing with. An education is essential because of the mistakes and errors that by that means can be avoided. An example of the consequences when choosing an agent without financial knowledge or education is the Swedish sports agent Kent Carlzon. He had no business education but still helped the athletes with financial services; he also did tax crime, false accounting and obstructing tax order measures. Because of this he was sentenced three years imprisonment and five years away from the industry (Dagens Nyheter, 2008). How the financial services better can be done is described below.

Since every client has different and specific financial needs and goals, the financial planning has to be custom-made. The agents have to allocate limited resources to unlimited alternatives. The services that can be offered are analysis and recommendations on cash management, insurance alternatives, charitable giving and retirement strategies and budget concerns. The athletes often need help with investing their money since they relatively often earn much money. It is necessary to make wise investments in order to protect the athletes' assets against inflation, interest rate fluctuation and economic uncertainties. There are many financial tasks that athletes do not have time or knowledge about how to do. It is therefore important that the agent, who preferable is a financial expert, can deal with this. Examples of services are payment of bills, account management, reconciling accounts, completing loan and financial applications, insurance policy evaluation and financial analysis for prospective transactions (Jet Sports management, 2008).

4.4 Marketing

Sports agents have to market their athletes at the same time as they market themselves, to be able to find new athletes and sponsors. The athlete often does not know how the marketing works in the business and leaves therefore that to the agent, who has the contacts and experience. It is the agent's job to try to fulfil the wishes that the athlete has, for example the swimmer Michael Phelps wanted his agent Peter Carlisle to help him make the sport of swimming grow (Beirne, 2008). Marketing also has a lot to do with sponsorships and to be able to get this kind of publicity the athlete has to have a strong charisma, or star quality, to actually be successful. Charisma can be taught to

some level but if there is nothing naturally; it is harder for the agent to find good sponsorships. To get help with this, there can be media coaches involved so that the message is presented correctly and to form the star quality and natural charisma in order to fit in the context. Some athletes also practise before interviews and answer questions that might be asked, so that he or she is prepared and can leave a good impression (Thompson, 2007)

Word of mouth can be performed in three ways by consumer to consumer, business to business and business to consumer. The function of word of mouth is to build active, mutually beneficial communication between the parties mentioned above. It usually does not involve any other form of advertising, simply people talking to each other. Word of mouth is not “real” marketing it is basically about the consequences of what the company does. If the company offers great services and deals, people who have used the products will talk well about them to their friends. This will also spread to other people, a kind of snowball effect (Sernovitz, 2006).

4.5 Brand building

It will be pointed out why it is important and how to keep a brand successful as time goes on. To represent an athlete is similar to managing a consumer brand. The athletes are often well-known and cause a reaction when mentioning their name (Knowledge @ Wharton, 2003).

The advantages with a strong brand

It is often easier to work with a strong brand since the customers know what it gets. This is basically the same in the sports agent industry. The sports agents have to market their product, in this case the athlete, towards sponsors but also other sports events. At the same time they are doing that, they have to promote themselves as a brand to attract new athletes and more contacts. A well-known brand can give the sports agent and the athlete many advantages if they are ready to invest in it. Keeping and improving the quality and meeting the buyers’ expectations are costly (Dahlén & Lange, 2003) and it has to be up-to-date. The customer or buyer in this part will be the sponsors, who actually “buy” the athlete. If the athlete does not match the product or service, the sponsor will go for another athlete. The benefits of having a strong brand, which is the athlete, are that the sponsor is more aware of what it gets and what it can expect (Brassington & Pettitt, 2005). If the sponsor likes the message that the athlete communicates, there is a chance that sponsor becomes loyal to the brand, in other words the athlete. Loyal in these terms can mean that the sponsor chooses to hire the athlete more frequently, which in turn means higher profit for the athlete and the sports agent. (Dahlén & Lange, 2003). It is very important that the athletes’ performances have good quality and that they actually live up to the promises in the contracts and do not get caught in unsuitable situations. If they fail to fulfil the agreements, it can cause

damage to the brand, the sponsor and the athlete. Here some of the advantages with a strong brand are mentioned, described by Dahlén & Lange (2003):

- *Increased loyalty with the customers*

When a brand offers exactly what it says the customers trust it and will buy again. Popular sportsmen can help improve the image and knowledge of a brand or product, therefore a successful athlete that promotes a product, will help the company to sell.

- *Increased efficiency in promotion*

Loyal customers tend to filter the information given in media. They do not react as much on the competitors promotion as on the promotion from the company they are loyal to. An admired athlete will acquire attention, almost no matter what product she or he is promoting.

- *Attract new customers*

If many financial resources are placed in the promotion of a product, the customers will see it in many places and the chance that they will try it increases. People that normally do not have an interest in a certain product, can now be interested because of the connection to their favourite athletes used in the commercials.

- *Immunity to crisis*

When a brand already has a good reputation there is a greater chance that the customer will oversee a crisis that the company is involved in. Here, successful sportsmen can help to turn the failure into something positive. The consumers will hopefully focus on the athletic achievements instead of the crisis the company is experiencing.

- *Geographical expansion*

If the brand has great success in the home country there is also a chance that it might be successful internationally. Due to success, it is possible that there are financial resources enough to go abroad as well. Sport is a global phenomenon, and athletes are able to reach out through different languages, religions and cultures.

Brand management

Brand management gives the perspective from the company's point of view, how it can manage and use the brand. It also is important for the brand owner to develop a strong core identity that is consistent over time. A sports agent, in this case the "brand owner" is constantly working with developing and strengthening the identity of athletes, the brand. It has to be presented in a successful way and give a positive and likeable image of the product. The brand identity must reflect the self-image of the consumer and agree on the way it wants to be perceived or seen. Customers have to be able to relate to the sportsmen, therefore, it is important that the brand owner tries to make connections

between the brand product and the consumer. Relationship is the key issue between the consumer and the brand. (Melin, 1999).

Brand equity, according to Aaker (1991), is the set of assets and liabilities that are linked to a brand, its name or symbol that adds or subtracts the value provided by a service or product in the eyes of the consumers. If a brand name or symbol is changed, this can affect the assets or liabilities of the name, although some of them are shifted into the new name or symbol.

4.6 Networking

A key role for a sports agent is to have a broad network so that he or she can solve problems that occur, but also find new opportunities that help the athlete to develop and go further in the career. The networks can include contact with other sport agencies, athletes, sports executives and experts in different areas, such as lawyers (Become a sports agent, 2008). Certain sport agencies also help their athletes to establish connections with several kinds of advisors, accountants and asset managers. If the agency does not have the specific knowledge within the company, it is bought from external experts. There are often different experts every time, which also broaden the network. (Billing, 2006).

4.6.1 Personal contacts

To have personal contacts in the business is important because there is a greater chance that the agent reaches what he wants. Graham (2001) states that it is valuable to get to know journalists and broadcasters since these relationships are essential to “getting telephone calls accepted and to reaching a more receptive listener”. He continues by suggesting that the relations should not only be temporarily since there often is a need for similar contacts later on.

4.7 Sponsorship

Today sponsoring is a natural part of the marketing strategies among many companies, and there are careful planning and tactics behind the choices of sports, occasions and events. (Johansson & Norberg, 2007). Sponsoring is a commercial deal between two or more parties that result in association marketing, a way to communicate, promote and sell a brand, product or company. The goals from the companies are normally to create awareness and strengthen the brand and its image. Sponsoring is not the same as charity, rather a win-win situation. The athlete as an example gets economical funds in return for exposure of the company. Sponsoring differentiates from commercials, because the when and what of the activities are more difficult to predict and so are the effects of the cooperation. There is not the same kind of means to inform, but can still

convince, often because the target group experience it as a personal choice or recommendation. An advantage is that sponsoring communicates something about the whole lifestyle, the product and brand, not only one product as traditional marketing usually does. Of course, it is crucial that the sponsored person or event represents that kind of image that the company want to be associated with. A clear trend within sports is that not only individuals but also whole events are sponsored by a company, this makes the sponsors come closer to their target group and their lifestyle. (Johansson & Norberg, 2007).

There are some different motives for sponsoring: The companies that sponsor athletes are paying for image and association; they want their brand or products to be recognised in certain circumstances and to have positive associations. They want exposure in a positive context and in the right market segment. Publicity is one factor; media attention also gives attention to the sponsors. Introducing new or changed products is another reason for sponsoring; this gives a very good opportunity to get the product out on the market. In addition, when expanding and entering new markets this is a positive way to create awareness. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be a large factor when sponsoring, the company takes a responsibility that is outside their own field of business. Even though there are most likely commercial motives behind, CSR is expected from some companies. Sponsoring is also a way to build relations between the parties, a person, event and the company. (Johansson & Norberg, 2007).

Disadvantages of sponsoring

A sport or activity might lose its identity if the terms and conditions are dictated by sponsoring companies or organisations. Rules and times of an event can be changed due to requests from sponsors, to suite TV-schedule for example. This can be negative or even a disadvantage of the athlete. A sport can actually be over-commercialised, and this takes away the genuine and fun feeling about the whole event.

Sponsoring tends to target only top performers; therefore, less talented or unsuccessful participants can be left without economical funds. If the sponsorship is cancelled, many participants may have to quit because of the economical circumstances. A bad product or person may damage the product. An artist's reputation influences the sales of the product he or she is representing. It can also be the other way around, unacceptable sponsors in sports and lifestyle events. Tobacco and alcohol are some examples that you might want to rethink regarding sponsoring, due to the health risks and contradictions of a sporty lifestyle (Moritz, 2002).

The sponsor and the sponsored sometimes have different needs and purposes with the relation, therefore it is important to find partners to cooperate with that have similar values and points of view. If not, there might be a lack of creditability and there are risks

that you sell your name or brand “too cheap”, and the resources and benefits coming from a sponsorship could be over-estimated. At least in the beginning of a career, a player/rider needs to dedicate a lot of time and effort to search for companies to collaborate with, and there can develop a situation when a sponsorship costs more than it gives in return, in terms of lost time, less independence and so on (Moritz, 2002).

5. Characteristics of a sports agency

Every sports agency offers something “unique”. This can be expertise in certain areas related to the sports industry or experience in the sport and the business. Below there are six common characteristics that most of the sport agencies possess.

5.1 Experience in the sport

It is common that the sports agents have experience in the sport that their athletes are active in. This gives them better understanding for the athlete and it is easier for them to make better deals in consideration to the sport. In Sweden the sports agent business often is divided in to two main groups. The first group is agents who are self-employed and usually former professionals themselves, for example Daniel Wessfeldt (athletics), Martin Dahlin (soccer), Roger Ljung (soccer) and Nina Wennerström (tennis). The other group can be summarised in one corporation, the great company International Management Group (IMG). (Affärsvärlden, 2006)

It is not only good to have experience in the sport because of knowledge; there are other advantages as well. The people in sports are often competitive and they work hard to achieve what they want. These qualifications are really good when doing business since it requires long and tough negotiations to get the best (Rhodes, 2006).

5.2 Education

The best education a sports agent can have is experience. Experience here means having knowledge about the business and how it works. A sports agent often has experience from the sports industry as an active athlete. Education can also be useful, as a complement. An example of education in the subject is Sports management in Båstad, Sweden, which is a two year education. It has theoretical as well as practical moments, and gives the student a qualified degree within sports management. This program started after some pressure from representatives from the sports field, both national and local level, and that was seen as a sign of higher demand for people with sports management competence. The learning is based upon projects from the business world, and the student has the opportunity to shape and develop his or her education in collaboration with the tutors and other students. Lectures, practices and seminars are

used as support, but the learning is supposed to happen through experiences rather than just reading. The exams are held by individual or group assignments, and during the study time cooperation between the student and companies and organisations take place. During some periods the education consists of internship, during which the student will be given opportunities to work more practical in the field. The general eligibility is Social science, Mathematics and English, alternatively experience from working and/or studying. Organisational work and practising sports on professional level also gives advantages. Caddie sports and Business is the company behind this sports management education. Its founders Tomas Nilsson, Frans Fransson and Viktor Magnusson had a strategy from the beginning, Caddie was supposed to be a link in between sports and business. This is mainly because of the need of management within the sports industry, and also because of the interest in the field. They wanted to use their skills and experiences from management in an interesting context, to combine business and pleasure (Studentum, 2008).

There are also a lot of different online courses that are supposed to give a sports agent education, but not many have high quality (Sports Agent Guide, n.d.) and therefore these have to be critically checked before use. All such courses often cost much, so there is a chance that a new sports agent without experience gets swindled.

5.3 Sports agent license

There are no requirements for a “formal college education to be a sports agent” (about.com: Sports careers) but often there is a need for a license to be a sports agent. Several agents do have degrees in law, since it is preferable when dealing with contracts or other agreements with clients and partners. The most important factor to become a successful sports agent although is to have well-performing athletes, as well as contacts in the industry. Almost every sport has its own license; but most of the terms included are similar and therefore are only the licenses for ice hockey and soccer explained in this chapter. The examples given are applicable in Sweden (about.com: Sports careers).

To have a license gives the sports agent more credibility and the athletes also know then that the agent has some sort of education within the business. There are also rules that the agent has to follow that create a more “safe” relation (Stein, 2008). To make it even clearer, two examples of licensing are described below.

Ice hockey

According to The central organisation of Swedish ice hockey players, SICO (Sveriges Ishockeyspelares CentralOrganisation), is responsible for issuing the certificate for a player agent. The purpose of SICO is to provide for the players’ interest within the sport, economy, social welfare and labour rights towards the employer, that is the teams,

organisations or the national team. One of the most important tasks is to help players that have been mistreated by the team or employer; this can concern conflicts with payment or disputes about the contract.

What does SICO's agent certification mean and what does SICO demand of their agents?

Basic costs for applying and being an active agent:

- Apply for a certificate: 5000 SEK
- Certification and liability insurance: 10 000 SEK annually
- Agent meetings: 2500 SEK per time

A person who applies for the certification is not allowed to be an active player in any of the highest leagues in Sweden, nor possess any position in the association or any of the teams. If necessary, the committee will summon for an interview, whose purpose is to find out whether the applicant is suitable or not, and has sufficient knowledge about ice hockey and its regulations, civil rights and contract rights. The interview, which should be carried out according to a predetermined list, will be held by a person appointed by the Certification committee, and at least one more representative from the committee needs to be present. Expenses or fees are not to be charged the candidate. The certification committee will decide whether the application will be granted or not. In the event of rejection, the decision has to be motivated. The decision of the committee cannot be appealed, but a refused candidate has the right to apply again after six months (Svenska Ishockeyspelares CentralOrganisation n.d.).

The obligations of a certified agent

To avoid conflicts of interest the agent is obliged to only represent the interest of the player. At every event, the agent has to have satisfactory liability insurances, and when the agent is working with agreements that are included in the certification earlier mentioned, the standard agreements issued by, or other agreements approved by SICO have to be used exclusively. The agent undertakes him or herself to respect and fulfil the agreements that are made between SICO and different Swedish player associations.

A certified agent is ordered to pay an annual fee of 3000 SEK, in which the cost of two yearly education days is not included. An agent that is abusing the rights that are granted to him or her, or do not follow the obligations that are incorporated with them, is risking sanctions. This can be a warning, retrieving the certification temporarily or permanent. An agent that is ceased with the assignment should return the certification to the certification committee of SICO. The names of all the former agents are to be official and published in the official magazine of the central organisation of Swedish ice hockey players (Svenska Ishockeyspelares CentralOrganisation n.d.).

Soccer

To be a player agent within the Swedish soccer association, some procedures need to be done in order to apply. A written application has to be sent to the Swedish soccer association and this written exam is arranged twice a year, one in March and one in September. The applications have to be put to the association's disposal at the latest in the first of February respectively first of August. The cost of the examination is 1000 SEK and following documents has to be attached:

- A description of the applicant's experiences within the field
- Curriculum vitae with copies of transcripts
- Employment certificates
- References
Including phone numbers to players, team managers and other that the candidate wishes to refer to.
- A recent photography
- A birth certificate, with citizenship data
If the candidate is not a Swedish citizen, he or she needs to send a domicile certification.
- A certificate of good standing
This proves that the applicant not has gone bankruptcy.
- A certificate that proves that the applicant does not have a legal guardian
- Proof that the applicant does not appear in the criminal register

When applying, the person has to specify in which area he or she wants to practice as an agent. A standard agreement that regulates the relation between agents and players, that the candidate has intentions of using.

The part with the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (hereafter FIFA) questions of the written examination is in English and the part from Swedish Soccer association (Svenska fotbollsförbundet, SvFF) is to be written in Swedish. There is also a possibility for the candidate to write the English part in one of the other three official languages (Spanish, German or French) of FIFA. Before the examination, the rules and regulations of the Swedish soccer organisations, the FIFA rules and regulations, and the SvFF regulations for player agents are to be obtainable for the applicant (Svenska fotbollsförbundet (n.d.).

5.4 Clients

The clients play a great role in the sports agent's business. Their activities are formed after the athlete and the marketing has to be arranged in a certain way so that the

athlete's true image comes out. Since every athlete is different, the "programs" for them have to be custom-made, like financial planning and marketing. To create a stable and trustworthy relation, the sports agent is signing a contract with the athlete. In this way both parties are aware of the terms and conditions. Some examples of what is included in a contract are stated below (Become a sports agent, 2008).

- The fee the agent will charge and how this is to be paid
- The expiration date of the agreement
- Who pays for expenses incurred by the agent or player
- The rights of termination by either party

One part of the agent's job is to give the athlete advice, but the athlete might not always follow them. This should not affect the relationship since the agent first of all should see the relationship as a "business relationship". If the agent does not treat the relationship this way, it is a possibility that the agent loses the objectivity and also the respect of the client (Rhodes 2006).

5.5 Organisation and management

The organisation and management can look very different from case to case. Some agencies have all the resources needed within the company and others use consultants for, for example, financial services. The consultants are not always the same, which is to prefer according to Billing (2006). The way the agency is built is an important part of its way of working. In the following part there will be descriptions of four agencies, where the organisations are very different. This gives a special character to every sports agency, and one kind of organisation is not optimal for every athlete. New athletes for example need closer contact with their sports agent with more custom-made solutions than athletes that already are on the top of their career (Billing, 2006).

5.5.1 Podium - Sports and entertainment wealth management group

Podium is a sport agency with a team of professionals, situated in Monaco, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The services include financial, fiscal and legal consulting and Podium make the services tailor-made for each client. Network and contacts are also important parts in the organisation, and the sport agency puts a large amount of focus on customer service. This enables them to maximize the client's existing and future possibilities.

The Podium employees are knowledgeable and can therefore make an analysis of the client and give specific suggestions for its needs. Podium helps the client with contracts as well as makes sure that the athlete earns a fair salary. The organisation offers many

services, has broad experience and is representing some Swedish athletes like Susanna Kallur, Stefan Holm and Christian Ohlsson. The network that Podium has is extensive even outside the “sport world”. Hereafter more of Podium’s services will be described.

Financial services are consultancy services for the athletes in all financial matters, such as finding the best way of investing their money. The services are on both national and international level, and there are also services that help the clients with currency matters. This is relatively common because the athletes often are active in events abroad. The financial experts also help the clients with tax planning and the fiscal duty to declare.

Legal services are very important as well, since many contracts have to be written with sponsors and partners. Podium’s main practice areas are “Sports and Media Law, Commercial Law and Contracts, International Business Law, International Estate Planning, Trust, Immigration Law, Intellectual Property and Trademarks” (Podium Sports and entertainment wealth management group, 2008). Insurance and pension planning is important, so that the athlete can feel safe regarding income for the future. Podium offers different kinds of insurances concerning personal injury, medical, private life insurance and private pension insurance.

One of the most important assignments of a sports agent is dealing with marketing, media and brand management. Podium can give the clients guidance and marketing expertise, for example in managing their marketing rights, image rights and incomes. Custom-made offers and strategies are Podium’s way of working, and therefore they try to find the best solution for each athlete. This can concern for example sponsorships agreements. Since handling media is a large part of the athlete’s life, a sportsman obtains media training and expert advice to effectively communicate and make interviews and speeches. (Podium Sports and entertainment wealth management group, 2008).

5.5.2 Sportyard

Sportyard is a relatively small sports agency in Sweden with only three employees and two in Finland. The chief executive Johan Elliot handles most of the contact with the clients and partners, but the financial services such as investments and planning is taken care of by different consultants. Further Sportyard helps the athletes with establishing contacts with for example advisors, lawyers and auditors (Billing, 2006). One thing that differs this sport agency from others in the industry is that Sportyard does not take a commission of the prize money. The agents charge the athletes a fixed management fee and also for other work they conduct. (Olsson, 2007).

“The heart and soul of Sportyard is creating the perfect constellation between our athletes and our corporate clients” is Sportyard’s own description of the company (Sportyard, 2008). The organisation has 20 years of experience in the business, and believes that cooperation and communication are of outmost importance. In this way the parties involved can grow together, and make sure that the brand equity of the athlete and the corporate client are the same, striving for the same goals.

Sportyard focuses mostly on golf players today but has earlier represented other kind of athletes, the free ride skiers Kaj Zackrisson och Sverre Liliequist are two examples. (Olsson, 2007). Brand is important in this organisation and they work with it in several ways, to assure that the right message comes out and that the communication is efficient. Sportyard deals with legal issues as well. They make sure that their clients do not sign any contract with an organisation they do not have a common ground for future cooperation, which both parties can benefit from. When contracts are signed, Sportyard ensures that this is shown in events, sponsorship or consulting. The company claims to be different from the competitors, because they offer a special combination of understanding sports management and building successful brands. (Sportyard, 2008).

5.5.3 International Management Group (IMG)

IMG is one of the world’s largest companies within sports, media and entertainment. The organisation has about 60 offices operating in 30 countries, with among other things consulting services, events, representation and licensing. IMG has the world’s largest facilities for multi-sport and education, with more than 12 000 athletes participating each year. IMG covers sports in several angles, such as events, sponsorship, client representation and training. The company has numerous resources as well as experiences that the clients can benefit from and help them to reach the maximal potential. IMG owns, produces and manages several sporting events and can offer exclusive brand building opportunities. Professional sportsmen, young talents and leisure athletes are able to improve their skills at the IMG Academies.

IMG is also a leading contributor within fashion and lifestyle events, integrating business and pleasure. This can be done through the internet, broadcasting on air, in print or in person. IMG disposes over the rights to produce and distribute sports in various media, such as television, digital media and mobile platforms in more than 200 nations in 100 major sports events (IMG, 2008).

Mark McCormack

Mark McCormack (1930-2003) was the founder of the International Management Group (hereafter referred to as IMG), and was a leader in the modern era of sports management and marketing. In 1990 Sports Illustrated named McCormack the most

powerful man in the sports world. He believed that the popularity and the marketing potential of athletes could go beyond borders, cultures and languages, as well as the sport itself. The sportsmen under his management were the first ones to endorse clothes, watches and other products, as they were playing exhibition matches. Athletes also held inspiration speeches to organisations and played golf with corporate managers, for which the companies paid large amounts of money. Before this, agents represented sportsmen but in a much smaller scale. McCormack had a talent in keeping his clients well-paid and also well-known. IMG became very powerful in sports management and marketing and could eventually promote the athletes in a way that other sports agents were not able to do. TWI, the largest TV company in sports, was created and IMG had the possibilities to broadcast and promote their clients all over the world (Brewster, 2004).

A year and a half after the death of McCormack, IMG was running eight or nine sporting events around the world daily and TWI broadcasted 9000 hours of sport annually. However, the agency still kept the principles of not selling out its soul just for the sake of expanding. Due to the injuries after a car accident when he was child, McCormack devote himself to golf and it was here that he met Arnold Palmer, one of the first clients in the agency. McCormack graduated with a law degree and was practising law, and helped pro golfers looking into their contracts. After golf, McCormack moved on into tennis, soccer, skiing, running and baseball. Athletes knew that when cooperating with IMG, there were several opportunities to earn money not only on the sport itself, but also on other activities. The agency would deal with everything from handling the contracts, negotiations, placing and investing of money to making sure the sportsmen showed up at appointments. McCormack was interested personally in several of the athletes, even becoming close friends with some and acting like a father figure to some. As it is a personal service business, there is often no other choices, the agent gets involved in all parts of the life of the athlete. Mark McCormack also wrote books, started a fashion agency and a consulting arm at IMG. In May 2003 he died after suffering a heart attack some months earlier (Brewster, 2004).

5.5.4 Leigh Steinberg

When bringing up the subject sports agents there are often many people who think about the movie Jerry Maguire from the year 1996 (The Internet Movie Database, 2008). Jerry Maguire is about a sports agent and gives a relatively good picture of what the world of a sports agent looks like, although it is a little bit exaggerated and too glamorous (Golfbladet, 2008). The main character Jerry Maguire is based on a "real" sports agent, Leigh Steinberg. Leigh Steinberg is a sports attorney and he has accomplished much in his time in the business. He has for example negotiated over two billion dollars worth in different deals for his clients (Sports Hollywood, 2000).

Steinberg founded together with a friend the law firm *Steinberg & Moorad* which represented more than 150 clients; almost everyone a professional athlete. In 1999 Steinberg sold the firm to a “multi-billion dollar wealth management firm” (Sports Hollywood, 2000). He later became chairman and chief executive for other sports agencies, Assante Sports Management and Steinberg Moorad & Dunn.

Steinberg has experience in sports like many other sports agents have. He has run track and claims that he “basically played every sport” and his interest in sports is great. This is almost a requirement since the agents spend their entire days working with sport related assignments.

Every sports agent can have a special approach and Steinberg wants his athletes to contribute to society. He wants every athlete to give an amount of the money they earn to their “hometown, high school, university or national charities and foundations”. (Sports agents directory, 2008). By doing this the athlete will achieve a positive image and be a good role model that “helped the community that helped shape him” (Sports agents directory, 2008). Steinberg also contributes to the community and donates large amounts of money to different organisations, for example Children now and Children’s miracle network.

The reputation that Steinberg has in the business is that he is a successful negotiator. He is according to Gill (1988) able to help the athletes to look beyond their playing years. His success may also be due to Steinberg’s negotiation technique, where he is well prepared, overwhelms his opponent without antagonizing actions and that he is taking advantage of every situation.

5.5.5 Summary

These four sports agents work in similar ways and offer similar services. There are however different aspects to them which separate them from each other. Podium is a sports agency that has offices in three countries and Sweden’s most well known sports agent, Daniel Wessfeldt, works there as well. The athletes that Podium represents are professionals and they also practise many different sports. Sportyard is a rather small company that focus on golf players. It is also a “family” feeling within the agency, where everyone is being taken care of and sponsorships are carefully chosen to match the athletes’ personalities. IMG is the giant and does not focus much on the personal designed programs or sponsors that are chosen for special reasons. New athletes might have to do many commercials and events that they do not have time to focus on their sport. Leigh Steinberg gives custom-made services and also has a “niche”, which is that the athletes give an amount of their incomes to charity. All of these sports agencies are

successful but they use different ways to reach it. This also shows the complexity of the word success.

5.6 Profitability

The sports agents have different ways of earning money, but they often take a management fee, which is a fixed cost and will be charged even if the agent does not achieve any deals (Billing, 2006). There is also a commission on the athlete's income, which varies from three to 20 percent, but most common is around five percent (Staudohar, 2006). The more and favourable sponsorship deals and other agreements the agent succeeds to close for the athlete, the more the both of them earn. If the agents do not work and try the best, they will lose both money and attractiveness on the market (Billing, 2006).

The agencies profit from selling and negotiating on the behalf of the players, therefore it is important that the athletes will be displayed before as many teams and partners as possible. Profitability comes from "selling" many athletes, and the agents get paid when the deal is closed with a new club or renewed with the current. In order to recruit new athletes to the organisation, agents are contacting young players to offer their services, and then there is a relation of trust established. There are possibilities to get more well-known sportsmen as well, but this is if the agent is popular and has succeeded with advantageous deals (Markstedt, 2008).

5.7 Marketing

Doing a good job is the best marketing a sports agent can do. If the sports agent represents the athlete in a good way; other sportsmen will be interested to work with this agency as well. In the beginning of the career, the agent can visit games and be some kind of "talent agent" and recruit young athletes that have great possibilities to develop (Markstedt, 2008). The more sportsmen an agent is representing, the more athletes will have knowledge about the agency and come without any active marketing (Billing, 2006).

6. How to be a successful sports agent

After defining the different functions and characteristics of a sports agent, it is now time for the connections to success. Several factors are to be considered when talking about success; it is a combination of many aspects. This is shown in figure 3, which is an extended version of figure 2. In this model, success is added and that is to be discussed in this chapter.

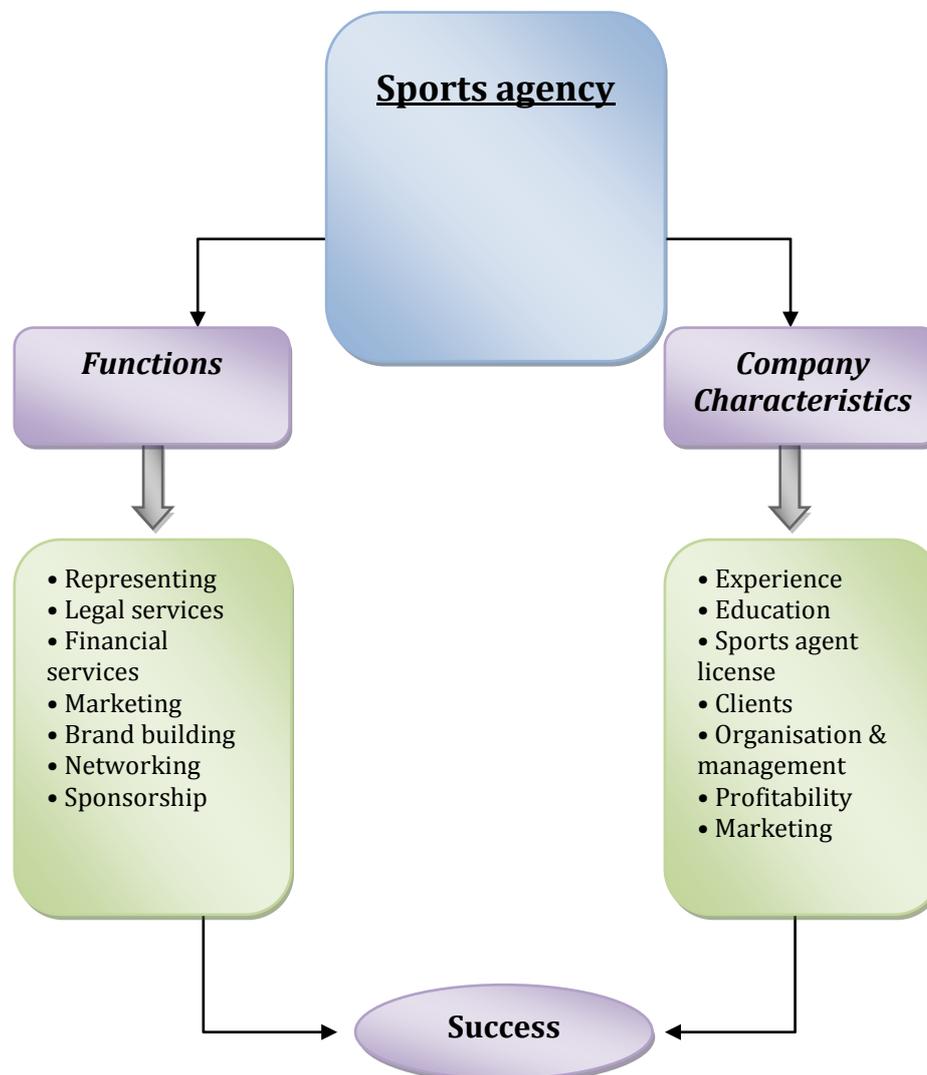


Figure 3, SAM – S, Sports agency model with a more detailed knowledge and the connection to success

As mentioned earlier, when working as a sports agent, success means that the sportsmen are achieving good results, and as a consequence they become more interesting to sponsors and other business partners. The combination of well-performing athletes and successful business leads to profitability, which is another aspect of success in this thesis. Profitability is a factor that has to be considered, because it gives the agent more resources and most likely a higher motivation. Some of

the aspects that can help reach success are stated below, but as success is a complex concept, this varies from organisation to organisation.

- **Profitability**

This means closing deals that gain both the athlete and the sports agent economically in a long term perspective. Additionally, the contracts need to be favourable in terms of other conditions such as for example length and extent. Profitability is always a factor that is important when running a business, without making money it is nearly impossible to continue the work in the long run.

- **Well-performing athletes**

Reaching good results in competitions and tournaments is another aspect of success of the clients. With good results, the sportsmen have greater opportunities to become more attractive in the market for example sponsorship deals and contracts with better teams. A well-known name is an advantage, since the athlete is to be considered as a brand, which needs to be promoted and marketed.

- **Resources**

The need for educated co-workers and financial resources is essential, because this enables the sports agents to their best in representing the athletes. Within the agency there should be experts in the field, for example financial services and marketing. Ethical values are very important in the business, because the work concerns private matters and decisions that affect the client in several issues and for a long time.

- **Contacts**

Networking enables the sports agent to meet partners to collaborate with as well as finding athletes to represent. Contacts are one of the most important things when being a sports agent, because a lot of the activities are connected to personal relations. It is through contacts a sports agent can promote the own business and also the athletes within the agency.

Most important functions

The most important functions a sports agent is performing are mentioned in figure 2. These are the ones that the athletes are not able to do themselves when they want to focus entirely on their career. This can for example be legal services; without the contracts that the sports agent negotiates, the athlete would not have the same opportunities to benefit economically of the career or get the best deals with different

teams. The work that a sports agent is doing involves prolonging, extending and improving the career of the athletes that he or she is representing.

In order to reach success as a sports agent, there is a need for clients. What kind of clients is of course one of the most important factors, the clients are the essential part of the work and almost everything the sports agents do is connected to the athletes. If the agency has a certain profile on the business, the clients are chosen from that point of view. For example the agent might only represent athletes that are active within the same sport, this can be an advantage because it makes it easier for the agent to follow the development in the sport and specialise in this field. The athletes can also benefit from this since they can encourage each other and give helpful advice to one another.

To be able to have satisfied and happy clients, it is also important that the sports agent creates harmony and a balance in the relation as well as in daily life for the athlete. If the athlete does not feel satisfaction, he or she will be at a constant look out for better conditions and circumstances. This is negative for both the athlete, who cannot concentrate fully on the performance, and the sports agent, who might get bad word of mouth and fewer clients as a result.

Another important condition is experience in the sport and in the business. To have experience in the sport is preferable and sometimes necessary. It is a great advantage to “know the sport”, to be able to relate to the work and have knowledge about the duties of an athlete. Because the agency wants the best players, it is important that the agent is familiar with the sport and can for example evaluate the performance of a sportsman. Sometimes the different clients of a sports agent are active in the same sport, and the sports agents often also have experience in this sport. Experience gives useful knowledge about how the industry works and good opportunities for networking.

Without any experience it is hard to know what to ask for and what is reasonable to demand. There is no need for a background as a professional, but it helps to at least have tried and have had a chance to really get to know the sport. To have been a professional can be positive in another way of course, as a kind of promotion of the brand. There might be a special interest for new talented athletes to hire a sports agent that used to be their own hero.

In order to perform the work as good as possible, there are some basic conditions a sports agent needs to have, such as the right agent’s license in the sport and an education covering the different functions. In certain sports there are requirements to have been an active athlete in the same sport before working as an agent. Licenses can bring not only more competence but also more creditability. Although, not all agents have a license, in these cases experience, a well functioning organisation and contacts

compensate this. The importance of licenses is increasing, since the business of sports agents tend to become more competitive and corrupt. Licenses are in a way protecting the agent's honour, but still there are no guarantees that a licensed agent is a suitable agent. By demanding licenses is to take a step in a right, honest direction for the business.

When a sportsman signs a contract or earns money in another way, for example through sponsorship deals, the agent handles questions about the income, such as tax, financial planning and investments. In order to do this in an optimal way, an agency needs to have business education or turn to external experts. It is of great importance that an agent provides high-quality financial planning, so that the athlete can feel secure about future income and pension. An advantage when the agent is handling the financial matters for the sportsman is that they do not come in conflicts with greedy relatives. For an agent it is easier to decline the athletes' families in questions of money.

Contracts need to be negotiated and therefore legal knowledge or education is necessary for the sports agent. If the sports agent does not possess these qualifications, external advisors, such as lawyers, should be used. It is important that the contracts, which are supposed to be signed, are correct and do not contain traps or causes conflicts with other commitments of the athlete. Another advantage is that the athlete has someone to contact in legal questions, concerning both money and contracts.

Contacts, contacts and contacts; that is basically the most important factor in the life of a sports agent. This is the way the sports agents market themselves and also the way they find new clients. If the sports agent is well known within the business, people choose to work with him or her instead of looking for someone else. If the athlete or team finds out that this certain sports agent usually negotiate advantageous contracts, it will be the clients' natural choice. Throughout the thesis it has become obvious that contacts are of utmost importance, since almost every work assignment involves people. It is for example easier to get sponsorships and work opportunities if the sports agent knows somebody within in the organisation, preferably managers in the right departments. To be able to use and get the most out of these relations, the sports agent has to take care of and nourish them. The job also requires a constant look for new contacts and networking.

Marketing is one of the most important tasks for the agent. It includes both to market the athletes and the agency. If the agency represents the sportsman in a good way, this will lead to that other athletes become interested in cooperating with this organisation. The number of athletes that the agency represents also contributes to the marketing opportunities. The more athletes that are represented in an advantageous way, the more well-known the agency becomes. This is a kind of word of mouth, which is something

that is hard to control and nothing that the marketing of the firm merely can be based on. The work should talk for itself; therefore it is preferable to offer good services from the start. Also to work in a good and ethical way, which gives the organisation a good reputation is preferable. Certain agencies do not market themselves with more than “word of mouth”, which shows the importance of this phenomenon. Other marketing than word of mouth is hard to recognise from the sports agency. Often the sports agents work in the background and focus their resources on promoting the athletes. It is more common with informative websites, and not so much marketing to the public.

An athlete is to be considered as a brand in many ways, and because of this, the agent needs to work with strengthening the “product name”. To improve a sportsman’s brand, the agency should market the athlete towards suitable partners to cooperate with, for example sponsors. A strong brand gives advantages for both the athlete and agency, because it leads to more opportunities for marketing and attracts partners to work with. In addition, it gives a higher value on the market which creates interest in both the agency and the sportsmen. Due to this, a sports agent needs to consider its clients as products that are to be marketed and “sold”.

To be successful when dealing with the clients the agent has to be direct and stay with the core business and not overpromise. It is also important to keep it simple and to do the right thing; the things that accords with the athlete. Successful sports agents also see opportunities and go for them, they also strategise, work hard and try to have frequent contact with their athletes so that business opportunities can be captured.

To make profitable contracts between the parties, the sponsor and the sponsored have to be compatible. This means that both the athlete and company should benefit by it; a win-win situation. If a company will launch a new product, it wants to make the right positioning on the market by using the right kind of sportsman to be associated with. Therefore the agent is useful, when finding and closing these kinds of deals, so that the agreements and the values are similar with the ones of the athlete. When finding sponsors it is important that the team or organisation that is the athlete’s “employer”, accepts the agreement. A successful athlete often receives a lot of offers from sponsors and partners, and the agents’ work is then to choose the most suitable deal for both parties. Common values are very important in order to have a successful collaboration.

To become successful as a sports agent, certain qualifications are required: social competence, knowledge, honesty and energy. The work means dealing with people from many backgrounds and in different circumstances; therefore the agent needs to be skilled socially. Another reason for this is that the agent is acting like a kind of spokes person for the athlete and needs to be a good representative. Experience from the business naturally gives more knowledge and confidence in performing the tasks. It also

gives higher credibility. When representing a sportsman the agency is handling professional matters as well as private, therefore the importance of building a trustworthy relation based on honesty and devotion is necessary. The profession demands a great deal of commitment, because a sports agent usually works long hours and has a busy schedule. The work of a sports agent includes to constantly be prepared and ready to go out and assist the clients.

To be profitable the agents need to sign advantageous contracts with their athletes. Thereafter the agents negotiate lucrative contracts with sponsors and teams on the behalf of the athlete. Of these amounts the agency earns a certain commission, which is a great part of its income. In addition to this the agency sometimes charges a management fee for the work it is performing. To take a management fee is good since it is a guaranteed income in contrast to the commission, which is dependent on the athlete's performance and activity. In order to close favourable deals, the sports agent has to be a skilled negotiator and also know what is reasonable to demand regarding salaries and conditions. Another way of earning money is when the athletes make transitions to different teams. If the sports agent has negotiated a good contract, he or she can also get a high commission from it.

There are not only contracts between athletes and sponsors, but also agreements between sports agents and athletes. It is necessary to have guidelines to successfully keep a well functioning relationship between the different parties. The influence that a sports agent has on the athlete differs from person to person, sometimes the agent represents its client in several matters and there is always a need for some guidelines. This facilitates when problems arise and help solving conflicts and also what commission the agent earns. It is also preferably to have a contract on the exact functions that the sports agent has and what he or she is supposed to handle.

7. Recommendations

In order to be successful in the sports agent business, there are some recommendations that are to be followed.

Experience

Experience gives a substantial amount of knowledge, both within the sports and the market. Having a background in a sports agency or similar is a good way of starting an own career, both regarding contacts and knowledge. It also increases the credibility when having a few years of experience in the business and more people get interested in cooperating with that sports agent.

License

Find out what license that is specific for the sport of interest and also what qualifications that are demanded. Having a license leads to higher credibility and gives the agent a more business-like impression. When representing some sports it is also mandatory to have a license.

Education

Not everything is learned through experiences. Courses, literature and internships are to recommend. Not only education connected to sports is recommended, but also marketing, law and business. Financial advice and planning might be complicated and therefore some financial education is advisable as well as within law since the sports agent will deal with contracts and agreements. If there is a lack of competence in any of the areas there is a need for external resources.

Contacts

Networking is one of the key factors in this industry. Keeping in touch with people and maintaining personal relations helps in almost all kinds of situations when working as a sports agent. It is also good to be present at games and championships to find new contacts and market the own agency and athletes. A sports agent is handling several areas of the athlete's life; therefore creating networks in different surroundings are to be recommended, so that the agency can help in every matter that the client requests.

Ethic values

To behave ethically and honest gives a better reputation and more stable relations with clients and other partners that the agency is cooperating with. Good ethic values make it easier to create long term relationships and more people want to cooperate with someone that keeps his or her promises. Having a good moral is a competitive advantage; clients are more interested in cooperating with someone that is reliable and concerned about ethics.

Be a good negotiator

An ability to negotiate advantageous agreements for the agency as well as for the athlete is necessary when running a sports agency, since negotiating contracts is a large part of the work as a sports agent. A talent in persuading could be beneficial and useful to be able to convince the partners that this sports agency has the best offers and conditions.

Know the market

To be updated and have knowledge about the sports, the market and the opportunities that arise is crucial. To have an eye for what athletes that are going to be successful and what contracts that can be profitable for all parties.

Word of mouth

Relations are a large part of the business, and in order to promote the agent's work and make the necessary promotion, word of mouth is an important part. Good word of mouth comes from doing a good job and also to speak well about the own clients. In this way the athletes can talk well about the sports agency in return and in that way attract more clients.

Custom-made services

To have an ability to bring together athletes with sponsors who are suitable is essential. Common values and goals are very important when closing deals that should be mutually beneficial and satisfactory. It is rather bad publicity when representing something that the athlete does not like or is compatible with.

Management fee

To get a secure income it is to recommend taking a management fee. In that way the sports agent is not as dependent on the income of the athlete, in particular in the beginning of the career. It is necessary to take a management fee sometimes if the athlete does not earn any money, because the expenses that concern representing the athlete still have to be paid.

Love the sport and the business

There is clearly a need for passion and love to sports, because so much time of the work will be spent on sport related activities. If the agent is not engaged enough or is not a skilled business man, he or she will find it difficult to find any opportunities and take advantage of them.

8. Conclusion

Throughout the thesis it has become obvious that some factors are essential. These are for example experience, education, contacts, be a good negotiator, marketing and passion for sports. Most clear is the fact that the sports agents act in an ethical way, where he always does what is best for the client and not for him- or herself. It is also a profession that takes a lot of time, which means that it is necessary to have an interest in sports and also in business and law, since these are the factors that dominate the day of the sports agent.

Reference list

- Aaker, D. (1991). *Managing brand equity*. New York, United States: The free press
- About.com: Sports careers (2008). *Sports Agents - Learn More About The Career Path and Lifestyle of Sports Agents*. Retrieved November 8, 2008 from <http://sportscareers.about.com/od/agents/a/entryspagent.htm>
- Arbnor I, Bjerke B. (1997). *Methodology for Creating Business Knowledge*, SAGE Publications, London
- Arrow Vale Community High school (n.d.) *Advantages and disadvantages of sponsorship* Retrieved October 21, 2008 from http://www.arrowvale.worcs.sch.uk/sportscollege/gcsepeppt/sponsorship_files/fullscreen.htm
- Become a sports agent (n.d.) *Start you sports agent career today!* Retrieved November 15, 2008 from <http://www.become-a-sports-agent.com/join.asp>
- Beech, J. & Chadwick, S. (2004). *The Business of Sports Management*, Harlow, England: Prentice Hall Financial times
- Beirne, M. (2008). Brandweek, *Michael Phelps Turns His Gold Into Green*. Retrieved November 27, 2008 from ABI/INFORM
- Billing, A. (2006). *I proffsens hemliga tjänst*. Retrieved November 4, 2008 from <http://www.affarsvarlden.se/hem/nyheter/article273208.ece>
- Björklund, M. & Paulsson, U. (2003). *Seminarieboken – att skriva, presentera och opponera*, Lund, Sweden: Studentlitteratur
- Brassington, F. & Pettitt, S. (2005). *Essentials of marketing*. Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited
- Brewster, M. (2004). *Mark McCormack, superagent*. Retrieved November 19, 2008 from http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/nov2004/nf20041110_1752_db078.htm
- Dahlén, M. & Lange, F. (2003). *Optimal marknadsföring (1:1 uppl.)*. Malmö, Sweden: Liber
- Elliot, J. (2008). Chief executive of Sportyard. Interviewed December 10, 2008
- Gill, M. (1988). *Success, Unstoppable Offense*. Retrieved from ABI/INFORM November 20, 2008

Graham, S. (2001). *Ultimate Guide to Sports Marketing (2nd Edition)*. Blacklick, OH, USA: McGraw-Hill Professional Book Group, 2001. p 167.
<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/malardalen/Doc?id=10015317&ppg=187>

Heitzmann, W. (2004). *Careers for Sports Nuts and Other Athletic Types*. Blacklick, United States: McGraw-Hill Professional, p. 136. Retrieved November 6, 2008, from <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/malardalen/Doc?id=10065218&ppg=154>

IMG (n.d.) *Company facts*. Retrieved November 16, 2008 from http://www.imgworld.com/about/company_facts.sps

Job profiles, (2003-2008). *Your guide to careers and education, Sports Agent*. Retrieved September 12, 2008, from <http://www.jobprofiles.org/artsportsagent.htm>

Johansson, D. & Norberg, M. (2007). *Sponsring inom Extremsport – livsstil, kultur och kommersiella möjligheter*. Bachelor thesis. University of Uppsala. Retrieved October 5, 2008 from Academicnetwork.se

Knowledge @ Wharton, (2003), *For Tiger Woods' Sports Agent, It's All About Brand Management*. Retrieved November 27, 2008 from <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=779>

Lauer, Charles S. (2003). *Modern Healthcare, It's all about integrity*. Retrieved November 27, 2008, from ABI/INFORM

Lenngren, H. (2004). *Hårt jobbande agenter bakom sportstjärnorna*. Retrieved November 18, 2008 from <http://www.fria.nu/artikel/1805>

Lundahl U, Skärvad P-H. (1999). *Utredningsmetodik för samhällsvetare och ekonomer*, Studentlitteratur, Lund

Markstedt, P. Financial advisor, Folksam. Interviewed December 4, 2008.

Melin, F. (1999). *Varumärkesstrategi - Om konsten att utveckla starka varumärken (1:1 uppl.)*. Malmö, Sweden: Liber AB

Moritz, S. (2002). *Gratis pengar? Om sponsoring av kultur*. Bachelor thesis. University of Library science. Retrieved October 13, 2008 from Academicnetwork.se

Olsson, J. (2007). *I golfstjärnornas tjänst*. Retrieved December 5, 2008 from <http://www.versatilis.se/artiklar/text9.html>

Oxford university press (2008). *Compact Oxford english dictionary*. Retrieved November 27, 2008 from http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/success?view=uk

Podium Sports and entertainment wealth management group (2008). *About us*. Retrieved October 30, 2008 from <http://www.podium-group.com>

Rhodes, J. (2006). *Top sports agent offers career advice*, interview with Peter Johnson, formal chief executive office of IMG's Sports and Entertainment Division. Retrieved November 21, 2008 from <http://www.udel.edu/PR/UDaily/2006/may/sports050906.html>

Sandberg, P. (2008). *Två års fängelse för Carlzon*. Retrieved November 6, 2008 from <http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=647&a=738851&rss=1399>

Sernovitz, Andy. *Word of Mouth Marketing : How Smart Companies Get People Talking*. Chicago, IL, USA: Dearborn Trade, A Kaplan Professional Company, 2006. p 3. Retrieved December 5, 2008 from <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/malardalen/Doc?id=10155085&ppg=34>

Sports agents directory (2008), *Why contact sports agents?* Retrieved September 12, 2008 from <http://www.sports-agent-directory.com/>

Sports Agent Guide, n.d, Brittany Wooten, Sports Writer GHS, retrieved November 14 from <http://www.sportsagentguide.com/>

Sports Hollywood (2000), *10 questions with Leigh Steinberg*. Retrieved December 9, 2008, from <http://www.sportshollywood.com/asksteinberg.html>

Sportyard (2008). Retrieved October 7, 2008 from <http://www.sportyard.com>

Staudohar, P (2006). *So you want to be a sports agent*. Labor Law Journal; Winter 2006; 57, 4; ABI/INFORM Global, p. 246

Stein, M. (2008). *How to be a sports agent*. High Stakes, London

Studentum (n.d.) *Caddie Sport&Business, beskrivning av sports marketing*. Retrieved November 17, 2008 from http://www.studentum.se/Sports_marketing_KY_17987.htm

Svenska fotbollsförbundet (n.d.) *Spelaragenter* Retrieved November 8, 2008 from <http://www.svenskfotboll.se/files/%7BA9B0DD4F-39A7-46D5-8B05-ED0227FC01DA%7D.pdf>

Svenska Ishockeyspelares CentralOrganisation (n.d.) *Certifiering av spelaragenter*. Retrieved November 06, 2008 from http://www.sico.nu/ag_lic.htm

The Internet Movie Database, IMDb (2008), *Jerry Maguire*. Retrieved November 20, 2008 from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0116695/>

Thomaselli, R. (2006), *Athletes sign up double agents*, Advertising age, vol 77, iss 3, pg 3-4. Retrieved October 7, 2008, from ABI/INFORM global database

Thompson, A. (2007), Wall street Journal, *Marketing Athletes May Now Demand Its Own Playbook*. Retrieved November 27, 2008, from ABI/INFORM

Vennberg, M. (2008). Consultant at SISU Västmanland. Interviewed December 10, 2008

Ytter, L. Marketing professor at Mälardalen University. November 2008

Appendix 1

Interview

The purpose with the interview is to complement the information about sports agents that have been acquired through secondary sources.

The interview starts with questions about functions and conditions of a sports agent. Then the interview treats organisation and marketing, to be concluded with questions about success.

With "functions", the different functions a sports agent is doing are meant, for example negotiating, marketing and networking on the behalf of the client.

Please answer the questions as thoroughly as possible.

- 1. Write a little bit about yourself, what do you do and what have you done earlier within sports?**

- 2. What functions does a sports agent perform?**
- 3. What are the most important functions a sports agent is doing on the behalf of the client?**
- 4. Why do you think these are the most important?**
- 5. Is it important for a sports agent to have own experience of the sports that the athletes are practicing? If yes, in which way is it useful?**
- 6. Do you have any education within the sports agent profession? If yes, which?**
- 7. What types of sports agent licenses do you have?**

- 8. How is a sports agency built?**
- 9. What co-workers are there within the organisation?**
- 10. In what way is the organisation managed to be as effective as possible?**
- 11. Does the organisation cooperate with other sports agents?**
- 12. What other partners does the organisation cooperate with?**
- 13. For what does a sports agent charge?**
- 14. How is profitability created in a sport agency?**

- 15. How does a sports agent market him or herself?**
- 16. In what way does a sports agent market the athletes?**

17. How does a sports agent find new partners to cooperate with on the behalf of the client?

18. What demands does a sports agent have when looking for sponsors to a client?

19. In what way does a sports agent create networks?

20. How does a sports agent work to strengthen an athlete's brand?

21. What makes a sports agent successful, in your opinion?

22. What qualifications should a successful sports agent have?

23. How does the market for sports agents look today?

24. What does a sports agent who wants to establish him or herself on the market, need to think about?

**Thank you for your cooperation!
Kind regards
Jessica Bjälevik & Maria Magnusson**

Appendix 2

Interview with Johan Elliot

The purpose with the interview is to complement the information about sports agents that have been acquired through secondary sources.

The interview starts with questions about functions and conditions of a sports agent. Then the interview treats organisation and marketing, to be concluded with questions about success.

With "functions", the different functions a sports agent is doing are meant, for example negotiating, marketing and networking on the behalf of the client.

Please answer the questions as thoroughly as possible.

1. Write a little bit about yourself, what do you do and what have you done earlier within sports?

Born and raised in Zambia, southern Africa. Have of different reasons travelled a lot ever since and have in that way gotten in contact with many different people and cultures. Sport became in many ways a central part of my life rather early. In the beginning of my life, it contained a lot of soccer but also other sports, but due to injuries I started with golf after I turned 15. Sport unites in many cases the world and I see sports as a possibility to contribute to a better world.

2. What functions does a sports agent perform?

We contribute to improve, facilitate and prolong their careers. We do everything from water their plants and pay bills to handle all their commercial rights and to work with and develop their personal brands.

3. What are the most important functions a sports agent is doing on the behalf of the client?

To answer this question correctly, more time and space is needed but concise we think that the most important thing is to create balance and harmony so that our clients are able to perform as good as possible.

4. Why do you think these are the most important?

Because if balance and harmony is not there, everything else plays a rather small role.

5. Is it important for a sports agent to have own experience of the sports that the athletes are practicing? If yes, in which way is it useful?

I see it as directly necessary. If you do not have the roots and network in the sport you are active in, you are going to have difficulties with questions and credibility.

6. Do you have any education within the sports agent profession? If yes, which?

No specific education but I think I benefit from my studies in business and marketing, which were the subjects I graduated in when I studied in the USA.

7. What types of sports agent licenses do you have?

None.

8. How is a sports agency built?

I don't understand the question.

9. What co-workers are there within the organisation?

Many, but my closest coworkers are Lillian Jansson and Kenneth Svennberg.

10. In what way is the organisation managed to be as effective as possible?

We have just made a reorganisation. We rather keep our way of working to our self for a while since it is unique and in our eyes world-leading. We are not ready to share that yet.

11. Does the organisation cooperate with other sports agents?

Yes.

12. What other partners does the organisation cooperate with?

Most of the management firms cooperate in one or another way during the year. We work very close with two American firms; Crown Sports Management and Pro-Sport Management.

13. For what does a sports agent charge?

His work and for what we contribute with pure economically, i.e. sponsors and such.

14. How is profitability created in a sport agency?

To make more than we spend.

15. How does a sports agent market him or herself?

Mostly "word of mouth". Our work should preferably talk for itself. We have not up to now market ourselves more than personal meetings with interested individuals.

16. In what way does a sports agent market the athletes?

Here is more time and space needed again. This is the core business in what we do and if I would be able to give a good answer on this; it would be an own essay... I would happily talk about this separately when I/we have more time.

17. How does a sports agent find new partners to cooperate with on the behalf of the client?

See above.

18. What demands does a sports agent have when looking for sponsors to a client?

Most important is that our client and the company have common values.

19. In what way does a sports agent create networks?

Through being in the right places and meet people in the right forum.

20. How does a sports agent work to strengthen an athlete's brand?

See question 16 and 17.

21. What makes a sports agent successful, in your opinion?

Passion for the profession/sport and an understanding for the clients' different needs and moods and stages in their careers.

22. What qualifications should a successful sports agent have?

I think that an inner and external tranquillity is of value and to never put yourself or the agency in the first place. "It is always about the client"!!

23. How does the market for sports agents look today?

Incredibly tough but also rather open since IMG; Octagon and other "big" companies are losing ground and therefore there are possibilities for new thoughts and ways of working.

24. What does a sports agent who wants to establish him- or herself on the market, need to think about?

Have patience... Rom was not built in one day... You have to know what you are getting into to 100 per cent!! What I mean is that I would have had it much more

difficult to succeed in another sport where I do not have the same roots in as golf.
Be humble...

As you may notice/understand, i have rather short of time. I hope though that my answers can contribute in some way. And, as mentioned before, would you like more detailed answers; then you have to return this spring. I hope that it will be a little bit less busy then. Thanks, Johan

Thank you for your cooperation!
Kind regards
Jessica Bjälevik & Maria Magnusson

Interview with Mats Vennberg

The purpose with the interview is to complement the information about sports agents that have been acquired through secondary sources.

The interview starts with questions about functions and conditions of a sports agent. Then the interview treats organisation and marketing, to be concluded with questions about success.

With "functions", the different functions a sports agent is doing are meant, for example negotiating, marketing and networking on the behalf of the client.

Please answer the questions as thoroughly as possible.

1. Write a little bit about yourself, what do you do and what have you done earlier within sports?

Active within wrestling since 1974. until 1992 I was active, participated in the youth, junior and senior national team. Since 2001 I have worked with the development of professional wrestling in the country (Sweden). I started my employment at SISU Idrottsutbildarna 1996 and I have worked since 2003 with professional sport in the county.

2. What functions does a sports agent perform?

He is the intermediate between sportsmen and different teams.

3. What are the most important functions a sports agent is doing on the behalf of the client?

He helps him to find new team/clubs. He helps the player with different kinds of contracts.

4. Why do you think these are the most important?

The contract part can be complex, especially if you change to foreign clubs. The athlete can instead concentrate on its sport.

5. Is it important for a sports agent to have own experience of the sports that the athletes are practicing? If yes, in which way is it useful?

6. Do you have any education within the sports agent profession? If yes, which?

No.

7. How is a sports agency built?

8. In what way is the organisation managed to be as effective as possible?

9. For what does a sports agent charge?

Negotiations of new transitions and sponsorship contracts.

10. How is profitability created in a sport agency?

To have as many transitions as possible.

11. How does a sports agent market him or herself?

He looks his new clients up and he can negotiate good contracts and by that means his reputation is spread. If the clubs know that he is good to work with, then they choose to use him.

12. In what way does a sports agent market the athletes?

Contacts.

13. How does a sports agent find new partners to cooperate with on the behalf of the client?

Contacts.

14. What demands does a sports agent have when looking for sponsors to a client?

15. In what way does a sports agent create networks?

Contacts.

16. How does a sports agent work to strengthen an athlete's brand?

17. What makes a sports agent successful, in your opinion?

Competent, someone to trust.

18. What qualifications should a successful sports agent have?

Social competence and be a good listener.

19. How does the market for sports agents look today?

Good, before the recession.

20. What does a sports agent who wants to establish him- or herself on the market, need to think about?

See above.

Thank you for your cooperation!
Kind regards
Jessica Bjälevik & Maria Magnusson

Interview with Peter Markstedt

The purpose with the interview is to complement the information about sports agents that have been acquired through secondary sources.

The interview starts with questions about functions and conditions of a sports agent. Then the interview treats organisation and marketing, to be concluded with questions about success.

With “functions”, the different functions a sports agent is doing are meant, for example negotiating, marketing and networking on the behalf of the client.

Please answer the questions as thoroughly as possible.

1. Write a little bit about yourself, what do you do and what have you done earlier within sports?

Working today as an economical advisor at Folksam, have a past within soccer since the age of 5, played in VSK until I was 27 years then in turn, England (Barnsley) Premier League 97-99, Helsingborg 99-00, VSK 00-00, Hammarby 01-04, Norway (FC Lyn) – 05, VSK 06-07.

2. What functions does a sports agent perform?

Helps with negotiations and contract offers at transitions, makes sure that exactly your name becomes interesting to other teams.

3. What are the most important functions a sports agent is doing on the behalf of the client?

Contract negotiations.

4. Why do you think these are the most important?

There are several problems with taxes and other important details (above all when moving abroad), the agent also knows much better what is the market value of the player and what is fair in asking for salary.

5. Is it important for a sports agent to have own experience of the sports that the athletes are practicing? If yes, in which way is it useful?

As a soccer agent is it above all important to know soccer, to know what one talk about at negotiations but of course also for your own sake when the agent wants to have as good players in the team as possible.

6. How is a sports agency built?

They make sure to try to sign players in a young age as possible to later help them from the start and build trust. Of course they can get established stars but then they have to be very popular agents that succeeded with good sales.

7. What co-workers are there within the organisation?

They make a living of selling therefore it is a lot about marketing their players and make sure that as many teams as possible come and watch their players.

8. In what way is the organisation managed to be as effective as possible?

He only charges at an eventual transition or a new contract agreement, either direct from the team or from the player.

9. How is profitability created in a sport agency?

To sell as many players as possible.

10. How does a sports agent market him or herself?

Partly through making many good deals and have many good players in the team. Otherwise they are out on the field watching several games in order to see if there are any new talents to sign.

11. In what way does a sports agent market the athletes?

They know what kind of player the team is looking for, (for example defense) then the agent sends a CV about a defense in the team and says this defense is the best, you are welcome to come and have a look.

12. How does a sports agent find new partners to cooperate with on the behalf of the client?

Is the player really good the agent also helps signing sponsorship agreements for its clients, could be anything.

13. What demands does a sports agent have when looking for sponsors to a client?

That it should be ok with the team that the player belongs to.

14. In what way does a sports agent create networks?

Sell good players and be at the arenas.

15. How does a sports agent work to strengthen an athlete's brand?

Through speaking well about the client all the time.

16. What makes a sports agent successful, in your opinion?

Social competence, to be able to handle people. That he is able to create a trust at the teams and its players.

17. What qualifications should a successful sports agent have?

Energetic, honest, knowledgeable, social competence.

18. How does the market for sports agents look today?

They are doing fine.

19. What does a sports agent who wants to establish him or herself on the market, need to think about?

One should have good contacts and a great insight into the life of sports. One has to be drifty and make sure that the players think you do everything for them in particular. In the end is all about what trust the players have in you and what you do for them, if you succeed with a good deal and handle everything properly then other players will follow.

Peter Markstedt has had four agents in total.

Thank you for your cooperation!
Kind regards
Jessica Bjälevik & Maria Magnusson