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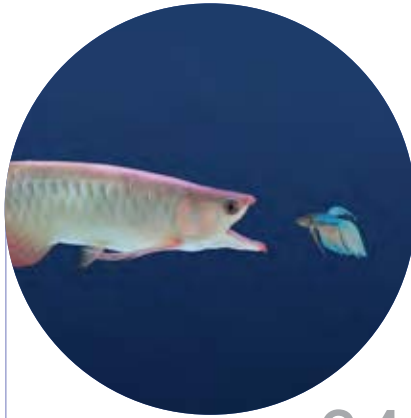
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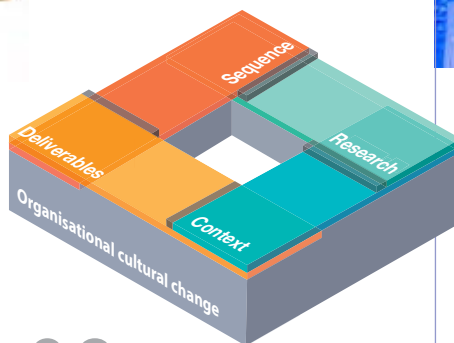
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Making Service Design Work for Start-ups

SDN Finland helped to kick-start new companies with service design

SDN Finland made a nice small profit from the Helsinki SDN national conference, held in September 2015. Early last year, it was time to make the money support the chapter objectives: promote the use of service design and support local organisations in creating human-centred services. The Chapter opened a Service Kick Grant competition and set the winner announcement for the first Service Design Day in June 2016. Around twenty good and realistic applications from small service companies and entrepreneurs were submitted. Here are the stories of the three grant winners and their service design coaching process.

The Service Kick Grant was especially attractive because it came in two parts. Alongside a monetary grant of €500-1000 in each of the three categories, the winners received a service design coaching package worth around €12,000 euros. The Chapter didn't just want to give out the money, but instead guarantee that the winners got a real chance to apply service design and create services that met their customers' real needs.

The application form was a video sales pitch that would demonstrate a clear business idea and justify why

the applicant should win a grant. Other criteria for applying were global scalability of the business idea, the company age being less than three years old and, in one category, that at least half of the owners were women. This was important in order to support women in the otherwise male-dominated start-up scene.

Despite many strong applications, the determination of the grant winners was easy and unanimous for the jury composed of Anne Stenroos (current Chief Design Officer of City of Helsinki, then Professor,

IDBM Program Director of Aalto University), Jaana Komulainen (SDN Finland Chapter representative, CEO of Atwork Oy), Paula Bello (Business partner and design consultant at Livework Helsinki) and Alex Nisbett (Senior service designer at Livework in London).

The winners are ...

The winners were announced during the first Service Design Day on June 1, 2016, at an event hosted by the Finnish financial service provider OP. The three winning applicants were Mothers in Business Mib ry for their Mothers in Business Academy, Punos Mobile Ltd for the Meeting Assistant tool and Panda Training Oy for its Panda Corporate Training marketplace. However, the winning announcements and certificates were just a start on a longer service design coaching journey, provided pro bono by several enthusiastic SDN coaches.

Flexible coaching to serve participant needs

The service design coaching package was planned to include 15 hours of coaching workshops. This was made possible by three great service design



Emma Tullila represented Mothers in Business at the winners' ceremony. Their Mib Academy for career-oriented mothers was found to be a service that fit well into the socio-cultural setting and deserving of further development with service design.

teams consisting of one senior service designer and a few junior service designers each donating their time for this project. The roadmap had been planned in advance and the senior coaches Paula Bello, Jaana Komulainen and Andy Pattichis each took responsibility for one winner. It was easy to find eager junior designers to help out with the planning and execution of the workshops: Eliisa Sarkkinen, Sofia Nyssönen, Adalgisa Lyra, Heini Kauppinen, Suvi-Kukka Salonen, Daniel Augustyn, Noora Nylund and Agustina Lagomarsino all contributed to the valuable outcomes with the winning companies.

This kind of project offered something new for the coaches, too. Besides expanding their own organisational contexts, they could apply their knowledge to new kinds of customer cases and network with colleagues outside their usual organisational settings.

The approach included three steps to be covered in three different workshops: The first session focused on mapping the service ecosystem, the customers, their value drivers and identifying the pain points. The second session was focused on imagining and designing the desired service experience, and the third session around create a compelling business story to support the service proposition. Each company process was, of course, slightly different, and the coaches applied the initial plan flexibly (figure 5). The grant winners were also made to work between the sessions in order to gain the best results.

“A successful SD coaching requires activity from many stakeholders. The process requires collaboration skills, project coordination, persuasion skills, compromises and teaches patience. In the end, the focus needs to be on things that really matter in the business environment.”

Daniel Augustyn, Junior Coach

Turning an association into a business

The first Grant winner case was Fambition Consulting, a fresh spin-off company with a background in the Mothers in Business MiB network of over 1,500 highly educated women in Finland. Active members of the MiB community recognized a common challenge faced by many Finnish parents with small children: traditional HR and management processes do not adequately support work life demands while also allowing for taking care of a growing family. The SDN facilitation was of great help in finding the business case for the seven co-founders of Fambition, which aims to change the work practices towards a more family-friendly direction.

According to Fambition's People & Culture Expert Laura Hannola, parental leave is often a moment for ambitious women to switch jobs. From the employer's perspective, this means a huge loss of resources. "We feel that there is a need to develop work life practices. We want to challenge employers to better utilise the potential of highly educated parents – often women – returning from parental leave. The SDN Kick Grant process gave us an opportunity to ideate various service concepts and to recognise that our customers' – the employers – needs and challenges early on in our business development. It was a very rewarding experience to be facilitated by the enthusiastic SDN team that helped us to focus on our core offering."

"Being part of the SDN Kick Grant coaching project was very enriching. I really enjoyed the possibility of working with different startups and collaborating with smart people. It was a great opportunity to exchange knowledge, even beyond service design."

Gisa Lyra, Junior Coach



The co-founders of Fambition Consulting possess many special skills and have a high level of expertise. The Kick Grant coaching offered them a great opportunity to focus on the content and to co-create their service offering with potential customers.

Tool to close sales

The second Grant winner was Punos Mobile's 'Meeting Assistant for Sales', a multi-platform solution for companies using Salesforce CRM. It helps sales teams to plan, manage and document better customer contacts and close more deals. The number of staff supporting sales is constantly declining, yet much of the related automated software is clumsy. This is the service gap that Punos aims to fill.

The Punos team had realised that their approach was too technology-focused and needed help with defining target customers in more detail and determining their real needs. The service design coaching process offered support, tools and templates to allow them to solve some challenges together with their customers.

Ville Mettälä, VP of sales at Punos, stated that the coaching process was extremely helpful in gaining better customer understanding: "The process pushed us to lead real and open dialogues with our customers and

even reopen stagnated negotiations. We now understand better what and why our customer wants certain things. We used to deal only with the senior decision-makers but are now also involving the actual user – the sales staff. This has made us take completely new steps in our development process and is leading to a much better customer experience.”

Helping to keep the competitive edge with training

Finding suitable training for employees is a constant headache for many professionals and corporations. Panda Training Ltd., a service provider for a training sourcing platform, was still half-way through the coaching process when this article was being written. However besides the monetary gain of the Grant, they could already see benefits of the coaching: “The process has helped us to validate our ideas and prioritise activities. Learning about our clients’ expectations and user experience helps us focus on sales now. The coaching brought us back to the basics again: for example, user testing was arranged. The whole SDN team is doing a great job and is very responsive and committed,” said Dima Syrotkin, CEO of Panda Training.

“I received valuable experience in SD, UX, facilitation and got insights on how start-ups work. I can include it in my portfolio, too. All very useful experiences for me!”

Heini Kauppinen, Junior Coach

“I participated in the SDN Kick Grant because of the opportunity to broaden my skills in service design by using methods I may not have used before.”

Sofia Nyssönen, Junior Coach

Strengthening the Chapter as a professional community

The SDN Kick Grant process was an inspiring way of promoting professional networking, shared learning and enthusiasm within the Finnish chapter. So far, we had been mostly active organising events, but this process gave us a real hands-on opportunity to apply and share service-related knowledge. It was amazing how many people really wanted to be part of the process and contribute to the Chapter goals.

“One reason to participate was the SDN itself. While finalising my studies, SDN represents a valuable network with its seminars, projects and, the best, all the great people working pro bono.”

Eliisa Sarkkinen, Junior Coach & Kick Grant Project Manager



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