

Lapland University of Applied Sciences – an integrator of the service network

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The Times They Are A-Changin' – the words of Bob Dylan continue to hold true. Operating environments and ecosystems are organising in a new manner – they are networking. Organisation structures, ownership, business models, nature of work and financing systems are undergoing a turmoil of changes. The future of Arctic Europe, however, seems bright from the perspective of renewable natural resources, circular economy as well as political, safety and technical and economic factors. The key words of this change include globalisation, digitalisation, robotics, service business and entrepreneurship, but also the respect and appreciation of nature and the environment, responsible production and ethical consumption.

The development of service business has progressed at an accelerating rate, and many organisations have improved the customer-orientation of their perspective and offerings and are aiming towards comprehensive operating models – networks – when resolving customer needs, bringing added value to their customers. Often, an organisation with a special service integrator role, which steers the network and unites competence, operates at the customer interface (Valkokari, Valjakka, Hakanen, Kupi and Kaarlela 2014, 7).

The utilisation of network cooperation is key in the reform of operations and in the development of the service business. How value is created in a network and what the role of the service integrator is in uniting competence and as a party steering operations. In examining the operating environment and anticipating development paths, it is essential to recognise the goals and resources of the actors and operations. Seeking and observing new opportunities and partnerships also requires the exploitation of more loose cooperation relationships. In many fields, tightened competition and complex customer needs as well as the need to stand out from the competition have led to a situation where customers are offered value adding integrated solutions instead of individual products and services.

The theme of this online magazine is service business and entrepreneurship, which is also a key area of the strategy of Lapland University of Applied Sciences. This strategy is implemented at Lapland University of Applied Sciences by combining teaching, research, development and innovation activities. With the help of an operating model, the competence of each educational field is developed and the operations of the different educational fields united. The model also serves the operations and internationalisation of the local companies and organisations.

The research, development, innovation and teaching activities of the university of applied sciences can be compared to the operations of a service network integrator. The integrator must possess the ability to identify the competence of each actor, find new potential partners and commit the partners to a solution that brings value to customers. The recognition of new business opportunities requires the ability to perceive larger regional networks and to unite the resources and skills of the business networks in a diverse and efficient manner. In addition to efficiency, the business network enables proactive anticipation, learning and innovations. Within the networks, organisations and companies have different goals and require different cooperation models. Business networks can be classified as basic business networks, i.e. networks improving business, networks reforming business that develop and renew operations as well as networks developing new business that are used to seek new innovative solutions and operating models (Möller & Rajala 2007, 899).

Companies and organisations invest in strategic core competence and outsource a part of their operations. The business networks of companies often comprise companies and organisations operating in parallel fields. Each actor may be part of several networks. The starting point for network development is the identification of the company's own strategic goals and network position.

By networking actors and by creating value networks within the field and between different fields, it is possible to form wider networks where the actors are able to jointly develop the offering, earning logic and competence. The operations and internationalisation of these groups (networks) can be supported via educational organisations and public support organisations.

We received an abundance of interesting articles and other texts on the theme of the magazine as well as articles closely related to it. I want to express my heartfelt thanks to CEO Timo Rautajoki of Lapland Chamber of Commerce for writing a column as well as to all the other writers! We grouped the texts according to the following themes: *service business*,

entrepreneurship as well as *teaching and learning*. I hope you enjoy the magazine with all its thought-provoking articles and other texts!

Marita Wahlroos

Sources

Möller, K. & Rajala, A. 2007. Rise of strategic Nets – New Modes of value creation. *Industrial Marketing Management* 36, 899.

Valkokari, K., Valjakka, T., Hakanen, T., Kupi, E. Kaarela, I. 2014. *Palveluverkoston kehittämisen työkirja*. VTT publications 2014, 7.