



LAUREA

An investigation of market research related to
student practical training for SME's

(Project of Jolly Dragon)



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This thesis paper was made as a project for an event organizing company Jolly Dragon. Jolly Dragon started its' training program Academy of Practical Training aimed for international students in 2008. From there on the program has been in development phase and we were asked to take part in the development through this study.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the attitudes of small and medium sized enterprises towards student practical training program (Academy of Practical Training) and international students in general. For our data collection we used online questionnaire and also depth interviews with the representatives of two companies.

The main idea behind the Academy of Practical Training is to help international students to integrate into the Finnish business culture through projects and job placements. This is important because there has been a growing worry on the matter that international students do not stay in Finland after they graduate but take the know-how to the markets where they feel integrating in business culture easier, such as English speaking- and their home countries.

The questionnaire was there to create a general picture of the attitudes of the SME's related to the Academy of Practical Training as well as point out the challenges and opportunities that hiring international students bring for the SME's. The two depth interviews were done in order to gain further insight to the subject and also to find out suggestions how the program could be improved.

Mainly qualitative approach was used in this study. In the questionnaire we favored open-ended questions even though some simpler rating questions were also used where appropriate. The interviews were conducted as a free form flowing discussion instead of having a highly structured approach, in other words following the methods of depth interview.

As the sample remained so low it is not possible to draw any absolute conclusions about the attitudes of the SME's towards the Academy of Practical Training. However our findings indicate that most of the companies who answered either the questionnaire or were interviewed think positively about possibly hiring educated international workforce. The respondents also believed that Academy of Practical Training has every chance to succeed in the future as long as they are able to guarantee and maintain high quality of the students recruited through them.

Keywords: Market Research, Academy of Practical Training, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, Jolly Dragon, Qualitative Research

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Markkinatutkimus opiskelijoiden käytännön koulutusohjelman toimivuudesta pk-yrityksien keskuudessa (Jolly Dragonin projekti)

Vuosi 2010 Sivumäärä 60

Tämä opinnäytetyö on tehty projektityönä tapahtumajärjestäjäyrittäjä Jolly Dragonille. Jolly Dragon aloitti kansainvälisille opiskelijoille suunnatun ja käytännön työhön perustuvan opinto-ohjelmansa (Academy of Practical Training) vuonna 2008. Opinto-ohjelma on kehitysasteella ja meitä pyydettiin ottamaan osaa kehitystyöhön päättötöyämme kautta.

Academy of Practical Trainingin perustana on idea luoda ulkomaisille opiskelijoille paremmat mahdollisuudet suomalaiseen yrityskulttuuriin integroitumiselle projektien sekä työharjoitteluiden avulla. Tämä on tärkeää, koska on ollut paljon keskustelua siitä, että Suomessa opiskelevat kansainväliset opiskelijat usein vievät tietotaidon opiskelujen päätyttyä muille markkinoille, kuten omiin kotimaihinsa tai englanninkielisiin maihin joiden yrityskulttuuriin integroituminen on helpompaa.

Tämän työn tähtäimenä on kartoittaa pienien ja keskisuurien yritysten mielipiteitä Academy of Practical trainingia kohtaan sekä yleisesti kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden palkkausta koskevia seikkoja. Tiedon keräämiseen käytimme sekä nettilomaketta että syvähaastatteluja, joissa haastateltiin kahden eri yrityksen edustajia.

Nettilomakkeen tarkoituksena oli muodostaa yleiskuva pk-yritysten mielipiteistä Academy of Practical Trainingia kohtaan ja kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden yritysmaailmaan tuomista hyödyistä ja haasteista. Syvähaastattelut sen sijaan antavat tarkemman käsityksen pk-yritysten asenteista sekä varteenotettavia kehitysehdotuksia projektin jatkamiselle.

Kvalitatiivista tutkimustapaa käytettiin tämän opinnäytetyön tekemisessä. Kyselyn vastauskentät jätettiin avoimiksi vaikkakin joissain selventävissä kysymyksissä jouduttiin käyttämään arvoasteikkoa vastauspohjana. Haastatteluista haluttiin avoimia keskusteluita tarkasti jäseneltyjen haastattelujen sijasta, toisin sanoen niissä seurattiin syvähaastattelun periaatteita.

Kyselymme otoksen jäätyä kovin alhaiseksi on mahdotonta muodostaa ehdottomia johtopäätöksiä Pk-yritysten kannasta Academy of Practical Trainingia kohtaan. Joka tapauksessa tutkimustuloksemme osoittavat, että vastanneet yritykset ajattelivat positiivisesti koulutetun ulkomaisen työvoiman palkkaamisesta. Vastaajat olivat myös sitä mieltä, että Academy of Practical Trainingilla on kaikki mahdollisuudet menestymiseen mikäli se pystyy takaamaan ja ylläpitämään välittämiensä työntekijöiden pätevyyden sovituihin työtehtäviin.

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1. Introduction

What is the story behind the research? Why it has been made? We met Paul Brennan from Jolly Dragon first time in summer 2007, he had started his company three years earlier and now he wanted to make cooperation with Laurea students. The cooperation got us interested in Jolly Dragon and especially the idea of being “serious while having fun”, in common language how to make a hobby or a free time activity to be your job. The facts that Jolly Dragon also brings international people together and social networks offline from the Internet were the key points of our interest.

In the summer of 2009 the community of Jolly Dragon was alive and well and got a chance to move to a new office within the premises of Uudenmaan liitto (Uusimaa Regional Council) by that time Jolly Dragon was in closer contact with the City of Helsinki and Uusimaa Regional Council. After multiple talks between these three cooperators there was a discussion about a Training Program for International students, and if Jolly Dragon could plan the program and use their networks to realize the program. Paul Brennan did like he was told and planned the program. Now there was just a question: Could the program succeed?

After hearing from Paul Brennan that Jolly Dragon might need help with its new product and that there could be a chance to conduct a market research for them. Paul Brennan wanted the market research to find out the interests of small and medium sized enterprises towards this new Training Program. We decided to give it a try.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Jolly Dragon

Jolly Dragon is an event organizing company located in Helsinki. Jolly Dragon hosts various types of events for international people in Helsinki Metropolitan area. It also gives platform for people inside the community to host their own events. Jolly Dragon has over 2000 people community mainly consisting of foreigners in Finland.

Jolly Dragon was founded by Irish Paul Brennan who found his way to Finland after having a successful career in marketing field back in Ireland. Paul realized having problems in integrating to Finnish society and decided to create a platform for internationals to meet and hang out, and therefore community called Jolly Dragon was born. Jolly Dragon started as a hobby in 2004 and it quickly evolved into a serious (about fun) business having over 2000 international members (www.jollydragon.net) Paul himself states “why not to add meaning to your money” in this sense spending good time with friends and helping other internationals to feel like home in Finland, more precisely in Helsinki.

Jolly Dragon started off by hosting multiple small events almost every day of the week, events such as carting, squash, bar nights, poker and everything people are keen to do with other internationals. Along the way Jolly Dragon has established large support network, where big sports and leisure companies are firmly involved; one of the biggest associates being Amer sports.

1.1.2 Academy of Practical Training (APT)

Jolly Dragon operates in close contact with Helsinki City and Uudenmaanliitto. Especially in Helsinki area, municipals are worried about the fact that international students do not stay inside Finnish borders when they graduate, but take the talent away from Finland. In that sense the right for foreign people to study for free in Finland becomes expensive burden for the Finnish society. Uudenmaanliitto and Helsinki Municipals have discussed about the matter with Jolly Dragon members. As a result of the discussion Jolly Dragon is planning to start a new project, Academy of Practical Training, in the beginning of 2010, as a matter of fact the project has been in research and development for 21 months already. The Academy of Practical Training intends to expand its training program for international students; more precisely give them the chance to carry out their job placements through the company. As the founder Paul Brennan states it “At the moment the focus of APT is about scaling it to provide a service to schools, students and economy to enable Internationals a chance to get experience with Finnish business culture.”

The students participating in the Academy will be graded in order for the companies to be aware of the students’ performances within Academy of Practical Training. The grading system will also help the companies to find out if the students are suitable for their operations. The grading will be conducted by the people working with the students within the Academy. To maintain the program the Jolly Dragon needs investments outside the company and it hopes to find out if companies would be ready to pay commission for APT trained internationals. Jolly Dragon would be then working as an agent between companies and the APT trained student.

It is crucial to bear in mind that APT has not been launched yet and this study is there to give that first scratch for a proper start of the project. All the study results will be financially important for Jolly Dragon, and the research is conducted in such way it generates the most value for the company. For this reason some parts of the study will be confidential and therefore not published in the final version.

1.2 Objective of the Study

1. 2.1 Main objective

The main objective of this study is to find out if there is a possibility for Jolly Dragon to get co-founders for the project and receive monetary benefit through the students trained in the program. The market research itself intends to have a glance on the matters that JD is keen to find out from it, mainly expressing if there is a potential market among SMEs located in Uusimaa or not. The Secondary objective is to find out how SMEs feel about employing talented international workforce and how SME directors see the possibilities of this kind of trainee program to succeed.

Literature from market research field is widely used to generate such a research that follows strictly the topic, so in this sense planned for SMEs. Interviews were conducted in order to acquire detailed information how SME directors feel about international and mainly foreign workforce being part of their everyday business life.

1.3 Key Terminology

1.3.1 Small and Medium sized enterprise

The definition of Small and Medium sized enterprises varies between different countries, but will be standardized among EU countries in following years. In Finland Small and Medium sized enterprise is a company having fewer than 250 employees and annual turnover less than 50 million Euros or a balance sheet total being under 43 million Euros. The company must also fulfill the characteristics set by European Commission for a Small and Medium Sized Enterprise. (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2007) (European Commission 2010)

SME's are the basis of the Finnish economy with the overall amount of SME's being 99, 8% of the Finnish companies. Small and Medium Sized Enterprises are also growing their share as employers with an average percentage of 1.7 a year, and seeming to be the only field of business where is growth in amount of employees. (Suvi Kiema 2008) SME's were picked to be the target of this paper due to their potential as future employers. These numbers and figures tend to fluctuate in short period of time, but now it seems that Finnish SME's have survived from the financial crisis extremely well and are expected to have growth in turnover within next 12 months. Only 10% of the SME's are likely to reduce their amount of personnel in this same 12-month time scale where other 90% of the SME's are planning to higher the amount or hold it the same. The biggest growth expectations are with SME's having close to 50 staff members. (Suomen Yrittäjät, Finn Vera Oyj, Työ- ja Elinkeinoministeriö. 9/2010) Due to these growth expectations this thesis paper becomes really current.

1.3.2 Qualitative research

The most recognizable fact of qualitative research is the use of small samples. Samples between 15 and 40 are common while the maximum number rarely reaches 60. Qualitative research does not give answers to questions like; how many shared the opinion? But is more likely to give an answer to the question Why they shared they shared their opinion? Like the name of the method already shows, the focus is on the quality, not in the quantity of the samples. (De Ruyter, Scholl 1998)

1.3.3 International Student

In this paper international student means a student who studies in international environment. Basically meaning both foreign and Finnish students, who study in International education programs in Universities and University of Applied Sciences.

1.4 Study methodology

In this study qualitative research methods will be used in both the questionnaire and the interview. Qualitative approach was chosen because understanding of the behavior of the respondents gives the study more precise information than just numbers. There was a need to know what respondents think and why they think that, not only to collect enough data to get to measure the results but to get the insight. (De Ruyter and Scholl 1998) Qualitative study is a flexible way to collect data and can be used effectively in different kind of studies, from politics and education to marketing. (Hy Mariampolski 2001) In this study, the method used needs to be flexible due to the fact that it is carried out by both email questionnaire with open questions and interviews.

The results gained from the questionnaire will be used to establish a general view of the challenges and opportunities that small and medium sized enterprises face when considering employing international workforce. The interviews on the other hand are giving an insight on how the specific companies realize the possibilities enabled by the international workforce and what the companies think are the possibilities for Academy of Practical Training to succeed.

Questionnaires and interviews were conducted with pre-selected companies in order to have a proper screening and to increase the validity. Screening needed to be made since only the opinions of the potential customers' matter where opinions of inadequate companies might have a negative effect on validity. That is why only companies with international activities and potential were chosen to be part of this study. This study does not rely on the amount of respondents but the fact that there is enough variation between the responses to maintain the quality. (Mariampolski Hy 2001)

2. Theory

2.1 Qualitative Market Research

Market research in this context will include several procedures that are widely used when launching a new product for a new market. The key activities for such a research are mainly; collecting data and analyzing the data and foremost to explain why marketing researches should be carried out. It is important to realize the markets as a whole; to realize the factors that make up the markets, such as consumers whether they are individuals or organizations. (Paul Hague, Market Research) In this study the target markets are Small and Medium sized enterprises (SME's).

Market research according to Edward F. MaQuarrie (*The Market Research Toolbox 2006*) means; any effort to gather information about markets or customers. Paul Hague defines it more precisely; Market Research is the systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of information relevant to marketing decisions. MaQuarrie also emphasizes the importance of market research by saying “whenever there is increased uncertainty the need of market research comes more acute.”

Successful market research will guide in developing and improving marketing decisions, where as finding information about the market is the main focus. (Paul Hague, *Market Research*). Market Research intends to find out the buying patterns of a person. Markets are extremely hard to predict and for that reason Market Research is used, to gain knowledge and some certainty about the markets. Reference for Business 2010, (*Market Research*) When entrepreneur wants to get the most from his business plan, a business plan included with a market research higher the level of benefits. Market research gives understanding about the competition, customers and the markets.

Market Research can go wrong, but nearly every time it gives the researcher new information about the market and how it functions, sometimes the new information is not the one that was sought and so the Market Research becomes additional expenditure. The need of market research can also derive from the fact that something wrong has occurred, so the Market Research is not a tool to use with just new products, but it can be used for example when sales are rapidly low. For example General Foods USA had to use Market Research in 1960's when they were doing seemingly well and it had no real competition in USA and Canadian markets. The pudding Jell-O had just turned 60 years and for the reason new packages and flavours were released. And then something went wrong, the new packages and flavours met only 85% of the expectations and therefore first

time in sixty years they had to examine markets. If market research had been done before the release they could have known what was wrong with the packages and the flavours. (Percy Larry (1997). *Marketing research that pays off.*)

Market and Marketing research can be easily confused and so it is vital to differentiate market research out of marketing research. Market Research as mentioned above consists of data collected from markets and customers where marketing research as defined by Naresh K. Malhotra and David F. Birks is; an Applied Approach stands for a key element within the total field of marketing information. It links the consumer, customer and public to the marketer through information which is used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems; to generate, refine and evaluate marketing actions; and to improve understanding of marketing as a process and of the ways in which specific marketing activities can be made more effective.

Qualitative research as defined in Marketing Research (Aaker, Kumar, Day) is a research designed for exploratory purposes. The purpose of it is to make the problem more clear and identify possible methodological problems. This means the results gained from the qualitative study are rather a rough estimate of the real attitudes of the group than an absolute truth.

According to Hy Mariampolski, qualitative research methods come in question when the goal of the study is to gain new knowledge of the product learn about consumer buying behaviours, to make educated guesses about the preferences and attitudes of customers, to learn how to create an image for the product so it stands out from its competitors. He also adds that qualitative research is important when a new research program is starting and researchers are trying to find the right questions to ask, when looking for new creative ideas, to learn about

customers' future plans and intentions and when analysing the steps of consumer behaviour.

“Qualitative research involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting data by observing what people do and say.” (Alvin C. Burns, Ronald F. Bush, Basic Marketing Research) Therefore collecting and analysing qualitative data is often time consuming and in cases where using hired researches more expensive than using quantitative approach. This is because the data received from a qualitative study is in open format and while analysing and interpreting it; it is often only possible to make educated guesses of the subject.

Burns and Bush also acknowledge in their book Marketing Research a few key techniques for qualitative research. These are Focus groups, individual depth interviews, ethnography and online research.

Focus groups are one of the core techniques in qualitative research. When conducted with clear purpose, focus groups produce truthful emotions from the participants and that is what makes them so popular. Individual depth interviews are beneficial when there is no need for respondents to interact with each other or when it is important to find out each respondents personal perceptions and feelings about the subject.

Ethnography moves the research away from facilities. Rather than asking questions the researcher will observe the everyday actions of people. Online research tools like blogs add dimension to observing consumer behaviour as it offers the participants a possibility to react and hear others react and share opinions and emotions.

Furthermore Burns and Bush also explain why qualitative research works. The reasons for this are that the interview engages the respondents in more personal and active way

compared to surveys. The interviewer has an opportunity to find out more by asking additional questions on subject and find more subtle and deeper attitudes towards the subject studied. Also the interviewer has an opportunity to observe, report and interpret nonverbal communication, which might be helpful when analysing the interviews later. Lastly the opportunity to help the respondent to overcome the self-consciousness that might have negative effect on the information received. All of these key elements are something that it is not possible to achieve in a quantitative study, as there is no or very little personal connection and interaction between the respondent and the interviewer.

In her article; Academics, practitioners and qualitative market research, Miriam Catterall that direct comparisons between quantitative and qualitative research not only oversimplify the differences between them but also come nowhere near to capturing the diversity of qualitative research approaches. In the book *Markkinointitutkimus* (Mäntyneva, Heinonen, Wrangle) the comparisons of qualitative and quantitative methods are the following. According to them quantitative research is rigid, has large samples produces figures based on numerical data, includes questionnaires and answers on questions, what, where, how often and how much. Qualitative research on the other hand is adaptive, has smaller samples, produces qualitative data to be analyzed, has stories and meanings in it, includes interviews, answers on questions what kind of, why, how and produces new viewpoints.

In this study the main focus has been on qualitative research. Even though some rating questions, that could be viewed as quantitative had to be made for the questionnaire it was important to keep the more complex questions open. Quantitative research is used to produce numbers and figures whereas qualitative research provides information on why something happens. (Tony Proctor, *Essentials of marketing research*) Even though parts of the questionnaire used in this

study could be viewed as quantitative research the emphasis has been on quality over numbers.

2.1.1 The History of Market Research

Market research saw its early days in 1920 when Daniel Starch studied how educational surveys could be linked with advertising. In 1930's Starch founded his company, which interviewed people in public places about their reading habits, more precisely what magazines they read and if they remembered the advertisements in the magazines. Then he compared the number of the people interview and the circulation of the magazines to sum up the effectiveness of the advertisements. In short time others, such as George Gallup, adopted Starches methods and started to develop them further. Gallup took his methods to radio and TV advertising and for that reason he became one of the most recognisable market research practitioners. (Reference for Business 2010, *Market Research*) Marketing research had its heydays in 1930 and 1940 when there was plenty of methodological development among the academic researchers and market researchers.

Researchers have also another opinion about the start up of the Market Research; it can be stated that Market Research had its beginning in the University of Minnesota in 1885 when psychologist Harlow Gale was researching the people's attitudes on advertising. First consumer research departments can dated back to 1910's and 1920's. (Converse, J.M. *Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence 1890-1960* 1987, 2009)

Among the today's practitioners the history of market research is not highly valued. It has been thought that there should not be any values or facts to be followed, so that the practitioners are able to come up with better marketing decision making. Anyhow some of the early days Market Researchers, such as Paul

Lazarsfeld, are still highly appreciated because of them being pioneers in the qualitative research field in 1930's. (Miriam Catterall, 1998. Academics, practitioners and qualitative market research)

2.2 Depth interview

A depth interview as described by A.C, Parasuraman in Marketing Research (1992) is a form of non-structured, non-disguised questioning in which respondents are encouraged to provide information as unrestricted a fashion as possible. In his article, the pursuit of value through qualitative market research, Malcolm Robert Victor Goodman says that traditionally the direction of a depth interview is guided by the responses of the interviewee. During the interviews one of the objectives was to adjust depending of the responses the interviewees. However at the same time the goal was to follow the rough guideline made beforehand in order to get the responses for the important questions. When needed additional questions were asked.

Hy Mariampolski mentions depth interview in his book Qualitative Market Research, a comprehensive guide, and explains it to be a research way, which needs moderator to stay alert at the time of the interview. Moderator needs to follow the expressions and reactions of the interviewee and not only form his conclusions from the answers, but also to interpret the reactions and include those into the conclusion. Depth interviews should last from half an hour to one hour and the questions should be open ended and non-directive, making the interview relaxed and more discussion like. Strict guidelines should not be used but pre-planning should be done, nevertheless questions should be presented with a natural flow. In this context the Open- Ended questions are simply meaning questions where the interviewee simply cannot answer yes or no, but needs explicate on to topic. Interviewers should be flexible to change the order of the questions or come up with completely new questions. It is also recommended to use audio recorders in the interviews to be

able to interpret the reactions of the interviewee even afterwards. (Kvale 1996) (Guion 2009)

Depth interviews should be used when it is important to know the respondents and their reactions without the influence of peers. Depth interview comes in question also when the topic is sensitive and easier discussed in one on one situation, again there are no peers to distract the interview. When the moderator does not want the respondents to communicate with each others, the Depth Interview is a useful tool to separate the respondents from getting influences, because the interviews can be settled to different places and different times, so the interviewees cannot meet.

Depth interviews are said to be time consuming and expensive per interviewee due to the fact that both analysis of the results and the interview itself requires more time than for example in focus group interviews.

2.3 Qualitative data-analysis

According to Qualitative Data-Analysis (Miles, Huberman) analyzing qualitative data consists of three concurrent flows of activity. These are data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification.

Miles and Huberman say that data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written up field notes and transcriptions. Data reduction is something that goes on during the whole project even before the actual data collection starts. For example in this study the first data reductions have been done already at the point of creating the research questions and furthermore when building the questionnaire and choosing the right questions and also when choosing the respondents to send the questionnaire. This was all done in order to gain a sufficient but not overwhelming amount of data which would still give a

good insight on how SME's feel about the subject but be relatively easy to analyze.

Data display according to Qualitative Data-Analysis is generically an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action. Choosing the right display will make it easier for the researcher to draw conclusions of the study. As an example having hundreds maybe thousands of pages of data to draw a conclusion from is a lot more difficult and confusing compared to compressing the data in graphs and charts if possible and summarize it in easily understandable form and then draw the conclusions.

The third of the concurrent flows is conclusion drawing and verification. Already at the beginning of the research the qualitative analyst starts to decide what things mean while still remaining open skeptic and not drawing any concrete conclusions too soon. Miles and Huberman also emphasize that the meanings found from the data have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness and their "confirmability"- that is their validity.

Miles and Huberman state that qualitative data-analysis is a continuous, iterative enterprise. This can also be seen within this study since it is possibly to identify all the three flows, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification, in action more or less simultaneously. The data reduction has been used already from the beginning and actually at every point when data has been written down. Data display has been used in order to put the results in more understandable form, respectively creating charts. Conclusion drawing and verifications have also started in an early phase as there has been general assumptions made about how the companies will react in this study and the questions and later those assumptions have either been verified or been proven to be wrong.

3. The research

3.1 Questionnaire and results

The questionnaire was sent twice to 150 Small and Medium Sized companies in Uusimaa region during the spring 2010. Out of these 150 companies unfortunately only seven answered. The companies were selected from Kauppalehti menestyjät list (Kauppalehti 2010) and the questionnaire was sent by email to the addresses found from the web pages of each company. The companies selected represented different fields of business and they were all such companies that we thought would have an interest in the services that APT is providing. Some pre-selection was made due to the fact that it is clear that sending the questionnaire to certain type of companies would be a waste of their time and irrelevant for the research. It is certain that all the companies will not need the services of Academy of Practical training. Therefore the companies selected usually had contacts in other countries and were used in to communicate in English. Luckily the companies who answered to the questionnaire represented different industries and their responses will give some indication of how useful Academy of Practical Training seems for different fields of business.

Your company's field of industry?

Out of the seven respondents two were wholesale companies, one working more on the domestic market and the other that had more international activities and customers. One sports equipment manufacturer and marketer, legal office, importing company, Project management consultant, planning and engineering office and one fire safety consultant company also answered the questionnaire

What benefits (if any) do you think international students bring to the Finnish business environment?

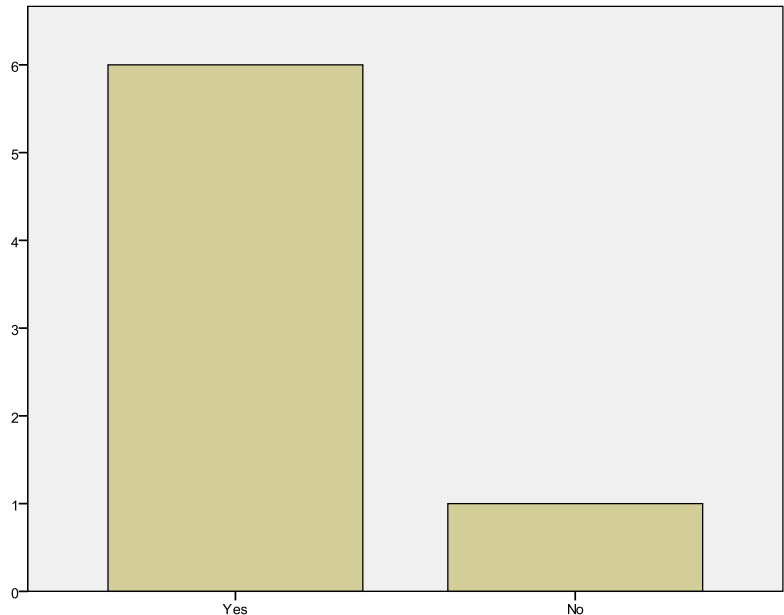
Almost all of the companies were able to identify one or more benefits that international students bring to Finnish business environment. The Importing company however couldn't find any benefits that international students would bring in their own activities.

The benefits mentioned are: Language skills, multi-cultural understanding, new ways of thinking and new viewpoints, help creating internationalization strategies, international contacts and knowledge of different countries, better export and negotiation possibilities when the company has international professionals on its pay list.

What (if any) are the obstacles for your company hiring/employing international students?

The key obstacle that was brought up a few times was financial issues and that in the smaller companies it wouldn't be financially smart to hire a person who might not be able to work efficiently in the Finnish market due to insufficient language skills. The other issues mentioned were possible problems in internal communication, conservative customers and the language skills

Would you be prepared to change your company's working environment (if necessary) to integrate an international student more easily?



Out of the seven companies six were willing to change and make adjustments to the working environment in order to integrate international students more easily. One of the companies was not willing to change its working environment.

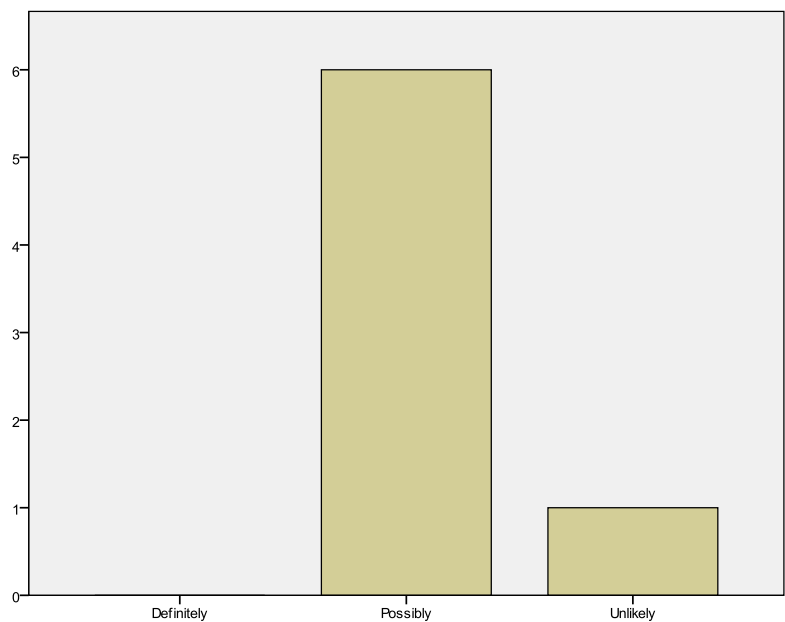
If you answered yes to the previous question how would you do that?

Out of the six who answered the previous question three gave some suggestions how they would help international students integrate. One of the companies was already operating on many international markets and the language used within the company was English. They also told that they have some foreign employees outside Finland and have had some foreigners working for them in the domestic market also. Furthermore they added that if any changes are required for an international to join their company they are willing to help them as good as they can to

integrate. There was one other company that answered that international trainees are very welcome already.

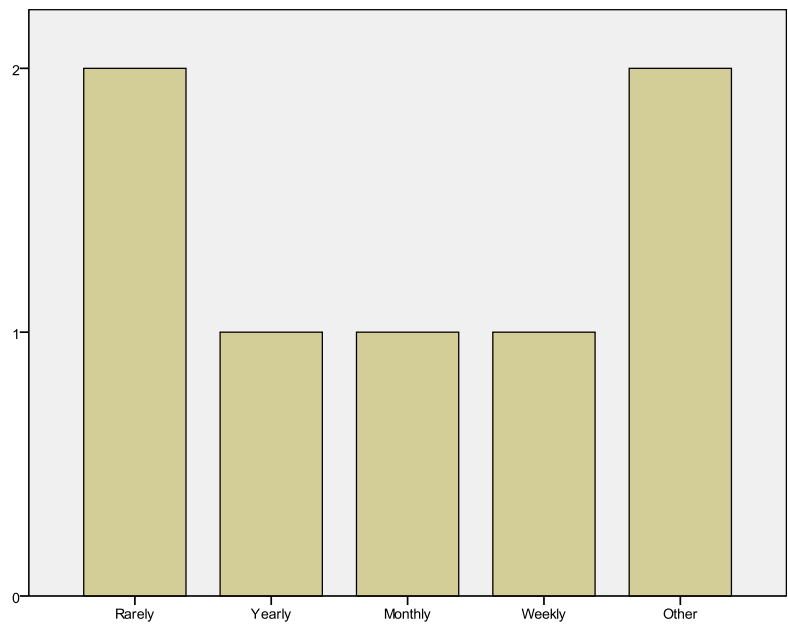
The suggestions received from the three others were the following: In time the language skills of the current employees would improve and possibly hiring more people in specific positions within the company if the business grows enough, more communication in English within the company and hiring more staff on the purchasing department.

If students have completed such a training program (APT) would it increase your level of interest in hiring such students?



Out of the seven respondents six answered they would possibly be more interested in hiring students who have completed a training program like Academy of Practical Training and one respondent said it would be unlikely that such a training program would increase their interest in hiring a person. None of the respondents would not say that completing APT would definitely increase their interest in hiring a student.

How often does your business have projects that might require international students' assistance?

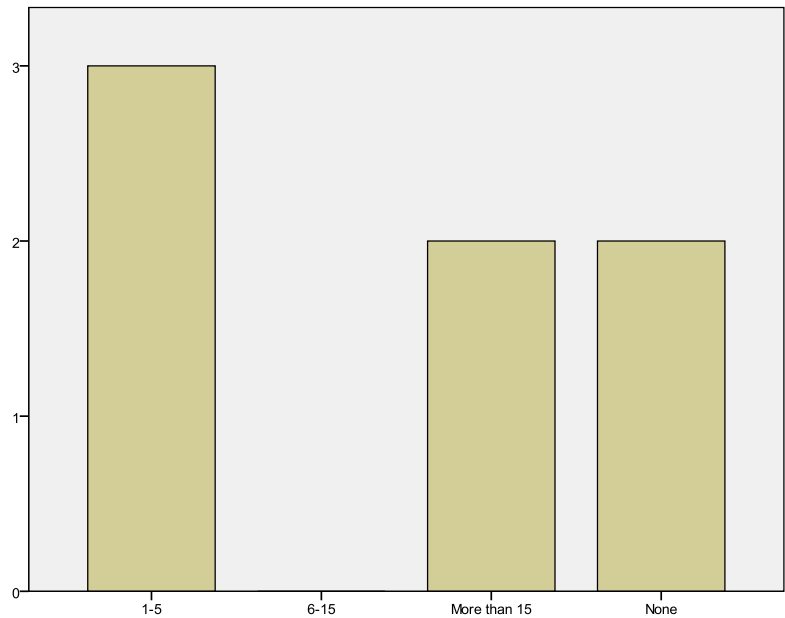


One of the companies claimed that they have projects, as often as weekly that would require assistance from international students. One of the companies answered monthly and one yearly. Two responded rarely and one of the companies said they don't have projects as such. One of the companies claimed that they never have projects that would require assistance from international students.

How important is it for your company to have employees with entrepreneurial spirit?

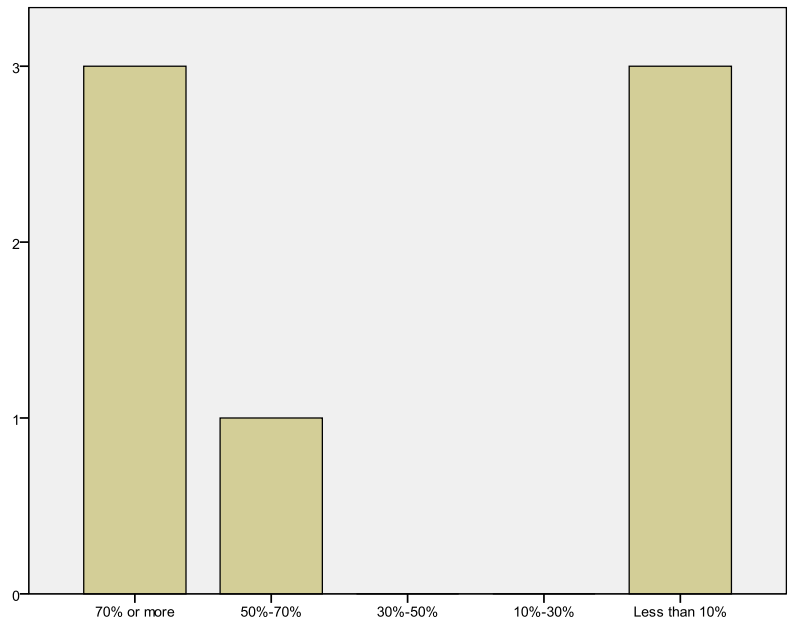
Six out of the seven answered it is extremely important that employees have entrepreneurial spirit and one of the respondents answered it is quite important.

How many major customers does your company have outside Finland?



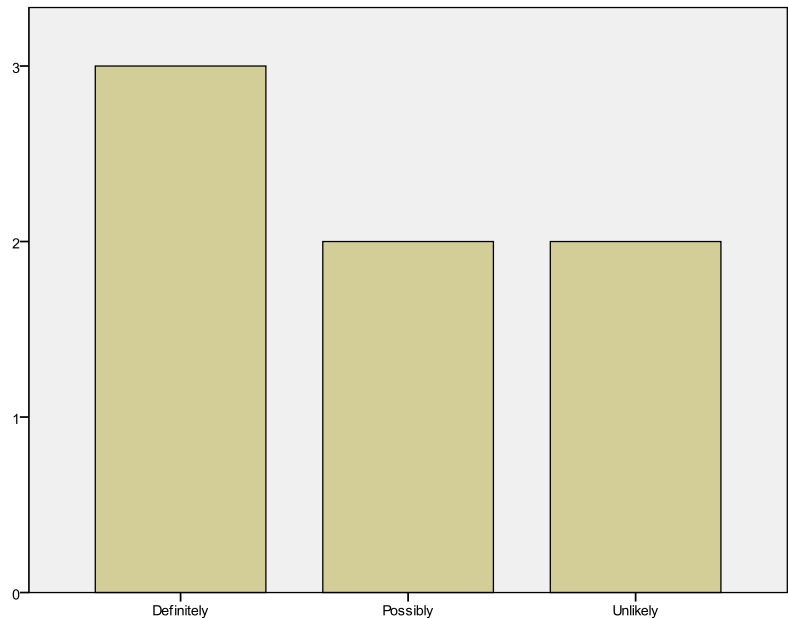
Two of the respondents answered they have no major customers outside the domestic market. Also two of the companies had 1 to 5 major customers outside Finland and three of the companies claimed they have more than 15 customers on the international market. None of the companies had 6 to 15 major customers outside Finland.

How large a percentage of your marketing activities at present are targeted at international markets?



Three companies targeted over 70% of their marketing activities to international markets. One of the companies targeted somewhere between 50% to 70% of its marketing at international markets and three answered that less than 10% of their marketing is targeted outside Finland. None of the respondents answered that their company spends between 10% to 30% or 30% to 50% on international marketing activities.

Do you plan to increase your international marketing activities in the future?

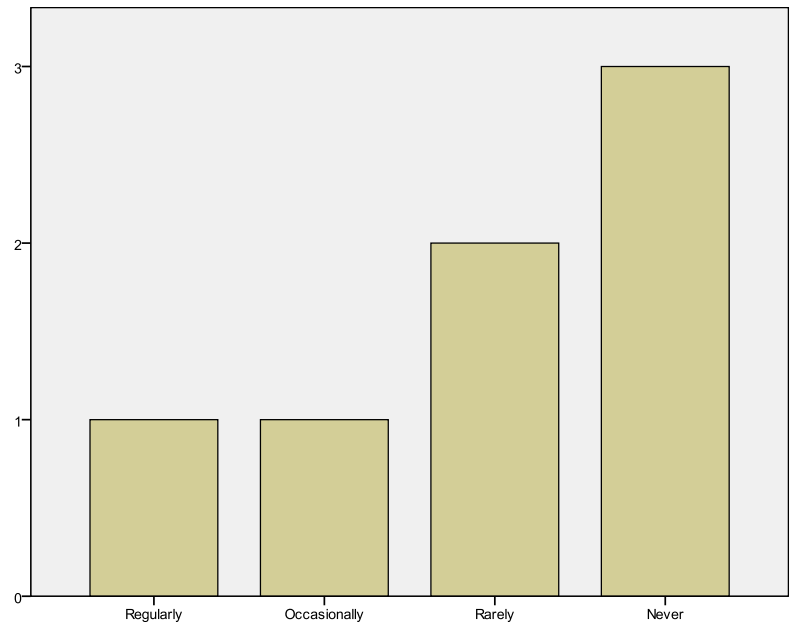


Three of the companies were definitely planning to increase their international marketing activities in the future. Two were likely to do that and also two answered that it is unlikely that they are going to increase their international marketing activities.

What in your opinion are the most important qualities that a person working in the sales/marketing should have?

The right attitude was the quality that was mentioned a couple of times as a key for a sales or marketing person. The other important qualities are: outgoing personality, ability to sell, willing to learn and wants to succeed, confidence, vision, being able to work independently, courage, social skills, alertness, good speaker, politeness, ability to listen the customer, being active in customer contacts, creativity, be unprejudiced and have the ability and skills to use IT as an advantage.

How often does your business have projects that could be outsourced?

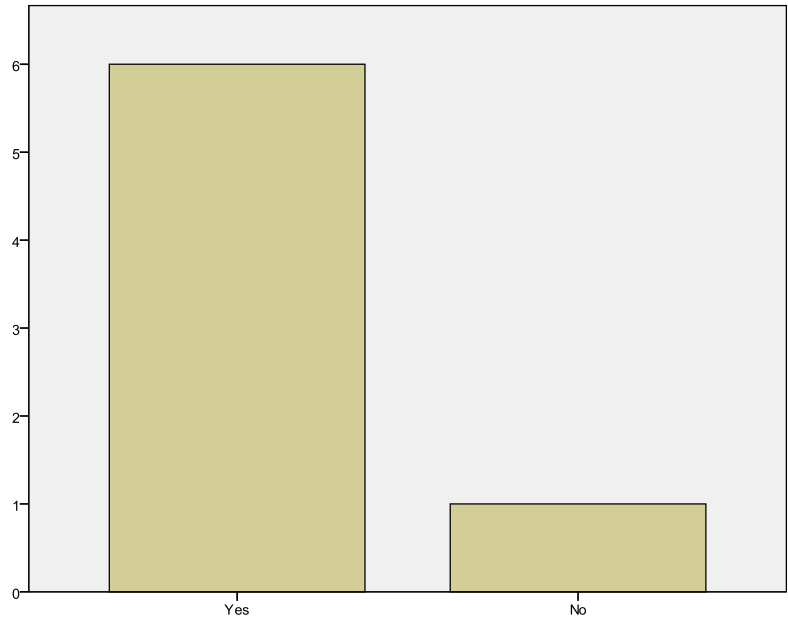


One of the companies answered they regularly have projects that could be outsourced. One company answered they could outsource occasionally whereas two answered that outsourcing would come in question only rarely. Three of the respondents believed they could never outsource any of their projects.

Would you be willing to outsource some of those projects to APT?

On this one, only two of the companies replied. One answered it depends on the costs and ability of the students APT is able to provide for the project and the other said it is highly dependent on the occasion and the nature of the project.

Do you believe the APT program gives international students a better chance of finding employment in Finland?

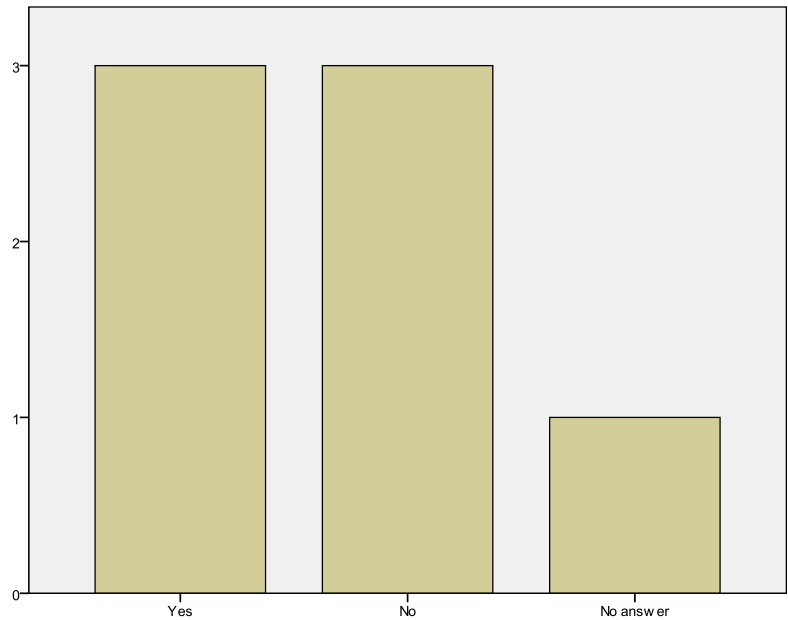


Out of the possible seven, six believed participating in Academy of Practical Training will increase the students chance to find a job in Finland and only one believed it wouldn't be beneficial for a student to participate in APT.

If you answered yes to previous question why do you think so?

All of the companies who answered on this one valued concrete, practical experience gained from APT highly. Also it was mentioned that participating in such a program shows that the international student is more willing to integrate in the Finnish business environment than an international student who is not participating.

Would you be more interested in hiring students, which have gone through the APT program than others (e.g. new graduates)?



Three of the respondents answered they would be more interested in hiring students that have completed Academy of Practical training. Also three answered that Academy of Practical training would not increase their interest in hiring a student. One of the companies gave no answer on this one.

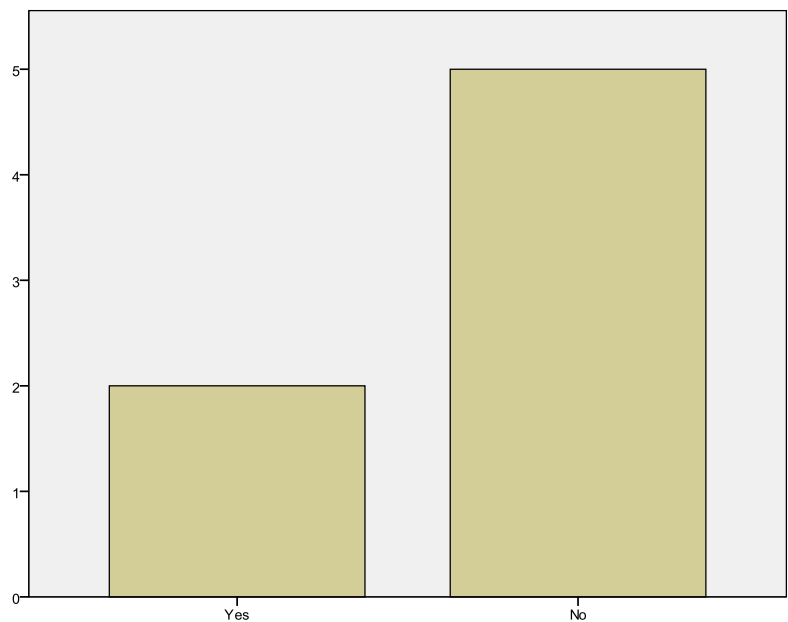
If you answered yes why would you be more interested in hiring them?

Practical experience and proven records of success during the APT program would be the two main things that would increase the respondents' interest. Also it was mentioned that if the student does impressive work in the company during his job placement that naturally would be a big benefit for him when applying for a full time position within the company.

Would your company be interested in investing in APT and at the same time working on its steering committee helping to advance the program?

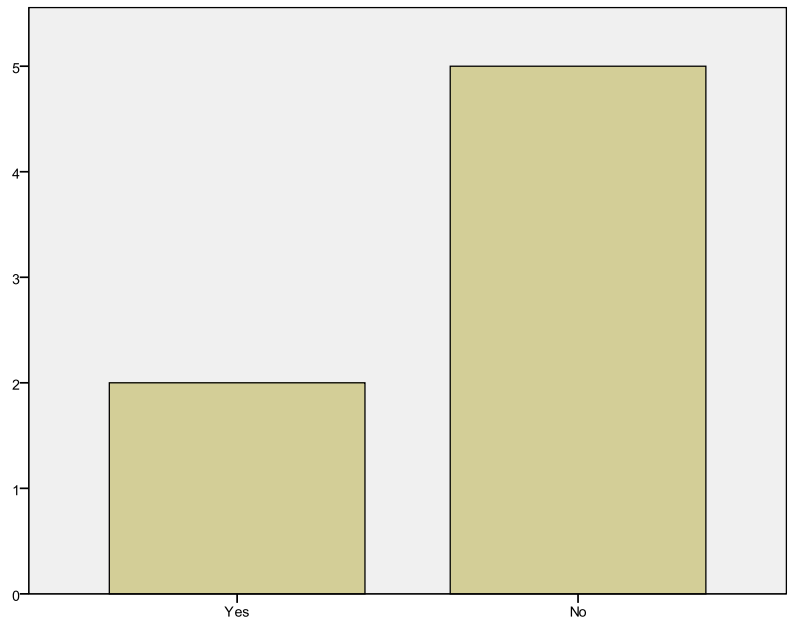
None of the companies were interested in investing APT at the moment.

Would your company be interested in using APT as a marketing tool, such as allowing the students to organize some promotional activities?



Two of the respondents said they would be interested in using Academy of Practical Training in their marketing and would allow some promotional activities to be held. However five of the companies were not interested at the moment.

Would your company be prepared to pay a small negotiated fee to APT for selected students recruited through APT?



Two companies would be prepared to pay a small negotiated fee to APT for selected students recruited through them. Five respondents were not willing to pay.

What are your overall opinions on this kind of program (APT) and its chance of success?

The feedback on this one was mainly positive and encouraging expect for one respondent who saw the program as a total waste of time. The main challenges in the respondents' minds were the students might possibly have insufficient Finnish language skills and that actually starting and running such a program will be very challenging. Also it was mentioned that if this kind of program could be executed in as it has been planned it would by no doubt be an interesting possibility for the companies.

3.1.1 Questionnaire Analysis and results

The respond rate for the questionnaire was disappointingly low, even though the questionnaires were sent out twice for 150 companies. The respond rate turned out to be 4, 67% as seven companies answered the questionnaire. The conclusion from this is that sending the questionnaires and material by email is not an effective way to reach the companies. It could be also speculated whether companies that were not interested in the services of APT just ignored the email completely, since six out of seven respondents reacted positively on APT and only one of the respondents was more negative and critical.

International students were mainly seen as an asset and the companies were prepared to help them to integrate into the company. The key challenge identified for hiring International students were the financial issues, which is not surprising at the time of recession. Also for a smaller company hiring a new person is always a relatively big investment. Unsurprisingly the possibility of having inadequate skills in Finnish language was identified as a big challenge too. This would affect dealing with the customers as well as the internal communication in the company. Though it was mentioned that the applicants Finnish doesn't need to be perfect the person should be able to handle the day-to-day issues that might rise in Finnish also.

Academy of Practical Training was mostly seen as beneficial for the students to participate and, many respondents believed it would increase the students' chance of finding a job in Finland. The practical experience gained in the APT was valued quite highly. Only three companies though answered that completing APT would increase their interest in hiring a student. As the program is still new and under constant development it is not surprising there are some doubts about its quality and reliability.

Two of the companies were interested in outsourcing projects to Academy of Practical Training and its' students and also two were interested of the possibility of using APT as a marketing tool. Naturally the costs and quality as well as the nature and expertise required for each project are a big factor when considering outsourcing. Rests of the companies were not interested at the moment.

None of the companies were interested in investing in Academy of Practical Training or taking part of its steering committee. This is something that was also quite expected as for many it would seem like stepping outside of their own field of business when investing APT. Also as the financial situation is not optimal all investments are being considered even more carefully than usual. Also only two companies were prepared to pay a fee for the students recruited through APT. This might be explained by that the material we send to the companies about APT was more of a general point of view and introductory and it didn't describe the business idea in more detail. However getting paid for the students recruited through them is going to be a big part of income for Academy of Practical Training.

In conclusion it could be said that even though the results gained from the questionnaire were mainly positive from the point of view of Academy of Practical Training. The reliability of the results however is not that high as the number of respondents remained very low and the nature of the questionnaire might have caused the people not interested in APT not to answer as there was an info package to study before one could answer the questionnaire. Also as many of the questions in the questionnaire were open-ended it required more effort from the respondent to answer when compared to simple rating questions?

However even if only one out of fifty SME's would be interested in the services of Academy of Practical Training it would still easily provide a big enough market for the program to succeed. The biggest challenges for APT will be first of all building a reliable and quality trainee program, finding the right ways to maintain and improve its quality, finding the right partners and last but not least finding the customers in the field of SME's. Having a high quality program and focusing the marketing activities carefully, finding the right ways to market such a program and make it known are the keys of its success. Like with any new business the biggest challenges are faced within the first years. However with its strong partners and like the respondents mentioned with a quality and working program Academy of Practical Training has every chance to succeed.

3.2 Interviews

3.2.1 Introduction to interviews

For the interviews two companies were interviewed. The companies chosen for the interview were Rakennuskemia Oy and Active People Oy. Rakennuskemia Oy imports construction chemicals mainly from Central Europe. Most of their customers are located in Finland. Their products can be seen in the biggest home hardware stores such as in Rautakesko (K- Rauta, Rautia) and in German giant Bauhaus. Rakennuskemia was chosen to be part of the interviews because their company profile is close to the majority of Finnish Small and Medium sized enterprises, being small wholesaler whose products are imported from other countries.

Active People is a personnel service company operating in restaurant and event marketing industries. Active People was chosen to be part of this study due to the fact that they have been in the personnel service field from 1997 and have worked with many international students and workers along the years.

Mikko Ikonen the CEO of Rakennuskemia Oy was interviewed on 29th of September in the premises of Laurea Hyvinkää and Terhi Westerberg who is a Key Account Manager at Active People Oy on 6th of October in their office at Helsinki. The interviews were conducted in Finnish and later translated into English in order to have a reliable and more relaxed depth interview.

Additionally, our goal as interviewers was to encourage the interviewees to “to respond with a natural flow of information and to assist them “to overcome fears and inhibitions which may frustrate the purpose of the interview” as described by P.M Chisnall in his book Marketing Research (1997).

3.2.2 Summarized interview Mikko Ikonen Rakennuskemia Oy

The interview took 44 minutes and this chapter will explain the main points question by question:

First question asked was about the size of their company and what kind of positions they have in their company.

“We have plenty of different positions. As our business bases on importing we have people working in sales, purchasing, marketing and management. Of course there are couples of persons working in the warehouse also.

Is English language needed in those positions?

“ Let’s say that we have three persons who are in connect with our suppliers on daily basis and those are the ones needing English language skills”

“There is going to be an opening for an assistant in the future and from that person I would expect good English skills”

“In a company like ours it is still important to know Finnish language, so that the person could work in multiple positions and the flow information would run smoothly”

Some of the international connections were already explained but do you have any customers outside Finland? Are you planning to expand to international markets?

“We have just couple of clients abroad, but we have planned to go to international markets, the timeline is not confirmed yet and it might take two to three years when it is really put on the table.”

Do you get any contacts from clients abroad?

“No we don’t usually the contacts that come from abroad are from suppliers”

What kind of attributes, skills and personality you value in an employee and in a job applicant?

“Honesty, relaxed mentality that fits in our business culture. The person should also be initiative and bring out his ideas and viewpoints, in a nutshell be socially skilled”

“Having good business culture is very important for us and for that reason the persons working with us need to be social and honest”

Do you need international sales professionals?

“No not at the moment. Sales person who would know Finnish but be a native English speaker then maybe there would be a need. Like said before the Finnish language is crucial for us”

“I think that if there would just one English speaking employee it might change the culture and some of the old staff members face difficulties in contacting with this English speaking person”

“If we would have 20 persons in our company it would slightly different, the integration of this is English speaker would be easier. But now when there is just ten of us and the atmosphere is really dynamic the integration seems harder”

What kind benefits and challenges would English-speaking worker bring to your company?

“The biggest challenge in my opinion is the integration, I would not like if the person would not get along with the other workers and sort of become an outsider. Everyone should enjoy their time at their work place”

“The integration might be easier in other kind of companies, like in marketing companies where the staff speaks English and are already used to use English in their everyday work. But I still emphasize the importance of knowing Finnish language; at least the person should try to learn Finnish and try using it while working in Finland. I myself think that the foreign job applicants who try to speak Finnish stand out from those job applicants who do not.”

How about the cultural differences? How would those affect?

“I appreciate culture very high. Small cultural differences might bring different kind aspects and turn out to be really good for the company, but if the culture is totally different from what we are used to it might bring out difficulties. Again the fact that, we are a small company and from the same culture, might make

the cultural integration harder. If we are thinking about for example religion, I know that it is written in law that it should not make a difference, but would it really be so, is another question.”

Which do you value more, practical experience or theoretical background learnt from school?

“My personal opinion about this is that everyone should have some kind of skills and theoretical background learnt in school in order to create the conditions required for him to grow professionally. The practical experience makes a huge difference when stepping in to the business life. I would rather hire someone who has got his degree and worked before than one who has just got out from school without work experience at all”

“If thinking from Academy of Practical Training point of view the marketing and sales experience provided by the APT might become really beneficial for the student”

If an international student has gone through a program like APT, would it increase your interest in hiring this person?

“I say yes, At least if the references gotten from the APT are good and comprehensive enough to give an idea of the students knowhow”

Does APT give better changes for the international students to find employment?

“I am quite sure it would make getting job easier if they (students) have a thorough data about their experience and skills. If the student has worked with other Finnish companies before, I recon it is also a huge step forwards in getting a permanent job”

“It also tells that the student is really trying and wanting to succeed if he has gone through this kind of program”

APT students are taking part in the projects assigned by both Jolly Dragon and other companies. These projects require skills and attitudes like entrepreneurial spirit, problem solving skills and result orientation. Do you think that these kinds of workers would bring additional value for your company?

“Entrepreneurial spirit is a really important factor in an employee and if APT can really provide information that shows the person has these qualities it would be easier to hire them. The APT cannot be just a mentioning in the CV it really needs to be well made report about the skills of the student.”

Do you think SME's would pay a commission for APT, if APT provides a worker suitable for them?

“I think the commission is reasonable when the worker proves to be skilled and motivated, and turns out to be the same person that appeared on the report. I think the person should have a short trial time and after that I would be willing to pay a commission. For example 1000e for one good worker sounds really reasonable if compared to normal recruiting costs”

Do you believe there could be projects APT student could involve in your company?

“There are plenty projects where we might need help with, for instance in promotion and marketing. I could give a small group of students a budget and instructions for example to make a marketing campaign for our new product. This kind of projects that would cost us plenty of time and money but when outsourced it comes highly reasonable. The commission given to APT would go hand in hand with the time and results of the project.”

Do you have an interest in making long-term cooperation with APT?

“It is a matter of pricing, if the prices are reasonable for us then yes. Also the results should be worth the expense. If APT is proven to be trustful concept and can maintain the quality of the work it might become even more important partner.”

How do you feel this kind of Trainee Program could succeed?

“I see the future of this kind of program quite bright, if APT just has enough resources to operate the program. If City of Helsinki keeps supporting the program and cooperation network between schools and APT is handled well enough, the future seems even brighter”

3.2.3 Summarized interview Terhi Westerberg, Active People

How many people work in your company?

“As we are providing a personnel service for both event marketing and restaurant field we have workers who work as dishwashers, waitresses, cooks and product presenters. Sometimes we provide personnel to the management level of the restaurants. In promotional events we offer part time jobs for example for students. Active People consist of three people in management then there are three persons who are recruiting personnel to the restaurant field. But in this office there are just we three. There are also few people in bookkeeping department.”

Is English language needed in those positions?

“Our restaurant department uses English on daily basis because the amount English speakers in provided workforce are getting bigger and bigger all the time. In event marketing we use English due to the fact that we have large international companies as our major customers for example Unilever. Also when we are in contact with our Swedish customers and counterparts we use English as the business language”

Do you get any contacts from clients abroad?

“If not talking about our major customers mentioned before, we have some of our marketing material suppliers working abroad. The amount of contacts depends much on the campaign we are working on at the time”

Are you planning to expand to international markets?

“In event marketing and event production field we could expand to international markets in the future, but it is something that has not been thought of so much. We still have unused markets inside Finland. Some of the concepts we have used in Finland have been used in Denmark and Sweden too.”

What kind of attributes, skills and personality you value in an employee and in a job applicant?

“In restaurant field work experience is highly emphasized but if when it comes to our event marketing side the personality and social skills matter the most. In direct marketing employees should know Finnish language otherwise the marketing campaign does not reach its goals. Problem solving skills are also something we highly appreciate.”

Do you need international sales professionals?

“I think the language is not a problem, it is just that we do not have that many customers outside Finland. I think there could be a chance to international professional to work here after getting used to our concept”

What kind benefits and challenges would English-speaking worker bring to your company?

“For our company the biggest benefit we could get from hiring international worker is that we get more workforce to provide to our clients. It is our job to convince the client about the skills of an international worker being as good as Finnish one. The biggest challenge again could be the communication between the worker and the client company”

Is it an obstacle for an applicant to get the work place if the person is lacking Finnish language skills?

“In our restaurant side no, but in the event marketing it sure is an obstacle. When working dynamically with the event and having short deadlines the communication should not be problematic. In administration we also work in Finnish and it would become a problem if a new person joins our team and does not know any Finnish. The problem lies on the fact everyone else would need to teach themselves to use English as a corporate language.

How about the cultural differences? How would those affect?

“In the beginning there were some problems with workers coming from totally different cultures, but now when we made strict rules everyone needs to obey, the culture differences do not bother anymore.”

Which do you value more, practical experience or theoretical background learnt from school?

“In the work that we provide through the personnel service practical skills matter more than the theory, but if we talk about a worker going to be part of our team, then the theoretical background combined with the practical experience becomes appreciated.”

If an international student has gone through a program like APT, would it increase your interest in hiring this person?

“Of course, it tells a lot about the motivation of the person if he has gone through this kind of program. It is also a great idea to rank these students and make them go through the steps to really tell who is good and who is not. The report gotten from APT might ease up employers’ decision to hire the student.”

Does APT give better changes for the international students to find employment?

“It does, the motivation to work needs to be shown, and this seems to be good platform to show it. Cooperation with the companies gives students a foothold.”

APT students are taking part in the projects assigned by both Jolly Dragon and other companies. These projects require skills and attitudes like entrepreneurial spirit, problem solving skills and result orientation. Do you think that these kinds of workers would bring additional value for your company?

“We appreciate entrepreneurial spirit very high, we are a small company and sometimes the deadlines are pushing us fast forward, so there needs to be a commitment for the work. Usually we work alone and because of that problem solving skills and ability to make fast decisions are important. ”

Do you think SME's would pay a commission for APT, if APT provides a worker suitable for them?

“Depends how much it costs? We have used this kind of service before and it has been profitable. I think the customers would like to try the cooperation before investing a lot on it. “

“There might be problem if the student needs to be hired by the partnering company. Why do not they do it like we do and just offer personnel services and hold those workers on their own pay lists. It is rare nowadays that companies sign new workers directly their own pay lists. Jolly Dragon will get more customers if they are willing to do the employers responsibilities.”

“It also gives the student a chance to choose and change the place easier if Jolly Dragon is the employer”

Do you believe there could be projects APT student could involve in your company?

“This might be useful for example when launching a product for new markets. Bigger group brings diversity for the projects. I think this is really good idea.”

Do you have an interest in making long-term cooperation with APT?

“If all the things mentioned would work out fine, then why not. There should be an easy access for the cooperation and it should not need an investment in the beginning”

How do you feel this kind of Trainee Program could succeed?

“If they develop their service concepts if feel there is a good chance to succeed. They also have to market it correctly and think about the pricing.”

4. Conclusions

The main objective of the study was to find out whether or not there is a market among SME's for Academy of Practical Training and also would there be interest among the SME's to co-found the project and be part of its development. Secondary objective was to find out how SME's feel about employing talented international workforce and how SME directors see the chances of this kind of trainee program succeeding.

To receive the information needed, a questionnaire was sent to 150 SME's in Uusimaa region and two interviews were conducted in order to back up the information gained from the questionnaires. Unfortunately despite our best efforts the response rate for the questionnaire remained very low as only seven answers were acquired. Because of this it is not possible to

make any definite conclusions from the results of the questionnaire, only educated guesses. The interviews have highly informative role in this thesis work.

The reasons for the low response rate are various but can only be speculated at this point. The questionnaire included many open-ended questions, which required more effort from the respondents than simple rating questions would have. Also it was necessary to go through the information material sent with the questionnaire in order to be able to answer. Due to high amount of effort required to answer the questionnaire it is likely that the ones feeling negative or uninterested about Academy of Practical Training did not bother to answer. Since almost all of the feedback was positive this is quite possible. Also the companies receive a lot of questionnaires and other thesis request by email, which means that undoubtedly some of those will be ignored. From this we can draw the conclusion that contacting the companies by email, especially with a qualitative study, is not an optimal way to reach them. In order to gain their attention and to awake interest it would have been better to contact them by phone and arrange face to face interviews with them.

The companies who answered both in the questionnaire and in the interviews were thinking very positively about educated international workforce and they were even mentioning that they could change their culture to more international way if there would be more international contacts and customers. The same companies were also saying that employing a foreigner with limited English skills might become an obstacle at this time, when not much international business is done and most of the contacts are Finnish. They were referring to the fact that it would need a lot of input from the Finnish staff to make the non-Finnish speaking staff member feel being inside the community. The communication issues also raised up both in the interview and the questionnaire, and the message was that; even though Finns speak English quite well, it would be difficult to change from Finnish to English when you have used to use Finnish while

working. International students with Finnish language skills were highly emphasized bringing a lot to the company, such as multicultural viewpoints, global understanding and better English skills.

The above mentioned was quite predictable before sending out the questionnaire. Because the usual profile of SME's being such; an importing company or a wholesaler with maximum ten staff members, it is easy to state that bringing one person who cannot communicate in Finnish in this kind of dynamic atmosphere might be difficult, and easily considered to be an expenditure rather than an investment.

According to this study, the SME's interest towards Academy of Practical Training was positive, the combination of practical skills and theories learnt in school are the qualities that were appreciated in job applicant and for the international student this kind of training program might be only way to learn the practical skills. Therefore APT program can be stated to raise SME's interest in hiring international students, but only if the report received from APT is comprehensive enough to show the real qualities of the applicant. The quality also came in question when asked about the projects that could be outsourced. Half of the companies have projects that could be outsourced, but they were requiring Academy of Practical Training to prove the quality of the project workers before investing into it. Jolly Dragon should have enough resources to maintain the program and to maintain the quality of the program in order to succeed.

From the responses gained from the questionnaires and interviews it is possible to conclude that the key factors for APT to succeed are quality, successful marketing strategy and the right pricing. As the field of SME's is large it is a challenge to find the potential customers while trying to remain cost-effective. The ability to afford quality workforce of its customers and be able to maintain and guarantee that quality is extremely

important for APT when building its reputation and creating a reliable corporate image. Lastly there is the issue with pricing and how to remain competitive while still bringing in sufficient income. Even though the main goal of the program is to find a permanent work place for an international student the biggest part of the revenue is likely to come from projects and providing short-time workforce for the companies. As providing high quality training for the students is going to be costly a careful pricing plan is a necessity alongside with high quality and right marketing in order to succeed. If these facts have are taken into consideration while developing the program, we can say that there will be markets for Academy of Practical Training.

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Westerberg Terhi, Key Account Manager Active People Oy 6th October 2010

Appendices

Finnish info letter

Jolly Dragon on käyttäjälähtöinen yhteisö, joka järjestää noin 200 tapahtumaa kuukausittain auttaakseen Suomessa asuvia ulkomaalaisia opiskelijoita ja työntekijöitä ystävystymään ja olemaan aktiivisia. Jolly Dragon aloitti vuonna 2004 järjestämällä monia pieniä tapahtumia päivittäin, kuten mikro-autoilua, squashia, baari-iltoja, pokeria ja muita kansainvälisiä ihmisiä kiinnostavia aktiviteetteja. Tällä hetkellä tapahtumia järjestetään aina värikuulasodasta kutomiseen. Jolly Dragon järjestää myös urheilu- ja kulttuuritapahtumia, esimerkiksi salibandyä ja pianoiltoja. Jolly Dragon ei peri maksua tapahtumiin osallistuvilta.

Yli 2000 ihmistä, jotka haluavat löytää uutta tekemistä pääkaupunkiseudulta ovat liittyneet Jolly Dragonin nettisivuille vuoden 2004 jälkeen. Tapahtumiin osallistuu niin liike-elämän ammattilaisia kuin opiskelijoitakin. Osallistujista 32 % on suomalaisia ja suurin osa osallistujista ovat iältään 22-35 vuotiaita. Tulevaisuudessa Jolly Dragon aikoo laajentaa toimintaansa auttaakseen ulkomaalaisia työntekijöitä ja heidän perheitään integroitumaan suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan.

Jolly Dragon on saavuttanut laajan tukiverkon, johon kuuluu myös suuria urheilu- ja vapaa-ajanyrityksiä. Nykyisin Jolly Dragonilla on läheinen suhde kansainvälisiin opiskelijoihin, jotka samanaikaisesti opintojensa kanssa yrittävät sopeutua liikekulttuuriin. Tämän johdosta Jolly Dragon on aikeissa perustaa **Academy of Practical Training** -koulutusohjelman.

Mikä on Academy of Practical Training?

Academy of Practical Training (APT) on koulutusohjelma yrittäjyyshenkisille kansainvälisille liiketalouden opiskelijoille. APT:ssa opiskelijat pääsevät työskentelemään oikeissa liike-elämän projekteissa ja saavat mahdollisuuden johtaa omia liikeyksiköitään (Business unit). Liikeyksikkö on opiskelijalle

riskitön ympäristö oppia tarvittavat tavat, taidot ja ajatusmaailma, jotta he ovat valmiita astumaan suomalaisille työmarkkinoille. Jokainen liikeyksikkö tulee saamaan vastuulleen Jolly Dragonin järjestämän tapahtuman, jota opiskelijat tulevat johtamaan kuin omaa yritystään. Tarvittaessa mentorit auttavat ja opastavat opiskelijoita. Menestyvän tapahtuman rakentaminen vaatii opiskelijoilta luovuutta ja innovatiivisuutta. APT:n tavoitteena on päästää opiskelijat hyödyntämään jo opittuja taitoja käytännössä, auttaa heitä integroitumaan Suomalaiseen bisnesympäristöön ja kehittää heitä tulevaisuuden liike-elämän huippuosaajiksi.

Academy of Practical Training koostuu kolmesta tasosta:

Taso 1: Opiskelijat markkinoivat jo olemassa olevaa Jolly Dragon tapahtumaa. Saatu ammattitaito: tuotekoulutus, tehtävien toteuttaminen, kenttämarkkinointi, joustava työskentely ja asiakastyytyväisyyden dokumentointi

Taso 2: Tapahtuman kehittäminen uudelle asteelle. Opiskelijalla on selkeitä kehitysehdotuksia tapahtuman asiakasystävällisyyden edistämiseksi. Saatu ammattitaito: markkinatutkimus, asiakassuhteet, sitoutuminen, sopimuksien solmiminen ja päätöksenteko

Taso 3: Opiskelija ottaa kokonaisvastuun tapahtuman järjestämisestä ja liikeyksiköstään. Opiskelija alkaa delegoida tehtäviä ensimmäisten tasojen opiskelijoille. Tasolla 3 opiskelija saa myös mahdollisuuden työskennellä Jolly Dragonin ulkopuolisissa projekteissa. Saatu ammattitaito: työnjohtotaidot, neuvottelu- ja myyntitaidot.

APT-opiskelijat tullaan arvostelemaan kokemuksensa ja suoritustensa perusteella. Ensimmäisten tasojen opiskelijat työskentelevät vain Jolly Dragonin antamissa projekteissa. Tason 3 opiskelijat, jotka ovat menestyksekkäästi johtaneet omia liikeyksiköitään, saavat haasteellisempia tehtäviä ja mahdollisuuden työskennellä yrityskumppanien antamissa projekteissa. Haastavimmat projektit annetaan vain parhaille opiskelijoille. APT tarjoaa yksityiskohtaisen arvostelun kunkin opiskelijan suorituksista yrityksille, jotka ovat kiinnostuneita

opiskelijoiden rekrytoinnista. Kumppanuusyrityksillä on etuoikeus parhaiden opiskelijoiden palkkaamiseen.

“APT:sta valmistuessaan opiskelijalla on tarvittavat taidot työskentelyyn markkinointi- ja myyntityössä. Tämän lisäksi opiskelijoilta löytyy tämän päivän liike-elämässä tarvittavaa yrittäjäyshenkisyyttä.”

English info letter

Jolly Dragon is a user driven "events for fun" community that hosts around 200 events a month to help international people to make friends and be active. Jolly Dragon started off in 2004 by hosting multiple small events almost every day of the week, events such as carting, squash, bar nights, poker and everything people are keen to do with other internationals. At the moment the event variation is everything from paintball to knitting including sports and some culture events. No service fee is charged to add an event or participate.

Over 2000 people who are keen to find out something new to do in Helsinki have created a profile on Jolly Dragon's web pages since 2004. The backgrounds of the people participating in the events range from International business professionals to students. 32% of the participants are Finnish and most of the participants fall in the age range 22-35 years. In the future Jolly dragon is looking to expand its activity in helping foreign workers and their families to integrate in to the Finnish society.

Along the way Jolly Dragon has established large support network, where big sports and leisure companies are firmly involved. Today Jolly Dragon has been in close relations with international students who are at the same time with their studies trying to get into the Finnish society and business life, therefore JD is now planning to launch a new program called Academy of Practical Training.

What is Academy of Practical Training?

Academy of Practical Training (APT) is a training program for international business students with entrepreneurial spirit. The students participating in APT will be working on real projects and have a chance to run their own business units. Business unit is a risk free way for the student to learn the necessary skills and frame of mind needed when entering Finnish business life.

Each business unit will be given a Jolly Dragon event that they will run like their own companies, with guidance of mentors from Jolly Dragon and APT. Creating successful events will require the students to be creative and innovative. In a nutshell; help the students to connect their studies with practice, integrate in the Finnish business environment and to realize their potential as business professionals.

International students participating in the Academy of Practical Training will be coached through three different levels:

- Level 1: Promoting an existing Jolly Dragon event. Skills gained: Product training, Objection handling, Tension for Change, field marketing and documenting customer satisfaction
- Level 2: Taking the existing event to a new level. Have ideas of how to improve the event in a more customer friendly way. Skills gained: market research, customer relations, Commitment, Deal Closing
- Level 3: The student will take the whole responsibility of the business unit and starts to delegate tasks for younger trainees. The student will also get to work in projects outside Jolly Dragon. Skills gained: leadership & management skills, negotiation skills and sales.

The students in APT will be graded by their experience and results. The entry-level students will be working only on projects assigned by Jolly Dragon whereas the students who have been successful in running their business units will be given more complex tasks and a possibility to work on external projects given by the partner companies. The most challenging projects will only be given to the best students. APT will provide detailed information about the students who have gone through the program for the companies interested in hiring them. Partner companies will have privilege in recruiting the best students and the most fitting talents.

Students who have graduated from APT will have the required skills to work in marketing and sales. Furthermore the students will have the entrepreneurial spirit required in modern business world.

Finnish questionnaire

Yrityksenne nimi ja toimiala

Millaisia etuja kansainväliset opiskelijat tuovat suomalaiselle yritysmaailmalle?

Minkälaisia esteitä teidän yrityksellänne on kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden palkkaamiseen?

Olisitteko valmiit muovaamaan työilmapiiriänne suotuisammaksi kansainvälisille opiskelijoille?

-Kyllä - Ei

Jos vastasit kyllä, kuinka tekisitte sen?

Jos opiskelija on suorittanut APT:n kaltaisen ohjelman kasvattaisiko se kiinnostustanne kyseisen opiskelijan

palkkaamiseen?

-Ehdottomasti -Mahdollisesti - Epätodennäköisesti

Kuinka usein yrityksellänne on projekteja joissa saatettaisiin tarvita kansainvälisten opiskelijoiden apua?

-Vuosittain -Kuukausittain -Viikoittain -Päivittäin
-Muu

Kuinka tärkeää yrityksellenne on, että työntekijöillänne on "yrittäjyyshenkeä"?

- Hyvin tärkeää -Melko tärkeää - Ei kovin tärkeää

Kuinka monta merkittävää asiakasta yrityksellänne on Suomen ulkopuolella?

- 1-5 - 6-15 - Yli 15 - Ei yhtään

Kuinka suuri prosentuaalinen osuus markkinoinnistanne on suunnattu kansainvälisille markkinoille?

- Yli 70 % - 50-70% - 30-50% - 10-30% - Ei yhtään

Onko yrityksellänne tulevaisuuden suunnitelmissa kasvattaa kansainvälisen markkinoinnin määrää?

- Ehdottomasti - Mahdollisesti -
Epätodennäköisesti

Mitkä ovat mielestänne tärkeimmät ominaisuudet, joita myynnissä/markkinoinnissa työskentelevällä henkilöllä tulisi olla?

Kuinka usein yrityksellänne on projekteja, jotka voitaisiin ulkoistaa?

- Säännöllisesti - Ajoittain - Harvoin - Ei koskaan

Olisiko yrityksenne valmis ulkoistamaan osan edellä mainituista projekteista APT:lle?

Uskotko, että APT antaa kansainvälisille opiskelijoille paremmat mahdollisuudet työllistyä Suomessa?

- Kyllä - Ei

Jos vastasit edelliseen kyllä, niin miksi uskot niin?

Olisiko yrityksenne kiinnostuneempi palkkaamaan APT:n läpäisseitä opiskelijoita kuin muita opiskelijoita (esimerkiksi vastavalmistuneita)?

- Kyllä - Ei

Jos vastasitte kyllä, niin miksi olisitte kiinnostuneempia?

Olisiko yrityksenne kiinnostunut sijoittamaan Academy of Practical Trainingiin, ottaa osaa sen ohjausryhmään ja olla mukana kehittämässä ohjelmaa?

- Kyllä - Ei

Olisiko yrityksenne kiinnostunut käyttämään APT:a yhtenä markkinoinnin työkaluna?

- Kyllä - Ei

Olisiko yrityksenne valmis maksamaan ennalta sovitun korvauksen palkatessanne opiskelijoita APT:n kautta?

- Kyllä - Ei

Mikä on yleinen mielipiteenne tämän kaltaisesta trainee-ohjelmasta ja sen mahdollisuuksista menestyä?

Yhteystiedot: