

TEXT KATJA ALAJA | PHOTOS SNAOMAWSOY

JUMP FOR TOMORROW'S LEADERS AND EXPERTS

Background: SanomaWSOY is a growing media group with operations in over 20 European countries. Over 50% of its net sales come from outside Finland, where the group has a leading multimedia portfolio. SanomaWSOY employs over 18,000 people in various fields in magazine and newspaper publishing, including online operations and educational publishing for television, internet and radio. It also has kiosk operations, press distribution, bookstores and entertainment.



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TUULA JOKIPALTIO

SanomaWSOY contacted HSE Executive Education (HSE EE) in the winter 2005 to discuss a program for “high potentials,” both leaders and experts. The challenge was to develop an ongoing international training program that deepens participant understanding about SanomaWSOY as a group and its strategy. It should also provide know-how and tools to be applied in current and future career positions. The program was named SanomaWSOY Jump.

“It is really important for SanomaWSOY to bring people from different parts of the group together, as this supports our internationalization. We believe that diversity enhances learning,” says **Tuula Jokipaltio**, HRD director of SanomaWSOY.

Jokipaltio says that HSE EE was chosen as a partner because of its international experience and its good references; these include the Concept Academy of Rautakirja, which is a division within the SanomaWSOY family.

(START) The program started in October 2006. A total of 25 people, 13 women and 12 men, from Finland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany and France gathered together in the Vanajanlinna Castle in Finland. The group included

a sales manager, chairman of the board, and journalist. “Everybody was really enthusiastic and interested in each other and their businesses, so the start was a positive surprise. People found common discussion themes, such as digitalization, right away,” says Jokipaltio.

(DURING) The program was divided into four three-day modules: Strategy and Leadership, Customers and Markets, Business Performance, and Leadership and People. Modules started with an internal SanomaWSOY case. “Each case improved the participants’ understanding of the SanomaWSOY Group, which is quite complex. External speakers linked our internal case to their lecture, case examples and practices. For example, Phil Phan, a professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, who spoke about Strategy and Leadership, was extremely up to date about what is going on at SanomaWSOY,” says Jokipaltio.

In the Customers and Markets module the case was about the marketing of Helsingin Sanomat, the biggest daily newspaper in Finland, and solving challenges related to the current market situation. Participants had a chance to hear how women’s magazines in the Netherlands take care of their customer relationship. When

the module ended, participants came up with ideas, including business value.

Jokipaltio also highlights the variety of methods used: for example, the Business Performance module was carried out as a business simulation.

“In general, people discussed things actively during training days, and even continued talking about the themes and country level challenges well into the evening. The overall feeling was so positive that people spoke very openly and honestly, which does not happen easily in trainings,” says Jokipaltio.

(IMPLEMENTING NEW SKILLS) After the Strategy and Leadership and Customers and Markets modules, participants started to apply their new knowledge and skills to their work through practical tasks. Some of the people also gave presentations around the topics.

Participants’ capabilities to lead themselves and cooperate with others were enhanced by taking the MBTI test (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), which reveals personality types. The module also included practical tasks during interactive situations.

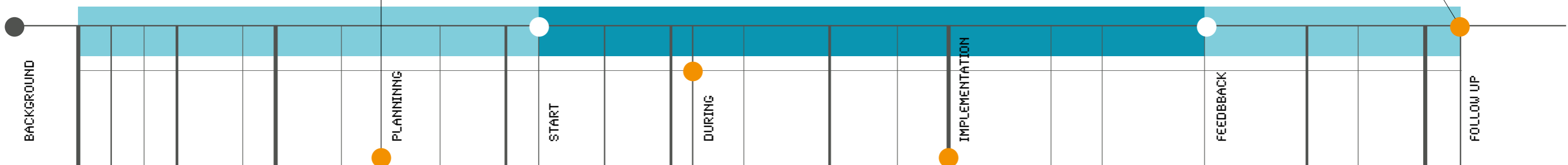
“Our message was to encourage people to think that diversity is

a great thing, and that different kinds of personalities complement each other,” crystallizes Jokipaltio.

(FEEDBACK) All participants rated SanomaWSOY Jump as an excellent program. It met their expectations; the content was thought to be relevant and highly applicable, and maybe, most importantly, had value for the future.

“We had a unique end discussion on the last day. Eija Ailasmaa, president and CEO of Sanoma Magazines, who had been giving a presentation, asked how people have benefited from the program. Everybody had a very confident and concrete answer; and the SanomaWSOY Group spirit that they demonstrated amazed both Eija and me,” says Jokipaltio. →

(FOLLOW UP) After the program ended in March 2007, SanomaWSOY and HSE EE started preparing the second Jump. Jokipaltio explains that the core modules will remain the same, but that the order will be modified and a couple of new speakers introduced.





WORKING WITH SANOMAWSOY

“I ENJOYED working with SanomaWSOY, and not just for one, but many reasons. SanomaWSOY is growing and becoming more international rapidly, but also systematically. The group invests strongly in develop-

ing its people.

We started preparations with Tuula Jokipaltio and people from different SanomaWSOY businesses almost a year before the Jump program was launched. It was great to brainstorm and plan things with time. This is very unusual.”

How about the participants then? “They are smart, skilled, eager to learn and curious to get to know new people; simply, fun to work with. The people were committed to the practical tasks even if they were busy; for example, they wrote excellent book analyses. To wrap up, I am glad that we succeeded in creating a very special program where people crossed the cultural and business unit borders and formed a family-like

union,” comments Kirsi Gylden. •

KIRSI GYLDEN
PROGRAM DIRECTOR, HSE EE

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

Jaana Lindvall-Harki, vice president (acting), media sales, Helsingin Sanomat and **Karin van Gilst**, editor-in-chief, Viva magazine, participated in the SanomaWSOY Jump program with zest. Helsingin Sanomat is the biggest daily newspaper in Finland, and Viva is a popular weekly women’s magazine for 20-35 year-old women in the Netherlands.

Both ladies hoped that they could widen their internal network at SanomaWSOY; and that, in fact, happened. “I liked meeting people from all over the group and sharing ideas with them. It built networks for future cooperation,” says Lindvall-Harki.

Van Gilst agrees: “It was very inspiring to talk to East European participants and get to know their challenges. It is such

a vibrant growing market out there. And now the cooperation Jaana talks about has started. I just received an email from a participant who wanted me to elaborate on an issue.”

During the program Lindvall-Harki was promoted to her current position. She says that all modules gave her great preconditions for acting as a manager; for example, coaching abilities and know-how to share with her team.

“I got a lot from various practices, such as the book analysis task. I read Jim Collins’ book Good to Great and applied its wisdom to my current work. One of my insights was that IT is a great slave, but a poor master,” says Lindvall-Harki.

Van Gilst’s favorite was the Business Performance module, which was executed as a simulation. “Usually finance is boring, but this was fun. We had such an enthusiastic facilitator. Still, the biggest thing is that I feel that I am a member of the SanomaWSOY group.”