

OI INSPIRATIONAL CASES



HOW OPEN INNOVATION CAN LEAD TO A CHANGE IN BUSINESS FOCUS

Playsign collaborated with a broad range of stakeholders to develop a new product and service and thereby accessed a new industry and market. Thanks to these different collaborations, the company was able to change the focus of their business, from gaming to urban planning 3D visualization, and helped reshape the company's strategy to implement their vision "Co-Design by Playing".

- Playsign was founded in 2007 by Tomi Hurskainen and colleagues Toni Alatalo and Pekko Koskinen.
- At that time, the company was specialized in developing games and platforms, as well as web applications under the motto of "Making anything playful". Their main business was complemented by collaborative projects focusing on the technical development of virtual environments and web 3D technologies.
- As their projects advanced, the Playsign founders saw an emerging opportunity in developing game-like applications for visualizing urban planning processes, in collaboration with their customers. This led to a change in focus for their business with significant results.

Origin of the Open Innovation

Playsign is a Finnish SME, which started life developing games and applications in 2007. Although Playsign games were considered successful in terms of recognition among the gaming community, their sales were not very profitable. At that time, the founders were undertaking the technical development of virtual environments and web 3D technologies, in collaboration with other companies, such as Adminotech and Ludocraft.

Almost a decade later Playsign had the opportunity to shift its business focus towards developing virtual platforms, web 3D

technologies game-like and applications for visualizing urban planning processes, thereby shifting their business model from B2C to the B2B sector. From the marketing and growth were a challenge for Playsign. In order to overcome hurdle, the company participated in the Nestholma Accelerator program, in which Nestholma trained Playsign staff in marketing and sales issues.





Through the Accelerator program, Playsign had the opportunity to get in touch with Scandinavian Innovation Architecture, organizers of the Nordic Built Cities contest, which was one of the most important open innovation projects for Playsign and finally helped change the strategic direction of the company.

The OI Journey

Thanks to its experience of developing computer games, Playsign was able to focus on the creation of web 3D technology and virtual platforms using cloud-based solutions for their urban planning customers, both for the City of Oulu and through the Nordic Built Cities project. This involved the company in an open product development process where they innovated jointly with customers, municipalities and end-users.



This experience was complemented by the firm's participation in the Horizon 2020-funded C3PO project in which Playsign began to develop platforms giving users the opportunity to leave information and ideas that relate to urban development improvements. In turn this helped Playsign to understand in depth the issues surrounding the visualization of a city.

Playsign made it its priority to develop and



attract new customers. By developing a common marketing strategy which it could implement together with its customers, Playsign sought to develop a win-win relationship through which its customers were able to increase their sales and Playsign was able to expand its word-of-mouth reputation and recognition within the market. At the beginning Playsign thought of their customers as end-users, but following their experience with the Accelerator program, they realized that they are more like channels to the end-customers. The company develops virtual platforms together with their customers and Playsign intends to give permission (and a commission) to their customers to sell the platform onwards.

In doing this, Playsign chose a competition strategy which focused on differentiation. With the development of its virtual platforms, the company's aim was twofold: to focus on the activities developed within the platform as well as on the experience gained by users. Through the Nordic Innovation cases it has created long-term virtual platforms that are updated and upgraded by the citizens using them. Playsign has also been able to achieve economy of scale by using the same technology for all the cases it has worked with as part of the Nordic Built Challenge.

Through the Oulu project, the public was able to test the tool developed by Playsign - a virtual platform for involving citizens in city planning This initially created some difficulties, as the public are not experts in urban planning. For this reason, a series of workshops was organized to

KEYLESSONS

test the tool, where each team had an assistant who helped them to perform the tests; formulas and goals were added to increase functionality and to facilitate testing for the non-specialist sector.

Impact of the OI Collaboration

Playsign is searching for new partners to collaborate with, for example to participate in joint European projects, which could also bring insights to their product development. Through its participation in various projects, Platech has managed to improve its B2B business operations. At the same time, the company seeks to improve its range of skills by adding new ones, but this is proving to be rather difficult as their business and platform features are very dependent on their customers' needs and preferences.

Through the C3PO and Nordic Built Cities projects, the company managed to identify the needs and particularities of the urban planning sector. The main advantages for Playsign have been the strategic benefits it has gained, as well as the reorientation of the company's main focus from the development of games to 3D visualizations of city development plans and architectural projects.

The company is also seeking to add more intelligence and features to their platforms, for example traffic simulation and environmental sustainability issues like measuring air quality. As more cities and companies become interested in having their own virtual platforms, Playsign will most probably focus on the mainstream B2B market – and not only city developers and architects, but also construction companies and shopping mall developers.



TOMIHURSKAINEN CEO&DESIGNER

OPENINNOVATION INFLUENCES A CHANGEIN BUSINESS FOCUS

External collaborations can have an impact on the business focus of an SME.

IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMERS

The knowledge and information provided by external partners/customers are important for ensuring that the products meet the end-users' needs.

EXTERNAL COLLABORATIONS COMPENSATE FOR MISSING EXPERTISE

External partners are useful in other areas than just product development, for example in marketing. Utilizing other companies to acquire sales through joint marketing is sometimes required by SMEs due to a lack of marketing and sales experience.

THE POWER OF MARKETING

Marketing is an important area for the sustainability and further development of a company. It is a way to attract more customers and increase sales.

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