



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



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.



TOMI HURSKAINEN
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OPEN INNOVATION INFLUENCES A CHANGE IN 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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