



Finpro accelerates its consulting skills to serve buoyant Finnish business

Finpro is a consulting organisation that helps the internationalisation of Finnish companies. The 300 strong team operates through a unique global network with over fifty trade centres offering advice and support to clients in over forty countries. Their aim is to guarantee that Finnish companies, especially small and medium size companies, have access to high quality, comprehensive services to help their expansion around the world.

Shaping a consultancy service

Finpro was formed back in 1999 out of the well-established Finnish Export Association, who had a long and successful history of helping Finnish businesses expand in the global market. However, during the early 00s they found that Western Europe was becoming much more consultancy orientated, and, keen to align themselves with the market, they decided to re-brand as a consulting firm – whose market services included worldwide market research, business intelligence and export advice as well as internationalisation strategy consulting.

Finpro wanted its disparate team of new consultants to deliver these services to the same high standards, and they chose consulting experts Elevation Learning as their training provider. Calvert Markham's and Robert Fonteijn's experience with training small and large consulting firms and developing their own successful SME practice made them ideal for the job – and they designed a programme for the 300 new consultants in core consulting skills such as the consulting process and client engagement techniques.

A standardised approach across all trade centres

“Having every consultant subscribe to the same approach for delivering Finpro's services was a key objective,” tells Calvert. “People had worked autonomously for a long time and were used to having the freedom to do it ‘their way.’ Most of them were doing a great job but as Finpro expanded it was important they take a more consistent approach.

“We held workshops mainly in Helsinki, but also in other key theatres of operation, such as the Far East, working closely with the teams, sharing our experience of delivering consultancy and helping them to devise a process that would suit delivering a reliable and quality Finpro service – that could be rolled out from any office.”

China and Asia were boom areas as lots of Finpro customers were operating and expanding here. Calvert continues: “It was extremely important to get it in these locations. It’s a very different culture to Europe, and Finpro’s clients really needed help fitting in, understanding the people, culture and legislation. We spent extra time ensuring that the Finpro team had a process that really worked for them, that they fully understood and were bought in to, that enabled them to offer clients a full range of services to suit the market.”

Improved efficiencies

“Life has become much easier for our employees since they had been through the training,” tells Tarja Ihalainen, Human Resources Development Consultant for Finpro. “They now have a standard set of procedures for working and a common language. They are able to work more efficiently, help more customers and support other colleagues more easily.

“We have 300 staff worldwide, most of them consultants, and we put all our new recruits through the same induction training,” Tarja continues. “The staff we recruit are frequently from industry organisations and possess lots of valuable client side experience, but not often consultancy skills. Our training ensures that our new starters can plug straight into the Finpro way of working and quickly serve our key clients at a high standard.”

Future development

Tarja concludes: “The Finnish market is very buoyant right now with strong political institutions, a focus on technology, and sound macroeconomic management. Our clients need our support more than ever before so they can capitalize on this. That’s very exciting and we are better equipped to respond to their needs.

“Elevation Learning has been a great help to us since we began working with them. We’ve grown up together, and flexed to meet each other’s needs as we’ve both expanded – which is exactly the approach we take with our own clients. It’s how all good partnerships should be.”

