

Sustainable Integration through telework - Think Baltic Extension

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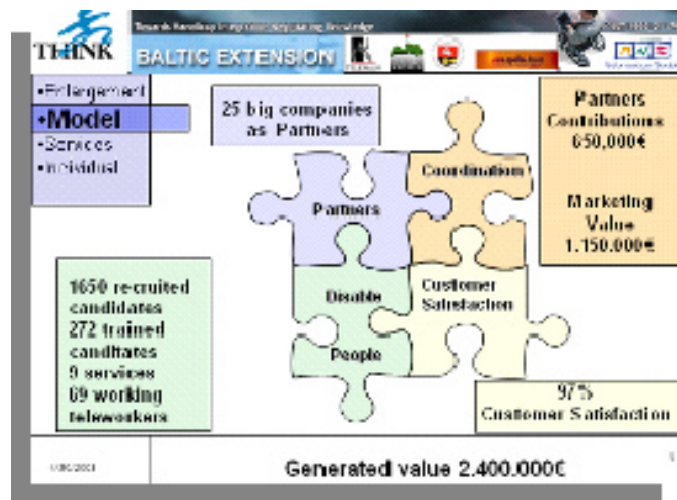
THINK is an application of an organisation model developed in Portugal by TELEMANutenção S.A. (hereafter referred as TELEMAN), to four other countries: Spain, Italy, Scotland and Greece. The project was conceived, coordinated and led by TELEMAN partnering with companies like Microsoft, Hewlett Packard among other 25 major organisations that contributed with its specific products/services and know-how.



THINK innovated basically in two ways: by creating an organization model that facilitates the sustainable economic and social integration of disabled persons; and by mobilising private companies to invest in and develop new opportunities for a part of the (regional or national) population that is still not being used at its full potential.

The main objective of the THINK project was to create and develop a sustainable model for the integration of disabled people, via teleworking and partnering with several large organisations - suppliers of products or services required by THINK - needed to render the project viable.

From September 2000 to June 2002, we recruited more than 1650 candidates, training 272 in 9 different professions and creating 69 new job opportunities in 5 countries. This was done involving 25 companies, 8 of them multi-nationals working with us in several countries, who contributed with more than 650.000 Euros worth of their products and services. We generated promotion and publicity worth more than 1.150.000 Euros (including TV, newspapers, magazines, Internet and public events). And we conquered 21 long-term clients to buy the services produced by the THINK teleworkers, who gained ratings of 97% customer satisfaction.



We demonstrated that, despite the diversities in other countries, the model initiated in Portugal is viable to exploit, with due localisation. Now the project is being developed in the 3 Baltic countries.

THINK wasn't and it isn't a technological project. Its major breakthroughs come from two organisational and marketing aspects and can be synthesized by the following:

1. From the concept of a "consortia for sustainable business citizenship". THINK developed a Win-Win approach to business organisations where it demonstrated the potential behind the disable population market –

from two points of view: as a source for high quality talents; as a new consumer for the IT market. The main criteria we had in selecting the potential partners were their positioning in the market – the way they see and are seen by the market as a “citizen” company; and the complementarity of the products and services offered. This complementarity reinforced a co-operation spirit, crucial to the success of the project. Our major concern, from the beginning, was to present the project as a new business opportunity instead of “just charity”. This was then reinforced when we started to have quality results to demonstrate that we were in reality promoting and viabilising the creation of a network of high quality workers.

2. To look at the disable population as an asset, instead of a liability, that could be turned on and start creating wealth. Again the major innovation was in the way we communicated the project both to the candidates and to the media in general. Media plays a crucial part in the success of THINK. With out the full involvement from the media, since the beginning, it would be an almost impossible mission to achieve what we achieved. Media enabled all consortia partners to get visibility – very important institutional marketing – and it introduced THINK to the disable population.

So, in reality the THINK concept implied a co-operation between several companies towards a common good with both: the business and the “citizenship” perspectives.

At operations level what THINK developed was a very simple and light virtual coordination structure that facilitated the work of all team and project managers. Associated with this virtual structure is a distributing and monitoring process that ensures the quality and assertivity of all the services produced. Both this processes rely on short-term feedback and intensive communication support to guaranty the performance levels demonstrated by the teleworkers.



Because we are preparing the exploit THINK model plan to other countries, we would like to address an invitation to all institutions present in TELEBALT Workshop to know more about the model and consider implementing it in their country.

For further information please go to www.aboutthink.com and <http://www.telebalt.lv>

