

# Recruitment

Case # xxx (FIN2018): 'Home Sweet Home' in Kajaani

## Abstract

At times, it is not easy for SMEs located in a remote location to recruit the right talent to fill vacancies. This is the case for the partner SME in this case study. It is growing rapidly and needs experienced programmers in mobile games development. However, such talent is scarce for a few reasons; one, this is a new industry; second, the location is far away from bigger cities or other ICT clusters; third, experienced software engineers with specific programming language are needed. Thus, the partner SME decided to attract talent from abroad. To ensure the prospects and foreign employees settle successfully in their new environment, the SME has collaborated with the SHARPEN project to study the phases of onboarding and to develop a practical tool that will help the HR personnel to support the new foreign employees and their family through a systematic approach. The objective is to help them settle as quickly as possible so that they can feel at home in their new work and living environment.

## INTRODUCTION

In this case study, we will summarise our work on a Kajaani-based video game company and how it does its HRM regarding new foreign employees. Our research problem is to understand and develop the way the Company settles and onboards foreign employees and their families to Kajaani.

## THE COMPANY

The company is located in a notably remote location in Kajaani, Finland. Their main product is a free-to-play mobile game, which they have said is primarily aimed at more serious players. The company itself was established back in 2010 and is currently employing around 60 people from all around the globe. At this point in time, they are medium-sized, but they are planning to grow their operations by hiring more employees and expanding their office space.

The company currently has two offices. One is located in Kajaani and acts as their headquarters, whereas the other one is found in Seoul, South Korea. Currently they have around 10 people working at their Korea office.

## **THE HRM FRAMEWORK OF THE COMPANY**

The company's structure is somewhat flat, which reflects the majority of other modern gaming companies around the world. Technically their HR department consists of four people in total. They have one primary HR manager and two office assistants taking care of all kinds of HR-related tasks. They also have a person with a job title of Director of People and Communications, who works on tasks such as recruiting people from abroad.

There are lots of different HR processes in the company - recruitment, contract negotiation, relocation, onboarding and event management, to mention just a few. There are many processes that the HR management is responsible for and they also include some other smaller tasks besides those mentioned above.

The HR processes in the company have been deducted to be heavily centred around soft HR principles based on the discussions our research team had with the management and the employees. The fact that the company's organisational structure is flat also supports this conclusion. Soft HR management means that the company views its employees as a valuable resource, which works as a competitive advantage over other companies. All the employees are treated as individuals and are invested in, and this approach to HR management seems to be working well for the company.

## **RESEARCH LITERATURE**

Human Resource Management (HRM) describes formal systems devised for the management of people within a company. The responsibilities of HR staff fall into three major categories: staffing, employee compensation and benefits, and defining/designing work. HRM is vital because the performance of an individual in a company is highly affected by the work atmosphere or workplace culture.

"Self-initiated expatriate" stands for a person who has relocated internationally willingly and self-intentionally. Usually self-initiated expatriates intend to work regularly in the new host country. Also, these people usually are in the new country for a temporary stay and plan to relocate back to their home country someday. These people are usually skilled and have professional qualifications that they can use in their newly-acquired job.

"Human Resources Management" (Beardwell, I., Holden, L., & Claydon, T., 2004) and "Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice" (Armstrong, M., & Taylor, S., 2017) formed the basis of our understanding of HRM. "Planning and Implementing an Orientation Guide for New Employees" (A. K., 2012), "Creating Human Resource Management Policy for an SME Company" (Soinsaari, A., 2014) and "Developing HRM-practices in growing Finnish SME's: A strategic view" (Kuutti, S., 2015) developed of our understanding of how HRM could be done in an SME with employees from foreign countries.

After we had done research on onboarding new foreign employees and after we had studied the company's process of onboarding foreign employees we recognised four phrases of onboarding as a model for building our research methods. These phases formed the basis for interviewing the company's employees. The phases are as follows:

1. **Phase I:** Applying for the job in Kajaani
2. **Phase II:** Getting the offer to work in Kajaani
3. **Phase III:** Relocation process (from current location to Kajaani)
4. **Phase IV:** Settlement to the new environment and continued support after relocation.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Our methodology was based on interviewing the company's people responsible for HRM and the foreign employees. Our methods are qualitative and naturalistic: we answer the research questions by executing interview-based research. The interviews were carried out by using two questionnaires: one for the HR managers and one for the foreign staff. The interviewed staff consisted of seven employees, most with different nationalities. Most of them were from the EU, from countries like Poland or the Netherlands, but there were some from farther

away, for example Brazil. One of the interviewees was notably from South Korea, where the company's second office is located.

## **FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

The current onboarding process has several positive and negative traits.

- The **positive one** being that the HR director and personnel staff have experienced both living and working abroad, so have understand moving, living and settling abroad.
- The **negative ones** on the other hand include the following. The company's process is less organised as a result of the rapid growth within short period of time. The less structured and organised approach make the process time- and resource-consuming. It is also repetitive to be asked the same questions and there is less opportunity for the new employees to handle issues by themselves.

As the workforce is now very multicultural, care is being taken to develop an inclusive company culture, where people from any nationality can feel at ease. The company is also very adamant about keeping their employees needs satisfied and takes care that they do not feel overwhelmed at work, particularly during the onboarding period.

- For example, working overtime is not required, nor encouraged. Thus, creating a strong organisation culture is also important to help the employees feel settled, have a sense of belonging, and find their identity in this new environment.

Based on the interview results, we found that all those interviewed had a positive outlook on their onboarding time and said that they have been supported throughout the onboarding process. The HR personnel had been very helpful during this critical period. They had received sufficient information about Kajaani and the company. Upon arrival, the HR managers had spent a lot of time and effort to get them settled into Kajaani and to familiarise them with Finnish culture. They also received housing from the company, if they needed it. Employees were generally positive about Finnish culture and customs.

Most of the problems among the employees consisted of practical things, like shopping and anything else dealing with language. Since very few products and services have English labels or English instructions, they have to rely solely on the internet for the translations.

As such, the solution is to gather and collect the various practices implemented by the HR personnel to date and organise the onboarding activities over the four phases into a clear set of structured, organised and exciting onboarding guidelines, supported by good check lists. In this way, the company will have a good, consistent onboarding step-by-step guide, which can be used by the foreign candidate or employee on demand. This information can also be shared with some of those in support roles such as line managers, an outsourced agency or other employees within the organisation.

### **PRACTICAL TOOLKIT**

Having clear a checklist and guidelines can help to address the most frequently experienced problems or questions, thus freeing up time resources and reduce costs to support an effective transition. In this way, the HR personnel only need to focus on dealing with exceptions. Also, there could be a shift of responsibilities to support transition using, for example, a buddy system – every new employee has a local peer buddy (or a foreign employee who is well-settled) as their first point of support.

**Toolkit 1: ONBOARDING CHECKLIST** (This is not a comprehensive checklist, but one for illustration and to help a company kickstart the process)

### 1. PHASE I

<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee Skype interview
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee given basic information package on the company & Kajaani
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee moves on to in-person interview in Kajaani
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plane ticket purchased
<input type="checkbox"/>	Visa obtained for visit (if needed)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Information given in English about taxes, education, and healthcare

### 2. PHASE II

<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee applies for residence on EnterFinland.fi and employer can access progress
<input type="checkbox"/>	Application process completed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee's plane ticket purchased, and move-in date arranged
<input type="checkbox"/>	Company-owned apartment arranged for employee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation arranged for pickup from airport

### 3. PHASE III

<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee settled into new apartment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee taken shopping for basic food and given Shopping Guide
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee given General Finnish Driving and Street Signage Guide
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee taken to Maistraatti and assisted with paperwork
<input type="checkbox"/>	Visit Poliisi Office for Suomi Henkilökortti
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employee assisted with opening bank account
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kela paperwork assistance for employee and family (if applicable)

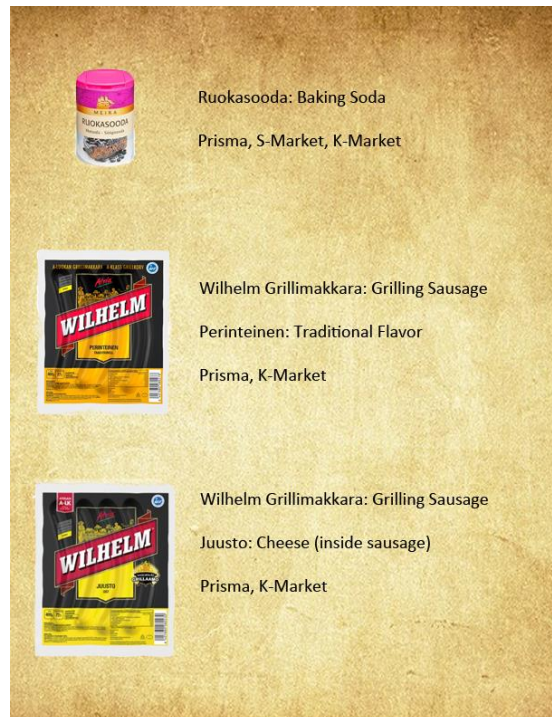
### 4. PHASE IV

<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist employee with getting an apartment or home
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist employee with obtaining home insurance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assist employee with purchasing a car (if needed)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Car insurance, registration, transfer process of original license to Finnish license (if car is purchased)

**Toolkit 2:** Familiarisation Checklist during in-person interview when visiting the host city/region. (This is not a comprehensive checklist, but one for illustration and to help a company kickstart the process)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>COMPANY FAMILIARISATION TOUR</b>	<b>Responsible Person</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Walk around and introduce to key people he or she will work with in the new role	
<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<b>ENVIRONMENT FAMILIARISATION BRIEFING</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Taxes, living costs, healthcare services	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Driving	
<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<b>CITY FAMILIARISATION TOUR</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Residential areas based on interests of the candidate (e.g. what type of requirements, family situation, needs for school, nurseries, special needs such as access for wheelchair etc.)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	If with children, show the nursery or schools	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Leisure facilities e.g. swimming pool, ski tracks, frisbee golf, golf, walking and cycling tracks etc. and activities based on the interests of the candidate	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public transportation and services	
<input type="checkbox"/>		

### Toolkit 3: A shopping List example



### REFERENCES

1. Armstrong, M., & Taylor, S. (2017). *Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice*. London: Kogan Page.
2. Beardwell, I., Holden, L., & Claydon, T. (2004). *Human resources management*. England: FT/Prentice Hall.
3. Kervinen, A. (2012). *Planning and implementing an orientation guide for new employees* (Bachelors thesis). Retrieved from [https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/41419/Annukka\\_Kervinen.pdf?sequence=1](https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/41419/Annukka_Kervinen.pdf?sequence=1)
4. Kuutti, S. (2015). *Developing HRM-practices in growing Finnish SME's: A strategic view*. Retrieved from [http://epublications.uef.fi/pub/urn\\_nbn\\_fi\\_uef-20150923/urn\\_nbn\\_fi\\_uef-20150923.pdf](http://epublications.uef.fi/pub/urn_nbn_fi_uef-20150923/urn_nbn_fi_uef-20150923.pdf)
5. Soinsaari, A. (2014). *Creating human resource policy for an SME company*. Retrieved from [https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/83932/Soinsaari\\_Ansi.pdf?sequence=1](https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/83932/Soinsaari_Ansi.pdf?sequence=1)