

Networking Groups of Silver Service



Meeting of the spinning network in Jämtland!

1 Summary

Many people in the society have craft skills. Many are almost retired or older and can now devote their time in just one craft technique that they become specialised in. Traditionally in Sweden you would join a craft society but nowadays internet is where you meet you're like-minded friends. In the project we have developed networking groups to get people to meet up and share their knowledge. The members of each network often have specialised knowledge to share to each other. The project offered coordination, premises and supervision. Usually the network meetings are held monthly. The networks also showed off their skills on different open houses and craft markets. It always stirs a lot of attention when skilled people show their craft. The handicraft advisors of Region Jämtland Härjedalen will keep working with the networking groups on a regular basis because the outcome is very positive.

Another and different angle can be shown in an example from the textile manufacturer Oleana in Norway. It is based on long traditions for this business in the area as old as from 1846. They are today situated in the same building as the Ytre-Arna Museum, and they have collaboration both the museum and local businesses to form a historical and traditional rooted concept for their products. One unique part of the concept is that employees can stay working in the business, as long as they wish, far beyond the normal retirement age. The result is very engaged employees and an extraordinary positive working environment, as well as preserving knowledge and quality for the future.

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2 Background

The handicraft advisors of Region Jämtland Härjedalen have found that during the last few years the internet is exploding with handicraft, social media, blogs, tutorials and other type of sharing sites. This new method of interacting seems interesting even for elder members of the handicraft society, they discuss, share knowledge and show of their creations in pictures and tutorials. Internet is the opposite of the old way of meeting and working in a craft association.

In Jämtland Härjedalen local crafts knowledge many times is still alive among older people and they are very pleased and enjoy showing their crafts so the network arrangements that we supply becomes their “stage”.

Another angle for the engagement of older citizens is found in Norway in the Economusee Oleana. Their corporate philosophy is based on values. Sustainability and justice form the basis for most of us - the people we employ, the craft we maintain, the materials we use, the dealers and the suppliers. This is Oleana's basic attitude. People live longer today and would like to work longer, and age is no obstacle. Oleana has special focus on visions and dreams, it gives us energy, claims the director Kolbjørn Valestrand. The patterns and garments are inspired by traditional Norwegian knitwear, and the collection always consists of something new along with designs that have been in the collection for many years. "Good design gives the company identity, while promoting affiliation and pride among employees," points out Signe Aarhus. Oleana has also received many awards. As many as five times, the Norwegian Design Council has honored the company with the label for good design. The award is a recognition for successful use of design and for innovative products and solutions.



Woodcarving: Lotta Wingstedt (left) and Inga Qvarfell

3 Methods

To create synergies and awareness between the artisans, the local community, young and old people work with tools like meetings, workshops, exhibits and festivals. We initiate, encourage and support craft networks.

Part of the method is to identify still active crafters, and if there are enough people interested in getting together to meet around the specific topic. Social media like Facebook, is often used to inspire meetings, and let everyone be a part of planning for the networks event. It is also used for sharing with each other their specific knowledge, and for showcasing of products. Skilled craftspeople always get a lot of interested followers. Once established, the groups meet on a regular basis, typically once a month.



In Oleana, where employees can stay working in the business, as long as they wish, far beyond the normal retirement age, the result is very engaged employees and an extraordinary positive working environment, as well as preserving knowledge and quality for the future. In textile fabrication there is a lot of one-sided work, and to remedy this, Oleana is focusing on gymnastics and dancing in the breaks. They have tried both in Latin dance and African dance. It's healthy for the body and creates a lot of laughter and fun. They also focus a lot on the history, culture and heritage they are a part of and keep it living.

More than half of the employees are seniors (above 50 years old), and the total age span today is 22 to 72 years. One example is Selma, who was 62 years old when she took an early retirement in another company. But she wanted to work longer, and was employed at Oleana, 63 years old. She stayed until she was 86!

Oleana also cooperates closely with the Ytre-Arna Museum. Everyone who works there is silver services. They have started this project, collecting pictures and textile history at the factory in Ytre-Arna.

4 Planning and execution

In Jämtland, we organize meetings monthly with regional craft networks where there is a large representation of women. In the network of spinning, 40 people participating, sewing 29 participants, knitting 18 participants, non-profit craft organisations 235 participants, are usually the backbone of participants to our activities.

It's important to create special effects, like someone contributing with something to make meetings interesting, ask someone on beforehand to show something special or present a theme.



One of the networks is the blacksmithing network, 30 participants and it is overrepresented by men. In June 2016 a blacksmith festival was performed. About 800 visitors attended the festival and experienced demonstrations of different blacksmithing techniques. Even other crafts were demonstrated by artisans.

It is always interesting to meet the public, meet someone new for inspiration and sharing the skills of the craftsmanship.

The 20th and 21st of May 2017 the Spring Market was organized in Östersund. This local event gathered hand crafts, house, home and garden in focus. Famous lecturers and skilled crafters were invited. During this event, the wood carving network and the spinning network exhibited their craft. They had the chance to showcase their techniques.

Blacksmithing: Anders Wennström (left) and Ella Eklöf

The networks of silver services create a great social function in the local community when sharing knowledge and inspiring others. It also gives meaning to the crafts people, and their knowledge, skills and stories are still interesting and well appreciated by the broader public.

Since Oleana employs many older people, they have a low turnaround rate, and these workers have a lot of knowledge and experience. They are also used as mentors for the younger workers who are under training. Oleana will have challenge with recruitment for the next 10 years, especially for employees between 20-30 years old. Oleana takes the training themselves since the public-school system tend to halt the continuation of these textile and handcraft. They attempted to establish a cooperation between the county and the upper secondary school to support training integrated with the company to save these eradicating trades. This attempt failed, but they will continue and try it again.

5 Results and outputs

Our networks and silver service groups, spinning, blacksmiths, woodcarvers, meet continuously. They plan and carry out joint projects and workshops. We support them with venues, advertisement and spreading the events on social media.

Overall, a great part of the senior audience is regularly coming to the meetings. They contribute to sustain the craft knowledge and to preserve it within the local community. By showcasing the knowledge and sharing it, the project has showed that the senior citizen was a great channel to improve the interest of the younger generations. The results can be listed:

- Zpinnerz, 14 monthly meetings, participating markets and open days
- Woodcarving network, monthly meetings, participating in open days
- Blacksmith network, meetings and plans for the next festival
- Higher social status of the crafts due to visualization in social media and on different "stage's"
- Increased social gaining's from meeting new craft friends on a regular basis
- Planned exhibitions of the network concept
- A method and routine to keep up the work in the networks, (which has continued)

In 2004, Oleana received the award "The Senior Initiative of the Year in Norway".

Selma and two others (Erling and Randi) traveled to Oslo and received the award on behalf of Oleana. They were on both national TV channels NRK and TV2.

Oleana is a key player in the annual Ytre-Arna days taking place around April / May. It represents a social value increase in the local community, and Oleana provides facilities for the event. They also organize concerts and have a guided tour in the Economusee.

Oleana get more sales during the events. There are local people that drives the coffee in the premises of Oleana, and they also have integrated refugees (Syria) to the cafe. This has led to other exciting dishes and food culture exchanges. Many Silver service also contributes during the Ytre - Arna days. It has also been found that there is less sick leave in those who are over 60 years old. Gymnastics and dancing in the breaks, are healthy for the body and creates a lot of laughter and fun at Oleana.

7 Recommendations

To create awareness of the local public regarding the craft workforce and craft potential there are in Jämtland Härjedalen, small craftsmen and other handicrafts who are offered the opportunity to take part in local events. During this period, the spring market organized in May 2017 enabled the spinnery network together with the wood carver network to expose their art and reach a wider audience.

However, each silver service network in Spinning, Wood carving, Sewing, Blacksmithing regularly organize meetings and invite new participants to take part in the network activities.

Implementing responsibility to each person to keep the network working. Also, the regional craft advisor will work with the method in other crafts.

The Museum Ytre-Arna is important for all the involved silver services and “enthusiast” in the community, and identification for the company and the local community. Oleana thinks it's good medicine to have a job to go to regardless of age.

6 Contribution to NPA indicators

The craft competence and commitment of older citizens in smaller cities and communities gives increased value for craft companies. Older citizens contribute to a large extent and is a major asset to the benefit of society and companies.

Older people have a commitment to craftsmanship and craft issues that can increase corporate social commitment in the society and become very beneficial to the Économusée businesses.

