

STELLA – THE VAASAN GROUP’S WAY OF LEADING PEOPLE

The VAASAN Group is one of the most significant bakery operators in Northern Europe. It is the leading bakery company in its home markets in Finland and the Baltic region. The VAASAN group is also the largest thin crisp and the second-largest crispbread producer in the world, and a leading bake-off player in the Nordic countries. In 2013 the VAASAN Group's net sales was approximately EUR 414,5 million and the Group employed some 2,745 people.

This company has developed solutions to meet consumers’ needs and brought innovations to the market for decades. They are active in several research projects and the aim of the product development based on research studies is to create high-quality products that attract consumers and make use of the naturally beneficial qualities of grains.

Why and what is Stella for?

During the years 2012–2014 VAASAN Group and Mercuri International have jointly executed a **Leadership program called Stella**. The participants are the superiors on all levels throughout the organization, including the Group Management Team.

The starting point in 2012 demanded changes: The company management realized that much better commercial success would need significant changes. Restrictions were e.g.

- peoples expertise was not used in the best possible way
- customer focus and commercial pride was lacking throughout the organisation
- personnel satisfaction and commitment was low
- group management team and local management teams were not efficiently working teams but rather “reporting forums”

Stella works on many levels starting with the group management team and cascading to every individual in the organisation. Through improved leadership, every person at VAASAN is involved in developing the business and is aware of how the company is doing.

The result: an informed and committed workforce delivering a healthy business.

Some highlights of Stella

2012:

- The group management team together with Mercuri International defines the Stella way of leading people
- Around 400 people in every Business Area and country get involved defining VAASAN leadership targets and actions
- Stella cascading starts around the organization

2013:

- Stella becomes a way of working – to ensure common ways of working, especially communication and leading people
- VAASAN values are defined and taken into every-day use
- Commercial awareness and success is emphasized throughout the organisation – “success creates success”.
- Stella workshops are rolled out throughout VAASAN

2014:

- Stella continues and has become an essential part of the VAASAN way of working
- Sales gets the most attention in terms of organisational functions
- Leading people gets the most attention in terms of superior work
- Innovation is emphasized to meet ever-changing customer and consumer demands.

Taking Sales to a Higher Level

Measurable achievements



Now (in September 2014), after working in the Stella way, the measurable achievements so far are:

- VAASAN business results have improved, the owners consider VAASAN their best led portfolio investment.
- The cooperation between the trade customers and VAASAN has deepened significantly.
- VAASAN is considered as one of the key players in the FMCG market.
- VAASAN has overtaken former market leader as the preferred bakery by consumers being now #1.
- Customer satisfaction and involvement is on a new level.
- VAASAN has become faster and more agile to meet the future demands.
- Stella has uncovered many strong talents leading to career development.
- Leadership is constantly on the agenda.
- Employee survey results have improved every year since 2012 and the latest response rate among 2600 employees was 89% showing a strong interest towards VAASAN.

Thanks to Stella - VAASAN Group way of leading people - our company today is so much more agile, cooperative and aligned.

“During two years we have been successfully executing a considerable number of Stella events leading to extraordinary results in employee engagement, living up to our values, creating & aligning our strategy, strengthening good leadership and utilizing existing opportunities.

The Stella events have been a big investment and it has all been worth it as our company today is so much more agile, cooperative and aligned. There has also been a considerable effort in all businesses and functions together with our personnel to get everybody onboard, participating, learning and putting their expertise into common use.

Our common Stella journey will continue with specific events and daily activities also in the future on our journey to be a true world-class company.”

Esa Rautalinko, CEO VAASAN Group

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More detailed information of the case and contact information available on request.