Producing an Assistant Guide for Haaga-Helia StartUp School

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Abstract

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This product-oriented thesis was commissioned by the StartUp School (SUS), a program of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences that supports Haaga-Helia students to become entrepreneurs. The StartUp School offers Haaga-Helia students a six-month assistant trainee position. Consequently, every half a year there is a new assistant at the StartUp School. The commissioning party was lacking an essential tool to introduce work tasks to new assistant interns.

The objective of the thesis was to create a comprehensive manual (Assistant Guide) particularly for the StartUp School. The Guide should not only introduce work-related issues to a new assistant, but most importantly list all work responsibilities and tasks and explain them in great detail. The Guide is to be used as a supporting tool during assistant trainee induction as well as during the period of internship, as an assistant should refer to the Guide when needed and update it in accordance with changes in practices of the StartUp School.

As being a product-based thesis, it contains two main components. First one is the report which presents the background of the project, theoretical part, implementation of the product and discusses the thesis results. Second one is the final product - Assistant Guide for Haaga-Helia StartUp School.

Theoretical part of the report discusses how the product will support marketing in the StartUp School, as one of the main tasks of a StartUp School assistant is to promote StartUp School services on digital channels. Literature related to management assistants' work was reviewed for better understanding of main characteristics and a role of a management assistant in an organization. Studied sources related to digital marketing, particularly on social media, supported theoretical knowledge, which along with the author's previous experience were used to build the product.

The work on this thesis began in January 2016 with acquisition of the data for the Assistant Guide, which continued until the end of June 2016. Information was collected during six month when the author of this thesis was doing her internship as an assistant at StartUp School. The Guide was being written in between July and October 2016 and the report was finalized in November 2016.

Generally positive feedback from the commissioning party and a user – a current StartUp School assistant, was received on the product. The feedback, suggestions for future development of the product and personal assessment are discussed at the end of the report.

The commissioning party prohibited the Guide to be published in Theseus online library due to sensitive information the Guide consists. Therefore, only the Guide's table of contents is included in the appendix.

Keywords
guide, management assistant, social media marketing, StartUp School

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1　Introduction

The first introductory chapter of this thesis report gives an overview of the project. First section of this chapter consists of information about the project background and how the author chose the thesis topic. The second section tells about objectives and limitations of the project. The final section introduces the structure of the thesis.

1.1　Project Background

This product-based thesis was done for the commissioning party, the Haaga-Helia StartUp School (SUS). The product of the thesis – the Assistant Guide for Haaga-Helia StartUp School is mainly based on the authors own experience as well as the theoretical knowledge from the related sources.

As part of my studies at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences I had to complete an internship in a position related to my degree program for Multilingual Management Assistants. I was selected as an assistant and had a great opportunity to do my internship for Haaga-Helia StartUp School. It was a full-time internship and lasted for 7 months, from the beginning of December 2015 till the end of June 2016.

At the beginning of my internship I received an induction /orientation from StartUp School staff, mainly from the previous assistant trainee, who was finishing his work placement at SUS. The orientation was held during first three weeks of December. During the orientation period I learned about the organization's vision and mission, organization's practices, the role of each team member at StartUp School program. Moreover, I was introduced to Haaga-Helia staff members with whom I had to be in contact when accomplishing some of my assistant duties.

The major part of the induction was focused on the explanation of the assistant tasks, which I had to do during my work placement period. The previous intern explained me my main work tasks. He guided me through the processes of organizing events, managing social media channels, booking rooms, ordering refreshments for events etc.

For the induction process the previous assistant used an Excel table called 'Transition', where he wrote down topics / main tasks and their short description. The last column of that table specified 'tools, people or software needed' to complete the tasks. (Karpov 2015).

I was taking a lot of notes while receiving the orientation from the SUS staff and especially the previous trainee and was trying to memorize all places which were showed to me, for

instance, where staff storage rooms are located and where to dispose secure waste. At that point I was already told that I would have to make more comprehensive induction material which StartUp School would be able to use when giving an orientation to the next assistant trainee.

Right at the beginning of my work at SUS I have started making notes and collecting information I considered would be useful for a new assistant at StartUp School. At the interviews when I was being selected as a SUS assistant trainee, I told SUS staff that I am interested in writing my thesis for an organization where I complete my internship. I have been suggested to write a thesis regarding business angels. However, while collecting information for an induction material for a new SUS intern assistant, I realized that writing an Assistant Guide will take a lot of time and effort. We discussed it with the StartUp School Project Coordinator, who advised me that a product for my thesis could be a SUS Assistant Guide. Considering that I wanted to make a product-based thesis which would be related to marketing, particularly digital marketing, I was glad to have this topic for my thesis work. I knew I could utilize my practical knowledge received during my work placement as well as theoretical knowledge regarding online marketing gained at courses in Haaga-Helia to produce a high-quality assistant guide for the StartUp School.

1.2   Project Objectives and Limitations

The StartUp School, a program of Haaga-Helia UAS, offers Haaga-Helia students an opportunity to complete internship as StartUp School assistant trainees. The internship typically lasts for six months; therefore, SUS has a new assistant trainee every half a year. As a new employee of Haaga-Helia, a SUS assistant receives orientation during their training period. Trainee should learn about practices and policies of the organization and most importantly their work tasks and responsibilities.

Founded in 2012 StartUp School was going to have its fifth assistant trainee in autumn 2016. The new trainee had to receive an induction and learn about work tasks and responsibilities. Even though previously one of Haaga-Helia students wrote a 'Guide for the StartUp School's assistant trainees' for the StartUp School, the document did not answer the StartUp School's current need of having an induction material and the guide with detailed guidelines for assistant interns at StartUp School. The document was useful as a brief introduction for a new assistant before they start working at SUS, but it was lacking precise guidelines on how a SUS assistant should do concrete tasks. Thus, I was requested by StartUp School staff to produce a coherent and comprehensive assistant guide based on my own knowledge and experience as a StartUp School assistant trainee.

This thesis' main objective was to develop an Assistant Guide which will be used by new trainees at StartUp School. When starting work placement interns have orientation where they receive basic information about the organization, its mission, vision and practices, the roles of team members and description of the work tasks. At StartUp School an assistant is responsible for organizing events and other projects. Often an assistant organized an event or manages a project by himself without other SUS staff members being involved. Therefore, StartUp School team members are not always aware of what concrete tasks an assistant is doing when they arrange an event or advertise a course. This is where comes the need of the written guidelines which introduce the assistant to the organization practices, assistant responsibilities and tasks. Guidelines are to be used as a tool to help each new assistant to work independently from the very beginning of their work placement at the StartUp School.

Traditionally, a current SUS assistant explains work tasks to the next assistant. The goal was to create an all-sufficient guide, so that the new assistant would know what to do, when and how. The Guide's aim is to help StartUp School assistants to get familiar with the daily and monthly routines and to-do lists. The Guide had to include all the essential guidelines for organizing events, marketing of StartUp School offerings, ordering the refreshments for the events, booking the facilities, writing StartUp School monthly newsletter, managing StartUp School communications, taking care of social media channels, performing secretarial duties and more.

One of the main tasks of a StartUp School assistant is to market StartUp School services especially on digital channels. Advertising of the StartUp School offerings, courses and events is done by an assistant on StartUp School's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages in addition to StartUp School website and newsletter. Marketing also takes place on Haaga-Helia's intranet MyNet and Haaga-Helia info-TV. In addition to e-marketing an intern advertises StartUp School services with printed marketing material such as posters distributed in Haaga-Helia campuses, brochures, flyers and promotional table tents.

Studying a degree program for Multilingual Management Assistants and majoring in marketing, I wanted to incorporate my theoretical and practical knowledge of digital marketing into the process of writing thesis. The related literature on marketing and management assistants' work was studied to deeper understand the role of a management assistant in an organization from marketing point of view. The focus was on online social media marketing.

The product – the Assistant Guide is to be used by the commissioning party during an orientation for assistant trainees as well as during their internships, since the Guide consists of to-do lists, useful tips and precise guidelines on how to do tasks. The Guide is made in an electronic format which is easy to use and navigate through. Practices and policies of StartUp School might change, and an assistant at StartUp School should be able to add information to the Guide to keep it up to date. An electronic format of the product allows to update and modify it when needed.

The delimitation of the thesis could be described as following. The product part of the thesis is an Assistant Guide for Haaga-Helia StartUp School. The Guide gives a brief overview of an organization, its staff and employment-related issues. However it is mainly concentrated on tasks of a Haaga-Helia StartUp School assistant and includes the tasks' detailed description and the guidelines on how to perform these specific tasks.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This product-based thesis consists of two elements: the report of the thesis and the product itself. The report part contains five chapters, which are introduction, commissioning party background, role of the product in StartUp School's marketing, implementation of the project and conclusions and recommendations. The first chapter introduces the project background, reasons why author chose this topic for her thesis, tells about objectives and delimitation of the project. The second chapter gives a description of a commissioning party. The chapter three focuses on relevant theoretical basis and author's own experience. The fourth chapter is dedicated to the description of the project implementation including project timeline, product's producing methods, data acquisition for the product and its content and structure. Outcome of the project, recommendation and suggestions for the product future development, as well as assessment of the thesis process and personal learning is discussed in the last chapter.

Second element of the thesis, the Haaga-Helia StartUp School Assistant Guide contains a cover page, table of content, 68 pages of the Guide and seven appendices of 19 pages in total. Appendices are different instructions presented as images which could not be placed in the body of the Guide. The product is separated from the thesis report.

2   Commissioning Party

This chapter introduces the commissioning party, the Haaga-Helia StartUp School. First subchapter briefly tells about Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and the second subchapter introduces Haaga-Helia's program, the StartUp School.

2.1   Haaga-Helia UAS

Haaga-Helia is one of the biggest universities of applied sciences in Finland with programs available in English and Finnish. There are 5 campuses of Haaga-Helia UAS, three of them in Helsinki (Haaga, Pasila and Malmi campuses), one in Porvoo and one in Vierumäki.

Haaga-Helia UAS has approximately 10 500 students and almost 700 employees, almost 400 of whom are full-time teachers. At Haaga-Helia students can study business, hospitality, tourism, sport and leisure, journalism, languages, marketing, management assistants, information technology and vocational teacher education programs (Haaga-Helia Admission Services 2016, 2.).

There are other two large universities of applied sciences in Helsinki: Laurea and Metropolia, which could be considered competitors of Haaga-Helia. However, Haaga-Helia has a strategic partnership with Laurea and Metropolia. Three institutions promote entrepreneurial education and student mobility (Haaga-Helia 2016. Stronger together).

2.2   Haaga-Helia StartUp School

Haaga-Helia StartUp School is a Haaga-Helia's program that supports Haaga-Helia students who want to become entrepreneurs. StartUp School offers coaching, events and hands-on assistants. It was founded in 2012 and now has coaches in all 5 campuses of Haaga-Helia, and the office in Pasila campus. Annually about 30 companies are founded by StartUp School students. (StartUp School 2016. About).

There are 4 staff members in the StartUp School, one of which is an intern assistant. Haaga-Helia students have an opportunity to complete their internship as an assistant at StartUp School. Assistant's term lasts half a year and one of the main tasks of an assistant is to look for the next intern assistant.

Plenty of different projects related to entrepreneurship are running at StartUp School, many of which are in cooperation with Laurea UAS, Metropolia UAS, co-working spaces, such as

Microsoft Flux and HUB13, StartUp School companies, students, other universities' entrepreneurship societies as AaltoES and MetropoliaES and international partner universities.

The goal for the future is to become the number one community in Finland encouraging entrepreneurship among students and practically helping students to start their businesses.

Finland is among top ten in the list of 144 best countries for business by Forbes (Forbes 2015.). Government funding for startups is also at the good state in Finland. The Finnish government provides millions of euros of loans, grands and investments for startups yearly (Geektime 2015.). Therefore, the StartUp School's field's view for the future looks very promising. Students come up with new business ideas all the time, StartUp School is a valuable place for Haaga-Helia students to receive support on their entrepreneurial journey. StartUp School is a beneficial program for Haaga-Helia UAS, as StartUp School students earn credits through StartUp School courses as well as the program promotes entrepreneurship among Haaga-Helia students and plays a significant role in Metropolitan area's startup scene.

3 How Product Supports Marketing in the StartUp School

Haaga-Helia StartUp School offers students different services, such as courses, projects and events. StartUp School assistant's duty is to organize some of the events and manage some of the projects. All events and projects will not have participants if they are not properly advertised. There are different channels where an assistant can market SUS offerings. These channels include digital channels, such as online channels (website, newsletter, social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), channels used internally in Haaga-Helia UAS (info-TV, intranet, online learning platform). Apart from using digital marketing channels a SUS assistant has an opportunity to promote StartUp School services by advertising them to students visiting a StartUp School lounge or attending SUS events. Also, posters, roll-ups, flyers, promotional brochures and table tents can be used.

As we can see marketing is one of the main tasks of a StartUp School Assistant. From my personal experience working as a SUS assistant intern, marketing takes a big part of working time of a SUS assistant. In the theoretical part of the thesis report I look at the most important characteristics of a management assistants and discuss the need for marketing skills for a StartUp School assistant. During the process I learn how the product supports marketing of the commissioning party, the StartUp School.

3.1 Important Characteristics of a Management Assistant

Management assistant's aim is to assist a manager in a way that a manager would have more time in his hands to take care of the major issues in the organizations, such as the strategy and the mission of the organization. In the StartUp School the assistant supports all SUS team members and gives a helping hand when needed.

Assistant's work requires the ability to multitask. On a daily basis assistants have to check and reply to emails and work-related calls, deal with invoices, write meeting minutes, order documentations, arrange meetings, book travels, greet clients and manage projects. All these can be done if an assistant has good organizational, stress management, teamworking and time management skills. (France 2009, 111-112.)

Time management is among crucial skills a management assistant should have. Some days are hectic, full of tasks that must be completed as soon as possible to proceed with operations of the company. Assistant should be ready to work under the pressure and be as productive as possible in a limited amount of time. Prioritizing and ability to focus while multitasking is very important for assistants as well.

As Sue France suggests, a good assistant should know how to prioritize. Prioritizing the workload starts with writing down a to-do list, include there all tasks. This step helps from worrying. Then all points which are completed should be ticked off, it gives a feeling of accomplishment. To-do lists are created for each work day, so that tasks which can wait till tomorrow are moved into tomorrow's to-do list. It is also good to have on hand a notebook with a pen; in case you remember some task you should do, mark it in your notebook and remember to transfer these notes to your to-do list later. To-do lists may specify time, date and estimation of time required to complete a task. (France 2009, 112-113)

I have used the above-mentioned method to prioritize my work tasks while doing my internship at the StartUp School. Moreover, keeping track of my tasks using such to-do lists inspired me to write some parts of the Guide in a format of to-do lists. A StartUp School assistant can print out related pages of the Guide which consist of to-do lists when, for instance, they must organize an event. Having a to-do list in front of the eyes and ticking off completed tasks can help at organization process.

3.1 Why SUS Assistant Needs to Know How to Market Online

It might get confusing when talking about importance of marketing skills for a StartUp School assistant. Some might think that a SUS assistant must be a marketing assistant as they are required to do so much marketing at StartUp School. However, marketing assistants' work differ from management assistants' work as marketing assistants, as the name implies, help marketing managers. Apart from marketing managers they could also support executives in projects which lead to increasing company earnings and developing marketing campaigns (Targetjobs). There is no marketing manager at StartUp School, promotion of services is mainly done by an assistant. Also, when promoting SUS services assistant aims at receiving attendees at events, applicants for projects by spreading the word about StartUp School services and reaching as many students as possible.

When I was working as a StartUp School assistant I promoted its offerings on different online marketing channels, such as website, newsletter and social media: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Social media channels are used not only for marketing but also for being reachable by customers. With social media platforms a company can create a dialogue with its customers, receive feedback on services and provide customer support.

StartUp School assistant organizes and promotes events. When promoting an event on Facebook, first an assistant should create a Facebook event. Usually a featuring image or a Facebook event cover is added. The assistant designs the cover image. The way how

event's image is displayed on Facebook desktop and mobile differ, therefore it should be taken into consideration when creating a cover image for a Facebook event (Mäkeläinen March-June 2016). For instance, a Facebook event's cover's size is 784 x 295 pixels; the images with wider proportions will be automatically cropped on sides, in case of the height of an image being larger than width, such image will be cropped from top and bottom (Myers 30 September 2016).

Facebook posts could be paid to be promoted. Paying for posts promotion helps to receive more visibility for the post. There is a tool on Facebook, called Adverts Manager. If you want to advertise your organization's Facebook page or an event's page, firstly, an objective of a campaign should be chosen, then audience defined, detailed targeting added, placement set as well as the budget for a campaign. Also, ad's form should be selected and featuring images and text added. Your post will appear to the target audience you defined. (Mäkeläinen March-June 2016).

The possibility of marketing on Facebook using paid ads exists, however, when I discussed with the StartUp School Project Coordinator paid options for marketing SUS events, I was told that they could be considered but not in the nearest future. Thus, information regarding Facebook Adverts Manager was not included into the product.

Organizations should know what information on them exists online. It is advised in a Private / Incognito window of a browser periodically search for your organization's name. There might be posts or comments discussing services of an organization, sometimes, comments can be very negative and a company should react to them and communicate with clients in case there is a need to provide a customer support or fix an issue. (Mäkeläinen March-June 2016). A SUS assistant should also google 'StartUp School' to track online information on the StartUp School and take actions if needed, for instance, update outdated information.

Lasse Rouhiainen suggests to use social media managing tools such as Hootsuite (www.hootsuite.com) which can help to leverage organization's efforts in online marketing on social media channels (Rouhiainen 2015). Hootsuite can be used for different social media channels, for instance, Twitter. A StartUp School assistant can schedule tweets before leaving for holidays and tweets will be posted automatically. Additionally, if an assistant plans an online campaign and has created several tweets for it, Hootsuite will ease assistant's work. All the campaign's tweets can be prescheduled so that an assistant is no worried about that task anymore. When prescheduling posts in Hootsuite, a featuring image could be added. It is advised to include a photo to a tweet, statistically tweets with photos

are read more likely, thus including an image to a tweet will increase its visibility (Kingston 10 July 2012).

Apart from Hootsuite there is another pre-scheduling tool for social media accounts called Buffer (www.buffer.com). These two tools help with scheduling social media posts but at the same time they have some differences in their scope. As Mark Traphagen suggests, it should be considered using both tools in tandem to benefit from different functions of the tools. (Traphagen 21 January 2016).

However, I would recommend a StartUp School assistant to try Hootsuite and Buffer and decide whether they want to keep using both tools or only one of them.

A company can post some exclusive deals on Instagram, create and promote campaigns and contests with prizes, such as discount codes. Also, Instagram can be utilized for creating a brand's story. Instagram images should be accompanied by hashtags; informative or even funny hashtags could be added. (Mäkeläinen March-June 2016).

StartUp School assistant should post on Instagram several images per month, it is their responsibility to come up with the idea of a photo. An assistant can see the previous StartUp School Instagram posts to understand what kind of photos were posted before on the platform.

Marketing skills are important for a StartUp School assistant, as they must spend a significant part of working hours promoting StartUp School offerings.

Some advises and tips based on the information I learnt when studying sources for the theoretical part of the thesis were included in the product. Such sources as courses I have studied in Haaga-Helia UAS, academic books, online articles, blogs on topics related to work of a management assistant and online marketing, particularly social media, were used when working on the theoretical part of the thesis. I based my decisions on what, from the information I learnt, to include in the Guide on my personal knowledge about what could be utilized by a StartUp School assistant when marketing SUS services.

The role of an assistant in StartUp School's marketing is apparent. A SUS assistant must have knowledge about marketing, especially digital, to successfully perform their tasks. The product – the Assistant Guide, includes information regarding how to promote StartUp School's events, courses and projects throughout its contents. One major chapter is dedicated to marketing of SUS events. Information about marketing included in the Guide is

based on the theoretical knowledge from studying related sources as well as on my personal work experience. The Assistant Guide will support marketing in the StartUp School by providing its assistant necessary knowledge, advices and tips on how and where to market StartUp School.

4   Implementation of the Project

The chapter regarding empirical part of the report discusses the planning process of the product – Haaga-Helia StartUp School Assistant Guide and product's implementation. The subchapter about planning of the project consists of three subsections: former materials related to the StartUp School assistant guide, project timetable and acquisition of the data for the product. The second subchapter regarding implementation of the project includes two subsections, one of which presents product producing methods and another gives a description of the product's structure and content.

4.1   Planning of the StartUp School Assistant Guide

During my internship as a StartUp School assistant in spring 2016, I was constantly receiving information from StartUp School staff regarding what should be added to the assistant guide. I had started saving notes and bits of data to add to the assistant guide from the beginning of my internship, then later I decided to produce an assistant guide for the StartUp School as a part of my Bachelor's thesis.

StartUp School staff expressed the need for the induction material for SUS assistant trainees, where assistant's duties would be listed and described in detail. The staff's opinion was that the StartUp School was lacking such type of written guidelines and there was a great need for the guide, which would be utilized when a new assistant intern comes to work for the StartUp School for a period of six months. The idea was that the guide should not only introduce work tasks and responsibilities to a new assistant during their orientation, but also would be constantly updated by each new assistant trainee according to changes in practices and policies of the StartUp School.

The Guide must be a helpful tool when hanging over work from one assistant trainee to another and support an assistant throughout their internship. In case an assistant has a question on how to perform a work task they should not seek an advice from the colleagues first, but instead refer to the Guide and find an answer there. If the answer is not found in the Guide, an assistant refers to their colleagues and adds the information to the Guide. This way the assistant guide continuously is kept up to date.

One of the main requests of the commissioning party was to make the guide informative and including detailed instructions on work tasks of the StartUp School assistant. As was agreed with the SUS staff, the guide had to be made in such electronic form, that it would be easy for a new assistant trainee to update and edit it. The SUS employees also wished to incorporate hyperlinks within the guide. The idea behind it was that, for example, several

tasks require ordering refreshments, and instead of repeating the same instructions multiple times in the guide, there would be only one instruction on ordering refreshments presented as an appendix. Any part of the guide could be linked to the corresponding instructions.

Clear preferences on the look of the guide or its format was not given by the commissioning party. I was given an opportunity to decide on the guide's format, contents, structure and design.

4.1.1 Former Material Related to the StartUp School Assistant Guide

When I started planning the product, I reviewed the previous 'Guide for the StartUp School's assistant trainees' done by one of the Haaga-Helia students, to have better understanding of what manual was previously used during orientation for SUS assistants. I also wanted to see if I could take that material as a base for my product and refer to it in my work.

The 'Guide for the StartUp School's assistant trainees' was dated March 2015 and consisted of ten pages. The document briefly described the StartUp School as an employer, gave an overview of a StartUp lounge, listed main assistant's tasks, mentioned communications on digital channels as one of the main tasks, gave short event checklist, listed StartUp School events and most important tools and systems, such as LeaP, Asio, Moodle and Outlook, discussed wellness and wellbeing at work, gave advice on way to success, described a short exercise an employee can do on their break and finally presented a case example, where in more detail was discussed how to organize a WarmUp event. (Pyykölä 2015.)

After reviewing the document, I realized that even though it could be used to give a general idea about work of a SUS assistants, I was aiming at producing a different product focusing on concrete instructions of how to do StartUp School assistant trainee's tasks. It was clear that I could not keep my product as short as the existing document. I decided not to refer to that document and start drafting the Assistant Guide from scratch and come up with the table of content which would cover all topics I wanted to write about in the guide. Despite the fact that I did not use the document as a basis for my product, it helped me to realize the importance of producing the guide which will be easy to update, as some information in the document was already outdated and not relevant to the current practices of SUS. The document was created just a year ago, and so many things have had already changed in the StartUp School.

The second document I reviewed was a StartUp School Induction Plan, which consisted of a check-list with the key topics to be covered during an orientation of a SUS assistant. This

check-list was used by the SUS staff when I started my work at SUS and had been given induction. Reviewing this induction plan I noted some bullet points / topics, which I later described and included in the Assistant Guide. The topics were: office equipment, lunch breaks, mailing system and working hours. These topics were explained to me orally when I started my work at SUS. In addition, full instructions related to some of these issues, such as lunch break and working hours, could be found in Intranet for Haaga-Helia staff. However, since these are important areas to be aware of when starting work in a new organization, I decided to include their brief descriptions in the Guide and refer the reader to find detailed instructions in intranet if needed.

Another document which I worked with when planning the content of the Guide was an Excel file called 'Transition', which a former StartUp School assistant used when explaining me work tasks during orientation. The file had a table listing main duties/tasks of a SUS assistant and short descriptions of these duties. For some of the tasks 'tools, people or software needed' to complete the tasks were mentioned in the table. I used this table as a check-list when revising a table of contents of my product. Furthermore, some tips, given in that table were included in the final product. (Karpov 2015).

4.1.2 Project Timeline

Haaga-Helia StartUp School had a need in an assistant guide with detailed descriptions of work tasks, which they aimed at starting to use when a new assistant trainee starts her work at the beginning of an autumn semester 2016. The guide had to also include all possible information one should know to do assistant's work at SUS, so that new assistants could refer to the guide during the whole period of their internships if any question regarding work tasks arise.

As I was working as a SUS assistant for half a year, I knew precisely the tasks and responsibilities of a StartUp School assistant. Therefore, I was requested to develop the guide based on my personal knowledge and experience I acquired while working for the StartUp School.

I was obtaining data for the Assistant Guide between January and June of 2016 by taking notes and saving bits and pieces of related information in one document. Production process of the product started in June 2016, at the last month of my internship as a StartUp School assistant. The first version of the table of contents along with the example of the content of the Guide was presented to the commissioning party in the middle of June 2016. After commissioning party's revision and comments, the table of content was adjusted. After

three revisions, the table of content was finalized and accepted by the StartUp School. The work continued with information acquisition for the product.

The first version of the Assistant Guide was ready at the end of July 2016 and revised by the commissioning party. The material was discussed via Skype and the needed changes were done. The work on the Guide continued and the missing chapter on organizing events was sent to the StartUp School at the beginning of August 2016. On 12th of August the first feedback on the Assistant Guide was received from the commissioning party and the user – a new StartUp School assistant trainee. The writing continued and information to some parts of the Guide was added to chapters three to eight. Commissioning party's comments were considered and the final version of the product was sent and accepted on 9th November, 2016. The both parts of the thesis, the report and the product, were submitted to the thesis coordinator in the middle of November.

4.1.3 Acquisition of the Date for the Product

The information for the Assistant Guide was collected at the Haaga-Helia StartUp School while I was doing my internship as a StartUp School assistant. The main period of information acquisition lasted for approximately six months, from January till June 2016.

Daily, I was saving information I considered I could include to the Assistant Guide. The main criteria I set for myself for the information's acquisition was usefulness for a StartUp School assistant trainee. Everything which I felt would help me after I started my work at SUS, such as information on how to perform my work duties, information I had to ask my colleagues to do my work tasks, I was collecting in the form of notes, pictures, tables and lists.

A lot of data was gathered while organizing StartUp School WarmUp events. I was making notes of what I did, how and what helped me during the process. I was aware that the Guide must include detailed instructions, since some tasks of a SUS assistant, e.g. organization of events, are complex and include a lot of small duties which are easy to forget about.

Apart from collecting the data while performing work tasks, I received requests from the StartUp School staff of what must be included in the Guide. Often while discussing a work task with my colleagues, I would be pointed that the information we had just talked about should be added to the Guide.

I had created a table in an Excel file where every day I wrote down a list of things I did during my working hours. The idea behind that table was to keep track of what duties I completed throughout the day. People get used to their work routine. I aimed at producing

the Guide as complete and as good as I could and wanted to include all work tasks, even small ones to the final product. Hence, I used the data from the Excel while creating the Assistant Guide to make sure that I have mentioned all work tasks and responsibilities one should do as a StartUp School assistant.

4.2 Implementation of the Assistant Guide

The second section of the empirical part of the thesis discusses working methods used to implement the project as well as uncovers the content and the structure of the final product. Procedural methods were chosen in consideration of the purpose of the study, which was to produce an assistant guide for the commissioning party, Haaga-Helia StartUp School. Subchapter on the producing methods describes different phases of the product implementation.

4.2.1 Product Producing Methods

While working on the product I used a simple action research model developed by Stephen Kemmis. The model consists of cycles, each cycle has four elements (plan, action, observation and reflection); first cycle's reflection is followed by a second cycle that starts with a revised plan followed by action–observation–reflection (Rory O'Brien 1998). The cycles were repeated until the product was complete. This S. Kemmis' model was chosen as it suited the objective of this product-based thesis to create an assistant guide for the commissioning party.

Following the chosen working method helped me to develop the product by repeating the process of the cycles described. To begin with the project, I made a project plan, after which drafted a plan of the product - a guide's table of contents. The table of contents was given to the commissioning party for revision. Received comments reflected on the second version of the table of contents I presented to the StartUp School. The process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting repeated multiple times throughout the course of the product implementation.

Moreover, I was discussing the Guide and receiving comments and suggestions regarding it from the StartUp School staff continuously during my internship. Six months of the internship coincide which the project's information acquisition stage.

Product implementation phase, as mentioned before, started with the draft of the Guide's table of contents. I wrote down all topics I wanted to cover in the product and grouped them into chapters. First version of the table of contents was presented to the commissioning

party in the middle of June 2016. It consisted of 123 sections including three appendices and had 15 main chapters. The StartUp School Project Coordinator, Anna Dementyeva, commented on the table of contents pointing out that it is too long and the number of sections can be reduced, for example, those sections introducing StartUp School team members can be placed under one section. According to Anna's comments, the changes were made: separate sections dedicated to different work devices became one section listing all work devices, same was done for social media channels. Consequently, the total number of sections in the table of content was reduced to 80. After two more quick revisions, the table of content was approved by the commissioning party.

Simultaneously with the table of contents, an example of the content, was approved by the SUS Project Coordinator. A piece was presented as a to-do list for organizing a WarmUp event in a Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus. A positive feedback was received on the example of the content as the format of a to-do list or bullet points suited well for describing a StartUp School's event organization process.

I continued writing the Guide using the information I collected at StartUp School. The content of the product is generally based on my own knowledge and experiences related to tasks and responsibilities of the StartUp School assistant.

After two months from having the table of contents approved, I was able to present the first version of the Assistant Guide. The first version of the product was sent to the StartUp School Project Coordinator. The feedback on the first version was received via Skype. The Project Coordinator commented on the content of the product, which according to her was clear and written in a detailed manner. Also, she commented positively on the 'Tips', which were included in almost every section of the Guide. The text included some typos and grammar mistakes which were pointed out by the commissioning party, and fixed right away during the Skype session.

There was one of the important chapters still to be completed when the first version of the Guide was approved. The chapter regarding organizing WarmUp events was sent to the StartUp School at the beginning of August 2016.

In the middle of August, I visited the StartUp School and received the feedback from the commissioning party regarding the chapter on WarmUp events. Some minor changes had to be done and some sentences had to be removed as requested by the SUS Project Coordinator. Furthermore, the first feedback was received from the user – a new StartUp School assistant trainee. As she stated, during the first two weeks of her internship she was

getting used to her work duties and the Guide helped her in the process, especially the 'To-do List of the Beginning of Internship' section. However, the intern suggested that the Guide sometimes looks overwhelming as it lists all tasks, and their details. It was also pointed out that instructions about mapping a Z-drive were already outdated. The reason for that was the Windows operation system's version used by Haaga-Helia staff was updated from 8.1 to 10. StartUp School staff informed me that it was the task of the current StartUp School Assistant to update the instructions on mapping a drive.

I had continued writing some missing sections of the chapters from three to eight. The complete Guide was sent to the commissioning party in October 2016 and was reviewed and commented on by the StartUp School Project Coordinator. There were several things which had to be edited:

− in chapter four I was advised to specify whether I was talking about assistants' role in general or a StartUp School assistant' role;
− several times in the document instead of 'project coordinator' I wrote 'project manager';
− one of the 'Tips' had to be removed as it was not a SUS assistant's task but rather the SUS Head Coach's task;
− a short paragraph from the section regarding the Haaga-Helia website had to be deleted as well due to being irrelevant.

Required changes were made and the final version of the product was accepted at the beginning of November 2016, when written feedback on the Assistant Guide was requested from the commissioning party and the user. The feedback is found in the last chapter of this report.

4.2.2   Content and Structure of the Guide

The final product – Assistant Guide for Haaga-Helia StartUp School consisting of 92 pages, comprises of the following components: a cover page, a table of contents, ten chapters occupying 69 pages and seven appendices of 19 pages in total.

In its documents StartUp School follows its official graphic guidelines, which I wanted to incorporate in the product. Knowing the official fonts and colors I tried to use them for the body text of the guide, however, I came to the conclusion to use a 'Calibri' font, which in my opinion is pleasant for a reader's eye. One of the colors, suggested by the SUS graphic guidelines was used for chapters' titles. One of the official fonts of SUS was used only in the cover page of the Guide.

The first chapter 'Overview of this Guide', as the name suggests, gives a brief overview of the document. The information for the second 'Organization Overview' chapter, which intro-

duces Haaga-Helia and the StartUp School to the reader, was partially based on my personal knowledge, and mainly on the information and statistics found from the official Haaga-Helia's and StartUp School's web pages.

Chapter three 'General Issues at Work' discusses such topics as work hours, sick leave, lunch break, premises for staff and work devices. The information for the first three topics was taken from related documents in the Haaga-Helia intranet for employees. The topics are covered briefly as full instructions are available for StartUp School assistants in the intranet. Last sections of this chapter are based on my personal experience. The third chapter also includes a 'To-do List at the Beginning of Internship, which consists of essential information and steps a SUS assistant must take for smooth start of their work at Haaga-Helia.

In addition to an overview of the responsibilities and tasks of a StartUp School assistant, the fourth chapter shortly discusses assistant's responsibilities in general. The information for this chapter was taken from related literature as well as based on my own experience. The chapter also introduces to the reader four following sections (chapter 6 – 8) of the Guide. These sections present main groups of tasks of a StartUp School assistant.

Chapter five about secretarial duties, is based on my own knowledge and experience I gained through working for the StartUp School. The chapter acquaints the reader with such secretarial duties of a StartUp School trainee as dealing with contracts, creating events in an online calendar, printing, ordering office supplies, promoting SUS to students, reporting, gathering statistics etc.

Sixth chapter is dedicated to event organization and is mainly based on my personal experience. The chapter covers SUS events' planning process and describes SUS events. Section about WarmUp events gives a detailed plan in a form of a to-do list on how to arrange a StartUp School event. At the end of the chapter reader will find instructions on event monitoring process.

A wide topic about marketing of StartUp School offerings in different marketing channels, specifically digital channels, is covered in the chapter seven. As two previous chapters, the chapter about marketing is based on my personal knowledge. However, a section regarding social media channels includes information from related literature and online sources. The reader can find advices on how to create and distribute marketing material, how to advertise StartUp School offerings on a SUS website, social media and Haaga-Helia internal channels, such as Haaga-Helia students' intranet MyNet, Info-TV and a study-platform Moodle.

Chapter eight is fully dedicated to recruitment of a new assistant intern as this is one of the tasks of a StartUp School assistant. The chapter is made in the form of a to-do list, which includes all steps that an assistant should do to advertise an open internship position. The chapter also specifies the promotional channels that can be used. When I was doing the same task of looking for a new StartUp School assistant, I took notes on each step I completed during the process. These notes later became a basis for this chapter.

There are several crucial things a StartUp School assistant needs to accomplish at the end of their internship. These things are listed in the ninth chapter. Miscellaneous issues, which did not fit into any of the previous chapters were collected in the tenth chapter.

The Assistant Guide ends with the eleventh section, consisting of seven appendices. The appendices illustrate instructions, which could not be placed in the Guide's chapters due to having a lot of images. At the end of my internship I took screenshots of programs, such as Asio, Leap and MyNet, which I planned to write instructions about. I have added marks on the images and created instructions on such topics as, how to fill an online form when registering an event in the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus, how to create a post on MyNet or how to book a room in booking system Asio.

5   Conclusions and Recommendations

The last chapter of this thesis report consists of four sections. The first section discusses the outcome of the project and weather the objectives of the thesis were achieved. The following section consists of recommendations regarding the product's future development and its update. The third section presents the commissioning party's assessment of the product. Author's personal assessment of the thesis process and own learning is in the last section of this chapter.

5.1   Outcome of the Project

The objective of this product-based thesis was to create a comprehensive assistant guide for the commissioning party. The purpose was to produce a professional looking guide with clear structure and detailed explanation of a StartUp School assistant's work tasks and responsibilities. The StartUp School needed a guidebook which would help them to hand over assistant tasks when one intern finishes his work and another starts working. The guide should tell the reader what precise steps one should do to perform assistant duties at StartUp School. Hence, in situations when assistant is not available or absent from work, other SUS staff member could refer to the guide and do assistant's tasks.

I was aiming at creating a guide which would be a combination of introducing an organization to a new StartUp School intern assistants, giving them information about general work related issues and guide them through the step-by-step process of doing specific work tasks. An important aspect was to order the information in such a way that the guide would be easy to navigate. The guide should serve the purpose of being a useful tool especially on the first day at work for SUS assistant interns and help them to start their work smoothly.

In my opinion, the objective of the project is achieved. As is evident from the chapter 5.3 about the commissioning party's assessment of the product, the commissioning party will benefit from the produced Assistant Guide, they will use it during induction for new assistant interns as well as to utilize it as the main tool for future SUS assistants. In addition, the product was used by a new SUS assistant and generally positive feedback was received.

5.2   Suggestions for Future Development of the Product

I aimed at creating a very detailed guidebook, which caused it to include all steps of doing SUS assistant's work. The SUS assistant's feedback, which is provided in the chapter 5.3 notes that some details could be removed from the guide as they are obvious. I agree with

this argument of the user's feedback. Thus, for future development of the product I suggest to revise the Guide regarding necessity of some information and exclude it if required.

Similarly, the Guide is quite long due to thoroughly described tasks, therefore some readers might find it too extensive and therefore overwhelming, especially because one should read it at the first day of their work placement. Perhaps some descriptions could be shortened which would decrease the overall length of the guidebook. Making the Guide shorter could also be achieved by giving it for editing to a native English speaker. My English language skills are not perfect as it is not my mother tongue, hence some sentences could probably be re-written by a native English speaker in a more concise way.

There are changes continuously happening in the StartUp School, whether it is a new way of implementing projects, new organization's policies or new tasks for an assistant. Thus, the Guide must be kept up to date. It is the task of a StartUp School assistant intern. They should update it with regard to changes in practices of the StartUp School. When updating the Guide, an assistant should consider the structure of the document and insert a new information under the related topic. The commissioning party has the Guide in a Microsoft Word document as well as in a PDF format. For updating, the Word version is used. The updated Guide must be exported into a PDF format, which is easy to handle. In addition, the Guide contains a lot of hyperlinks, which refer to online sources and files in a StartUp School's internal network drive. These links might change with time and therefore the SUS assistant will need to update them as well.

5.3 Assessment of the Product by the Commissioning Party and the User

The product was evaluated by the commissioning party. The Project Coordinator and the assistant intern assessed the usefulness of the Assistant Guide and provided their feedback via electronic communication. The general feedback is positive and the Guide was found useful. The commissioning party will be utilizing the Guide every half a year when providing induction for their assistant interns.

StartUp School Project Coordinator expresses her feedback as follows:

"Maria Averina worked as an Assistant Intern in StartUp School in spring 2016. Connected to her work, she wrote an Assistant Guide for StartUp School. Since SUS activities are very diverse, the Assistant has quite versatile tasks. Together with the fact that StartUp School takes new assistant interns every half a year, it makes it challenging to induct new interns. This Guide describes very well and in a detailed manner the main tasks of the Assistant. The structure is clear and it is easy to read. Our current assistant started to use the guide from the beginning of her internship, and we

noticed how much easier the Assistant switch was for us this time. The Guide will continue being the most important tool for the future assistants in StartUp School. The Guide is also consulted by the other StartUp School staff in case the assistant is not present at work due to some reasons." (Dementyeva 12 November 2016.)

A constructive feedback was received from the product's user, a StartUp School assistant trainee, Mazor Stéphanie, who was the first StartUp School assistant intern to test the Assistant Guide. She suggested that the Guide includes some information which seems obvious. However, the product helped Stéphanie at the beginning of her work placement and she particularly noted that lists of tasks, the 'TIP' sections and contacts included in the Guide are very useful:

"The Assistant guide is extremely detailed and covers almost every tasks the StartUp School intern has to handle (almost because obviously there are new tasks/projects/ideas coming up all the time). Reading the guide before starting the internship truly helps feeling more comfortable with the workplace and gives some confidence for the first few days at work. The guide helps the whole team save a lot of time that would be otherwise used to explain and demonstrate the processes and tools. There are very practical examples, descriptions and pictures, making it easy to understand. Some of the details are maybe a bit obvious and could be left out but considering the new assistant might have a very different background every time, I don't see that as a minus. Some particular things in the guide are very useful: the task lists, the "Tip" sections, and the contacts provided.
All in all, this is a tool that contains useful information not only for the assistant but for the whole SUS team and that prevents creating many documents gathering similar information scattered on SUS database." (Mazor 13 November 2016.)

5.4 Personal Assessment of the Thesis Process and Learning

This section discusses author's evaluation of the process of writing the thesis and personal learning acquired during the process. The whole process took roughly a year and there were some challenges during the process. However, the objective of the thesis is achieved: the author utilized her skills and learnt new information, the commissioning party is satisfied with the product of the thesis.

5.4.1 Author's Assessment of the Thesis Process

When choosing the topic for my thesis work I wanted it be relevant to my degree program and future profession of a management assistant. I chose to create a product which would not only be beneficial for the commissioning party but would also give me the opportunity to practice my professional skills required in a working life, utilize theoretical knowledge acquired while studying in Haaga-Helia and learn more about my major which is marketing

while reviewing literature for the theoretical part of the thesis. I was interested in further learning of digital marketing and I looked at assistant's work from a marketing point of view.

In my opinion, producing guide or manual is the task which could be required from an assistant in any organization and I am glad I have produced this Assistant Guide. If, when working as an assistant, I will be asked to create a handbook, I will already know the steps.

When I was thinking about my thesis topic, I was certain that I want to write a product-based thesis and create a product for my work placement's organization. I am grateful that I had an opportunity to complete my internship in Haaga-Helia StartUp School and that I could accomplish my goal of having created a product for them. I desired that the product would be utilized by the commissioning party and I have achieved that goal as shown in the commissioning party's assessment of the Guide found in the chapter 5.3.

Creating a guide enabled me to use my creative side and learn more about marketing and assistant's work during the process. As a Chinese philosopher Xun Kuang once said, "'Not having heard something is not as good as having heard it; having heard it is not as good as having seen it; having seen it is not as good as knowing it; knowing it is not as good as putting it into practice" (Goodreads). While writing the thesis, I was able to put into practice my theoretical knowledge and practical skills required in a business life.

The Guide shows how multitasking an assistant's work can be. To successfully perform their work a management assistant should acquire many skills, such as strong communicational, organizational, time management, project management, listening skills, attention to detail, proactivity, flexibility and ability to work under the pressure. Moreover, I had to create a product that is based on the need of the commissioning party and make changes according to commissioning party's feedback on every stage of the product development. It taught me how to listen to and take into consideration the client's wishes on the product.

I had a few challenges during the thesis writing process. Most of the topics had to be written from scratch, some I based on the existing documentations. Generally, I based the Guide on my own knowledge and the information I collected from the StartUp School. When I started writing, there were a lot of data which was disorderly saved in one Word document and it was difficult to organize it and start using. In addition, at the beginning of the work I found the process of producing the product exciting and motivating, however, I had difficulties with keeping a high level of motivation when the major part of the product was done and some short parts were remained unwritten.

Among the challenges during the product's implementation phase was the fact that I had never produced such a large written work before and especially such comprehensive guide-book. Hence, writing, along with editing took a great amount of time, longer than I had expected and initially planned. In contrary, the theoretical part of the thesis discussing how product supports marketing in the StartUp School turned out to be quite short.

The report of the thesis was written in accordance with the official guidelines on writing reports and theses at Haaga-Helia, whereas the product partially follows the official graphic guidelines of the Haaga-Helia StartUp School (Haaga-Helia 2016; Lalu 2016).

5.4.2   Evaluation of Personal Learning

My thesis project benefited from the fact that I had worked as a StartUp School assistant and could use my own experience and knowledge to create the product. I had a wonderful opportunity to collect information for the Guide during the whole period of my internship.

However, there were some difficult times during the course of the project where finalizing parts of the Guide took extra motivational effort, thinking positively and the thought of fulfilling the commissioning party's requirement gave me enough push to complete the guide. I also leant that when I divide a large task into small sections and concentrate on one section at a time, helps me to avoid getting overwhelmed by imagining how big the task is.

During the project I learnt about my working style when doing independent work. Several times I found it challenging to follow a set schedule and manage time. In comparison, when I work on a project in a team it is rather easy to stay focused and follow the timeline as there are people aiming to achieve one goal and therefore motivating and supporting each other. After working on my thesis I am aware that I must work on my time management and self-motivational skills to be able to work independently as productive as when I work in a team.

I am glad that the commissioning party is satisfied with the result, and my work is valuable, as the StartUp School us using the Guide. Personally, I am also satisfied with the result of the project because I put a lot of effort in making the Guide the best I could and including every detail which I considered useful for future StartUp School assistants' induction.

To sum up, I am happy with the product. The thesis enabled me to put my knowledge and skills into practice and learn more about marketing and independent working.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The Table of Contents from the Assistant Guide of the Haaga-Helia StartUp School

Assistant Guide

Table of Content