



A ToolBox for research and development

Case: The Rover program renewal in Finland

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Content

- Discussing the role of research activities in scouting
- The rover program renewal: Action based research in a Finnish scout camp
- A ToolBox to enhance more analytical and innovative program development

The role of research activities?

- There are difficulties in supporting the scout organization with research⁽¹⁾
 - Academic research is too slow to give guidance for a rapid development process.
 - Ability in reading the studies has been weak
 - The groups ability to formulate their information needs is not always the best one
- The scout culture in Finland has not supported a critical point of view to it's practices

(1) Five key persons related with the research group of The Guides and Scouts of Finland were interviewed during the fall 2007

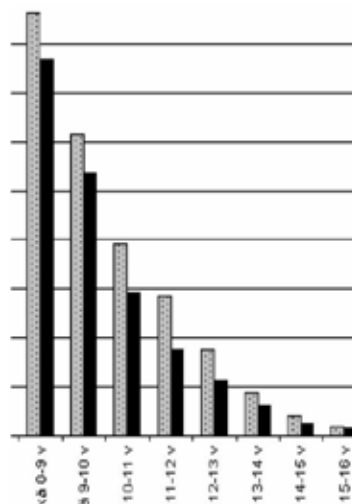
Need of the new tools for program development

- We should not give up making surveys and academic research.
- But besides them we need also...
- ...a set of easy-to-use research tools, that the projects could use themselves.
 - To understand the context where they are acting
 - To iterate the plans against goals, needs and requirements.
 - To test program, project or product in its early phases
- More iterative working methods and project model.

Case: The Rover program renewal in Finland in the mid 90's

Case: Rover program renewal in Finland A need for meaningful projects

- The main challenge: Age pyramids.
- Members are leaving after the age of 11-12
- Willingness to join in collapses after that
- We studied critically the context and the culture of the rovers, troops and scout camps
- Rovers have a bad reputation. "They are not useful, but only looking for fun"
- Inventing new activities seems to help only minimally
- Hypothesis: 15-18 aged rovers are interested in important and meaningful projects.
- The troops are seldom able to support or facilitate rover groups in their projects
- How about the big scout camps?



In Which age members join
The Guides and Scouts of Finland 2002

Big scout Camps in Finland Huge tasks

- A Finnish scout camp is always taken to the forest.
- The infrastructure is constructed from the scratch: Sanitary, watering, electricity, security, constructions ...
- Great opportunity from the rovers point of view:
 - A lot of important and concrete jobs
 - Ready collected resources to facilitate the projects

Traditional leadership in scout camp

- Adult leaders are recruited to plan and construct.
 - Proofed their trustworthiness and skillfulness
 - The goal: Efficient, reliable, economical process
- Leadership
 - A top-down hierarchical decision making
 - Strict scheduling and budgeting
- The camps are planned, constructed and managed successfully.
- Finnish scouts are good in that!
- The risk is minimized by controlling power and resources.
 - Right to make decisions
 - Right to define goals
 - Access to resources, money

The adults may also constitute a risk The reverse side of the effectiveness

- Leaders have been chosen as equipped, skilful, learned
- In such an atmosphere it is a big psychological obstacle to admit one's weakness or need for support.
- Adults overestimate their own resources and capacity
- A typical camp organization is not providing any training to their leaders
- A high-powered role leads too easily to self-sacrificing and burn-out
- The question rised:
 - What if a big scout camp would be constructed by only teenagers?
 - What kind of support or leadership we would need?
 - What would be the role of the adults?

The only way to find out would be to try it in practice.

The goals for our Rover Camp would be:

- The focus from effective planning and constructing to learning
- Instead of "I know how"
- We valued: "I don't know how - but I want to learn!"
 - Learn yourself
 - Learn your team
 - Learn your customer
 - Learn new skills
- No burn outs!

The Research intervention

- We "Conquered" half of the tasks in a camp of 2500 participants
 - Major buildings, technical infrastructure, logistics, security
 - Typically a work of 20-30 adults
- Boring tasks were turned to challenges and adventure:
 - "Collect a group to plan and build telecommunications for this camp"
 - "Build a camp-sauna that has never been seen before!"
 - "Create a show stage in the forest with all the audiovisual possibilities!"
 - "Take care of the transportation and logistics of the camp"

- 70 teenagers aged 15-17 were participating
- The rovers were promised:
 - freedom to plan and realize their project
 - freedom to the resources, including money
 - all the support they would need

No adults? Isn't that a risk?

We had a credibility problem

We needed a practical way to ensure

- the quality of the activities
- the risk management

A dilemma

Enabling learning means taking a risk of making mistakes.

We need leadership for learning that creates a safe environment for asking questions and making mistakes.

Risk Management 1 Ensuring the support when in trouble

- Double amount of actors
 - To ensure the possibility of learning
 - To ensure free-time
 - Preparation to unsuspected problems
- The solidarity between the rover groups
 - If labor or money is running out
 - If any project falls down
- Planning a Project-Leader-Course
 - To help in planning, budgeting
 - To help in leadership problems
 - To help in finding the limits and possibilities of the group
- Adults as tutors
 - A Professional adult as a resource and support

Risk Management 2

Iterative and innovative planning. Tools and methods.

- Ask questions and set goals
 - Why we are making this project?
- Study the context critically
 - How security can be managed?
- Interview your customers
 - How often would you like to have sauna in the camp?
- Innovative attitude to solving the problems
 - If we can not drive cars, we drive tractors!
- Iterate and test the plan in the early phases
 - Feedback from customers and other teams
- Create a double plan - just for sure
- Evaluate the results critically
 - What did we learn?

Results?

The camp was a success...

- The quality of projects was excellent
- Huge amount of learning and moments of success
- Adult leaders: "Rovers were communicative, innovative and skillful"
- Great atmosphere and team spirit
- Solidarity needed and it worked
- No burn outs
- And: The Finnish Jamboree 1996 bought the concept and changed it's goals and leadership

But did we get more rovers? No. The age curve did not change.

But instead...

We questioned some aspects in the Finnish scout culture...

- the motives of 15-18 year old rovers:
 - They are not just "looking for fun" but for meaningful projects and possibilities to learn
- the tone of the rovers' motto "I serve"
- the leadership methods of the big scout events
- the situation where big camps are not related with the
- educational goals or methods of scout organization

Coping the learning and risk management A general need of the leadership in scout projects?

- There has been discussion about the role of research activities in the
- Finnish scout organization:
 - Academic research alone is not enough to support the program development
 - Easy-to-use, iterative tools are needed for the projects' own use
- The set of tools were developed and tested first in a camp of 2500 scouts and then in a Finnish Jamboree
- The results of the work suggests that these tools are a practical way to
 - ensure the quality of the activities
 - manage risks
 - support a learning process
- The tools can be modified and used in various size of projects and with teenagers as well with adults.
- Tools are now developed further and packed as a ToolBox of research and development in the research group of The Guides and Scouts of Finland.

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