

A BRINK HELSINKI FIELD GUIDE

VOL. I

BRINK CULTURE BOOK

B

The manifest of our company culture.
Find out what makes us special!

BRINK CULTURE BOOK
The manifest of our company culture

Copyright © 2017 by Brink Helsinki.
Revised third edition 2020.

All rights reserved.

www.brinkhelsinki.com | info@brinkhelsinki.com

Index

FOREWORD	04
01 Our History of Survival	06
02 Our Vision	08
03 Our Strategy	12
04 Our Values	18
05 Our Leadership Model	20
06 Our Way to Talk	22
07 Our Recruitment Policy	26
LAST WORDS	28

Foreword

Most of us know the tingling feeling when you've just signed on for a new and exciting job. Your life is about to take a turn, but you're not certain in which direction. You're thinking: *Will I be good enough? Will the new co-workers like me? Will I be able to meet their expectations?* You're nervous but decided to give it a go and are more than eager to get started. There's just one unpleasant thing to do first. You have to tell your current employer that you're leaving. Personally, I've been on the receiving end of this conversation way too many times.

The turning point for us was the beginning of the year 2016. We had had a pretty good previous year, which was way better than 2014, which was actually quite horrible. Especially the last three months of 2015 had been excellent and it really looked like we were going forward as a company on every front. Every project was better

and cooler than the last, but still I had to say goodbye to our best employee. He went to work for our competitor for the exact same salary. On top of that, two other employees had left us in the past six months.

I was mind-boggled. Why now when everything was looking so great? Why not a year and a half ago when even I was uncertain if we were going to make it or not?

Then we figured it out. In reality, we weren't going forward like we thought but quite the opposite – we were headed towards burnout. That one really bad year was so fresh in our minds that we were scrambling to take every single gig we could get. Our employees were saying that they were practically living at the office and spending more time there than anywhere else.

On that day we decided that this couldn't go on. We decided to do a complete 180. We decided to make Brink the best place to work for creative professionals! This means creating an environment where people can pursue constant personal and professional growth, get to work with a great team, demand high quality leadership, and get to create the best animations and illustrations for our clients.

Now that I look back on that one dark day, I consider it a blessing. Without it this book would never have been written and most importantly, Brink Helsinki wouldn't exist anymore. Whatever your motives for reading this book may be, I'm glad you've stumbled across it and I hope we get to know each other better through it. This is our contribution to the business and our open letter to the world. This is our story.

All the best,
Allu / CEO

01

OUR HISTORY OF SURVIVAL

The combination of many failures produced enough pressure to finally form a diamond.

In the beginning of 2010 there were five guys (Allu, Ilpo, Jesse, Teemu and Turo) with pretty great jobs who felt a little stuck with their lives. So they decided to come together and found a company that would be something truly special and would change the whole creative industry. The guys would never be satisfied with anything but revolutionary success. They had zero experience in entrepreneurship, no existing customers, no strategy and no financing. They just decided to take a huge bank loan and start working.

What a hilariously stupid idea.

Against all odds, these five guys managed to pull off a decent business in the middle of a financially tough time in Finland. Maybe it was because of the challenging times and actually not quite knowing what they were doing that encouraged them to think differently and forced them to try out new things. In the end, the combination of many failures, like trying to make sci-fi movies and other billion dollar ideas, and economically tight times produced enough pressure to finally form a diamond.

Since the company was founded, there has been a lot of work done to make the company unique, to have something that no one else has.

To have something special.

OUR VISION

Becoming the best place to work for creative professionals was the most important decision we've ever made.

Our clients come to us, when they want awesome characters, striking animation design or just plain magic. To be able to provide this to our clients with the highest quality, now and in the future, we have to become the best place to work for creative professionals who pursue constant personal and professional growth. This was the most important and valuable decision we've ever made.

Since the day we founded Brink, we've been working really hard to find that one thing that separates us from everyone else, the thing that gives us a true competitive advantage. We call this the search for the laser pistol. Why? Well, imagine you had the ability to manufacture real laser pistols, like the kind they have in science fiction movies, and no one else knew how to make them. It would be really easy to sell and market them, as the only provider on the market.

As it turns out, finding that unique laser pistol for a business is not so easy.

As we researched production companies worldwide, it turned out that 99% of them had basically three components that made the company what it was: reference work, talent and being a storyteller of one sort or another.

So, what we deduced was that to be able to be the best in the world, you would need the best reference work in the world. That would mean working for the biggest, most successful and well-known brands like Coca-Cola, Apple, Red Bull, Google and so on. Well, we didn't have any work for those companies as our reference, and it would take quite a while to get them.

Talent means having the most successful and known artists in the

OUR STRATEGY

Best place to work, best way to work
and happiest customers.

After our rough patch and the loss of a few key employees, we felt like it was really important that we rebuild our company in a way that would attract and keep the best of the best, the most talented people in the business, who share our vision and values. Since the most talented employees are the ones that work best in a team and understand our business, we would also get the happiest customers as a result. And that, my friends, is what we are all about.

This leads us to our three-part strategy: the Brinkway Triangle, or the Briangle. The three main parts—*Best place to work*, *Best way to work* and *Happiest customers*—are described in detail below.

BEST PLACE TO WORK

We believe the following four fundamental features make our company the best place to work:

- A. **Decision making and leadership in the company**
- B. **Professional development**
- C. **Personal development and well-being**
- D. **Sharing the success**

Let's open these up a bit.

A. Decision making in the company. Here at Brink, every employee has the ability and the right to make company-wide decisions. We provide everyone with the decision-making tools that enable them to make smart decisions. What it means is that you can make any decision, and you know it's going to be a good one, if it fits the following model:

"The decision improves employee and customer satisfaction and profitable growth of the company, now and in the future"

A 3x2 decision-making model borrowed from the Finnish IT Company Futurice.

In order to be able to make good decisions, one needs information. That is why all the information on Brink is made easily available for everyone to access. This includes our key business data and figures, budgets, everyone's salaries, strategy meeting memos and everything you can think of. We believe only shared information is valuable. We also believe that by giving our employees the power to make company-wide decisions, we unleash the whole intellectual potential of the company.

The ability to make high quality decisions requires the ability to take responsibility, and understand the big picture, as well as all the details in our business. Responsibility will be taken more often in a safe environment, where trust prevails and fear of making mistakes is not overwhelming. We greatly value people who have the ability and tendency to take responsibility and get things done. At the end of the day, they are the ones that push our company forward.

B. Professional development. We feel it is absolutely crucial that our employees have zero obstacles to slow them down when it comes to professional development. We encourage short and long-term career and education path planning for every employee. We are also constantly striving together to learn ways to work smarter, rather than harder. Opportunities for growth are available for those who want them.

C. Personal well-being. We expect a certain level of professionalism from our employees. However, the most important job for every employee at Brink is to make sure they make their days as comfortable

as possible. We believe that genuine employee happiness is the key to success. So much so that it is built into our company's vision and it affects our everyday decision making. We support personal well-being with various perks,, avoiding working overtime, having company-wide recreational events, excellent healthcare and so on. It is also very important for us that our employees take responsibility of their own well-being and happiness.

D. Sharing the success. All this decision making and work we expect every employee to be interested in wouldn't be reasonable if we didn't in turn share the success with every employee in the company. We also educate everyone about our current business realities, and how to do work that is good for our business. That is why we work hard at having salaries, that are accurately connected to business performance. Bonuses, and all the numerous optional employee benefits are also always connected to our business and profitability.

The idea is that the smarter people work and the better decisions they make under good education, knowledge, practices and processes, the more profitable the business gets, and the more we share that profit back to our employees who deserve it as benefits and bonuses. In addition to these four fundamental features, we have a lot of smaller things that make our company unique. As questions, needs and challenges arise, We meet with all the employees to discuss, decide and implement new practices that make the company a better place to work. These new practices can be a variety of things.

BEST WAY TO WORK

In addition to being the best place to work, we want to have the best ways to work, as well. That's why we are constantly looking for better ways to use technology, processes and team play in our work. We know the amount of highly skilled people in this world is limited and we think these highly skilled people should be able to use all of their resources in doing creative work. We don't want them to use a single

<p>Company support for career and education planning.</p> <p>CAREER PLANNING</p>	<p>Board game night with snacks once a month.</p> <p>GAME NIGHT</p>
<p>Paid workdays dedicated to learning new, beneficial skills.</p> <p>EDUSLOT</p>	<p>Monetary bonus for recruiting a new member to the team.</p> <p>RECRUITMENT BONUS</p>
<p>Health and dental care for personal well-being.</p> <p>WELL-BEING</p>	<p>Anyone can work remotely, any time, anywhere</p> <p>FLEXIBILITY</p>
<p>Ability and permission to make company-wide decisions.</p> <p>DECISION MAKING</p>	<p>A shared reward according to monthly profit margin.</p> <p>BRINK BONUS CANS</p>

minute of their time to resolve technical problems or to wait for their computer to process something.

We also believe working shouldn't be constrained by location. We believe that we should use technology to our advantage, to enable people to work remotely anywhere, anytime. Hence our flexible remote work concept, which is one of the best practices mentioned above chosen by our employees.

HAPPIEST CUSTOMERS (AS A BY-PRODUCT!)

We understand that we pretty much exist only for our customers. That is why stellar customer service and understanding is built into our work culture. We think one excellent customer experience is more valuable than any marketing stunt that gets 100,000 likes on Facebook. We are proud to be known for understanding our customers' needs and business, listening to them and delivering high quality work that serves our customers and brings them results, while meeting our production schedule and budget.

With that said, sometimes something goes wrong in a project for one reason or the other, and the customer is not satisfied. We see these as very important moments because they are actually opportunities to utilize some exceptional customer service. It's fairly easy to avoid big problems in any production by just doing good work and having a solid production process. But recovering from problems with great style and ending up with an even happier customer is where you really earn your ranks.

We do creative work to improve our customers' business, and it includes a lot of problem solving. We are master problem solvers on many levels, enabling us to make things as easy as possible for our clients. Our job is to help them in making their work effortless.

04

OUR VALUES

We know we can help each other build trust and we respect and care for one another.

HONESTY

We always aim for the unfiltered truth.

QUALITY

We are committed to producing the best quality we can.

LISTENING

We listen to our clients as well as our employees.

OUR LEADERSHIP MODEL

We give a lot of power and responsibility to all our employees.

During our first five years at Brink, we had a really interesting way of developing the company. We were in a situation where everyone understood that it was really important to have a common goal and to work hard to reach that goal. However, at times it felt like we weren't all in the same boat, so to say, on our way toward a common destination. The problem was that the company didn't really have a concrete common goal that everyone had agreed upon.

Looking back on it, we use the analogue of a navigator and a rowing man. Imagine a rowing boat with one really good navigator and one really good rower. They blast forward like in a speedboat, and everything looks good, but the boat has no destination. The navigator is focused on finding the destination, and the rowing man is determined to get to that destination.

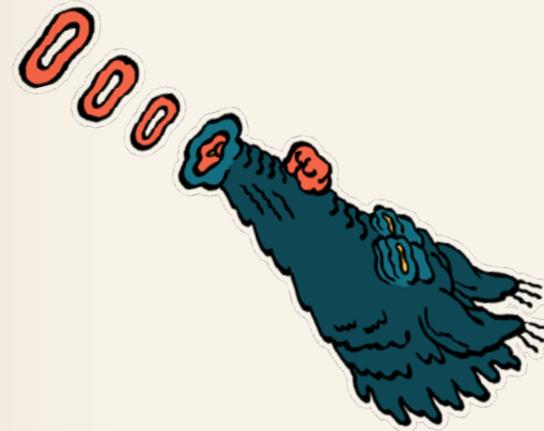
Nowadays it's a bit easier to steer the ship because we have a clear vision of where we are headed. Actually, we believe that once the ship has its destination, it doesn't really need a captain shouting orders. You just need to get a crew of smart people, tell them your destination and they'll find the optimal methods and route to that destination on their own.

That's why we don't believe in strong top-down corporate hierarchy at Brink. Instead, we give a lot of power and responsibility to all our employees. We don't just say that we have a flat organizational structure, we actually do concrete actions and make decisions all the time that improve company-wide decision making and openness of information. Flat hierarchy is a key part of our strategy. The navigator or rowing man alone is not the best person to take you to your destination. It's the combined work of the entire crew of the ship doing their best that will take you there.

Despite the flat hierarchy there is always leadership. Great leadership is what helps other people rise to the next level, gain valuable skills and become the best versions of themselves.

OUR WAY TO TALK

We want our clients and partners to know exactly why we do things the way we do.



BEST WAY TO TALK

Even the best idea is worth nothing, if no one knows about it. When it comes to sharing ideas, we think it's very important that the environment is such that you feel completely free to talk about everything and to share your ideas, without having to be afraid of being judged in a negative way.

That's why we also want to share our ideas with the whole industry, so that everyone can freely copy them and apply them to their own businesses. We also want every creative professional out there to know that we want to be the best place for him or her to work.

We want our clients and partners to know exactly why we do things like we do, because we think that is the very reason we do work together. We want everyone to understand why our working philosophy is extremely beneficial for us and for them.

OUR RECRUITMENT POLICY

It's very important for us to be able to find and hire the right people.

We want to hire humble, hungry and smart people who believe in our philosophy of creating the best place to work for creative professionals who pursue personal and professional growth and high quality leadership. We want to enable these people to do their best work and remove all possible obstacles from their way. We want them to be able to freely develop themselves, advance in their careers at the pace they desire, and become better at their work every day. And as such, it's very important for us to be able to find and hire the right people.

We hire new people carefully based on their personality, experience and certain level of professionalism. We want to hire people who we want to work with, and people who want to work with us. This is something we call a mutual match. Brink is not a stopover workplace. We want people to stay and grow with us, and above all, participate in creating the workplace of their dreams. But that's not saying that you can't go and try out new job opportunities. Of course you can, and if you wish to return to us, we will welcome you with open arms, knowing that you are one experience richer.

Even though we are just in the beginning of being the best place to work in the world for creative professionals, the short time we have been around has already been a game changer. We all now have a goal that resonates and feels meaningful for us to pursue.

We smile when we come to the office and we leave it with a calm mind. Our clients love it too, because they know that the work they ordered is exactly as good as the team that made it.

Last words

We've been following our new path since 2016 and it has been a game-changer for us. We're big on shared information. No sugarcoating, no hiding, no bullshit. So here are the results from the year 2019 in figures (Dec 31, 2019):

Projects made for our customers	103
Annual revenue	1,49M €
Profit margin	10%

We can't wait to see what the future has in store for us. What we know for sure is that we will try to serve our clients even better, so they would get as much value out of our collaborations, and be a better workplace every single day and that this will continue as long as Brink exists. We also know that we want to grow. So if this book made you feel that Brink might be something you would like to be a part of, don't hesitate to contact us.

We also want to share all the findings that have made our workplace better. We think it's a small but important contribution to the whole industry, which has been notorious for crazy work hours and practices. This book is our first contribution to changing that, but definitely not the last.

Finally, here are the three things we'd like you to remember from reading this book, the top three most important employee responsibilities at Brink:

- A. **Make yourself comfortable and happy**
- B. **Work smart**
- C. **Ask questions**

That being said, we wish you all the best. Keep dreaming!

Sincerely,
The Brink Team





BRINK