Marketing network meeting in Cavtat, Croatia 16-18 May 2006

Participants:

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Thursday afternoon: Good campaigns in marketing.

Elena Pataki, Patakis: the product presented is a fiction reader (literature for first time readers on their own). All texts are based on maritime issues, e.g. first level called 'little crabs' (crawling slowly), second level 'little fish', and third level 'little dolphins' (quickest animals in the sea). The best Greek authors have been asked to write the stories (e.g. at level 1 only 250 words may be used – these limitations were hard for the authors to comply with).

For every book there was a package with a bookmark (door note saying: do not disturb – child is reading!). In addition there are games to photocopy if wanted, a sticker for the car (same text as door note), the annual 'world book day', day of the book (2 April) is a big event in Greece. Radio spots advertising for the books of this series. Also used a game about how to produce a book – to be played on the floor by children, with the game is also a poster describing the world of publishing. The whole series is called 'no life jacket' the total new thing here is a series of fiction for reading beginners – hard job to make a text for this age group (click here to see the presentation).

Thomas Mikalonis, Alma Littera/Šviesa, first mentioned that textbooks must be approved in Lithuania (if not schools cannot spend official money to buy them), supplementary materials only allowed at the price of 2.5 euro per pupil per year. Last year the company decided to make a campaign for work books for secondary schools – using promotion evenings is normally rather expensive, so they promoted without any events in traditional sense (Workbooks are not funded by the state, they are bought by the parents). There were two stages (and two target groups) of the campaign – first the teachers, second stage the students. 17,400 free copies of the books were sent by mail to the teachers). A sweepstake was organised for the students – ‘you can win an evening concert with famous Lithuanian pop group at your school’. It was certainly a successful marketing campaign. There is problem with workbooks and textbooks: The Ministry says
workbooks are not relevant and are only made to make the job of teachers easier! There are classes in Lithuania where e.g. 15 students have the workbook while the rest do not (then the teacher copies for the rest). It is for political reasons (coming elections!) important that workbooks are not compulsory, but there is a big task in educating the students to know that it is good for their own learning if they use the workbooks (click here to see the presentation).

Wojtek Grudzinski, Rokus Publishing House, presented a series of commercial TV-spots (using the commercial TV-channel POP-TV) to market the PONS dictionaries/audio language courses for 5 languages. 40-60 TV-spots were sent per week in the period in question (all details are in the presentation). The brand name PONS has been widely spread in all Slovenia with this successful campaign. The TV station got 65% of the profit and Rokus around 35 % of the sales profit (click here to see the presentation).

Dejan Begović, Kreativni Centar, started with a short company presentation, since this was the first meeting the new member of the EEPG was attending. Kreativni Centar was established 1989 by three families of enthusiast to produce children’s books. Now they publish around 300 titles of children’s books every year. Until 3 years ago there was only one state owned educational publisher in Serbia. It was decided as an experiment to allow other players in this market. Now Kreativni Centar is among the 3 biggest educational publishers in the country. This year they are entering to publish books for 4th grade – the three previous years have focused on 1st to 3rd grade. The law which regulates the educational book market is 20 years old and still reflects the situation with one state owned publisher. For marketing the only channels being used so far are teachers’ magazines. In Serbia parents buy books for their kids, books mean textbooks, workbooks, for most material they also publish teacher’s handbooks, which are always free if the children in question use the company’s books. The teachers recommend the books, and the parents buy them – so teachers are the main target group for marketing. Promotion activities include regional events, or smaller promotions on local schools. Last year the company for the first time sent a full set of books (18 books in total) to all school libraries in the country. In addition another marketing channel is planned: an SMS club for teachers. Mobile phones are perfect for sending info about textbooks. Teachers are the real decisions makers regarding textbooks.

Maire Tänna, Koolibri Publishers, presented a special campaign which was launched in September 2005. It was a contest for children to write the "story of my parents" (their love story, how they met etc.) – the target group was children in general. There were prizes, there were sponsors, and Koolibri promised to publish a book with the stories. Results were overwhelming and included stories, poems, plays, picture compositions etc. The resulting book contained 200 pieces (texts, pictures, drawings etc.) from the contest. In the end every ‘author’ received a copy of the book. The company got results from 325 authors in total. Important point was that the children spent at least one night with their parents talking about sad and happy stories etc. The stories of how the parents met each other are similar. It should be stressed that there were also many stories about the marriages that did not work. The results of the campaign was mainly a lot of publicity, and of 3000 copies (printed) around 1000 have been sold so far (click here to see the presentation).
Paul Hedlund, Gyldendal Undervisning, gave a short survey of the textbook market in Norway. Gyldendal has 30% market share in educational publishing. He presented the school system where the local communities are the actual customers of the educational publishers in primary schools. In the ‘gymnasium’ (upper secondary) the students buy the books themselves. In primary the schools really lend the books to the pupils. The teachers place their orders in the local book store who then orders the books from the publishers. Until now there have been fixed prices on textbooks. In Norway there is no state approval needed for the books – this was abandoned 6-7 years ago. The marketing strategy of Gyldendal is like this: They start with a concept (2-3 years before publishing) which they present to authors and teachers and discuss the whole series of books beforehand. After selecting the authors the writing starts. Trial chapters are piloted in schools, and slowly they approach the final product. The ‘friendly’ teachers try them out and give good feedback and after final edition they start printing. Free evaluation copies are sent to each school (several copies per school) in order to make sure the teachers know about the product. This season they are distributing more than 90,000 free copies. Important is that the winning concept has a good sound pedagogical basis, and it is also important to give teachers the possibility to use the materials on different levels of skills within the same class (individualisation, differentiation), important materials are also the very comprehensive teachers’ guides – ‘we take them by the hand and make sure they reach the goal’. State approval was terrible or at least strange – ‘we have never had so many female fishermen in Norwegian books as in those days’ (due to gender policies etc.).

Jukka Vahtola, Otava Publishing Company, told that Finland also has abolished the approval system several years ago – and since then the quality of the books has increased – no doubt about that. Otava gives away more 200,000 copies for free to teachers (the competitors do the same, so they are obliged to follow this expensive ‘rule’). In addition the approval system gave and gives possibility of corruption because the power is concentrated on few hands.

Ana Kekanović, Profil International, gave an example of a successful marketing campaign for the textbook package "Steps to the World" (KORAK U SVIJET) for 1st and 2nd grade in social science, environmental studies etc. The whole series is written by the same team of authors – all of whom are or have been teachers. All materials have been piloted by 100 teachers in a few months in schools, they gave good feedback which helped finalise the books. In total 3,000 children have participated in piloting. The package consists of textbook, workbooks, and a teacher’s guide. Also included are books for gifted children and workbooks for children with special problems. The teacher’s guide has more than 300 pages describing in detail what should happen in each lesson etc. In addition the package contains puppets, posters for each lesson, worksheets to evaluate knowledge, skills and achievements, and a book of (dramatic) plays for each month of the year! Campaign: authors have been at more than 100 seminars, and workshops. Also special workshops where actors show how to use the puppets in the classroom. At the seminars teachers get pens, note books, folders etc. Special gifts for teachers who choose this books series. There is also a teachers’ club – free of charge The series has already 26% of the market – 3rd place after only one year. The reasons for success: a very wide spectrum of materials, including materials for children with special needs (click here to see the presentation).
Following this presentation there was a debate about differentiation (i.e. children with special needs). It was argued that this aspect is of course vital of course, but there was also the question why this has come about: why this change? – are there really more children with special needs nowadays or is it just a question of diagnosis? Earlier we had schools for such children, but now they must go in the same schools as others. Interesting arguments came up during this discussion.

Friday, 9.00 -11.00: Good campaigns continued
Jukka Vahtola, Otava Publishing Company, presented the company and the Finnish market for educational publishing. Then he presented an example of a good campaign regarding a new ABC book. First step was sending leaflets around (Spring 2005) indicating that a new ABC book was under way (just the name of the series and the time of publishing was mentioned). January 2006 invitations were sent to all primary teachers in Finland to events in 30 different towns (total 2,000 teachers). This included a special offer: 'if you buy one of these textbooks for primary you will get the teacher’s handbook for free!' Many different posters have been produced as well. There is also an internet club for primary with alphabetic games and other games to play with. Result: 26,000 copies sold. Otava expects to make good profit from the work books (which have to be bought every year). The campaign also includes after sales events. Seminars of one day are free with the topic how to use the material in autumn 2006 - and 20 teacher events are planned for 2007. The whole package consists of a very long list of additional materials (writing activity books, letter cards, posters, many different workbooks, cards for handwriting skills, audio-CD with music for the ABC book, five different short stories for extra reading, puppets, stamps for the teacher to use when indicating different levels of appreciation etc.

Not successful campaigns:

Jukka Vahtola, Otava Publishing Company, gave as an example of a not successful campaign a textbook for English for upper secondary called 'Smart moves'. This campaign started with small ads in teachers’ magazines. Later they organised road shows, and various types of events. However, the colour of the leaflet was not accepted by the authors nor by some of the editors etc. In total the colours have been changed three times during the campaign!! This is an example of events which can have a very bad influence on the campaign. In addition the textbook was published one year too late, the competitor had published his English book for the same target group one year earlier. Otava sold 6,000 copies but had hoped for 10,000.

Manfred, Veritas, a good campaign for vocational training market, an English textbook ‘Focus on Modern Business’. The market segment within vocational Veritas are targeting is around 15,000 students. They sold this English course relatively well, goals were 8,000 copies sold, for 2006 the target is 10,000 copies sold. There is textbook, work book, all teacher's guide – all together only 15 euro as the total price. In 2005 they actually sold 8,000 copies. The students keep the books, so more books have to be sold. USPs (Unique Selling Position) include 1) new concept, 2) high quality of all material (cooperation with Cornelsen who has produced the material in the first place). 3) timing= two years before the competitor, the right book at the right time, 4) they now have 70% of this market. They also organised 8 workshops around Austria about the book. Timing was probably the most
important issue. A sales rep only for vocational was hired two years ago. He phoned all 120 vocational schools and invited the teachers personally which worked well.

As an example of a not so successful campaign Manfred Meraner presented the production process and the campaign behind the product ‘KEK’ which is a series of German for primary school. It was decided to go into action because they had had loss of market share in the last years. It has been difficult to find suitable authors. The market for these primary books is crowded with ten different courses already in the market. The package contains two volumes textbooks, two workbooks (including a workbook B for children with learning difficulties), two audio CDs, two CD-ROMs and two teacher’s guides. Also a simplified version for children with special needs is offered.

Problems during the process include: deadline pressure, change of responsible editor (she got pregnant), inhomogeneous team. Promotion events: 8 primary schools afternoons with workshops, 30 presentations by the authors. An additional problem was that the teachers were not really clear about how to use the differentiation components in the material.

Jukka and Manfred make a bet: Jukka says Manfred is losing market for KEK 2, Manfred that they are gaining market (6000 copies sold). Solution of this bet will be announced at the marketing network meeting in 2007.

Paul Hedlund, Gyldendal Undervisning, presented a history project in upper secondary school. Two books of more than 500 pages each, one for history before second World War, and one volume for the time after the war. Sample chapters were sent to all schools, consultants were satisfied etc. Everything seemed to be all right, or so they thought, but then the books were published, and they only sold 1,800 copies, which was a disaster (the aim had been 8,000). What went wrong? Editor and authors had written a text which was aimed at the colleagues at university, and certainly not the students in upper secondary. They thought that students today have the knowledge they had themselves when they were at school. In addition the pilot schools it showed to be the three most academic schools in Norway. The main problem was here the level of the text, which was NOT aimed at the target group. Also they learned that upper secondary has changed, i.e. the students are not as ‘clever’ as ten or twenty years ago.

Elena Pataki, Patakis Publishers, summarised the experience with not successful campaigns in the word ‘timing’. If for example the marketing material is missing to be distributed in the beginning of May, you will lose market. Everything has to be done at the right time.

Ana Kekanović, Profil International, explained why the new project ‘www informatika’ for 5th grade in the subject of computer science has been not successful. This subject is not compulsory in Croatian schools, however very popular.

The textbook was written by two very young authors. The package contains: textbook with additional exercises, plus teacher’s book plus CD-ROM. No specific seminars for this book were organised; there were special gifts for teachers who buy the material(e.g. USB-stick). Reasons for failure include mainly the fact that the authors are very young (problems with teachers listening as ‘pupils’ to such very young persons at seminars. Secondly there has
been competition for some years, and the competitor has published already now a whole series covering the grades 5 to 8 (click here to see the presentation).

Maruša Kmet, Rokuš Publishing House, confirmed the importance of a) the contents of a textbook and b) the timing!! She told about the POP-TV advertising PONS books. They planned to come to virtually every village to set up sales points all over the country. New places were supermarkets, shops with food, post offices – the intention was to sell books at these ‘new’ places. End of October they had 305 points of sales with PONS materials. In two months the post offices only sold around 90 copies in total – which was a disaster. Why did this happen? The average age of intended users of the materials was between 35 and 42 years. However, these people use the internet to do their mail, they do not visit the post offices! So the customers simply did not see the products. In addition, the personnel at these post offices were not sufficiently trained so they could not really show the products and deliver the necessary service (click here to see the presentation).

Tomas Mikalonis, Alma Littera/Šviesa, presented the promotion campaign of the product ‘Limelight’, English textbooks for the two last grades at school (11th and 12th grade). In Lithuania there is very strong competition from foreign publishers like Longman and Oxford. Until 2005 this market segment was 100% covered by foreign published textbooks for English. The advantages of their textbook are a) continuity, b) full teaching set, students book, activity book, teachers book and audio CD (please refer to the presentation). Promotion activities include marketing articles in teachers’ magazines, 15 seminars for teachers (attended by 225 teachers), free textbooks etc. Results were only 1000 copies of each ‘Limelight 11’ and ‘Limelight 12’. Why? Foreign published textbooks are occupying the market, competitors are very strong, prices are low in competitors because they have a war between them. These facts make it very difficult for newcomers in this market, the price is almost half of Alma Littera’s prices, and generous presents and gifts and discounts are offered from the foreign houses to the English teachers in Lithuania. In addition this textbook was written by authors who were not teachers and the textbook is simply too difficult for the Lithuanian teachers! (click here to see the presentation).

Dejan Begović, Kreativni Centar, strongly supported the opinion that timing is always very important. Three years ago when the market in Serbia was opened (to other publishers than the state owned one) they produced a whole package for Serbian language in grade 1 and 2 in 6 months (praying for a miracle!). They also had to produce materials for mathematics. The approval feedback, however, was negative: they were told to make the materials for Math more serious! Math must not be fun – they were told!! So they decided not to publish a textbook for Math in the first year for grade 1. Next year they renovated the Math textbook, but now the teachers had chosen books from other publishers. So what to do? They marketed their Math book very intensely. And they only sold 12,000 copies (compared to more than 30,000 for Serbian language) – in the second year they sold Serbian language books with success, but there were still problems with Math. Then they hired an editor specially for Math, she edited books for 3rd and 4th grade which became more successful. But still the approval commission was negative to making Math teaching fun!
Maire Tänna, Koolibri Publishers, gave as an example of bad marketing experience in Estonia the ABC book ‘AABITS’ (which by the way participates in the EEPG competition this year). The package consists of a textbook, workbook, CD with songs, and an additional book with the same characters telling about their lives. In this book there are longer stories about the everyday life of the characters. When the schools buy a textbook they have to use it for at least 4 years – sometimes more – these are the conditions in Estonia. Only the work books have to be changed every year. It has been planned by politicians that by next year also work books will be paid by the schools (not by the parents as now). But Koolibri doubt it will happen – although they of course are hoping. The ABC book has been tested in several schools a whole year, but they only have 10% of the market with this book – and they had expected around 20-25% of the market. The series covers 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade in the subject Estonian language. Why these bad results? Answers include that teachers are (have become) used to use another book, they are afraid of new materials, and finally Koolibri did not have all parts of the materials ready at the start (the problem of timing, again!) (click here to see the presentation).

Lunch

Paul Hedlund, Gyldendal, presented how the internet is integrated into numerous materials from the company. Net based textbooks also for Math in the 3rd grade; here all of the book has been digitised and exercises are done interactively. In Norway the teachers expect that teaching resources for every book will be available – when they buy a book. These web sites have been supported by the Ministry with 3,5 mill euro. These sites also function as a marketing tool, teachers like them and use them with their books (click here to see the presentation).

General discussion:
Will we as publishers in future use ICT as a tool? A big problem is how to organise this enormous material. For the moment ICT is probably more relevant for academic levels. All our content should already now be digitised for later use so that everything will be accessible in the future when ICT really hits the educational World.
Manfred Meraner, Veritas, told that if content is available on print and on line, only few will prefer the online material. Also it is very expensive to develop online material.

Friday morning
09.00-11.30: Preben Späh, EEPG, gave a presentation of Semiotics and slogans. After a concise introduction to the concepts of Semiotics, he presented different opinions on good and bad slogans from a variety of industries. Finally the slogans being used by most of the members of the EEPG were discussed and evaluated from a Semiotic perspective (click here to see the presentation).

11.30-12.00: Manfred Meraner, Veritas, gave a short intro to the topic of parallel publishing, i.e. the fact that publishing houses sometimes publish two (or more) books with the same target group and the same subject. In a three-dimensional graph he showed how in one corner you can have textbooks (or other material) which is ‘closed’ which means the teacher is in a way forced to use one and only one path through the book – and at the
same time the textbook seems also ‘closed’ to the pupil/student, not leaving much to
his/her own imagination and specific interests. In the opposite corner of the graph (top
right) the aspect of openness is central. An example from History as a subject: In editing
you have to choose e.g. to present history chronologically and topic oriented. Here open
means that the material leaves much initiative to the users, closed means the opposite, all
items presented step by step etc. Very open materials for pupils and teachers have in
general only a small market segment. Veritas has tried to publish parallel for Math with one
traditional closed book and in addition two more open (upper right corner of the graph)
Math books. Thus they do not really compete with each other. Not only math for primary,
but also ABC books, Veritas publishes five different ABC books!
Only when you are market leader in a subject then you would consider starting parallel
publishing to prevent the competitor to enter the market.
Norway has published in parallel two books for physical training in the ‘gymnasium’ – one
theoretical and one more practical – although they both reach the same goals. The
methodology is clearly presented in the advertisements.
A special topic is also the publishing of parallel work books, one general and one for pupils
with special needs.

12.00-12.30: Paul Hedlund, Gyldendal Undervisning, gave a presentation on ICT in
marketing. ICT is being used in e-mail, presentations, reading copies, PDF files (for free
download for the teachers), web catalogue, electronic newsletters, all subjects/textbooks
will according to existing plans have their own electronic newsletter. The teacher orders
free copies as PDF files. Promotion activities include presentation meetings, where all
teachers are invited to attend. Afterwards the company knows the names, addresses,
emails etc of all attendants for direct marketing. In addition it was mentioned if a teacher is
not able to attend a course he/she can download PDF and/or PowerPoint files used at the
course/presentation meeting (click here to see the presentation).

In the final discussion it was argued that e-mail as marketing tool is difficult because
people get so much e-mail. Otava intends to establish four ‘fan clubs’ for primary,
secondary, gymnasium and vocational where they will put all relevant materials so people
can download what they want.

12.30-13.00: Looking back and looking forward

First of all everybody agreed that this network meeting had been well organised and that
both the professional and the social aspects had been taken very well care of – thanks to
the organisers from Profil International: Ana Kekanović and Matilda Tomas – and of course
Daniel Žderić. The meeting gave inspiration to many interesting discussions, including the
opportunities to deepen some topics at alater time.

Possible topics for the coming meeting(s) of the Marketing Network are:

Organisation of marketing within the company
How to save marketing costs?
Semiotics of titles, colours, the covers of textbooks
Maybe ICT in marketing (again) since we did not really have the time to go deeper into this
important aspect of marketing
The place of the meeting in 2007 will be in Lithuania (hosted by Tomas Mikalonis and his colleagues from Alma Littera/ Šviesa)

On behalf of all participants I would like to thank the organisers from Profil International for their active participation in arranging this meeting, taking both the professional and the social perspectives seriously.

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Preben Späth