

Juha Laakkonen and Elina Rauhala



"You never know who you are speaking to and what can come from it."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Laakkonen studied Finnish history and Rauhala studied museology and later ethnology.

In 2018, they established their company, Memorandum Unlimited. The company has done more than 10 customer projects focusing on bringing history elements to the everyday life by utilizing augmented reality.

An idea revived 17 years later: the popularisation of history for a broader audience

And that is how Memorandum Unlimited was born, from the desire of Eline Rauhala and Juhan Laakkonen to popularise history and bring it to a broader audience. They have met in 2000 in Alkio College in Central Finland. 17 years later Laakkonen and Rauhala met again, this time as PhD students at University of Jyväskylä and their idea of navigating history through augmented reality started to come into life.

An important turning point was the university course called Popularization of Science. Laakkonen was investigating if and how a history research can be visualised. The course lecturer pointed out that time was of the essence in Laakkonen's research. AR in mobile application was new at that time, however the technology was already widely accessible to the IT sector. Therefore, he advised Laakkonen to set his PhD studies aside and concentrate on developing the business idea.

Other stakeholders had also an important role on the development of the company. Zaibatsu Interactive is a game company that was a subcontractor for Memorandum Unlimited for 2 years; Professor Jari Ojala from University of Jyväskylä actively contacted his own network in order to help Laakkonen and Rauhala valorise their research; xEdu-Helsinki based accelerator for edtechstartups coached Memorandum during a 6 months programme; StartUp Factory - Jyväskylä based incubator - have been coaching Memorandum for past 2 years in terms of short and long term development of their business

Laakkonen reinforces the power of networking and advises valorisation actors to talk to as many people as possible, even strangers: "You never know who you are speaking to and what can come from it. Test your idea, evaluate the feedback. Don't spend too much time alone developing the idea. Network!"

KEY TAKEAWAYS

& ADVICE

Aim higher and do not settle for just a few people getting to know your research and reading your PhD thesis.

Time is limited in the business world and academics need to learn to deal with that.

Don't give up on an idea before trying to make it happen.

Network, test and share ideas.

“The public should be able to make use of research instead of researchers only.”