

# **Solinor Survival Guide**



**SOLINOR OY / © 2017**

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## \_\_CHAPTER 1

### **Welcome to Solinor** **6**

## \_\_CHAPTER 2

### **Solinor Facts** **12**

2.1 What we do 14

2.2 Who we are 16

2.3 Solinor values 20

2.4 Mission & Vision 2021 22

## \_\_CHAPTER 3

### **Solinor Culture** **24**

3.1 We value your talent and expertise 26

3.2 All code stands united 27

3.3 Strength in diversity 29

3.4 Hierarchy is not for us 30

3.5 We will take care of you 32

3.6 Open communication is vital 36

3.7 Quality time with the co-workers 38

3.8 Work on your own pace 40

3.9 Our people, teams and projects 42

## \_\_CHAPTER 4

### **Becoming a Solinorian** **44**

4.1 Your first day 46

4.2 Your first month 48

4.3 Personal growth 50

— CHAPTER 1

# Welcome to Solinor



## *Hello and welcome, new Solinorian!*

Let me begin by telling you how pleased we are that you have chosen to bring your unique personality and talent to Solinor. Our company and its success is built on our extraordinary people - people like you.

Congratulations are in order, because I sincerely believe you have just joined the best company you will ever work for. Having said that, at Solinor we encourage you to be the change you want to make. By running a flat organisation with minimal power structures and bureaucracy we want to establish an environment in which you are free to flourish.

In fact, all of our actions are based on the belief that it is people who make our work meaningful. Our people. People around us. Our customers and our customers' people. People who use the services we have created. We measure our success by the positive impact we create on our surroundings. Having come this far, we are confident you will do the same.

This guide will teach you the basics of our company but most importantly, I hope it will help to make your transition to Solinor as smooth as possible. I think the best possible first step for what we believe is going to be your greatest professional experience yet, is to get involved.

Be curious and honest about what you do not yet know. We are here for you and your questions all the way.

Take comfort in the fact that we also have a lot to learn - from you. Your fresh insights are incredibly valuable for our progress. Look around and question the way we do things. In fact, that is going to be your first task here at Solinor. It is also a task we hope you never quit.

*Godspeed!*



Aki Koikkalainen, CEO

*Aki Koikkalainen*

— CHAPTER 2

# Solinor Facts



## 2.1 What we do

We craft awesome digital services.

We specialise in helping customers create successful digital products and services that transform markets.

We always keep the customer's business and end user at the forefront of our minds.

We are firm believers in holistic software development, and that is why we hire people across different fields - business design, service design, software development, analytics. You name it.

We do not believe in mediocre software, we create world class services and products.

We only put our best work into the hands of our customers. When they succeed, we succeed.

We communicate openly with our customers - whether it is exchanging ideas or challenging assumptions. Good communication is the bridge between us and the customer.

We believe that the best software is created by the people, for the people.



## 2.2 Who we are

Solinor's story began in 2002 with a tech student Pekka who was graduating from Tampere University of Technology. Fresh out of university Pekka and his long-time friend Sami were hungry for new and innovative business ideas. Sami's father Aarno owned a software company called Screenway, which had developed the EMV standard software for chip cards for self-service automatic payment terminals. Combining their strengths, these three teamed up and started developing something brand new. Pekka dove into developing a backend system for EMV payment infrastructure using PHP, Aarno handled terminal programming and Sami took on sales and marketing. First came the slogan "Solutions from Innovators", that conveniently shortened to Solinor.

By 2006 Screenway had become a major player providing both software and hardware based EMV payment terminals to thousands of Finnish merchants.

All the terminals used Pekka's backend system which routed payment authorisations and transactions between payment terminals and banks. Over the years Pekka had also been building another business called Snoobi. Amongst other things Snoobi developed code for Netpak, the first PCI DSS certified system in Finland.

In 2007 Luottokunta (currently known as Nets) acquired Screenway in order to obtain a direct business relationship with merchants. Consequently,

Solinor continued to develop the Netpack system, now for Luottokunta. Luottokunta was impressed by Solinor's proficient and effective management of a hundred-million euro system, and soon they wanted Pekka to bring in more people to develop Netpak and to expand other projects. Netpak was adopted by Joel, who joined Solinor in 2008. In the same year Luottokunta requested Solinor to establish a prepaid payment platform for electronic lunch cards that would replace paper lunch tickets. Solinor's prepaid lunch card that was introduced to Finnish markets in 2011 after successful pilot rounds.

By 2012 Solinor had grown its workforce but still had all of its revenues coming from Luottokunta. After becoming the market leader in web analytics Snoobi had been acquired by Fonecta. Pekka was anticipating a digital disruption in banking and payments and wanted to make Solinor the forerunner in digital payments. With Aki as CFO, Marko as COO, Joel as CTO, Sami as payment industry expert and Pekka as CEO, Solinor started obtaining new customers and building a team to achieve this goal. Solinor has evolved but Pekka's original vision still remains: We help our customers digitalise their businesses with solutions from innovators.

## 2.3 Solinor values

### **We believe in excellence in everything we do.**

For us, excellence means aiming for high standards in our actions, crafting something awesome with the resources available and delivering value in all circumstances. Happy users are the key to a successful digital service business.

**We trust our people** and expect them to make decisions. Trust means that we assume everyone around us has the best intentions to build our company. When we make commitments, we know we are accountable to deliver.

**We are open and transparent in all of our actions.** On the company level, we work actively to provide our people with all the relevant informa-

tion. On the individual level, we act openly and feel free to express our thoughts, feelings, and ideas to grow better company and community.

**We know that happiness creates the best workplace.** Happy people achieve the very best results. While we understand there are times we need to push ourselves out of the comfort zone, we work hard to create an environment where happiness prevails.

**We take humor seriously.** Being at work doesn't mean everything should be super serious. Our unique sense of humor makes us a team.

## 2.4 Mission & Vision 2021

### **Our mission**

Our mission is to enable people and businesses to make a positive impact and solve real life problems in the digital world.

### **Our vision 2021**

In order to keep on evolving one must have a vision for the future. Here is ours: By 2021 we will employ 150 top professionals across digital services, sales and marketing. We will be recognized as a competent and trustworthy partner for digitalization both within our industry and our clientele. We will be acknowledged as a great place to work and as a preferred employer in Finland.

We will be known for our excellent customer service from start to end. Our future vision is to offer our clients a one-stop-shop for their digital service needs, from digital business modeling to design, software development and analytics. Our customers will choose us over more specialized competitors because they know they can rely on our superior service and our firm ability to get things done.

Most importantly, we will remain as a company about the people. This vision is achieved daily by inflicting positive impact to those closest to us – the people we are working with. We have built a company where our people feel a sense of belonging and possibility.

CHAPTER 3

# Solinor Culture



## 3.1 We value your expertise

We believe in talent, and that's why you're with us! Whether it is a specific skill or a combination of many tech related or non-tech related skills, your talent is what enables us to create products and services that stand out. We embrace all kinds of expertise equally, and believe they should be nurtured, grown and shared.

In our eyes you are a professional. You won't come across titles like "trainee", "junior" or "senior", because our roles are fluid and we believe that we are all experts in what we do. Trust in your own skills, because we sure do. Never hesitate to challenge us, your teammates and even the customer - they are buying our services because they know our expertise makes all the difference.

## 3.2 All code stands united

There's more than one way to do it - pick your poison. At Solinor we are always looking for the best possible solutions, instead of being fixed on certain programming languages or frameworks. Some jobs require nuanced custom solutions, others are best solved with good content management systems (CMS) or web specific frameworks. We believe in each other to make these decisions.

Developers by nature are passionate to learn new things. We are always seeking for new ways to solve our daily coding tasks more efficiently. What type of solution are we building? What are the non-functional requirements? What are the team's current skills? What is the team's learning curve? Solving the entry points for any task require

knowledge of existing libraries and curiosity about emerging frameworks and ways of programming. A skilled developer knows when to turn to existing libraries to look for solutions and when it is better to resort to custom code. There is often somebody who has already solved the problem you are facing. That is why we always share our “aha!” moments with our co-workers.

### 3.3 Strength in diversity

Diversity, trust and transparency are fundamental to our culture and core values at Solinor. We are committed to creating a workplace where everyone can fulfil their potential and make use of their unique talents. People with different identities and backgrounds have different approaches to the same problems which makes diversity such a strength. We are also committed to further increase diversity within our organisation, because we have seen how enriching it is to our culture. Diversity doesn't just allow a greater variety of solutions for our customers, but also more learning opportunities for our people. It is an important key to innovation, creativity and growth.

### 3.4 Hierarchy is not for us

Solinor is a flat organization. We want to keep things simple by removing unnecessary organisational layers. Our CEO Aki is our only supervisor, so there is no need to follow an endless chain of command when you are making decisions. If that sounds like a big responsibility, you are right, it is. Together with your teammates, you are responsible for your work and improvement.

We want to maintain a structure that supports our people's empowerment, freedom and autonomy. Our teams are self-organised, allowing anyone to contribute when they feel they have something to offer the project. A flat structure removes organisational barriers between our people's work and the customer. This is why it is our developers who

communicate directly with the customer about the projects.

Our L.E.A.D. (Leadership, Excellence, Assistance and Dedication) team operates as a steering group for the company. The team meets biweekly to discuss current affairs and the future of the company. They are responsible for establishing and actualising Solinor's vision and strategy. They are the ones with answers, so you can consider them your friends and mentors!



## 3.5 We will take care of you

We want to support our people's individual and professional development and empowerment. For this reason we run a personal growth program that helps you figure out what kind of choices you could be making about your work path. Let us know about your motivations, wishes, goals or anything else on your mind and we will find the projects and roles that are best suited for you.

Whether it is technology, equipment, learning materials or something else entirely we want to provide the best possible tools so that you can work productively. Therefore, everyone within the organisation is entitled to a company credit card. It can be used to buy licenses, books or any tools that the work requires.

We want you to have the latest and the best equipment so that your performance does not suffer from little things like a faulty laptop. It is an investment in our people and their valuable time.



## 3.6 Open communication is vital

If you want to grow mushrooms, you have to keep them in the dark and feed them manure. This kind of behavior is called mushroom management - just switch the word mushroom into employees. This is not how we do things, we try to keep everything as open and visible as possible to keep the mold away.

We find that the key elements for good communication are transparency and openness. Honest communication builds trust and keeps our daily contact from getting too “stuffy” and formal. One way of keeping our communication flowing is asking our employees for weekly feedback. This way our people can voice their opinions about things like management, structure or communication. Our L.E.A.D. team goes through and reviews the feedback frequently.

Open communication is particularly important when we fail. Failed projects are not swept under the rug, but considered important opportunities to learn. Therefore, our people communicate constantly regarding how their projects are going. This way we can avoid disasters and celebrate every win together.

The company’s financial status, sales and marketing reports are shared on monthly basis to keep everyone in the loop. In addition we issue shares to our people bi-annually, because we want Solinorians to be invested in the work they do, and not just come to fetch a pay check.

## 3.7 Quality time with the co-workers

What would be better than to get life long friends from your workplace? We want to provide our people with all kinds of opportunities to bond and spend time together. Whether you are a sport-lover, a movie-goer or a board game enthusiast, you can find people with similar interests within our group. There are clubs and Slack channels for many different activities, and you can also always start your own group based around an activity you hold close to your heart! Here are some examples of what we do together:

**Sivari.** On Fridays we gather together to enjoy snacks, drinks and our comfy fatboys while listening to presentations given by one of our own people or an outside talent. Sivari sessions are great

for learning new things and enjoying each other's company at the same time - sometimes so much that we find ourselves still hanging out in the office into the wee hours.

**Sports.** We do a weekly sports excursion, so we can hang out with our co-workers and get in a workout at the same time! How good is that? In the past we have gone horse riding, climbing and running just to name a few. Whatever sport you would like to try out, we can make it happen.

**Parties.** It is great to get to know your colleagues outside the office environment. Every team does their own team nights, but every now and then we also get the whole crew together to celebrate.

Every Christmas and summer we organise an event for all Solinorians, which might include a trip or another fun activity.

### 3.8 Work on your own pace

Having hired the most talented and innovative people around we are not going to tell them to be at their desks at certain times of the day . We are all different: some are early birds, others are at their most creative late at night. Therefore, as long as we and the customer get to enjoy the results of your work, you are free to work at your own pace. However, always ask yourself these questions: Does the customer want you to be there at a cer-

tain hour? What about the team? Or the company? If not, you may come and go as you please.

Our flexitime system allows you to put your work hours where they matter the most. This means you can turn your crunch time into a long weekend or the other way around. If you want to go for a trip but you are few days short of your annual leave, you can add a few extra hours here and there to make up for the days. We trust you to know what is best for your projects.

### 3.9 Our people, teams and projects

We employ a multidisciplinary group of experts within different fields. About sixty percent of our employees are developers, and the rest of the community is composed of design, sales, digital marketing and analytics, and the L.E.A.D team.

Solinor creates meaningful and user-centered services for all kinds of customers. Light and fast prototypes, renewing existing services or creating totally new services from scratch – you name it. Whether it is a “state of the art” kind of undertaking or something more traditional, we tackle the project with excitement.

Our developers self-organise into teams that operate independently without supervision. The team sizes vary depending on the project, but they are usually from three to five people. Generally the projects last from three to six months, varying according to the extensity and the customer’s needs. We do regular check-ups with our employees to ensure that they are content with their projects and motivated as ever.

CHAPTER 4

# Becoming a Solinorian



## 4.1 Your first day

You have gone through the interview process and now you are finally here - fantastic! You might feel the same way you felt on your first day of school: perhaps a little bit nervous but hopefully mostly excited. We want to make sure your first day runs as smoothly as possible.

Since the first day can be a bit overwhelming, we have decided the starting day is always on a Friday. First we cover the basics and practical issues, such as: "How can I access my accounts?", "Who is my mentor?" or "How do I mark my hours?". Then you get a one-on-one with our Chief Happiness Officer who is able to answer all of your questions concerning your device and information security.

By now it is time for your onboarding lunch, where you get to properly meet your future team members over the most important meal of the day. In the afternoon you will have the chance to hang out with your personal mentor and get some insight about the projects you will be working with.

As you read in chapter 3.7, Friday is the day when we gather for our weekly Sivari session. It is the perfect finish for your first day: You can meet the rest of the crew, grab a beer and get inspired by the day's presentation. Warning: it might be a late one for all the fun you are having with your new co-workers.



## 4.2 Your first month

The first few months in your new job are all about settling in. Take your time. Before long you will be using that coffee machine like a pro. You will be able to remember almost everyone's name. Most of the confusion will have cleared and you can actually start focusing on what to work on.

For us it is important that you know what is expected from you, so you won't be constantly wondering how you are doing at your new position. So here it comes: we expect you to be proactive. In a flat organization like ours being proactive is everything. It enables us to work effectively and independently without unnecessary micromanagement. Being proactive is a way of thinking and acting. It is about voicing your ideas, feedback and

suggestions. It's about taking action rather than being simply responsive. We encourage our employees to challenge the customer and each other and question the status quo. Do not withhold your thoughts – you can always come forward and talk to the LEAD team about any issues on your mind.

For your goals and expectations, remember that your mentor will be there for all of your questions. During your first months you are going to be meeting up regularly to have a chat about how things are going. We want to make sure you are comfortable in your new position and that your first projects are running smoothly.

## 4.3 Personal growth

We care about your personal growth. Our approach to personal growth differs from many other companies. Here personal growth is about you and shaping your future. Therefore we always consider your personal growth in terms of your own goals and ideas about your future.

Thus, the discussions you are going to be having about your personal growth are not going to be about reviewing your performance. Instead, we are going to be talking about your ambitions regarding specific projects, roles or technologies you would like to pursue. With these in mind, together we try to decide what kind of goals you could be setting for yourself. Remember, these goals are just for you and your future.



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## *Welcome to the Solinor family!*

Now you know who we are, what we do and where we come from. We are pleased that you decided to join us and we hope you will have a marvelous time on your journey with us at Solinor. Let's get out there and make the world a better place!

