

Project Plan – Team Túlka

MS-E2177 Seminar on Case Studies in Operations Research



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1. Background

The number of asylum seekers and immigrants is likely to increase in the future due to factors such as global warming, natural disasters and conflicts. Therefore, one of the key challenges in the future for societies will be arranging the communication between people from different cultures without a common language and getting people from various backgrounds to understand each other.

To provide a solution for this problem, Túlka, founded in 2016, has started to provide a mobile interpretation platform that allows anyone to reach a professional interpreter instantly. The company focuses only on cases requiring immediate interpretation and the service is crowdsourced from professional interpreters. According to Tulka, a typical interpretation process is as follows:

1. Customer opens the mobile application
2. Customer selects the required language
3. Customers request for interpretation is sent to the pool of interpreters where the first available interpreter will accept the request
4. The interpretation is carried out
5. Both the customer and interpreter will review the case

The current platform includes both Túlka's and its partners' interpreters. Additionally, other interpretation companies can join the platform and utilize Túlka's technology to serve their customers. However, the major benefit of the platform is the increased pool of interpreters, shortening the lead times and improving the capacity to answer to the demand. Figure 1 illustrates the current platform.

Túlka generates revenue by serving its own customers as well as maintaining the platform and serving also the clients of partner companies. Túlka is planning its first market entry to Europe and one of the key questions is what kind of business model should be used and which elements and features the current business is still missing in order to be expanded geographically.

Since Túlka is an early stage start-up employing currently only eight people, its resources are extremely tied to day-to-day activities. Therefore, it is important that they get additional support in this matter in order to form a comprehensive view on what could possibly be the best strategy to expand the current business. Our role will be to critically evaluate all aspects of Túlka's current business model and to identify any possible caveats. After that, we will create logical solutions to tackle them. Our team is also likely to bring new ideas and

“outside of the box” thinking to Túlka which hopefully can be implemented and will help Túlka to reach its targets.

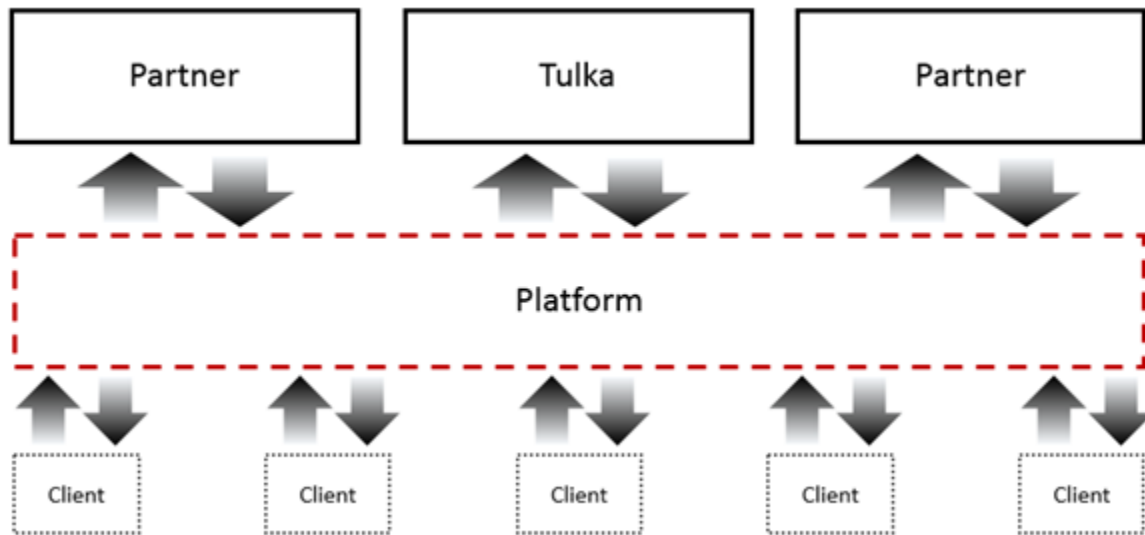


Figure 1. Illustration of the platform model

2. Objectives

The objectives of the project are to provide a comprehensive and feasible result in form of a financial model for Túlka and also grant our team a chance to learn in a unique business setting. The success of the project depends on how well our team can achieve success in both of these dimensions.

More specifically, our objective, in terms of Túlka’s interests, is to provide a growth strategy, that they can resort to when expanding internationally. Our team has broken this general level objective into two sub-objectives, through which this objective can be attained. One, determining whether there are certain aspects to the product or the business-model that should be refined before expanding to new markets. In this project, this means understanding the demand and supply profiles, and the approaches to dealing with partners. Two, determining a scalable new market entry model based on the viable product, understanding of the market and business approach. This is done through the use of dynamic system model. In addition to defining the model, there will be some emphasis on defining the specific markets, where this market entry model would be most feasible.

In terms of our team, the objective is thus to be able to gain experiences in a new setting and learn in the process. Our team has identified three key areas for learning. One, we can learn about Túlka and their industry. This means that we have a chance to observe the benefits and challenges in the work of a high growth and nimble start-up. We will also gain understanding into interpretation industry and more broadly into strategic aspects of growing a technology business. Two, there are learning opportunities in communication

between different stakeholders and in project management. This point consists of the communication between our team, Túlka, course staff and other parties and also scheduling of the project. Three, teamwork and analytical skills can be refined in this project. There are opportunities to experience working with different kinds of people, who have different backgrounds and approaches. This project also provides unique analytical challenges and learning opportunities.

3. Tasks

Introduction to Túlka and scoping of the project (12.1.-2.2.2018)

Gaining understanding to Túlka through primary and secondary sources. Understanding what the company does and what kind of challenges it is facing. Scoping the project with Túlka's management to best address their needs.

Understanding the business through data analysis (24.1.-23.2.2018)

Getting acquainted with Túlka's operative data from year 2017. This is done to understand how well Túlka can answer the demand and serve its customers at the moment. This provides insight on how well the company is equipped to expand into new markets and how it should probably approach the expansion.

Literature Review (12.1.-)

Concentrating on platform ecosystems, dynamic systems and expansive growth strategies. Conducted throughout the project.

Project plan development (14-21.2.2018)

Project plan is developed and written to describe the direction and the status of the project.

Developing the dynamic system model (15.2.-12.3.2018)

Dynamic system model is built based on discussion with Túlka's management. The aim is to make the model as granular as possible without losing its flexibility in assessing different growth strategies and new market entry models.

Defining the market entry model (12-23.3.2018)

Forming an educated recommendation on how to approach new market entry based on the analysis conducted through the dynamic system model. Discussing differences between different approaches and their pros and cons.

Defining potential implementation for the market entry model (23-30.3.2018)

Discussing potential use cases for the recommended market entry model with Túlka.

Interim report development (4-11.4.2018)

Interim report is developed and written to reflect the progress and results acquired at the point of time.

Final report development (30.3.-16.5.2018)

Final report is developed and written to describe the project and its results in their entirety.

4. Schedule

Our planned schedule for this project is based on the nine tasks which were defined in the previous chapter. The schedule is presented in a Gantt chart in Figure 2. The chart also includes three milestones which are the three deliverables that we have to provide: project plan (21st Feb), interim report (11th Apr) and final report (16th May).

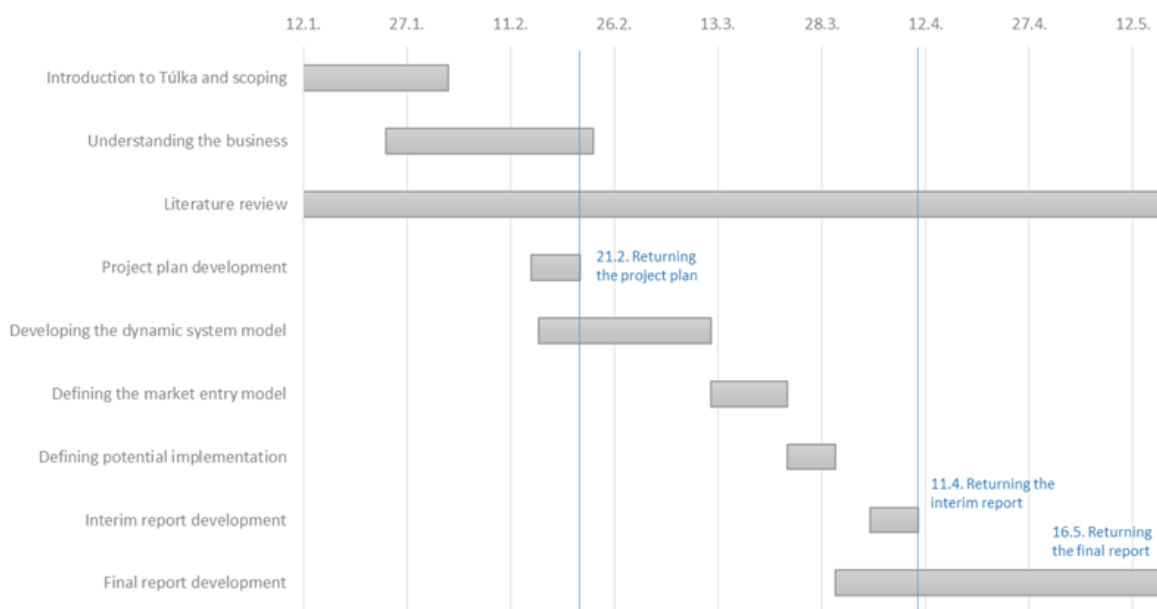


Figure 2. Schedule for the project

5. Resources

Main resources for our project come from Túlka. We have had and will have interviews with their top management as well as other employees to get insights about the company and the Túlka platform. We have also received confidential data from them to help our analysis. This data includes, for example, transaction data in 2017, pricing models and financial data.

Professor Salo has also given us a guidance session and will help us if needed. We have also received other potential contacts in Aalto University that have valuable experience in this kind of a projects and can give us insights about the topic.

Peer review is also an important resource. We have an opponent team which will go through our deliverables and give us feedback based on them.

We will also do a literature review throughout the project. The literature review is mostly related to platform economics, growth strategies and system dynamics. These external resources consist of books (e.g. 'Platform Ecosystems: Aligning Architecture, Governance, and Strategy' by Tiwana (2014)), articles, websites and theses. We will also use our prior knowledge from other courses and work life related to system analysis, data science, strategy and operations management.

6. Risks

The following table describes the identified risks, their perceived probabilities, impacts and actions that can be taken to reduce the potential negative outcomes.

Table 1. Identified risks

Risk	Probability	Impact	Countering actions
Unmatching schedules between team members	Low	Coordination of tasks is difficult and might cause unbalanced workload among team members	Creating a project plan and scheduling milestone dates sufficiently in advance
Conflicts between team members regarding the final output of the project	Low	Quality of the project might decrease if all members are not motivated to achieve the final output	Finding consensus for the output by iteratively discussing the most value-adding aspects for the company
Team member falls ill	Medium	Workload grows for the remaining team members	Team members are allowed to skip group meetings, if they feel that they should recover at home

The project scope is too wide	High	The aspects of the company's assignment are not examined in sufficient depth	The scope is narrowed as the project advances and the most significant aspects are recognized
The output of the project is not valuable to the company	Low	The company does not obtain value and the time of personnel might be wasted	The advancement and direction of the project is communicated clearly to the company in order to assure focusing on relevant aspects
Losing or accidentally sharing confidential information	Low	Serious legal consequences for the students and large possible financial losses for the company	Data is stored in a location, which is only accessible by the parties involved