

Piccolink and the meaning of innovation in Finland

Finland is a country full of traditions linked to the nature. This is the reason why, when you arrive in Finland you feel captured by its magical atmosphere. But surprisingly, old and new, tradition and innovation are concepts which can not be separated in a country like Finland. **“Despite appearances, Finns are not only manufacturers of Nokia products or “Sauna people”. There is something in Finland, which pushes people to promote technological innovations in total respect for their living environment in order to improve life in every aspects, big and small.”**

When we talk about technology, there are a lot of reasons to take a closer look at Finland. Finland has Europe's leading information society, second only to the USA, for example. It is the world leader in forest products, pulp, paper, cardboard technology and the world's leading innovator in mobile phones and communications. The Finnish Technology Award Foundation's mission is “to promote scientific research that aims to enhance the quality of life through new technology”. It sounds strange in a country of almost 5.000.000 inhabitants doesn't it? What is more, the Finnish way of thinking gives people the opportunity to think up things which can make life easier.

One of the most interesting new innovations I believe, is Piccolink. Piccolink looks like a little tv remote control with a screen above it. It also could be similar to a mobile phone or a radio, it is all and more than this, actually. Piccolink is available for all wireless data collection and system interfaces. It is capable of producing “single pass” display and functionality solutions for all mobile terminals supporting the Internet and standard PC devices.

Why is Piccolink useful? Because it is a control program designed for industrial production control and the preventive quality control of trade, verifications and monitoring of working instructions. The innovation is that to be processed data can be collected in real-time. The system was developed by ICL (large service and system provider with over 2000 experts all over Finland). ICL also developed the whole software of Piccolink to be used in the pharmacy sector. Thanks to it,

pharmacy stores have been able to reduce the amount of personnel and to improve inventory and speed customer service. By reading the barcode on the product, it is possible to know the price, the quantity, stock place, etc... It is even possible to use it to know about customers' allergies and illnesses, from the barcode on the customer's card that contains these information and to decide what medicine is more suitable.

It is easy to understand how Piccolink has become an important warehouse facility: because it works in real-time and covers a wide reception area. All goods' pallet barcode in fact, are checked out by Piccolink's scanner, the storage location and the "pallet ID" are added into the system and sent directly to the host computer using the hand-held computer.

This is only an example about the Finnish ability to improve life. It is said that "competence is the key to the future" and I believe so. Moreover technology is nothing without imagination and ideas. So we can think about a peaceful country, where in the long dark winter, people work keeping their main concentration on top-level expertise in the biotechnology sector, as it happens in Turku, for example. But it is enough to set foot in that country, to feel the presence of nature everywhere. So in Finland technology does not mean becoming a machine (everything is not so automatic as some believe) but living between a positive past and a better future.