

# Vincit

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That viewpoint was the main reason the software developer decided late last year to set up its North American headquarters as **Vincit California Inc.** in Irvine, where Chief Executive **Ville Houttu** recognized a talent pool that was both qualified and willing to stick around. He first opened a small office in Palo Alto staffed with developers from Finland, but the Silicon Valley vibe didn't resonate well with the company atmosphere he hoped to nurture.



**Houttu: UCI, private coding schools big part of appeal**

"We started with [Switzerland-based computer accessories maker **Logitech International S.A.** as a key customer] in the Bay Area in May, and I did try to interview and hire people there, but the culture is really different," Houttu said. "I felt like—and this is just my observation—that people are there to learn to be individually better, to get the next job" ... We believe that if we love our work, we will conquer all the obstacles that are out there."

He also appreciated that Irvine has "a really good university" and "high-quality code schools."

### Continuity

Vincit specializes in developing mobile apps, business-related software and e-commerce platforms for clients that "don't want to use something commercially available but want something that's customized to their needs," Houttu said. "We don't want our customers to be vendor-locked or pay for licenses, because as they grow, the licenses can get high."

It sees continuity of its staff as a key offering to customers.

"We are looking for people who live here and have graduated from here, to try to give them a hand and create a place where they'd want to work long term and be proud of working here," Houttu said, adding that, "We've grown to 20 people in less than a year, and we'll almost double it this year."

He set up Vincit California Inc. in the We-Work space in **Irvine Company's** 21-story tower at 200 Spectrum Center Drive. The collaborative environment there reminded him of Europe and the parent company's headquarters, where employees gather for breaks at the "office plaza" to "play Playstation and eat snacks."

### Expansion

Vincit, which employs about 350 globally, posted about \$39 million in revenue last year. That's up 50% from 2015 and 333% from 2014.

The company filed for an initial public offering on **NASDAQ Helsinki** in October to raise capital for expansion.

"We had employees who wanted to work on international projects, and we wanted to enable that," Houttu said. "We had to decide whether to go to Sweden or Germany—where all the other Finnish companies go—or somewhere else. So I went somewhere else—I like the way companies work here and how fast they can move when they want to."

Vincit Group has some big names on its customer roster, including **GE Healthcare's** patient monitors division, telecom **Nokia**, online yoga tutorial provider **Yogaia**, and **Hesburger**, a Finland-based fast-food restaurant chain.

It also has developed software tools targeting recruiting companies, which can be customized.

"Many of them operate on pen and paper or very old systems," Houttu said. "What we've created is a web and mobile interface for the candidates to log in, get employed and also for the staffing agencies' customers to order and pay for the work."

Vincit California gets most of its business through referrals and networking. It also plans to work with other local companies on projects—its design team is in Finland, so it partnered with **Xtopoly**, an Irvine-based digital shop that specializes in brand strategy and user-experience design, with a list of project-based clients that includes **Kellogg's**, **Naked Juice Co.**, **FedEx** and **T-Mobile**.

"Vincit does great work," said Xtopoly Chief Executive **Naushad Huda**, adding that the two companies have complementary strengths.

Vincit also held an inaugural Vincit Dev Talks last week, "designed to bring directors down from their towers and developers out from their cubicles." The event drew about 150 people, and Houttu was pleasantly surprised with the turnout.

"We're trying to build a community of software engineers and also the suits, the decision makers in OC." ■



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