

A Slovenian Practice Firm experience

By Helen Colja of Victoria University

A semester's leave from Victoria University allowed me to visit a practice firm in a European country that we in Australia knew little about and had not previously 'traded' with.

I was delighted to make contact with four young dedicated teachers (led by Mrs Mojca Zeleznik Buda) and an enthusiastic principal (Mr Dusan Stolf) who were instrumental in running the program.

I initially broached the visit with Ms Kath Billing of the ANPF (Australian Network of Practice Firms) who then negotiated the visit with Mrs Viljana Brinovec of CUPS, Slovenia's ANPF counterpart.

The Srecka Kosovela School is located in Sezana in Slovenia, just over the border from Italy. It is a secondary school with some 750 students aged 16 to 19 years of age. Students undertake 4 years of study here before they move on to tertiary. In their 3rd year at this school, all students spend 4 hours a week in a subject known as "Practical lessons" or practice firm as we know it. Initially this subject was an elective, but its popularity and value have seen it find a place on the curriculum.

It was interesting to observe how the concept of practice firm has been adapted to fit into the school program to allow students to attain the benefits of holistic, relevant learning with a hands on focus. Unlike Australian Practice Firms that have continuity, in this school 4 practice firms are established each year (one for each group) giving students the opportunity to use skills they have learnt to set up a business of their



Srecko Kosovela School

own choice and brainstorm product range, brochures, financial needs and leadership,

for they elect a CEO of that company who acts as spokesman. The school year commences in September and runs until June.



Practice Firm Staff at Srecko Kosovela

As well as establishing their firms, the students as their first major project arrange a performance in the school hall to coincide with their Christmas break of one week. I attended their 'break up' and it was a delight to see how much effort students had put into the morning as staff took a back seat. Two 'master's of ceremonies' confidently took to the floor and

smoothly carried off the show, which included a highly talented student singing, dance routine, a fashion parade and an acrobatic basketball performance superbly put on by the 'Grasshoppers who bounced, swung and catapulted across the court to the sound of loud, pulsating music. An impressionist who did a 'take off' of several members of staff also received a round of student applause. This was followed by a spiel from the 4 directors of the virtual companies (who had set up booths on the stage) and then preceded to give a run down on what their company marketed. Whilst no

trading occurred on the day, booths were set up in much the same manner we do for Trade Fairs. An impressive effort by the equivalent of year 11 students.



Performance organized by Practice Firms

I was keen to establish a cultural and trading link with this practice firm so that both their

students and ours at students at Star Events Practice Firm at Victoria University would benefit from trade and all the learning experiences that spring from international trade such as the use of on line foreign language translators and foreign exchange converters, written communication, exchange of commercial documents and ultimately virtual dollars and tolaars. It will be a challenge for the students of Srecka Kosovela who until now have traded largely within their own country and participated in Trade Fairs with schools in Italy. It will expand their electronic and internet skills and horizons, whilst for the students for Victoria University it will challenge their language translation skills, for unlike the students of Srecka Kosovela who learn two foreign languages (Italian and English) we will have 2 rely on language skills in our current practice firm group and use of online translator services.

