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From Local to Global – A Market Player that Aims to Expand the National Knowledge and Content Base

In our modern world, the role of social integration, that is, the integration among different disciplines and institutions has gained further significance. There are new means available for this purpose and the necessary techniques exist, too. The challenge of the present era is to ensure a renewing and sustainable momentum in the development of the country by utilizing the means and techniques appropriately.

Now, it is for more than 10 years that Magyar Telekom has considered it as one of its key missions to support the scientific community, popular science projects, national culture and civil society in Hungary. In 1995, the management of the company – then called Matáv – linked to the large-scale effort of developing national telecommunications, has established its sponsorship strategy that envisions a society living a better and nicer life. This strategy has been the basis of the role played by the company since. The consistent execution and – from an external perspective – social significance of the strategy has been further enhanced by the organizational changes that have taken place in the meantime.

As a result of the changing media, programs popularizing science, scientific achievements and development of the different disciplines have almost totally disappeared in the past years. Realizing this, the two founders, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Magyar Telekom have brought to life ENCOMPASS as a joint program. Since September 16 2002, the day ENCOMPASS started its operations, it has been proven that in Hungary the hunger for better, in-depth knowledge about the world of sciences spreads beyond the borders of universities and the academia. At the same time, we managed to establish a forum where Hungarian academicians, professors and researchers can present their respective fields of study – perhaps perceived as quite abstract by many at first sight – to wider circles of the public, while making it possible for the audience to gather hands-on experience explanations about the achievements of scientific research that define and sometimes transform our daily lives. This experiment carried out by the two founders was a unique one, of which there had not really been a precedent in Hungary. The public applause that the program – originally planned to consist of three semesters – met made continuance a must.

In order to undertake a greater scope of tasks and manage more efficiently, we established *Mindentudás Egyeteme* Scientific Non-profit Organization in 2004. This step also contributed to reaching the ninth semester by September 2006, and hosting 150 successful lectures and more than 20 club sessions with the participation of the most prominent representatives of Hungary's scientific circles. However, what is more important is the principle behind these figures: ENCOMPASS has created and still creates value for the whole society, because – by improving the cultural standards – it promotes the acceptance of and compliance with universal standards significant in civilized societies.

Knowledge ‘works like a module that transforms your mentality’, and we believe that ENCOMPASS thus improves the daily lives of an ever increasing number of people. This seems to be proven by the success of all the publications and related programs that we have launched and implemented together in the past years. ENCOMPASS is no longer merely the title of a very well received popular science show, but also a valuable brand, which is recognized countrywide and even beyond the borders of Hungary.

For seven semesters, it was the Budapest University of Technology and Economics that hosted the lectures. Putting emphasis on television coverage and exploiting the available technical facilities, we have held our programs at the House of Future Teátrum since the Spring of 2006. During the past four years, we ‘toured’ several big towns in the country (Veszprém, Miskolc, Pécs, Szeged, Debrecen) and Kolozsvár, presenting one lecture at each site.

Linked to the subject matters of the lectures, different events are held right before the start of the lecture, designed to enhance the learning experience and put the events into context. As one example, let me refer to the memorable occasion when the lecture about diabetes was accompanied by blood-sugar-level tests for the audience that was a huge success. Both the lectures and these ‘satellite events’ can be attended free of charge. In order to participate, all you have to do is register at www.mindentudas.hu or check in via telephone. The composition of the audience varies, but an average of 400 people visit the House of Future Teátrum week by week. Some regulars, already known by us, form a part of the audience. Courtesy of our media sponsors, hundreds of thousands become ‘university students’ every week by watching Duna Televízió, the Hungarian National Television, listening to Petőfi Rádió or reading national daily papers. If we consider only the audience reached through television, their numbers exceed 200-205 thousand every week.

Our above mentioned home page is an important communication medium in the life of ENCOMPASS. Beyond registration, it has many functions. We can watch live broadcasts of all the lectures via the home page. Providing interactivity in an ever widening scope is an especially important requirement. We made sure that questions asked about the lectures viewed via the home page and the information available on-screen are forwarded to the lecturer. In the archives you can find, watch and listen to previous lectures even years later, or read about the given topics and fill in the test questionnaires linked to them. The tests are also accessible through registration and the figures show that the topics and questions of previous semesters are not forgotten at all. What is more, new visitors of the site are ‘omnivores’, too, in the sense that they access all the materials available almost equally and continuously. The longer a given test is available, the more people register to answer it, which proves the above. The archive continuously available through the Internet does not only prevent the public from forgetting the lectures after some time, but it also plays an important role in the expansion of digital culture in Hungarian language and its enrichment with useful content. All or part of the lectures available through the home page are very useful for teachers, since the Internet is practically available in every school and we do receive feedback to the extent that the materials accessible at our home page are used for teaching purposes. Modern technologies enable us to give a chance to representatives of different layers in society, and I do believe that we can effectively assist to bridge the quite significant digital gap that still exists. Linked to this issue, it is to be noted that venturing beyond the borders of popular sciences, the first

e-learning materials are also available on the ENCOMPASS website. Our primary goal is to reach the widest possible scope of 14–18 year-old people and make it easier for them to prepare for their high school exams or their admission exams to universities, however, the materials available on the website are also useful in further studies at higher levels.

The above facts exemplify the role this website undertakes beyond its function to safeguard values. In order to support this, we plan to renew the external features of the website, and in addition, we can reach a breakthrough by developing other types of digital content relying on the existing knowledge base. Publishing interactive DVD packages represents a possible and useful way of product development, which is important for public education, since it makes the learning process a real learning experience. One DVD package includes several (3–7) lectures that belong to the same topic, in multimedia format. Also, an additional interactive DVD will help in integrating the content and assist search therein. The first steps have already been taken to this end. This solution, which is already available in the topic of genetics, exemplifies how flexibly high school classes can be structured if the teacher uses interactive DVDs.

Still, ENCOMPASS is not to give up its traditional role through which it gained its existing recognition. In order to promote development, we redefined our activities, as a result of which our tasks are grouped around three main processes. Creating the programs for the semesters and the televised lectures built upon them is a separate group of tasks. Another important process is raising awareness among the audience and increasing the number of people who take part of the lectures on location or through the media. The third large group of tasks is marketing. The key tasks are the management of products and services. This task also includes safeguarding and enriching values. New issues of the always popular ENCOMPASS book series are published courtesy of the Kossuth Publishing House. The four volumes published so far will be followed soon by the fifth and sixth ones.

On the occasion of the last lecture in the ninth semester, in December 2006, we celebrated the 150th televised lecture of ENCOMPASS. Three PhD students presented their respective projects and the discipline they work within. Our intention was also to demonstrate a paradigm change to be undertaken by ENCOMPASS in the future. By drawing the attention of the public to specific scientific research projects, we can do the groundwork in educating wide layers of society, while promoting ideas that fall within the triangle of research, development and innovation. We might establish actual links among scientific workshops or even players of the economy.

Though ENCOMPASS is a unique initiative in the context of popular science programs in Hungary and its value is proven by its popularity, Magyar Telekom does a lot more for sciences and culture. Magyar Telekom is a gold-level sponsor of the House of Future exhibition that was opened on December 16, 2005 in Millenáris Park. This exhibition makes it possible to get a hands-on experience in a playful and entertaining manner about what the future holds for us. It offers entertainment for all those who are interested in the achievements and novelties of sciences, and presents the major directions researched by scientists around the world.

T-Online, the flagship of Hungary's Internet market, supports primarily the growing popularity and spread of the Internet in order to promote a comfortable life rich in experiences. A key focus of its sponsorship is education with the main purpose of

popularizing the Internet culture for the widest possible layer of people, eliminating Internet-illiteracy by sponsoring training courses and conferences on the use of the Internet, financing scholarships and sponsoring high-school and university programs of e-learning closely associated with the Internet. This effort can contribute to gradually mitigating the reservations some people still have about this modern medium, and can allow them to explore the opportunities offered by the Internet to the individual.

Magyar Telekom, in line with its commitment to sustainable growth, strives to overcome the negative consequences of improving IT and communication technologies and promote a positive impact instead. For the promotion of economic growth, access to IT and communication technologies is a must. It is a key to a knowledge-based society, and communications changing in line with this requirement make it inevitable to learn the new technologies and the opportunities based thereupon.

The purpose of Magyar Telekom's Digital Bridge initiative is to educate people about the achievements and possibilities of IT and communications technologies in areas where the digital gap still exists and might potentially worsen to create an unbridgeable abyss. The Program called Digital Bridge at Small Settlements is focused on small settlements where increasing the pace of IT and communications development will not only promote local and regional prosperity, but be a driver behind other economic sectors of the area. The goal is to provide efficient education and customized assistance to people in villages. Local governments, churches and non-profit organizations (e.g.: schools, kindergartens, foundations, associations) can join the Internet Training Program. For these 1, 2, or 5-day free-of-charge programs, Magyar Telekom provides all the teaching materials, the teacher for the full duration of the program and – if necessary – the PCs, too.

Initiated under the 'Internet for Equal Chances' program, a community portal has been established with the purpose of supporting the efficient operation of different organizations dealing with underprivileged groups of people, by exploiting the possibilities of the Internet. The site called egalnet.hu provides a platform for organizations that register to establish and maintain relations with each other. Beyond the above, those that have no homepage yet can create one by using a simple software.

The underlying principle behind the initiatives described so far is to educate people to ensure that they obtain modern and efficiently usable information. The significance of this mission is best demonstrated by the fact that the reputed US weekly, *Time* elected the Internet people, i.e., the people building and using the Internet to collectively be person of the year in 2006. The editors thought that in 2006 the theory according to which the history of the world is made up of biographies of great persons, meaning that a few influential and famous people shape the world suffered a major blow. In the context of the Internet, however, 'the many [will wrest] power from the few and [help] one another for nothing and [...] that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes'. According to the editors of *Time*, this is a real revolution, a global social experiment, in which small steps of individual players add up to trigger underlying changes.

Nevertheless, before we turn our attention to contemplating global questions, let me revisit the original issue at hand. The challenge in our modern age, which is founded on the widest possible scope of knowledge, is to find the players who develop and renew from time to time contents that are useful for the largest possible cross-section of society. In this spirit, Magyar Telekom has contributed to numerous large-scale cultural events in Hungary. Let me give you a partial list of them as examples:

Courtesy of the 'Telekom Theater', several plays were sponsored in the largest and smallest theaters of Hungary, from Nyíregyháza to Zalaegerszeg, from Brecht's Mother Courage to Levente Szörényi's The People of Árpád.

Besides quite some concert series, several valuable cultural events turned into traditions under the stewardship of the Company, including the "Kaláka Folk Festival" of Diósgyőr, the Lamantin Jazz Festival of Szombathely or the T-Com Music Nights held at locations in Budapest. In the framework of the latter, the Magyar Telekom Symphonic Orchestra accompanied such popular artists as Branford Marsalis, José Cura, Bobby McFerrin or Chick Corea.

Magyar Telekom has been a major sponsor of Bartók Radio for nine years. As a result of this sponsorship, such successful programs as Jazz at Night, broadcasts from the Hungarian Sate Opera, Music in the Morning and Music in the Afternoon run on Hungary's only cultural radio station.

Besides popular Hungarian musicians, with T-Mobile's support a number of international stars – Joe Cocker, Sting, Lionel Richie, Elton John, Pink and many others – performed in front of audiences of several thousand people at the 'Day of the Connection' Concerts.

For five years, T-Com has been the exclusive main sponsor of the group 'Ghymes', which won fame and fans of tens of thousands, as well as selling enough CDs to reach gold or even platinum sales rates.

At the same time, the foundations established by the company also aim to strengthen non-profit initiatives in Hungary. The Telecommunications Education Foundation, for example, is the sole source of financing the Tivadar Puskás Telecommunications High-School, but the Foundation for Higher Education of Telecommunications and Telematics supports numerous institutes like the Technical University of Budapest or the Corvinus University of Budapest, thus contributing to the achievement of the goal for our scientific education system to keep pace with global challenges.

I do hope that the above facts have given you a comprehensive picture based on one example that demonstrates how fruitful a journey it can be to venture beyond the relatively limited borders of our core business into the territories of culture and closely related sciences. Involving market players in our activities and exploring mutual opportunities can result in breakthrough ideas for all of us, for the whole Hungarian society.