

## **Changes: Reinventing the Graduation Ceremony**

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**Background:** Some people say we don't need to change things that already work. But others are willing to risk and jump forward. And this story is about changing the history and traditions at Riga Technical University (RTU). Reinventing.

Until year 2017 RTU had more than 50 graduation ceremonies per year (separate for each faculty and institute). Needless to say, that it is very hard to get high rank administration (rector, deans etc.) to participate in all of them. And we're not even talking about the entertainment part — artists, who are making these graduation ceremonies even more worth remembering for alumni. So... we really wanted to not only optimize processes about graduation events, but also make them more convenient for all parties involved.

**Process:** As a solution we used an innovative approach — let all the graduates receive their diplomas all together at the same time. So now RTU for its graduates organizes RTU Grand Graduation where all the graduates of the current year (around 1500 graduates) participate in an amazing ceremony. Their guests (around 7000 people) are also welcome to enjoy this event and celebrate together. The event takes place at the largest arena in Riga, usually around the end of June. RTU Grand Graduation has three parts: speeches by top academic and government representatives complemented by musical performances, diploma ceremony and grand finale with the graduation hat salute. After that graduates are welcome to celebrate the event together with their guests at the «Arēna Rīga» enjoying good music.

RTU Alumni Association is the main organizer for this event. To make the event a huge success we tightly cooperate with other RTU departments and all 9 faculties. We handle the work of professional event management company as we manage different processes — fundraising, procurement, budget, PR and communication, coordination of stuff (stenographer, producer, technical companies, photographers, video) and artists, guests and speakers of high level, volunteer management (in total around 80 volunteers are recruited) and different administrative tasks.

**Outcomes:** As the result we handle all the administration of many several graduation ceremonies in one day thus relieving the work for university stuff. We also get an incredible PR for the university and alumni association as an organization. But most important — we get more inspired and engaged alumni as they receive the fabulous feeling of being all together. And for the first time they actually realize how impressive their university is.

**Conclusion:** We've learned that changes are for better and we need them — we, RTU Alumni Association, together with all the involved persons have carried out an unprecedented event in Latvian highest education. Of course, there are a lot of things to improve and we aim to do it —

each year the Grand Graduation is even more noteworthy. Because it would be stupid to rest on one's laurels, right? We also believe that our example is soon to be followed by other higher education organizations in Latvia. In the meantime, we are pleased to be the pioneers in Latvia who created such a new and notable tradition for every participant to remember.

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