Leading innovation projects

Product Development Project – Continuous Learning

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Workshop 09.12.2019
Leadership fostering collaboration

- Global challenges
- Changes of society
- Changes of working life
”Today’s employees, at all levels, spend 50% more time collaborating than they did 20 years ago.”

Cross, Rebele & Grant (2016)
”None of us is as smart as all of us.”

Japanese proverb
Team synergy & Process losses
Information asymmetry is the starting point
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The goal is to expand the boundaries of commonly held information and knowledge.
Expectations

Leaders and Managers
Nature of work in innovation projects
To whom is the product offered?

How much does it cost to launch the product?

How much can the product cost?

What should the product look like?

How should it be used?

What technology is the best?

How should it be manufactured?

What are the best materials for interaction and looks?

Cagan and Vogel, 2002
Divergent  Convergent

create choices  make choices
Team members need to share their point of views and be interested to hear those of others.
Supporting iterative experimentations

Challenges:
- Resistance to iteration (beyond first trial deemed successful)
- Overlooking ideas
- Losing sight of the initial problem
- Bias towards planning

Supporting the team:
- Facilitate reflective discussions
- Act as an objective observer
- Ask "stupid" questions
- Enforce practical next steps
Climb 

Dive 

Rise 

Knowledge 
Team dynamics 
Emotions 

Rill & Hämäläinen, 2018
Building blocks for unlocking the potential of a team

Awareness of knowledge and skills within the team + Enabling atmosphere + Shared ways of working + Constructive feedback

Rekonen, 2018
Awareness of knowledge and skills within the team

• The better and sooner team members aware of others’ skills and experience, the easier it is to utilize those throughout the projects

• Team roles in innovative projects requires “out-of-box” thinking

• It is the duty of each individual to bring their expertise to the table
Enabling atmosphere
"Google’s data indicated that psychological safety, more than anything else, was critical to making a team work."
Task conflict vs. Non-task conflict
Open questions to foster thinking

- What do you think..?
- Where is it based on..?
- What does it mean..?
- How do you understand..?
- Why is it so..?

- How do you feel..?
- How would you go about..?
- How is it related to..?
- What do you think..?
- Where is it related to..?
- How do you explain..?
Constructive feedback

I... LIKE WISH = a facilitated team feedback method

https://ilikeiwish.org
Constructive feedback

- Fosters open and trustful atmosphere
- Positive feedback increases confidence
- Constructive feedback ensures that team is putting effort on right things
- Kills assumptions of ourselves and others
Exercise I - Interpretation
Exercise I

Describe for your partner, a situation in which you saw leadership.

Why is this leadership?
Exercise I

Describe for your partner, a situation in which you saw leadership. Why do you feel that was leadership?

Tell your partner what you heard by repeating back:

“What I heard you say was...” and, “You felt this was leadership because...”
Why this approach?

Changes in leading innovation: **diversifying** the **domains** of participation

- **Competence** priority
- **Directive-based** performance
- Emphasis on **efficient solutions**

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- **Social and flexible** emphasis
- Seeking **broader participation**
- **Creative solutions** from new perspectives
Toward broader innovation domains

**Shifting** from traditional *competence* focused innovation to a more *diverse* innovation spectrum

**Innovation domains***:

1. **Competence**: Skills and ability
2. **Relatedness**: Social synergy
3. **Autonomy**: Independence

Key requirement for diverse innovation: **Participation**

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*Deci and Ryan 2000*
Benefits and challenges of leading diverse innovation

- Complex
- Disagreement
- Convergence challenge
- Balancing participation

+ 1. More sources of input
2. More inclusive
3. More creativity
4. More divergence

- 1. Complex
2. Disagreement
3. Convergence challenge
4. Balancing participation
Leading innovation in practice: Key issues

Considerations:

- **Relatedness**: Are participants part of the group? Are they validated and do they trust?

- **Competence**: Are the task, expectations, and benchmarks clear? What are the rules of participation? Is their role clear?

- **Autonomy**: How independent are participants able to be? To express? To be self-starters? Are they free from excessive external pressures?
Exercise II – Facilitating divergence as a leader
Key issues in facilitation:

- One of the main challenges we face is converging too soon or too late.
- In Creating an environment in which teamwork happens, it is important to:
  - Provide clarity of expectations
  - Measures of relevant benchmarks, for example what counts as “done”
  - Ensure trust on which participation can be built

**Task:** What is your experience and share an example with the person beside you.

- In groups, discuss how to get everyone in a team to engage and participate, sharing their ideas. Use the techniques you come up with at the table.
- Summarize with the whole class. Based on motivation, environment, self-image
- Discuss convergence (Paul)
Exercise 2 - Divergence

Task 1: What is your best experience of a divergent meeting and share an example with the person beside you.
Exercise 2 - Divergence

Task 2: In groups, discuss how to get everyone in a team to engage and participate, sharing their ideas.
Exercise III – Divergent, Convergent, and Difficult
Embrace expansive discussions

• Ask expansive questions such as ”what” and ”how”
  • E.g. ”Did you try asking others who’ve worked on similar challenges for advice?” → ”In what ways have you reached out to others for advice?”

• Add a ”plus” to others’ ideas
  • ”Yes and” vs. ”Yes but”

• Expand others thinking
  • ”Could you elaborate on that”

• Be an active listener
  • ”What I hear you say…”
Exercise 3 - Divergence and convergence

Task 1: At your tables, decide on the best suggestion for how to facilitate divergent - participatory discussion.

Practice using expansive techniques:

- **Add a ”plus” to others’ ideas**
  - ”Yes and” vs. ”Yes but”

- **Expand others thinking**
  - ”Could you elaborate on that”

- **Be an active listener**
  - ”What I hear you say…”
Spectrum of agreement

- Moving toward consensus:
  - Are positions clear?
  - Are there areas of problematic compromise?
  - Has disagreement been constructive?

“Active disagreement”
“Passive agreement/disagreement”
“Active agreement”

“Danger zone”

“This is the wrong approach”
“OK, fine”
“The plan sounds good to me”
Difficult conversations

Discussion

How do you give bad news?

How do you let someone know that you heard them, but the team will continue on its current path?

Adult-Child communication VS. Adult-Adult communication
References