

Prototyping – Fail Fast and Cheap While Having Fun!

INNOVATION IN ACTION 2015

This briefing paper includes key takeaways from the Innovation in Action 2015 workshop, facilitated by Niclas Ingeström from Stena and Conny Svensson from CGI. The workshop included a short presentation about the companies and their methods for testing and prototyping. The workshop included practical elements and the participants got to learn how to, in a fast and cheap way, create prototypes and have fun at the same time using technologies and gadgets, like beacons and drones.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the workshop was to share methods for how to, in a fast and cheap way, present an innovative idea to customers or audience. During the workshop it was emphasized that creativity is important and that we must bring back the imagination and unpretentiousness that we used to have while being kids. Moreover, we must move away from the notion that failing is bad and that risks must be avoided.

METHOD

During the workshop the participants were introduced to four different innovative technologies, i.e. iBeacon, Little Bits, Drones and Virtual- and Augmented reality instruments. Thereafter the participants were teamed in to four different groups. Each group had to come up with a smart idea for how the given technology could be used in a new way. The groups played with and discussed the technology and its potential business values and agreed upon one to progress with. The next task for the group was to produce a 1-minute video pitch for the “executive team”.

DESCRIPTION

The groups prepared by writing a script, drawing on paper and building small models. Thereafter they recorded a short video, often “fast and dirty” in one take. Overall, the work was productive and joyful and there were a lot of great ideas presented such as the “Flying Garden Manager” that uses a drone for gardening services as for keeping weeds out of your lawn.

8 ways to action

- ◆ Seeing is believing, feeling is revealing
- ◆ Fail fast many times and cheap when prototyping, otherwise the idea will become irrelevant by the time you present it.
- ◆ Listen up for the “wow-factor” and limit yourself to only prototype on those ideas.
- ◆ Bring the lab-environment to your business – prototyping is about experimenting and testing.
- ◆ A video prototype is effective since it quickly manage to present a complex idea so that your audience understands it properly.
- ◆ The prototype should look cheap, so that the audience focus your idea rather than that it has cost a lot of money and time to produce.
- ◆ Investigate the technologies you already have and what you can do with it, it does not have to be advanced or expensive.
- ◆ Use your own corporate environment so that your audience can relate to the content it should not feel like yet another YouTube-video.

LEARNINGS AND RESULTS

Main takeaways are that it is effective to think and reflect about which method you can use to communicate your ideas with and to look for ways of how you can make the process faster and cheaper. Since we in most cases have our audience's attention for a couple of minutes a video or model are effective methods. These types of physical prototypes engage the audience on another level and a repeated saying during the workshop was "seeing is believing, feeling is revealing". Moreover, when using visual methods, instead of producing an analytical text or power point, we challenge ourselves to be more creative. Participants argued that by working with their hands they became less self-conscious and more creative. An important learning from the facilitators of the workshop, was that it is often a good thing that the video or mock-up does not look perfect. This since higher management often do not appreciate that it seems like you spent a lot of money and time on the ideation phase of the project. From this point of view, you do certainly not have to use the latest technology or expensive equipment while producing a prototype, rather take what you already have and experiment with it. The important thing about a prototype is that your innovative idea is communicated and understandable for the customer or audience.

Another important learning was the aspect of timing for innovations. In our fast-paced society, successful innovation is a lot about the right timing and therefore it is crucial to not wait with your idea until you have prepared the perfect pitch. It then risks to have become irrelevant by the time you present it. It can be wise to limit yourself to only spend a limited time on one particular project idea, since the world will have changed too much if you wait much longer. In order to get people on board with your idea, we must have timing in mind and be willing to fail fast and with cheap methods when prototyping.