

Innovation Pioneers: Tank meeting #33

Ideas – the start of any innovation journey. Ideas excite, exhilarate, engage and provoke. The journey from an idea to an innovation which has reached the customer's hands is long. And the question marks that always will be raised when a new idea is presented are many. Will the idea survive in the noise of the organizational life? Does the idea fit with the organizational structures and processes, does it fill a customer pain, do the resources to develop the idea exist? The list of question marks can be made long, sometimes so long that good ideas easily drown in all the requirements they should fulfill. Therefore, idea management is an important cornerstone for any firm who wants to be innovative today.

At the 33rd Innovation Pioneers' tank meeting the focus of the day was idea management, and how idea management can be of benefit for the customer. After a warm welcome from Innovation Pioneers' Kim Silvasti and Innventia's Pia Wågberg, the participants of the tank meeting were invited to discuss current challenges related to idea management. First, the discussion took place in small groups on topics such as 'how do you formulate idea campaign challenges', 'how do you create engagement in the organization', and 'how do you boost your business through idea management'. Then, each group summarized their key take-aways and posted these on a mobile app, which allowed the members of the other groups to comment and participate in these discussions. A theme that emerged from these discussions is the duality of idea management. On the one hand, organizations need to support new ideas, and part of idea management is therefore about creating the prerequisites for new ideas to emerge and grow in the organization. Here, IT-systems and mobile applications can play an important role in providing such a support system. On the other hand, an idea is nothing without the person behind it, and the other part of idea management is to invoke passion and curiosity in people so that they dare to pursue their idea. This second part of idea management is often forgotten, but is where you can make a real difference in your organization.

In the discussions, many agreed on that it is important to set and define priorities for idea management, to identify why we want to innovate and for whom we innovate, and to frame and set the boundaries for idea generation. But how do you awake the passion which is necessary to make an idea reach the customer's hands? How do you spur curiosity and excitement, and make an idea relevant to your colleague or your customer? Here, the opinions varied to a large extent, probably because passion is so individual. What makes one person passionate about an idea might not be the same for someone else. In organizations, it is not always the people who seemingly burn the strongest and most blazingly who will see their ideas realized, but the ones who burns the longest and most intensely for their ideas. Here, leadership (and not management) plays a key role in order to fuel the passion of others. In order to spur the passion of others you yourself need to be passionate. Find out what makes you passionate. Is it an intriguing challenge? A burning topic that you cannot let go of? A societal issue you want to help contribute to? Then, find out what you need to sustain your passion. What keeps you going when you are being opposed and challenged? Being passionate and sustaining passion is a balancing act and requires discipline. Otherwise, passion risks burning out too quickly or risks fading away.

It is clear that the passion and experience which resides in the Innovation Pioneers' network is a great source of learning and energy. Energy which can help fuel and sustain passion, and might just be that extra nudge which is needed in order to turn that great, and exhilarating idea into a commercial success.