

## Take aways from the 33rd tankmeeting on Idea management for the customers benefit

*This briefing paper includes takeaways from the Innovation Pioneers 33<sup>rd</sup> tankmeeting on Idea management. The tankmeeting consisted of active members sharing examples from their organisations, a workshop where multiple different subjects were discussed, and presentations from scholars in the field. This paper focuses on idea management from the individuals perspective.*

### Method

Prior to the tankmeeting members had the opportunity to complete a survey where they could share experiences from their own organizations. Some of these experiences were shared during the tankmeeting. The meeting also included a workshop where participants could choose from a number of topics to discuss and share their own experience in the chosen subject, scholars then presented findings in the area of idea management to contribute with more knowledge.

### Learnings and results

Idea management can focus on accomplishing different things, for example to make it possible for employees to submit their ideas. This can be done with classical idea boxes as well as more elaborate IT-systems, it was however clear in the tankmeeting that mere hand in systems are not enough to make employees generate and submit ideas and that the tool is insufficient in making ideas into new innovations. In an organization employees needs to be motivated and engaged on an individual level and the idea management must facilitate stimulus in multiple areas such as ideation, idea selection and idea development.

To provide engagement and motivation among employees, i.e. the idea providers, multiple factors were discussed during the tankmeeting. Time to ideate was identified as an important factor as well as the time from idea submission to idea selection. To ideate, more time should be facilitated for the individuals who you wish to come up with new ideas, solutions that can be seen today is *20% time*, *FedEx days* and collective brainstorming such as *ideation workshops*, where you have time set aside to work with ideation. Whereas more time is often wished for to ideate, the opposite goes for the time from submission to selection. If this timespan is too wide, idea generators might argue that nothing happens and that there is no use in handing in ideas. If shortening this step of the idea management isn't possible, a transparent process with proper feedback to the idea provider was discussed as a way to compensate the wide timespan. Other means mentioned was a *Quick Fix* which aimed at making quick decisions and realize some of the ideas that are easy to implement which have low impact on the organization and a low implementation-cost. This would in some means close the wide timespan.

Another highlighted factor was that of different types of individuals, we are all motivated by different things and behave in different ways. Dependent of the anticipated outcome of the idea management, the aim should be to stimulate these dissimilarities. It is important that the employees who the organization aims to engage in the activity, e.g. ideation, should feel motivated, valued and encouraged by management. To facilitate this some kind of community where employees can submit their ideas as

well as see and comment others ideas can be implemented. It is also valuable since some people tend to submit many ideas whilst others tend to focus on commenting on others ideas.

On one hand idea management can be used to stimulate these and many other factors, but on the other hand the threat of creativity and intrapreneurship that comes with a structured idea management process. Factors like freedom and trust from the organization towards the individual were commented upon and processes identified as threats.

To summarize, it is important that there is a way for individuals to hand in their idea and that they have the time to ideate. It is also recommended that the time from submission to selection is transparent from the individual's point of view as well as not too elongated. Idea management should facilitate multiple ways to contribute with ideas so that many types of individuals are encouraged to participate, however idea management should be careful not to stagger creativity with processes and should to some extent provide freedom for the individuals to be creative and encourage intrapreneurs. It is clear that it is a struggle to stimulate all individuals and that this is a balance between processes and freedom.

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