

# PROMOTING INNOVATION THROUGH PEOPLE

## Innovation in Action - 2017

This briefing paper includes key takeaways from the Innovation in Action 2017 workshop, facilitated by Astra Zeneca. Sanja Beyowish, Astra Zeneca, and Martin Högberg, CGI, hold the workshop which aimed at getting the participants to learn how to promote innovation through people by experiencing it themselves. This through a group exercise focused on teamwork, combined with group discussions.

"FRUSTRATION IS AN EXPRESSION OF PASSION"

"HAVING FUN DOES NOT MEAN WE'RE JUST PLAYING – IT'S DEAD SERIOUS"

"COACHING IS ABOUT PLANTING IDEAS INTO OTHER PEOPLES' MINDS"

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the workshop was to show how to promote innovative and creative capabilities through people. It emphasized that there is no one type of creative person. Everyone is creative and innovative if given the right prerequisites. Through three iterations of a given task based upon teamwork, the goal was to learn by doing.

## METHOD

The primary learning of the workshop was structured around three iterations of an exercise highlighting the variance in the level of creativity within a group when using different roles in different ways in order to facilitate a creative environment. Group discussions were held between each iteration, which were then summarized in a few key insights that were shared with all groups.

## DESCRIPTION

The workshop started off with a warm-up consisting of an introduction to the theme of the workshop with pedagogical, practical examples of how to innovate through people, followed by short discussions. The main part of the workshop was then centered on the task of creating, developing, and prototyping an idea for a house or a building. This was done in three iterations, with a time limit for the process of 15 minutes per iteration, each time with a new idea and different roles for each team member. Four explicit roles were divided between the group

## 6 TAKEAWAYS

- All are innovators!
- Innovation happens everywhere – as much at the coffee machine as in the brainstorming sessions.
- Enable the innovative and creative capabilities you already have by providing an open, including environment.
- A competent innovation coach can make a big difference when it comes to innovation and creativity.
- Lateral thinking is a powerful tool to facilitate creativity through new perspectives.
- Dare to have fun.

members: ideator, observer, builder, and coach, where the coach was only used in the last iteration. During the first iteration, the idea was created single-handedly by the ideator and then developed by the builders. For the second iteration, everyone except for the observer was both the ideator and builder. During the third iteration, the idea was once again created by a lone ideator, which then took the role of an innovation coach during the development. Between each of these three iterations, the observer was to give feedback on the teamwork, and then rate the level of creativity of the work process. After a short discussion within the team, key insights from the lessons learned from each group after the iteration was also shared amongst all participants.

## LEARNING & RESULTS

The workshop demonstrated that innovation and creativity is not something that is limited to what society would call a “creative person”. If in the right environment, everyone can be creative and innovative. This means that an organization rarely has to look outside of its borders to find new creative employees. It merely has to learn how to enable the creative resources it already possesses. One of the ways of doing this is by providing an open, including, and stimulating environment for the employees to express their creativity in. A concrete way of looking at this is through diversity. Diversity is a driving force of innovation, but just having a diverse team does not mean it will be innovative or creative. In order to be able to access the advantages of diversity, an open, including environment is needed to bring out all the different perspectives that makes diversity such a powerful tool for creativity and innovation.



The basis for an open and including environment is a mutual understanding of what being open and including in a creative sense actually means. For example, a person who speaks her mind and takes a lot of space need to be aware that this might be hindering others from stepping forward, who might be sitting on a winning idea or crucial perspectives, but may not be so keen on taking the initiative themselves for bringing it out. Another way to enable the creative and innovative capabilities of your employees is to make use of an innovation coach during work where creativity is desired. With a competent coach acting as a facilitator in a team, who should steer the work in the right direction, enable lateral thinking, and include every team member, the level of creativity within the group is bound to increase. During the final iteration of the exercise in the workshop, this proved to be an important source for bringing in new perspectives and disrupting homogenous thought patterns that were hindering creativity.

Finally, it is important to dare to have fun. Especially when working with creativity and innovation. When having fun, one becomes more relaxed, and less pressured on performing, which once again contributes to an open, including environment that facilitates creativity.