

Building an Innovation Culture to Drive Company Growth



With the appointment of a new CEO in 2012, the Argentine branch of a Global Fortune 100 Media Company found itself in a period of transition. Faced with eliminating 200 jobs, the new CEO recognized the need to invest in the organization's future and boost morale. As a result, the Media firm turned its focus to developing its leaders, targeting innovation as the key component necessary for future growth. Leaders needed to learn and practice the mindset and capabilities necessary for building a culture of innovation to successfully drive the business into the future.

Transforming Strategy into Reality

The organization selected their top 130 leaders in Argentina to bring this new culture to life. Leaders went through a two-day innovation program designed to help them understand the role of innovation within their business. The goal of the program was to develop leaders' understanding of innovation, show them that it is a practice that can be mastered using a variety of different techniques and processes, and make them aware of the necessary leadership behaviors required to successfully work with uncertainty.

To achieve this, the Media firm partnered with BTS to identify the relevant innovation opportunity areas, places where the organization had room for growth, which participants would work on at the session. This allowed them to focus on real projects that could be implemented after the program. On the first day of the program, leaders formed cross-functional teams, and were guided through the process of innovation. Participants were introduced to new ways of thinking, which included the tools and templates to assist them in generating unique insights regarding unmet customer needs, provoke existing ways of thinking, and help them execute innovative ideas as disciplined experiments.

On the second day of the program, leaders attended an Ideation Session, where they applied what they had discovered during the first day to the identified innovation opportunity areas.

Teams leveraged idea flow, pitched their ideas to their peers, and asked for feedback to make their ideas stronger. At the same time, leaders identified the critical assumptions to be tested back on-the-job to bring the idea forward. This helped leaders understand the value of collaboration by sharing their point of view with a diverse group of people.

To demonstrate the relevance of this ideation process to the new strategy, the new CEO provided the leaders with an opportunity to apply their learnings. Worthwhile ideas generated during the program were pursued after the program's ending.

Measurable Success

The program produced several impressive results. One year after its completion, eleven innovation projects were being further developed. Currently, two of them are in the process of being implemented.

One of the solutions is a gaming service designed to replace traditional console gaming. The team identified that the average consumer might not be able to afford an expensive console and worked out a creative solution to this issue. The idea is to establish a service where customers can stream games on-demand, paying an affordable monthly fee rather than purchasing expensive consoles and games. This innovation is targeted to launch in the near future.

In addition to the new solutions, participants provided significant positive feedback on the program experience. One participant commented: "thank you so much for the two days of Shaping the Future. It was really an awesome experience and indeed very valuable. I had read a lot about the content you presented previously, but what really made the difference was how you and your team structured the information to engage with the people and connect with each one of us in the company's context. It was also very useful for personal goals. Then, getting the whole management team thinking insightfully and with the consumer in mind, and most importantly, understanding that change was needed was invaluable. I'm more than grateful for this engaging experience, and can't wait to talk about it with my team and put it to work. I'm really excited about this!"

Beyond Shaping the Future

To continue to build out a culture of innovation at the firm, the Argentine branch and BTS also designed a follow up program for a combination of directors and high-potentials. This workshop dove deeply into a customized innovation leadership simulation where participants practiced and experienced the "moments that matter" in an innovation leadership context. This meant specifically understanding which moments in their day-to-day work required them to lead differently to create an environment where their people feel comfortable trying out new things. The program also helped leaders hone their ability to facilitate innovation in discussions and meetings.

Ultimately, the organization's innovation program has continued to be an important part of developing leaders, ingraining and sustaining a culture of innovation. As a result of the success produced by the Argentine branch, the initial innovation program is being rolled out in Mexico in 2018, with other geographies to follow.

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