UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
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Master Degree Project in Innovation and Industrial Management

Exploring Best Practices for Ideation

A comparative study

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Abstract

This paper examines how organizations engage their employees in generating ideas for innovation, henceforth referred to as ideation. The study was conducted through interviews among innovation leaders at 9 different companies in the Gothenburg region. The various industries that are represented by the companies range from manufacturing, automotive, logistics, to health care, urban development and information technology.

The findings indicate that the common ideation methods which the companies use are innovation workshops followed by innovation contests and jams. These ideation methods are often used by the companies for different purposes. Workshops were considered as more appropriate for achieving business results, and demonstrating the feasibility of an idea, while contests and jams were considered as more appropriate for fostering an innovation climate.

The analysis of this study is based on the insights which the companies highlighted in working with ideation. Success in managing ideation seems to be dependent on three key factors which were identified as; management commitment, collaboration, and idea management.

Keywords: Ideation, Ideation Methods, Innovation Workshops, Innovation Contests, Innovation Jams

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1. Introduction

The following section deals with the background of the thesis, its purpose and the issue of study. Furthermore, the case company that was studied in detail is presented.

1.1 Background

In today's globalized economy innovation is considered a key source for sustaining and attaining a competitive advantage (Dodgson, et al. 2008; Björk, et al. 2010). Aasen & Amundsen (2013) argues that a company's innovation capability determines whether the company creates success in the long term or stagnates and disappears from the market. Even though most companies today have a general idea about what innovation is, innovation as a term can be defined in different and sometimes complex ways, and hence there is no universal definition. Amabile et al. (1996) describes innovation as "*the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization*". The definition captures the wide scope of innovation and this study. As pointed out by Amabile et al. (1996) innovations originate from creative ideas. But in order to get there organizations need to generate ideas that could develop into innovations once they are implemented. However, ideas rarely come out of the blue − they need to be formed by people (Johnson, 2010). In order to create and attain ideas companies need to engage their employees, as they are the driving force of ideation i.e. idea generation. According to a global CEO study done by IBM (2006), the main source of ideas for innovation is the employees, followed by business partners and customers.

Traditionally many companies have used so called suggestion or "idea boxes" for the employees to drop ideas and suggestions for improvements within the organization (Dodgson, et al. 2008). One company that has been successful in attaining the ideas generated by its employees is Toyota. On average the employees at Toyota submit one idea peer week, bringing about 1 million ideas per year (Dodgson, et al. 2008). Many of these ideas are later implemented within Toyota and can develop into new products, services or processes. The success of Toyota has been attributed to their way of managing ideation. But the case of Toyota is not unique, there are other companies, regardless of size, that have been successful in managing ideation and collecting ideas persistently from their employees (Dodgson, et al. 2008). Ideation in groups is often used as method to create new and innovative ways to solve problems, create change and thus also extend a company's business (Björk, et al. 2010). If a company can acquire knowledge more quickly and generate new ideas, this would both save

and generate capital in the long perspective. Hence, studying ideation methods and gaining insight into factors that trigger creative ideas, is necessary to understand the potential challenges that companies face concerning innovation.

1.2 Creation of Ideas

Ideation concerns the initial innovation phase where ideas are created (Björk et al. 2010). According to Amabile (1998) the creation of ideas is the result of creativity among individuals. Amabile (1998) divides creativity into three different components; creative-thinking skills, expertise and motivation. These components are interconnected with each other, where one area affects the other, as seen in *Figure 1.1*. With creative-thinking skills Amabile (1998) refers to how individuals approach problems in a flexible and imaginative way. Expertise refers to the practical and intellectual knowledge that individuals have obtained through education or work, and to which extent they are allowed to put their expertise in practice. Furthermore, Amabile (1998) distinguishes motivational factors into two different categories; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

According to Amabile (1998) extrinsic motivations are those motivational effects outside/enviroment an individual, these could be rewards but also recognition for a particular achievement. Intrinsic motivations on the other hand are those motivational effects that are found within an individual, such as learning, ambition or an interest in a specific area. Extrinsic motivation encourages an individual to do something based on expectations and incentives, while intrinsic motivation encourages an individual based on inner ambition and enjoyment of the work.
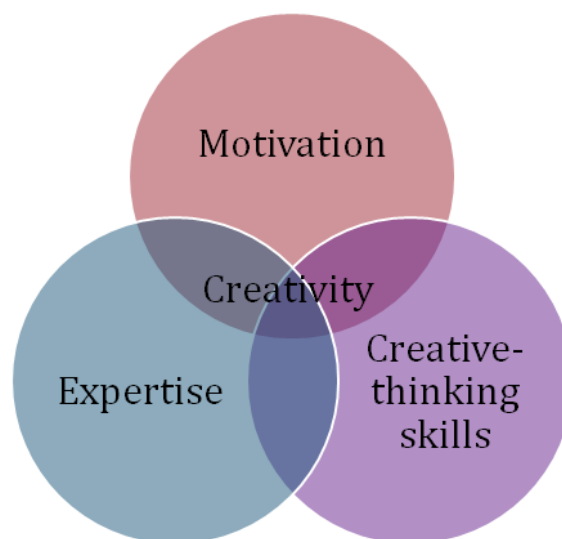

Figure 1.1 Amabile's (1998) three components of creativity

Amabile (1998) regards the first two factors (creative-thinking skills and expertise) as similar and the individual resources for creativity, while motivation is the force that drives it. Without motivation the first two factors will not be triggered effectively. The managerial implication is that a supportive climate can encourage the employees to creative thinking (Amabile, 1998).

1.3 Background to Case Company

The initial idea for this thesis was formed in collaboration with the company IT Management Consulting[1] in Gothenburg, henceforth referred to as IMC. IMC is one of the world's largest independent IT service companies with about 68 000 employees spread over 40 countries. IMC provides IT services and consulting, and their service portfolio includes business consulting, system integration, IT outsourcing, and their own IP-based business solutions. IMC's customer segments are diverse and include companies within manufacturing, retail and logistics, as well as government agencies.

IMC works with innovation both internally by generating ideas for products and services, as well as offering innovation services. Their innovation services include ideation activities which are carried out for their customers. The purpose of using ideation methods is to create and attain ideas for their customers, which can develop into innovations. IMC are facing a competitive environment where they continuously need to evaluate and adapt their ideation methods to the needs of their customers, as well as exploring options for improving them. Thus IMC need to manage ideation by focusing on their current business and existing practices, but also explore to acquire new knowledge.

The focus on IMC's behalf is how they can improve their current innovation services and ideation within their organization. This requires IMC to explore how other companies are managing ideation, and to identify the key factors that affect the outcome of ideation activities. IMC is familiar with the common ideation methods, but not how they are implemented in practice by other companies. Hence, IMC expressed an interest in a study that would provide them with a framework on how to manage ideation on a holistic level connected to their currently used ideation methods; innovation workshops, contests and jams.

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[1] IT Management Consulting is a fictive name for the case company of this thesis

1.4 Issue of Study

As mentioned above innovation is the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization, and the employees are the primary source of creative ideas. Furthermore, Amabile (1998) explains which factors that affect creativity among individuals. A few studies have focused on how various ideation practices affect the outcome of ideas and how large organizations can build ideation capabilities (Björk, et al. 2010). However, the study done by Björk et al. (2010) concerns large organizations and does not approach how an organization can manage ideation to encourage employees in providing ideas and trigger creativity. This requires a study that examines ideation methods in practice, but also the organizational learning connected to these, in how ideation should be managed on a holistic level to achieve the desired effect of creative ideas.
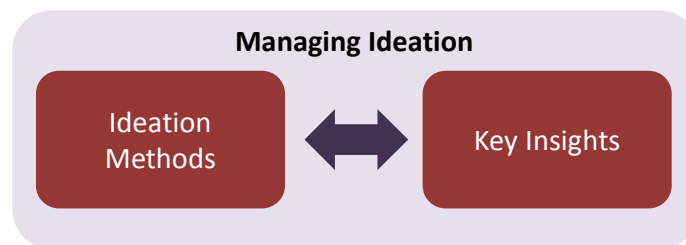
Figure 1.1 Illustrating the issue of this study

1.5 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to gain an understanding of how organizations in general and IMC in particular, can manage ideation holistically connected to innovation workshops, contests and jams. Hence, the study needs to explore how organizations work with ideation and the key insights they highlight related to their experiences. In this way I will be able to provide IMC with a framework for improving the management of their ideation methods.

1.6 Research Questions

In order to follow the purpose of this thesis two research questions have been chosen:

- *What are the key factors to consider when managing ideation*
- *How can IMC manage ideation to improve idea generation*

Both research questions require a combination of practical and theoretical approach. In order to answer the research questions I need to examine the current ideation methods used by IMC. Furthermore, I need to explore how other organizations are implementing the same methods

and the key insights they have gained in doing so. The analysis of the ideation methods and their impact will allow me to develop a framework for how to manage ideation.

1.7 Limitations

The study will not examine all available ideation methods as this would not fulfil the purpose of this paper. Instead the thesis will specifically examine three ideation methods; innovation workshops, contests and jams. The thesis will focus on the ideation phase and thus the implementation of ideas falls outside the scope. The sample for the organizations that will be a part of the study will be concentrated to the Gothenburg region.

2. Methodology

The following section deals with how the research was conducted and the reason for choosing this method. The research strategy is explained, followed by the research approach, design and the data collection method.

2.1 Research Strategy

Innovation as a research area can be examined on the basis of both a quantitative and a qualitative approach according to Aasen & Amundsen (2013), but the choice depends on the scope of the study.

Bryman & Bell (2011) argues that the choice of method depends on how the researcher wants to "*process and analyze the information they have gathered*". Based on the research question and the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen a qualitative method, which involves descriptive and analytical research of social and behavioural characteristics (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Quantitative oriented research is characterized by measurements of data collection and static analysis of the empirical material (Bryman & Bell, 2011) which is not my intention for this paper. Aasen & Amundsen (2013) describes qualitative research as appropriate when the researcher wants to capture the complexity of the innovation process in practice. Qualitative method intends to discover and describe what a particular group of people are doing and what their actions mean to them (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

In the qualitative research, the researcher is interested in what happens in and between organizations, and studies are done through practical situations such as interviews and observations. Interactions, relationships and processes are central concepts in the field, which is consistent with my research goal (Aasen & Amundsen, 2013). This is reinforced by Bryman & Bell (2011) who mentions that qualitative research is more focused on "soft" values as words are more important than numbers when answering the research question. As ideation to a large extent is about how organizations and managers deal with right samples as well as cultural and relational factors, the qualitative method is more appropriate than the quantitative.

Another argument that supports the qualitative approach is that it creates closeness to the interview subject which a quantitative method does not (Bryman & Bell, 2011). With close

proximity the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the behaviour, attitudes and thoughts of the interview subjects. Through this approach I can analyze reactions and feelings, e.g. if the respondent emphasizes certain words, sentences or areas. I consider this to be important in order to answer the research question and to approach the complex and subjective area which ideation is.

2.2 Research Approach

The study's approach is described as the alternative way to relate theory and empiricism (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In other words, how the study intend to interpret the empirical results, and handle the relationship between theory and empirical findings during the process. I have worked along an inductive approach in this study, which can be explained by testing the empirical findings on theory. This differs from a deductive approach, which takes its starting point from the theory and then tests the hypotheses on reality (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Hence, inductive research is more appropriate for the generation of theory rather than the testing of theory. The reason for choosing an inductive approach is connected to the research purpose, which is to develop a framework for how to manage ideation based on methods that organizations use today. Inductive research is also very common when the researcher seeks to collect data in natural situations and analyze social and behavioural factors that affect the subject (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

2.3 Research Design

According to Baxter & Jack (2008) a case study is preferable when the researcher wants to explore a specific case in detail, such as a company or an organization. The case study distinguishes itself from other research designs through the focus on structure and system. It allows the researcher to access an in-depth study with the purpose of analyzing behaviour, culture or structure within an organizational context. This is in line with Yin (2003) who argues that the case study is preferable when the researcher wants to create a better understanding of a phenomenon within an organization. It intends to find out how individuals interpret and understand a given situation. Baxter & Jack (2008) explain that the case study approach is appropriate when the researcher wants to demonstrate the link between the individual and the context. Another benefit with the case study is that it is possible to combine with qualitative methods such as interviews and observations.

In order to answer my research question I would need to develop a theoretical framework, based on empirical findings on how ideation is implemented in organizations. Hence, the case

study is most suitable as a research design for this study. To complement the case study on IMC, I extended the research with a multiple case study (comparative design). These case studies were applied on 8 different companies that in different ways work with ideation. The goal with the comparative design was to access an industry-wide approach in the study and identify the key factors in managing ideation.

According to Bryman & Bell (2011) a comparative design can be used in combination with a qualitative research strategy and this is a popular approach in business research. Comparative designs are built upon case studies, where the cases can be cross-industry companies. Furthermore, people can be used as cases instead of companies or organizations, in the field of business research (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

"*The main argument in favour of multiple-case study is that it improves theory building. By comparing two or more cases, the researcher is in a better position to establish the circumstances in which a theory will or will not hold* (Bryman & Bell, 2011)"

As theory building is in line with the deductive approach of this research the comparative design is appropriate for this purpose. The study will compare different organizations and the way they work with ideation to foster innovation. By analyzing the different methods used and comparing the cases I will be able to establish a theoretical framework.

2.4 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews are an alternative for qualitative interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011), which have been selected for this study. Qualitative interviews, unlike quantitative interviews, approach less structured issues where the focus is on understanding the respondent's position. In semi-structured interviews, it is desirable to have the interview move in different directions to see which areas the interviewees consider to be more important than others

An interview guide was developed for the semi-structured interviews, which related to specific areas regarding ideation. According to Bryman & Bell (2011), this contributes to a deeper understanding of the research topic. Furthermore Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that interviews are often used to create a foundation to prepare for further research. The interviews

contribute by ensuring that relevant questions can be asked in larger studies, in the form of questionnaires.

The interviews took approximately 1 hour complete for each respondent and the interviews were conducted on the premises of the companies. My intention was that the interviews should be held at a place where the respondent is comfortable and relaxed, so that the interviews could take the form of a discussion around ideation practices. The questions were open so that the respondent could interpret them freely and answer the questions from their own perspective. I believe this is important, in order for the person to feel comfortable in their role and be able to give an honest image as possible of the organizational activities and challenges. Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that it is crucial that the questions will allow the researcher to obtain information on how the respondents feel and perceive "their world" and that the interviews accommodate flexibility. The structure of the questions was therefore not too specific so that it would prevent alternative ideas or approaches that may occur during the data collection. During the interviews, the interview guide mostly worked as a checklist so that the questions would touch the important areas I wanted to investigate. For the presentation of the empirical findings I have chosen a descriptive method. This means that the data collected from the interviews will be presented in a descriptive way (Bryman & Bell, 2011)

2.5 Sample Collection

The sample collection consists of the managers that were interviewed at IMC and at the case companies that were included in the study. However, the case study that was conducted at IMC was more comprehensive numbering a total of four managers, while most of the other case studies focused on their respective innovation leader. All the managers that were interviewed at IMC were a part of their Innovation Board, which is roughly responsible for their innovation services and ideation within the organization. Some of the interviewees at the case companies officially had the title of innovation manager and thus an overall responsibility for innovation, while others were responsible for pursuing innovation within their specific area, e.g. business development, digital transformation or mobility. Regardless of the title, the common aspect was that innovation is an integral part of their role.

The purpose of the comparative study has been to explore how the organizations are working with ideation and what insights they have gained. Hence, to capture a broad understanding of

the key factors that affects ideation. In general there is no specific number of interviews that a qualitative research has to follow. According to Bryman & Bell (2011) the selection objective is to access comprehensive information to provide a qualitative description of a particular phenomenon in a particular population. In order to gain a holistic perspective I have chosen an industry-wide approach and including public as well as private companies.

The following criteria's' were considered for the comparative study:

• The company must work with ideation

• The company must be present in the Gothenburg region

• There must be a spread in terms of industries that are represented

• The interviewee must work with ideation within the organization

From these criteria's eight companies were included in the study:

Company	Business Area
Company A	A global automobile manufacturing company with approximately 22 000 employees worldwide.
Company B	A wholly owned municipal company working with urban development and property management, with approximately 70 employees in Gothenburg.
Company C	A creative consulting company focusing on business development and ideation, with approximately 6 employees in Gothenburg.
Company D	A shipping company in the maritime areas of passenger traffic, bulk transport and cargo transport, with approximately 6000 employees in the Nordics.
Company E	A logistics company that offers land, air and freight transport as well as inventory solutions, with approximately 64 000 employees worldwide.
Company F	A unit of the county council responsible for developing ideas for innovations within health care, with approximately 12 employees in Gothenburg.
Company G	A global bearing and seals manufacturing company with approximately 48 000 employees worldwide.
Company H	A global manufacturing company of trucks, buses and construction equipment, with approximately 100 000 employees worldwide.

Table 2.1 Clarification of the industries represented by the case companies

The table below specifies the role of the interviewees at the different companies:

Company	Interviewee	Location	Date
IMC	Innovation Leader	Gothenburg	2015-05-07
IMC	Digital Transformation Manager	Gothenburg	2015-02-19
IMC	Business Manager	Gothenburg	2015-02-18
IMC	Mobility Manager	Gothenburg	2015-05-21
Company A	Innovation Manager	Gothenburg	2015-03-18
Company B	Business Developer	Gothenburg	2015-04-30
Company C	Business Innovation Consultant	Gothenburg	2015-04-27
Company C	Business Innovation Consultant	Gothenburg	2015-04-27
Company D	Chief Digital Officer	Gothenburg	2015-03-13
Company E	Innovation Manager	Gothenburg	2015-04-01
Company F	Project Coordinator	Gothenburg	2015-03-12
Company G	Innovation Manager	Gothenburg	2015-04-20
Company H	Innovation Manager	Gothenburg	2015-05-22

Table 2.2 Illustration of the interviewees' roles

Through the above organizations and interviewees I believe that a representative sample has been selected. The various organizations have different expertise about the concept of ideation and therefore complement each other well. On one hand there are traditional manufacturing and privately owned companies, and on the other hand, there are organizations working within the public sector, and a consulting company specializing in ideation. Therefore I believe that the study has been able to capture an industry-wide approach.

2.6 Research Quality
Validity and reliability are two concepts that concern the credibility and quality of a research (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

2.6.1 Reliability
Reliability in research is according to Jacobsen (2002) to which degree the results can be repeated if the study is conducted in an identical or similar fashion. As I have chosen a qualitative approach for this study, the data collection has been guided by the interviewees' response. Thus, to generate the exact same answers through a repeated interview would be difficult considering the time and spatial aspect. Another factor to consider is the subjective

nature of ideation connected to the specific context, e.g. the organization, the interviewee, etc. These factors affect the responses and the way the researcher can interpret the answers (Jacobsen, 2002). An interview guide was used for the interviews to provide the interviewees with the same conditions and hence reduce the subjective reduce differences and provide the interviewees with the same conditions. However, Jacobsen (2002) argues that the validity is rather a better way to measure the credibility of a qualitative research.

2.6.2 Validity
Validity in qualitative research implies to which degree the researcher managed to measure what was intended to be measured, and if the correct phenomenon was researched (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, Bryman & Bell (2011) classifies the concept of validity into two categories: internal validity and external validity. Internal validity deals with how consistent the results are with how it actually is in practice, and external validity refers to the degree of generalizability (transferability to other contexts and situations). To maintain a high degree of internal validity in a qualitative research, where the results are largely based on interpretations, all the interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed into text documents. This was done to ensure that misinterpretations and misunderstandings did not arise during the data collection, and to provide the accurate information.

According to Bryman & Bell (2011) the degree of generalizability (external validity) is also important to ensure the quality of the study. Bryman & Bell (2011) describe generalization as to whether the research findings can be applied on other situations outside the context in which the study conducted in. Generalization thus concerns how useful my results are for organizations that were not included in the study, and how representative the sample is for ideation in organizations as a whole. Generalization of qualitative research tends to be questioned as a weakness compared to the quantitative approach (Gephart, 2004). According to Jacobsen (2002) the qualitative research is rooted in the social and subjective phenomenon that is changing, diverse and context-bound which hinders generalization. Bryman & Bell (2011) argues that the degree of generalization is largely determined by the choice of companies and interviewees to be included in study. Based on this reasoning, I have chosen to cover a wide range of industries to increase the generalizability. I have done this by selecting companies which operate in various industries with different number of employees.

3. Theoretical Framework

The following section deals with theories on ideation. The concept of ideation and the common ideation methods are described, as well as the innovation climate.

3.1 Ideation

According to Björk et al. (2010) ideas are the foundation of innovations, whereas ideation refers to idea generation for innovation. Ideation is normally discussed from three different perspectives. The first perspective concerns the quantity of ideas that are generated and assumes that a greater number of ideas are beneficial for innovation. The second perspective concerns the quality of ideas that are generated, while the third perspective focuses on the creative processes behind idea creation (Björk & Magnusson, 2009). In order to follow the purpose of this thesis the third perspective will be given most attention. The theoretical framework will touch upon three areas that affect the creative process of ideation. The starting point is describing ideation and the different approaches to organizing ideation, secondly the specific ideation methods which are commonly used by the case companies will be outlined. In addition to identifying opportunities through ideation methods, it is also important to create and maintain an innovation climate which affects ideation (Tidd & Bessant, 2009).
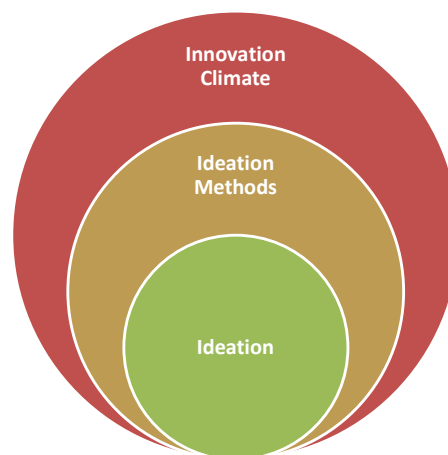
Figure 3.1 Illustration of the theoretical framework

3.1.1 Organizing Ideation

A common duality when discussing ideation is formalization versus autonomy. Formalization in ideation can provide guidelines for the activity and direct the focus on a specific problem or challenge (Björk et al. 2010). According to Cooper & Edgett (2007) a formalized approach to ideation is essential for the ideas to develop into innovations. Cooper & Edgett (2007) argues

that while the ideation phase is normally more unstructured than the later phases where ideas are implemented, a formal approach can facilitate the journey from idea to innovation. Nevertheless, guidelines and direction can also inhibit ideation which is sometimes the result of unexpected occurrences (Björk et al. 2010). The formalized approach also bears a risk in setting too many boundaries which may hinder radical ideas and creativity, and hence missing opportunities outside the scope of the problem area. Thus, the key in managing ideation is to balance structure with freedom and allow for both features in ideation activities (Björk et al. 2010).

3.2 Ideation methods

The three ideation methods which are used by IMC; innovation workshops, contests and jams are described below.

3.2.1 Innovation Workshops

An innovation workshop is a face to face method used to approach problems and generate ideas in groups (Geschka, 1986). Innovation workshops are normally organized in the initial innovation phase to search for ideas that could develop into innovations. Workshops should not be confused with team-building activities, as the purpose is problem-solving in groups by approaching a specific challenge or problem (Geschka, 1986). For this reason workshops use defined goals and organized agendas with a time schedule for the participants to follow. However, there is generally a degree of flexibility in the workshop procedure in case of unexpected ideas and actions. The workshop group could also be specially designed for a theme that concern a certain type of technology or area of their expertise (Geschka, 1986). It is important to use precise objectives and structure in innovation workshops to maximize the generation of ideas that are relevant to the problem area. Nevertheless, the workshop should allow for freedom among the participants to share knowledge and information, and should not lock their mindset.

According to Geschka (1986) an innovation workshop is more likely to produce effective results with management support. Management commitment in initiating and organizing an innovation workshop shows that the company prioritizes the workshop which increases the significance of the ideation activity within the organization. Planning and executing workshops is also associated with set-up costs and creating the desired atmosphere, thus resources from the management is necessary for the workshop to be implemented.

There are two important factors to consider when planning an innovation workshop. The first is to make share that the right participants are selected for the workshop, and secondly, make sure that the workshop is guided by a facilitator.

The workshop participants should have enough competence connected to the problem area that the workshop is supposed to approach. The workshop should also use cross-functional groups with employees from different business units, roles and positions. This ensures that the different competences and mindsets are mixed which facilitates creativity (Amabile, 1989)

Workshops are normally led by a professional facilitator (Rhodes & Thame, 1988). A facilitator is a person who coaches and guides the participants and can be internally hired or an external consultant. A facilitator with the right competence and know-how can influence the outcome of the workshop, and support the participants in achieving their goals (Rhodes & Thame, 1988). The facilitator is also responsible for directing the workshop towards the given problem or topic, and avoid discussions that could distract the participants. Thus, the skill of the facilitator can determine the success of the workshop.

3.2.2 Innovation Contests

An innovation contest, sometimes referred to as a competition or tournament, is a time limited live event where participants generate ideas in teams and compete with them (Adamczyk, et al. 2012). There are several variations on how to design innovation contests; the common feature is the concept of one or numerous challenges, the collaboration of individuals in teams, and a jury who determines the winners (Lampel, et al. 2012).

Innovation contests are not a new phenomenon and have been used by companies historically (Lampel, et al. 2012). With the emergence of internet and IT tools innovation contests have been, to a greater extent, executed through IT platforms (Adamczyk, et al. 2012). The employees participating in a contest are divided into different teams and are given a specific challenge or can choose one from different topics. An innovation contest normally uses incentives to motivate employees in participating, and encouraging the participants in providing creative ideas (Adamczyk, et al. 2012). These incentives are usually in the form of awards and recognition which are reserved for the team with the winning idea.

The main ingredient of innovation contests is competition, and studies have shown that competition have a positive effect on the creativity of individuals (Lampel, et al. 2012). While innovation contests may trigger creativity, they can also inhibit cooperation between participants (Lampel, et al. 2012). If the participants in the contest become too fixated and worried about rewards and recognition, this leads to a competitive environment which prevents interaction between the teams. Balancing competitiveness with collaboration in innovation contests is hence a great challenge (Lampel, et al. 2012). By organizing open contests where the participants can share knowledge and ideas, the contest can provide a creative environment and minimize the negative effects of competitiveness. The goal in working with innovation contests is not only to generate ideas but also to create an innovation climate which facilitates ideation and motivates the employees in participating (Adamczyk, et al. 2012). As motivation could be intrinsic and extrinsic some employees may less reluctant to participate if the incentives do not attract them. Therefore contests need to motivate individuals both seeking intrinsic and extrinsic incentives, and in the same way balance competitiveness with collaboration between the teams.

3.2.3 Innovation Jams

The innovation jam was first developed and introduced by IBM in 2001 (Bjelland & Wood, 2008). An innovation jam could be viewed as an innovation contest executed online. IBM's innovation jam has been described as a radical ideation method which has inspired other companies to develop their own jams based on the IBM model (Bjelland & Wood, 2008). According to Bjelland & Wood (2008) an innovation jam is a "massive online conference", where employees across the company, regardless of geographical location, can participate and interact online through an IT platform. The reason why IBM initiated an innovation jam was to engage employees across the whole organization to generate ideas.

The innovation jam was also intended to spark an innovation climate within IBM (Bjelland & Wood, 2008). The employees participate and compete with their ideas by submitting them online, with the restriction that the ideas need to be related to a specific challenge the company has announced. All employees across the organization can access the ideas online, read about them, comment and vote on them. Thus, the crowd determines the winners in an innovation jam.

The procedure of an innovation jam differs between companies and is often adjusted to the organizational context and goal (Bjelland & Wood, 2008). The innovation jam at IBM was carried out during two separate 72 hour sessions, and included employees as well as customers, business partners and university academics, numbering more than 150 000 participants.

Bjelland & Wood (2008) argues that management commitment is an important factor which affects the success of an innovation jam. The management must motivate the employees in participating in the jam, and be confident that all employees can contribute with good ideas within the specific theme. Therefore the management must show a long-term commitment in supporting the jam with resources and attention. Ideas that are generated in a jam can be of great importance for the future development of the company (Bjelland & Wood, 2008). Therefore the management should approach the jam with the mindset that every submitted idea can bring value to the company, and thus it is important to inspire the participants in sharing their ideas. This allows for big ideas to be visible to the whole company and for the managers to conveniently asses them. Anther important factor to consider in innovation jams is to utilize a sufficient IT platform which allows for collaboration and easy categorization of ideas (Bjelland & Wood, 2008).

3.3 Innovation Climate

According to Tidd & Bessant (2009) a favourable innovation climate has by far the greatest influence on the capacity for innovation. The innovation climate refers to behaviours and attitudes within an organization that promotes creativity among the employees (Tidd & Bessant, 2009). There are several different ways an organizational climate can be defined but the most common definition by Tidd & Bessant (2009) is "the way we do things".

Values and norms that support knowledge-sharing and collaboration lead to various behaviours' that promotes creativity among the employees (Aasen & Amundsen, 2013). Nevertheless, the employees need to experience the innovation climate beyond organizational expectations to understand it (Tidd & Bessant, 2009). This implies that an innovation climate should be encouraged at all levels in an organization. For instance, ideation activities that are in accordance with the long-term vision of the company may legitimize participation by the employees, as it is supported by the organizational goals.

Organizations should focus on what is supported in ideation instead of what is feasible. A fair evaluation of ideas encourages creativity and innovation (Tidd & Bessant, 2009). It is also important that the innovation climate has a positive approach to change by continuously searching for new and better ways to work (Tidd & Bessant, 2009). An important feature is how the organization handles mistakes' which determine if employees dare to be creative or not. Successful organizations reward success and openly recognize and discuss mistakes to learn lessons from them (Tidd & Bessant, 2009). In order to foster an innovation climate an organization should establish supporting mechanisms such as reward systems, recognition of ideas, and availability of resources. Reward systems and recognition of ideas lead to prevailing ways employees behave within the company (Amabile, 1998). Many companies want the employees to be creative in their thinking and take risks, while rewards are given only to those who work free of mistakes and use trusted practices (Tidd & Bessant, 2009). An organization that is innovative must also provide resources to the employees so that they can dedicate time to ideation.

The innovation climate affects participation, motivation and creativity at all levels in ideation activities. Thus, a supported innovation climate can encourage the employees to attend ideation activities and influence the outcome of ideation activities by facilitating the generation of creative ideas.

3.3.1 Management Commitment

According to Ekvall (1990) there is a positive link between a supportive management and creative behaviour among the employees. Since the organizational climate to a large degree is influenced by the management, the behaviour and leadership of the management can affect the performance of ideation activities (Ekvall, 1990). A supportive management would motivate the employees in participating and contributing in ideation activities.

When organizing ideation activities it is essential to involve the management, as this would show commitment and legitimize the activity for the employees (Ekvall, 1990). By prioritizing the ideation activity the management can communicate the importance of ideation through practice and promote creativity at all levels in the organization. This would also create expectations on the employees to dictate time and contribute with their ideas.

The management should also be supportive in providing the employees with feedback and encouraging them to share their ideas. This requires an openness and acceptance for different types of ideas. Furthermore, Ekvall (1990) explains that a supportive management provides the employees with intrinsic and extrinsic incentives to motivate desired behaviour.

3.3.2 Collaboration

Collaboration in this thesis refers to teamwork among employees in ideation activities. According to Amabile (1998) collaboration has a positive impact on creativity as knowledge sharing increases the access to expertise for individuals. Collaboration can thus build expertise, which is a feature in Amabile's (1998) creativity model. Collaboration in diverse groups, where the individuals possess different skills, can improve this further. Amabile (1998) argues that when different perspectives interact and approach challenges together it promotes creative-thinking. Furthermore, Amabile (1998) explains that if collaboration is performed naturally without hinders it may improve the satisfaction of work and thus become an intrinsic incentive for individuals, which also triggers creativity. Collaboration in cross-functional groups, where the employees come from different units and levels of the organization, is seen as the main force in fostering an innovation climate and stimulating creative-thinking (Amabile, 1998). Hence the group structure improves ideation as knowledge sharing facilitates the development of creative ideas.

3.3.2 Idea Management

Idea management refers to the process of collecting ideas from ideation activities and evaluating them. Idea management assures that the ideas that are generated and submitted during an ideation event is taken care of and assessed beyond the activity. Without an idea management process the organization cannot filter the ideas and select the ones with potential value for further development (Cooper & Edgett, 2007). Hence the organization needs to have a clear process for how to evaluate, select and implement ideas that are generated.

Furthermore, Cooper & Edgett (2007) discuss the importance in recognizing efforts of idea contributors and providing them with feedback. Thus idea management could either motivate or discourage employees from participating in ideation. If the organization is unable to handle the quantity of ideas and provide feedback to idea contributors, it could influence the perception of the ideation activity negatively among the employees (Cooper & Edgett, 2007).

4. Findings

The main focus of this part is to describe how the case companies are working with ideation and the key insights they emphasize based on their experiences. The findings, which are based on the interviews, have been divided into ideation methods followed by key insights connected to these. This will provide the report with an overview of the procedure, and the important factors in managing ideation.

During the interviews, ideation was defined as idea generation for innovation. A majority of the companies explain that ideation within their organization have mainly focused on business models. Company A and E also mentioned that the goal of working with ideation is to find new business opportunities and areas which the company can expand into.

4.1 Ideation Methods

The table below is based on the findings and how the case companies have described the features of the commonly used ideation methods. Some variations were noticeable among the companies regarding the set-up and procedure of the methods, and for that reason the descriptions below are very broad. The definitions of the methods were in most cases clear. On a few occasions the interviewees mixed up innovation jams with contests, as they were both seen as competitions.

Features/Method	Innovation Workshop	Innovation Contest	Innovation Jam
Time period	1-2 Days	1-3 days	5-30 days[2]
Media	Offline	Mixed	Online
Target group	Specified	Specified/Unspecified	Unspecified
Individual or Team	Both	Team	Both
Level of control	High	Medium	Low

Table 4.1 Comparison between the ideation methods

[2] According to IBM the time period should be 72hours (Bjelland & Wood), the findings show that this differs a lot between the case companies

4.1.1 Innovation Workshops

All the companies included in the study use workshops to varying degrees for ideation. Innovation workshops are often used by the case companies as a method to engage employees in specific challenges, and develop ideas that could extend the company's business.

Workshops normally include a small crowd of people (8-15) that are lead by facilitators, and are co-located for face-to-face discussions. Company A explains that their workshops are organized during two half days, 8 hours in total, to avoid exhaustion among the participants and work efficiently throughout the workshop. The workshop goes through three different stages, which were recognized at all the case companies. According to company C the stages are not a linear-process and during the workshop the participants could jump back and forward. On the other hand company A mentions that the stages are time limited, whereas the participants have to move forward into the next stage by the deadline. During all the workshop stages facilitators are used to guide and support the participants, in generating ideas and defining them in a concept or early prototype.

1. Problem Setting	2. Define Solution	3. Evaluation
▪ Specific Challenge	▪ Outline Concept	▪ Review of Concept
▪ Brainstorm	▪ Discussion	▪ Deliverables

Table 4.2 Stages of an innovation workshop

During the first stage, *problem setting*, the specific challenge is presented to the participants. At company B the specific challenges that set the objective of the workshop, are submitted by the project managers, and are related to opportunities they have identified within their business. One example of such which company B used was "*How does the future solution for smart energy choices look like?*"

The second stage, *define solution*, is where the participants discuss the ideas and are given the task to define their solution by drafting a concept, company A refers to this as business modelling. Seven out of nine companies used the Business Model Canvas[3] or a customized version of it in order to define the concept. During the last stage, *evaluation*, the concept is evaluated by the facilitators and the deliverables are identified, e.g. who are the stakeholders

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[3] Entrepreneurial tool for defining and developing a business model, proposed by Alexander Osterwalder (Osterwalder, et al. 2010)

we should involve? How could we fund this idea? At company F the ideas at this stage are categorized in business areas and sent to the concerned manager.

Company B used a distinctive method for organizing workshop series. The execution of the workshop itself was similar to the other companies (the three stages). However, after the first workshop, the participants have to review their concept by going in field and doing a so called *loop*. During the loop phase the participants collect information through market research, by testing an early prototype or interviewing stakeholders about their idea. Based on the feedback they receive, the concept is adjusted during the second workshop. This process goes on for six workshops until the final stage which is the *pitch*, where the concept is presented to the project managers.
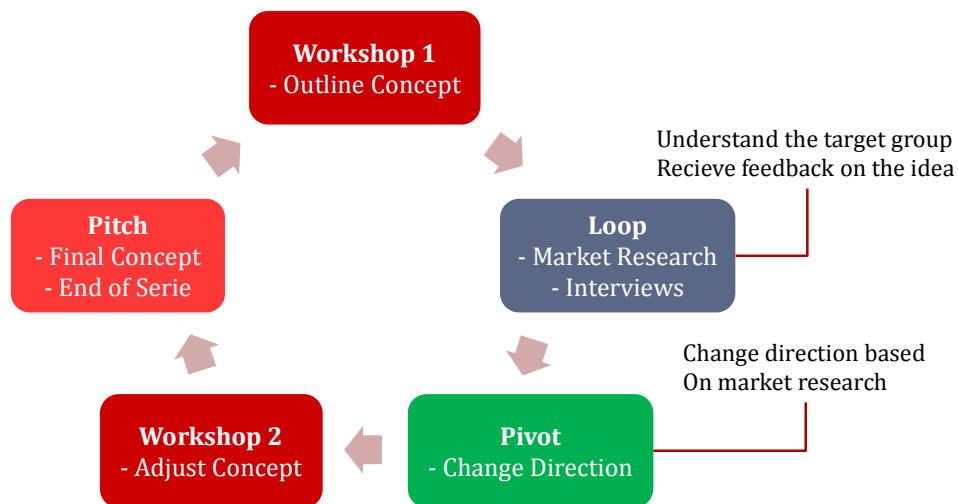

Figure 4.1 Illustration of the loop method

Key Insights

As mentioned before, innovation workshops were the most commonly used ideation method. The case companies motivated this by the insight that workshops generate quality in ideas and allows for further experimentation.

Preparation

According to company C the key learning for workshops is the preparation stage. There has to be a shared understanding of why the workshop is organized and what the managers want to gain from it. By assessing the *why* the company sets the objective for both the facilitators and the participants. In this stage the facilitators need to clarify the recipient of the idea.

Furthermore, company C explains that when the purpose is clear the participants are also able to approach the challenge without losing sight. All the companies mentioned the use of specific challenges, as otherwise the participants may experience a lack of direction. Company H reflected further on this by explaining that radical innovation is about finding new unexplored areas, which could be inhibited by the use of specific challenges. Using clear objectives means that the company beforehand decides what sort of innovation they want.

Company A points out that a workshop is not a "team-building" activity, even though it might be a beneficial side-effect, the main purpose is to develop a concrete idea which can turn into an innovation.

Using Inspiration

To inspire the participants with ideas, IMC invites speakers who are experienced in a field that is related to the specific challenge. During the brainstorming session the case companies use different creative tools to trigger idea generation. Company C for instance, mentions a tool called *forced relationships*, which is explained as combining unrelated things to come up with new ideas for products and services. In this way the participants are able to visualize their idea and put it in a context.

Embracing risk

Company C explains that during the brainstorming session there should be an acceptance for crazy or unattainable ideas, as these are the foundation of ideation, and could change radically in their characteristics as ideas build on each other. This also creates a climate of experimentation. Therefore ideas should not initially be "over-analyzed" or criticized. Instead of focusing on "what is feasible" the workshop should explore opportunities connected to the idea. Consequently, a big challenge is that people dare to take risks during the workshop and challenge the consensus thinking.

Professional facilitators

All the case companies argue that the benefit of workshops is that you can direct the type of ideas that are generated. Company A describes this as "*balancing structure and freedom during the workshop*", to neither inhibit creativity nor create chaos. The role of the facilitator is considered as very important to achieve this. In addition to managing the process, the facilitator indicates potential ways of thinking for the group and shifts the tempo during the

workshop. Company B emphasizes the role of the facilitator to coach, not to steer, the participants to be able to think beyond their own comfort zone and drop their mental restraints. Company D for instance, uses external facilitators in order to get access to professionals and also to get an outside-in perspective on the company.

Collaboration

One goal which all the companies mention is working cross-functional during the workshop. Cross-functional refers to including different departments of the company to collaborate. Working cross-functional could be challenging as company G points out "*the people in different departments speak different languages*". Thus people with different perspectives have to collaborate and the facilitators have to build trust between these people. At company B the workshops are organized together with stakeholders and one requirement is to have a triple perspective by collaborating with the industry, the public sector and the university. This requires the stakeholders to be identified during the planning of the workshop. Company G and H highlighted that one goal is to work more closely with their business partners in workshops.

Including the right people

Another challenge connected to workshops is to select the right people to lead and collaborate. Depending on the specific challenge, which could be business, customer or technology oriented, the people in the workshop need to have knowledge and an understanding around the issue. One example given by company B is that some challenges are related to IT and business, which require people who are familiar with these areas. Furthermore, company B explains that this does not mean that the participants have to be experts on the topic, but they should be carefully selected depending on the challenge. Another approach which the companies mention is including customers in the workshop. The customer perspective and opinions were seen as valuable order to bring the ideas towards innovations. Company F approaches this by user-driven ideation connected to their core business.

4.1.2 Innovation Contests

Six out of nine case companies use contests for ideation. However, innovation contests are used less frequently then workshops by the six companies. The six companies stated that the purpose in using contests is to foster an innovation climate in the organization.

According to the findings innovation contests normally involve a bigger crowd of people than workshops, numbering between 50-200 participants. The contest normally goes through three different stages.

1. Opportunity	2. Pitch	3. After Work
▪ Specific Theme(s)	▪ Present Ideas to Jury	▪ Identify stakeholders
▪ Define Deliverables	▪ Jury nominates Winner(s)	▪ Decide on next steps

Table 4.3 Stages of an innovation contest

The first stage is the *opportunity* phase where the specific theme is chosen and the deliverables are defined, essentially what is expected from the teams. This could be an idea template or an early prototype of the idea, depending on the goal of the contest. The process within the teams is open and the participants decide themselves on how to brainstorm and which idea to choose. When the teams have selected their final idea and defined it in an idea template the *pitch* stage begins, here the participants pitch their ideas to a jury who assesses them. The last stage, *after work,* is done after the contest is finished and this responsibility falls upon the organizers.

Company D arranges an innovation contest every quarter, which is open for all the employees. The innovation contest is carried out during 72 hours, with a specific theme which is chosen by the management group. The themes are usually very broad and one example of a theme used was "Digital Transformation". The participants, consisting of employees from all business units, are divided into teams of 3-6 people. During the contest company D uses different groups with given functions. One is the "back office group", which consists of externally hired consultants who provide the participants with feedback and coaching. The consultants who form the back office group are experienced in areas related to innovation or the theme of the contest. The participants can also use other channels for feedback, e.g. their own network. Every team is led by a process leader who is responsible for the group performing the given tasks and reaching its goals.
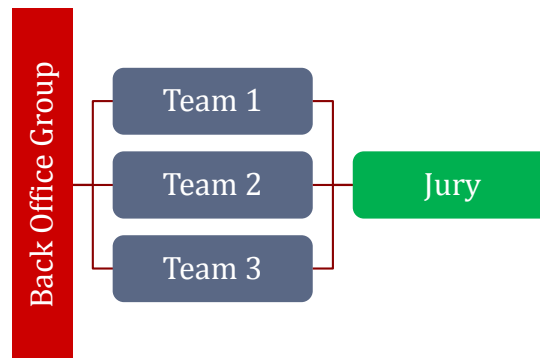
Figure 4.2 Illustration of the group relations

Key Insights

The case companies use various formats in organizing innovation contests. The differences could partially be explained by the fact that the companies operate in different industries. Company D uses external consultants in order to organize their innovation contests, while others use ad hoc groups or an internal department responsible for ideation activities.

Using relevant themes

At company H the themes were related to strategic areas that the management saw as important for future business. These areas were often connected to current trends in the market, e.g. big data, internet of things. IMC focused on areas where they saw opportunities to expand the business. The focus areas derived partly from the internal capabilities and competences of the company. By this IMC wanted to leverage the internal capabilities by connecting them to emerging trends. The case companies stressed that they did not want to limit the participants in their creativity, and for that reason sometimes more than one theme was used for a contest.

The six companies did provide an idea template for the teams to use, but the content varied from idea templates with a defined problem and solution to using a customized Business Model Canvas. Company E for example, required the teams to compete with early prototypes of their ideas, in order to demonstrate the feasibility of the idea.

Encouraging team-work

According to IMC it is important to bring together different competences within the company by inviting employees and managers widely. IMC has used different approaches when it comes to putting together the teams. At one contest the participants were responsible for

putting together the teams themselves, with the condition that each team should include employees from at least two different departments of the company. This was done in order to enable networking among the employees. For the most recent contest at IMC, the organizers put together the teams by allocating competences, e.g. between those who were more technology-oriented and business-oriented. The goal of both approaches was that the teams should be cross-functional, share different perspectives and cooperate across organizational boundaries. This in turn would create synergies between people with different roles but also mindsets, e.g. leaders, visionaries, realists.

During the innovation contest at IMC a collaborative IT platform was used as well, to post the ideas, receive feedback from other teams and the organizers. Thus, IMC wanted to connect the different teams and create a community-based competition, where the participants share knowledge and opinions. The organizers also took part as facilitators during the contest, by visiting the teams and providing them with feedback during the idea development. Worth mentioning, the facilitators also had different roles and competences which related to the themes.

Involving external parties

External parties in the form of customers and university student were invited to an innovation contest at IMC. The case companies expressed the desire to involve external parties more, even in the planning stage to suggest relevant themes. By directly involving the customers, IMC saw an opportunity in connecting the ideas to customer needs early on. As a result almost every team in the contest had a customer representative. IMC pointed out that involving external parties also requires earlier planning and foresight, as the customers and students have to be contacted and distributed among the teams.

Using incentives

None of the companies used monetary rewards to motivate participation, but instead recognition and awards were highlighted as a part of the contest. According to IMC and H one incentive for the participants could be the opportunity to create their own project. The management then encourages the employees by providing them with a forum i.e. the contest, where they can develop their idea and receive support. However, not all employees were motivated by this, as some are better idea generators than project leaders, and would rather want others to adopt their idea and implement it. Furthermore, IMC explains that the

innovation contest in a wider perspective should be seen as professional development for the employees.

The companies highlighted that some employees were motivated by the social event itself and hence the environment around the contest was important. Another way of motivating the employees was through inspiration, by following up results from earlier contests and showing success cases which received funding and turned into innovations.

Another incentive which all the companies mention is showing appreciation from the management, and making sure that all the idea contributors receive feedback. According to company A and H it also requires the management to show commitment by following up the winning ideas.

4.1.3 Innovation Jams

The purpose of an innovation jam is similar to an innovation contest. The four companies that use jams argue that the goal is to change or influence the innovation climate in the organization. Innovation jams have a greater reach than any other ideation method as they are exclusively executed through collaborative IT platforms. Hence, an innovation jam is commonly used to reach out to all the employees within the company, regardless of the geographical or organizational boundaries.

Company A and H arranges an annual innovation jam where all the employees are welcome to participate. The latest jam at company A was executed worldwide during a week and resulted in around 500 ideas. The employees competed with their ideas in different themes, either individually or in teams. The themes were selected by an Innovation Board, who is also responsible for providing feedback during the jam. The Innovation Board consists of managers and employees with different competences. The themes differ with every jam and one example of a theme which was used by company H is "*From Data to Business*". By using a collaborative IT platform the employees can post their ideas, comment on others and also vote on different ideas. Thus, the crowd evaluates the ideas continuously during the jam. When the jam is finished the top voted ideas are then distributed and evaluated by different groups depending on its area (service, product and process). By using specific criteria's e.g. potential value for customer, technical maturity, type of innovation (radical, incremental),

related ideas are selected and presented for the management group, who decides which ideas to take further and fund.

Key Insights

The process in an innovation jam is well defined by the use of a collaborative IT platform, where the ideas go through different evaluation stages. Consequently, one insight which the case companies mention is the use of a sufficient IT platform which facilitates idea management.

Motivating participation

The goal of the innovation jam should be clear and communicated early on to the employees. According to company A the employees need to know *why* they should participate in the jam and *what* they gain from it. Company A and H use incentives in the form of acknowledgement and awards. According to IMC, dedicated idea submitters in jams are motivated by the opportunity to see their idea implemented. However, IMC also emphasized the importance in allowing the idea submitters to decide if they want to continue in the progress of implementing the idea. Another factor which seems to affect participation is the collaborative IT platform. IMC argue that this lowers the threshold as the participants only need to formulate the idea in text, and not to present it to an audience.

Company H mentions the time aspect as well. Innovation jams are executed during a longer period which makes it possible for the employees to distribute their time according to their circumstances. According to company H a vital part of ideation is that the employees are given the opportunity to focus and dedicate time to innovation, which is not always the case if the management does not prioritize the activities.

Using moderators

The moderators in an innovation jam have the similar role of facilitators acting online. According to company A and H, the moderators need to be active during the innovation jam and support the participants by providing positive feedback. This also creates a climate where the employees are aware that the jam is taken seriously. At company H the moderators communicate with the idea submitters during the jam, and assist if the idea needs to be complemented in any way. Furthermore, some ideas that are generated have a potential value

but do not fit in the company's business model or context, in those cases company H involves other actors in their eco-system who could use the idea.

Managing ideas

According to the case companies, innovation jams generally require much after work as the ideas are somewhat "superficial". These superficial ideas are often only brief descriptions rather than well defined concepts.

Company H stresses that the employees need to know that the ideas they contribute with are followed up. Organizing an innovation jam every year without following up on the ideas could send the signal that the ideas are insignificant. Furthermore, the case companies point out that managing the ideas during a jam are often more difficult then receiving ideas. When the companies receive ideas up to 500, it is difficult to provide all the idea submitters with constructive feedback. The jam could also cement groupings as employees, depending on their geographical location, would vote on their fellow colleges. As company H points out, this is counterproductive in fostering collaboration.

As innovation jams are normally organized annually, the case companies argue that they need to be complemented by other ideation activities, as it could otherwise send the signal that the company only focuses on innovation once every year.

5. Analysis

The findings of this study indicate that ideation methods should be adapted to the needs of the organization. The companies that were working with innovation workshops, contests and jams made a clear distinction between the goals of the different methods. Workshops were perceived as more appropriate for achieving business results, and developing an idea beyond the definition stage to demonstrate its feasibility. Contests and jams were considered as more appropriate for fostering an innovation climate in the company. The findings show minor differences in the general process of an innovation workshop and jam, while the differences were more noticeable for innovation contests. Another difference was in the use of specific challenges for workshops, whereas contests and jams used less specified themes. Hence, a higher degree of formalization was recognized for workshops as compared to contests and jams. Furthermore, innovation jams was considered a better method for reaching a wider crowd spanning geographical areas, whereas workshops and contests were more suitable when the participants are easier to identify. The wider reach of the innovation jam normally resulted in a higher share of ideas, which demanded more after work in managing the ideas.

5.1 Managing Innovation Workshops

The preparation stage of the workshop is essential in order to set the objective and guide the participants in the right direction, which is in line with Geschka (1987). The objective should be clear and connected to the strategic goals of the company. Nevertheless, setting the objective before the workshop could also inhibit finding unexplored business areas. During the brainstorming session the participants should be inspired, in order to trigger creative ideas and to think outside their comfort zone. Thus, embracing risk is of importance and to allow experimentation of ideas by not over-analyzing them too early. The workshop should include employees from different functions and levels of the company to collaborate. To connect these people in the workshop and inspire for creativity, the company should use professional facilitators. Their role is to coach the participants and provide them with feedback.

5.2 Managing Innovation Contests

When it comes to organizing an innovation contest, the company should select relevant themes which are connected to strategic goals. It is important to create the right environment for team-work and experimentation at the contest. The contest should thus involve employees widely in the company, and create or encourage cross-functional teams. To create the right

environment, team-work should be encouraged within the teams, but also collaboration between the teams, as discussed by (Adamczyk, et al. 2012). By using facilitators the company can provide the teams with a support group for feedback and guidance. To motivate participation the company should use incentives in the form of awards, but also assure the participants that winning ideas will progress beyond the contest. By involving external parties, such as students and customers, the company can access an outside-in perspective on their business, and integrate customer needs early on in the innovation work.

5.3 Managing Innovation Jams

The company should start by communicating why the innovation jam is organized, and what the employees gain from participating. As mentioned by Bjelland & Wood (2008) and shown in the findings, the jam should be prioritized by the management, as this would empower the employees to dedicate time for it. Similar to contests, incentives such as awards and recognition should be used. It is also important to allow the idea submitters to decide whether they want to continue in the idea progress beyond the jam. The biggest challenge to consider is the difficulty in managing the ideas properly during the jam. Hence, the company should implement a clear defined process for evaluating ideas and providing feedback to all the idea submitters.

5.4 Innovation Climate

The purpose of this part is to provide recommendations on how a company could manage ideation effectively based on the findings.

The findings demonstrate that ideation is not a linear-process but more about fostering the right climate and organizational values that trigger ideas. Hence, the innovation climate originates from continuous behaviour which affects the results of ideation (Tidd & Bessant, 2009). This requires a supportive culture where ideation is prioritized and given resources by the management. Consistent with all the companies was stressing the importance of collaboration to generate creative ideas. Through collaboration the companies wanted the different business units of the company to share knowledge and build on ideas. The collaborative work, both inside and outside the company, could be seen as a milestone in forming an innovation climate (Amabile, 1998).

Three key factors were identified in promoting an innovation climate; management commitment, collaboration and idea management. Based on these findings the following framework was developed for managing ideation.
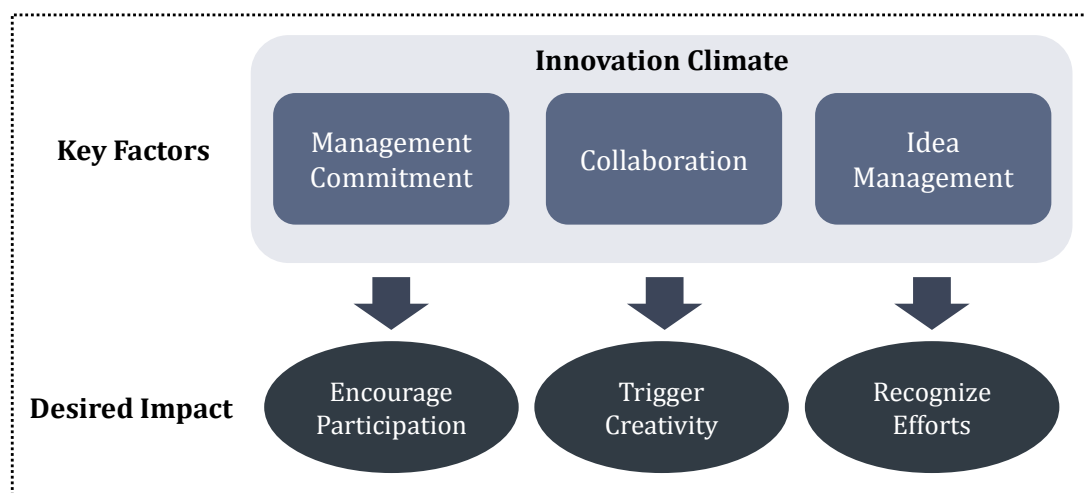

Figure 5.1 Framework for managing ideation

5.4.1 Management Commitment

The desired impact of management commitment is to encourage participation in ideation, and by extension the innovation work (Ekvall, 1990). The following guidelines describe how the management could approach this challenge.

Prioritize ideation activities: Allow the employees to dedicate time to ideation. Participation in ideation activities should therefore be seen as professional development for the employees, where they can acquire new skills and also extend their network.

Legitimize the ideation activity: Connect the objective of the ideation method to the wider vision and strategic goals of the company (Tidd & Bessant, 2009). This requires the company to approach the question: *What do we want to accomplish with our business?* Understanding this part also makes it possible for the company to connect it to emerging challenges and market trends they may face. The objective should also be connected to the internal capabilities – what sets the company apart from others which they could leverage. Involving the managers directly in the ideation activity, e.g. as participants, facilitators, jury members, also raises the legitimacy of the activity.

Set the direction: To set the innovation direction the management should formalize ideation with defined expectations from the employees; *what are they supposed to deliver?* Innovation is also about exploring new business areas, which could be overlooked by only using trusted practices. Balance the objective of the ideation activity by allowing or even promoting risk-taking and change of direction.

Use reward systems: Encouraging participation requires intrinsic and extrinsic incentives (Amabile, 1998). The incentives should capture the wide spectrum, as some employees are motivated by the awards and recognition, while others seek the social activity and networking opportunity. Thus, the incentives should balance competitiveness with collaboration and sharing.

5.4.2 Collaboration

The desired impact of collaboration is to trigger creativity among the employees (Amabile, 1998). Achieving collaboration in ideation activities requires diverse groups to work together.

Form cross-functional groups: The goal is to mix the different mindsets within the company, by involving internal departments of the company to interact with each other, e.g. sales, R&D, operations, but also to include different levels of the company, e.g. senior and

middle management. Depending on the size of the ideation activity the teams could be created by the organizers or the participants, with the condition that they are cross-functional.

Involve external parties: Customers, business partners and university students can provide the company with an outside-in perspective on their business. By involving the customers in the ideation activities the company can integrate their needs and desires early in the innovation work. External stakeholders could also raise the significance of the ideation event.

Coach and inspire: The role of professional facilitators is to inspire and coach the employees in generating ideas and sharing knowledge (Geschka, 1986). The company should use facilitators with competences related to the company's innovation challenges. If the company does not have the internal expertise they could hire external facilitators or build internal expertise through training.

Connect and collaborate in new ways: One benefit of innovation jams is the wider reach by the use of a collaborative IT platform. By implementing this feature in innovation contests the company can balance competitiveness with collaboration and foster a participant community. Besides connecting the participants the company could extent the concept further. One approach could be to organize two separate innovation contests simultaneously at different locations, and connecting them through an IT platform. Hence, the company challenges the geographical and organizational boundaries while leveraging the benefits of innovation contests.

5.4.3 Idea Management

The desired impact of idea management is to recognize the efforts of the idea contributors (Cooper & Edgett, 2007). This requires a clear process for how the ideas progress beyond the ideation event.

Provide feedback: Make sure that all idea contributors in ideation activities are provided with feedback. Ignoring this can lead to a pessimistic climate where employees believe that their ideas are insignificant. If the number of ideas is unmanageable, the size and scope of the ideation activity should be adjusted. One way to work around this problem could be to limit an innovation jam geographically, to a specific region or country. Another approach could be to use well-defined idea templates.

Follow up ideas: The winning ideas from contests or jams should be followed up by other ideation activities to promote an innovation climate. One way could be to use these ideas in workshops for experimentation and further development, e.g. into business models or prototypes. However, the company should allow the idea contributors to decide whether they want to be involved in the following activities or not.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of thesis was to gain an understanding of how organizations in general and IMC in particular, can manage ideation connected to innovation workshops, contests and jams. Two research questions were chosen to fulfil the purpose of the thesis. This section discusses if and how each of the research questions was answered.

1. What are the key factors to consider when managing ideation?

The research findings indicate that there are three key factors which influence the outcome of ideation activities. The first factor, management commitment, has an effect on the encouragement among the employees to participate in ideation activities. The second factor, collaboration, has an effect on the creativity that is triggered among the employees during ideation sessions. The third factor, idea management, recognizes efforts by the participants and provides feedback to motivate them in actively contributing in ideation activities.

2. How can IMC manage ideation to enhance idea generation?

The analysis part specifically addresses how a company can manage ideation connected to the ideation methods that IMC use. Furthermore, a framework was developed for managing ideation holistically in the company by fostering an innovation climate, which consists of the key factors mentioned above.
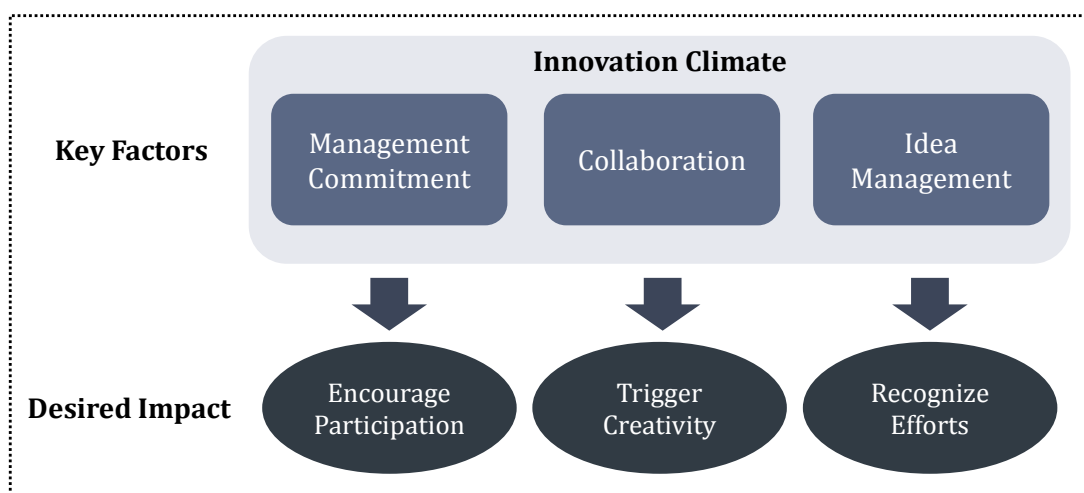

Figure 3.1 Framework for managing ideation

Management commitment: By prioritizing ideation activities the management can encourage employees in dedicating time for it. The ideation activity should be legitimized by

connecting it to the strategic goals of the company. Furthermore, to set the innovation direction the management should formalize ideation with defined expectations and clear structure.

Collaboration: By forming cross-functional groups for ideation the company can create an environment where the internal units of the company interact and share knowledge. In addition, the company could involve external parties such as customers, business partners and university students to provide an outside-in perspective on the business.

Idea management: All idea contributors in ideation activities should be provided with feedback to avoid the risk in creating a pessimistic climate. If the share of ideas is unmanageable, the company could limit the size or scope of the ideation activity by either selecting participants carefully or re-defining the innovation challenge

6.1 Future Research

This study has focused on the initial innovation phase and how ideas are generated, while a different approach could be to study the selection and implementation of ideas beyond the ideation phase. Some of the case companies that were included in the study expressed and interest in exploring practices for early prototyping and how to develop ideas into innovations faster, and thus to speed up the innovation process. This would require a study that examines methods for selecting and transforming ideas into concrete prototypes.

Another interesting research would be to replicate this study and including additional ideation methods beyond workshops, contests and jams. Because of the desires of the case company and the time constraint this study focused exclusively on three ideation methods, while there are others that are implemented by companies. Another approach to the study could be to examine ideation methods at organizations through observations, in contrast to interviews, and thus gain a practical insight in how the ideation activities are carried out.

A follow up research from this thesis could be to test the ideation framework by implementing it in an organization and measure the outcome on ideation methods. As this study had an inductive approach the ideation framework was developed from the empirical findings, a deductive approach would thus test the framework on other organizations.

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Case study Interviews

IMC, Business Manager, 2015-02-18

IMC, Digital Transformation Manager, 2015-02-19

IMC, Innovation Leader, 2015-05-07

IMC, Mobility Manager, 2015-05-21

Company A, Innovation Manager, 2015-03-18

Company B, Business Developer, 2015-04-30

Company C, Business Innovation Consultant, 2015-04-27

Company C, Business Innovation Consultant, 2015-04-27

Company D, Chief Digital Officer, 2015-03-13

Company E, Innovation Manager, 2015-04-01

Company F, Project Coordinator, 2015-03-12

Company G, Innovation Manager, 2015-04-20

Company H, Innovation Manager, 2015-05-22

Appendix A

Interview Guide

- Can you describe your role in the company? (Who is the person?)
- What tools and techniques do you use within your organization to generate ideas, and which of these are most important? (workshops, innovation competitions, IT platforms)
- Which of these tools do you consider most important, and why
- Why have you chosen this combination of tools and methods? (Market analysis or customization)
- What is the goal of working with idea generation activities? (Does the company have a defined goal)
- How have you implemented these methods / tools within the organization? (Identify top-down or bottom-up approach)
- Do you work in different ways for ideation within the organization? (Different departments, product vs. service)
- What have you learned from working with these ideation methods? (Benefits and Challenges)
- Do you measure the results of these methods / tools, and if so, how?
- Do you have any concrete plans to implement new tools / methods for ideation within the next three years?
- Who runs the innovation work in the organization? (A dedicated group of individuals or integrated throughout the organization)

Follow-up questions to consider

- What are the advantages / disadvantages of these methods?
- Is there a game plan (strategy) to work in the way you do?
- How long have you been using these methods?
- What results have you achieved? (Number of innovations, culture)
- How valuable are these methods for your innovation efforts?