

Innovation Round Table

Bogotá, Colombia

May 31st 2007

On May 31st 2007, the first Innovation Round Table was held in Colombia. It took place in the Bond Auditorium of the Windsor House Hotel. Companies from different industries like: Alpina, Johnson & Jonhson, Alianza Team, Familia Sancela, Meals, Avantel and Wunderman amongst others assisted to the event.

David Sutherland Ph.D. Founder and Director of Launch Institute together with his Management Team for Latin America, hosted the event presenting the three platforms of an innovation process.



Companies from different industries gathered in the same room, widely discussing the current innovation challenges in Colombia.

The event counted with the participation of study cases from Colombian companies like Alpina, Katharsis and Astrid & Gastón. They presented their experience within the three platforms from the innovation process.

“Innovation as a source of sustainable growth within the organization”

Lessons Learned and Challenges

Almost 20 assistants were able to experience the Round Table. They shared their cases with other assistants, who enriched their knowledge with the experiences and challenges of other participants.

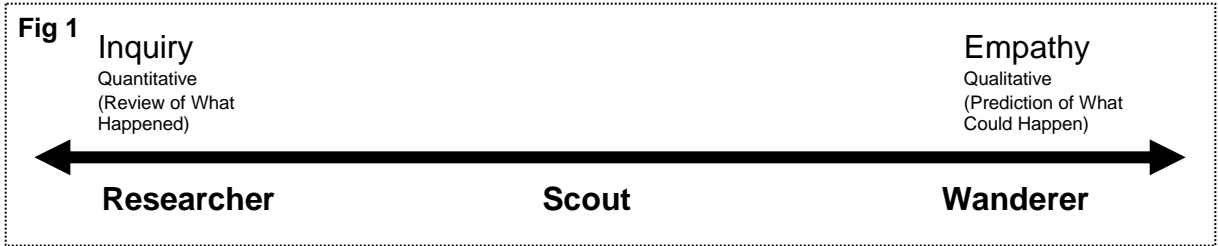
Some of the assisting companies are starting to develop different models as new ways to gain market insights and do qualitative research. They are doing ethnographic research using multimedia (photos, videos and diaries). Others are identifying mavens, trend setters or opinion leaders as they call them and regularly review new registered patents as ways to discover new insights (Fig1).

Traditional market research models are now becoming commodities which have to be done as a standard procedure, but are not the main source of insights within the company.



Companies from different industries take part in the InspirAction sessions.

The challenges and difficulties that the companies are having with this type of approach to research lie mainly in their level of maturity and understanding of the different models and techniques for market sensing since is new practice in most companies.



Colombian companies are starting to move from traditional quantitative methods which focus on research of the past (Inquiry) to more qualitative methods which predict what could happen (Empathy).

Companies are having issues regarding cultural and organizational change; they are having difficulties changing what they have done in the past. A common issue is the difficulty with sensing violent or marginal markets due to the danger of getting people to those areas. We also found out that the use given to this information is limited and extremely

focalized, nevertheless some of the techniques used rank in complexity to those in BMW or Nokia worldwide. But there is still a long way in maturing techniques to disseminate research and use it to generate ideas and concepts so they can transfer innovation on a regular basis and make it a reality.

Some of the challenges that arise are centered in the difficulty to share information within different businesses and business units, or as companies put it: "It's difficult to get them to speak".

Other companies report difficulties when conducting idea generation sessions and communicating with peers.



During the break out sessions, the assistants had the chance to look at more information about innovation, and write topics they wanted to know more about.

Although some of the innovation processes that were seen on the Round Table are well structured, they are still not the main source of sustainable growth. The process governance falls in the hands of product lines or even HR, but not in senior management. The portfolio for disruptive and incremental ideas is not well balanced too. Innovations are focused on products, while other valuable sources are not being used.

Where are we? and Where should we be heading?

Some companies are being recognized for their innovations in the industry as their processes develop. They start to differentiate themselves mainly due to the capabilities inherent to the process itself.

Although all this is happening right now, there



To share knowledge, collaborate and above all be convinced of the benefits of innovation are the key elements to develop long lasting innovation models.

are some topics which become more relevant to each company as they drive through the innovation roadway.

What has been discovered is that there is a lack of collaboration inside the organization as well as with the outside. Internal teams and business units are not working together to fully unleash the innovation potential of the planned ideas.

Some extremely good practices were identified in

terms of opportunity sighting and developing new business units. But this is not enough, and some questions arise from the assistants trying to understand what's next and where should they be in the years to come...

The answer to this questions is quite easy to state, but the complexity of some elements become clear as companies try to make innovation a reality. We are talking of innovation as a source of sustainable growth, then the challenges that arise are mainly centered around improving each stage of the innovation process, and bring to the mix other key elements such as

metrics, portfolio management and corporate governance that would guarantee the functioning of the innovation engine through the years.

To wrap up this report, and taking into account that according to an innovation ranking made by The Economist, Colombia came up 61st out of 82 countries, there is still a long way to go and work to be done to mature the innovation processes of Colombian companies, and the biggest question became clear: ¿Who can guarantee that the products we sell and the services we offer will still be bought 10 years from now?

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