Amity Business Journal
2012, Vol. 1, No. 2

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Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow Campus (ISSN 2278-0904)

BOOK REVIEW

"The Art of Innovation: Lessons in Creativity from IDEO, America's Leading Design Firm"

Author: Tom Kelley with Jonathan Littman
Publisher: Doubleday, New York, 2001
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The book comes from IDEO, which has been named as 'Imagination's playground'. Over the years, IDEO has worked both as practitioners and also as advisers for the business of innovation. Companies want to understand and learn from this process of innovation that is now so famously known as 'the IDEO way of Innovation'. The book enlists Innovation process based upon five basic steps understanding the problem, observation, visualization, evaluation and refinements and finally implementation of the new product for its commercialization. This is a fairly flexible and deceptively simple process. A blend of methodologies, work practices, culture, and infrastructure, with refinements is strongly desired. Hot teams are created, customer's eyes are important to assess things and situations, brainstorming and rapid prototyping are some of the unique features of this process that IDEO has developed, refined and mastered over the years.

'Rechristen ideas and make things, and you are likely to encourage accidental discoveries.' Focused Observation happens to be at the center of IDEO operations. Helping to bridge the gap between familiar and genuinely new ideas through trade-offs are what users shall accept.

The base of innovation is empathy for the user as it shall bring into the innovator to get the motives, emotions and underlying psychology of his/her interaction with the product/services.

The current issue is describing the best creative environment, and embracing that environment, are two entirely different things. It is required that a major change occurs also requiring a major change to the traditional corporate structure and mandates a retreat from the hierarchal nature of work in most firms. Deciding to make such a leap, based upon an academic tome, or even a research based treatise, is difficult.

Change is imperative and managers are reclusive to commit. Tom Kelley collaborates as something goes wrong it is much easier to figure out a solution rather than if you were working by yourself. Allowing a team to integrate and become their own little culture.

Understand the market, the client, the technology, and the limits of the problem, observe real people in real situations, visualize the concepts, evaluate, refine and Implement. He explained IDEO as a culture that "embraces risks and wild ideas and tolerates the occasional failure."

The chances are often where great ideas are born. It is important to understand that although chances are encouraged it is important that the chances don't crash the entire project every time. There is a time and place to take chances and knowing when it is appropriate.

You have to be aware of every thing around you. Take notice of what every sense is experiencing. You can't wait for trends to start to be innovative; you have to start the trends. The importance is to incorporate everyone's differences and not only act upon what people need and do, but something that is also going to motivate them to need or do something else. All of this watching comes back to the importance of the team. Tom Kelley stresses, researchers don't just get sent out to research and designer to do design. As a team you can notice different aspects of human behavior, and once again, give a different insight.

A brainstorming session should have Secrets shares

on the specific process and mannerisms.

A few key points are the downfall to off-site brainstorming, the uneasiness of a monitored brainstorm, and the negative effects of taking too many notes and not enough active participation.

Hot Group would have a clear goal, serious deadline, and no hierarchal structure. He includes several key players that should be present in a hot group. There are many goals that a good group should keep in mind. You might not always have it right the first time, but being able to see the product in action will give you a feel of where you need to go next, even if you don't know where next is. Prototypes can give you and the client the tangible, this can be done, feel with the product, solidifying ideas and processes. In the end, the more prototypes, the better.

The more you include your team in the design of your space, the more they will be involved and appreciate it. The space that is created often reflects the people who work in that space. Too much space or too little can hinder workflow, people need to have a natural space, allowing them to interact with each other and still have private space when they need it.

After observation of people actually using their product, seeing how it was instead used to wipe the individual's nose, they quickly changed their campaign to what it is today. Just because you intended one thing does not mean that is what you will get, but it is OK to have a different result, it may even be better than what you originally wanted.

When people do begin to accept change, they run with it. Generally only a few people start to try a new change at first, then a few more follow suit. Pretty soon, mostly everyone will feel comfortable enough with it since so many others are changing; they do not want to be left behind. Change is slow to start, but it will pick up momentum with persistence.

Don't get bogged down by something you're not an expert in, ask for help if you need it could give you a new perspective. Learn what you can, you may find that your fresh perspective on a new field gives you an advantage. It is great that they did not make so many rules of how things should be run, and in return everyone has their positions, but then independently helps other people out, which in return forms a more cohesive group.

One word of advice is that, in any given market, imitating your competitors is no way to innovate. Innovation comes from choosing the right metaphor to what is meant to be achieved. For any product, these metaphors can be found in places obscure and seemingly irrelevant; from spending afternoons in toy stores to spending days sailing the ocean. One blanket prediction in innovation is that empowerment products will experience huge demand in coming years.

Tom Kelley attests that this will land you better results, faster and more consistently. Like golf, the innovation process takes practice. But like anything practiced, rewards are bound to follow.

All aspects are critical and can drastically affect and change the outcome of a particular project for the better or for the worse. People need to be able to create their own surroundings that suit them best, but at least one member of the group should be responsible for keeping things in order so that one person's favorite surroundings doesn't interfere with their work or the work of others and their surroundings. The group is important, as well as the project/product, but the individual is just as important.

Making people go outside of their comfort zone by using their voices instead of socially normal modes of interaction, we expect that it will only become comfortable for them when others start to do it as well.

While we have a goal in mind, we are open to the changes that come about in the process. As much as we can we have made our environment as suitable as possible, we make everything humorous and everyone is encouraged to help out the other people. This has allowed us to become very cohesive. As for the actual project, we have been keeping it simple and only adding to it when we feel that it is in the project's best interest. Through the ideas and processes of IDEO along with some of our own unique ways, we have become a productive, fun, cohesive group that has a project we are all excited about and will love in the end no matter what.

Picking up things from the feet and bringing them to accomplish are the ways in which the innovations can be done. Avoid psychological issues and personality problems and focus on showing the reader exactly how a creative process can be harnessed.

Consistent ways to innovate can be in-borne into the system via learning opportunities.

A Great Book to read is one that inspires young minds, The Art of Innovations stands in tandem to it.