Open Innovation Topic Roundup from CoDev 2013

by Michael Glessner

Last week I attended the CoDev 2013 Conference hosted by PDMA and the Management Roundtable Institute. This conference focused on open innovation was well attended by several hundred people from a cross section of industries. Most of the attendees were associated with R&D or Innovation and many of the presentations reinforced key principles of open innovation. Through it all, there were three standout points to me: one subtle, one important and one out of left field that is quite thought provoking.

The subtle point - Contract R&D service is not open innovation

On the surface this may sound obvious, but many practitioners and leaders confuse the two concepts. Just signing up outside organizations to do specific research work misses the point. Open innovation requires shared commitment and a genuine win-win relationship for the participants. If you reach outside your organization to leverage other smart people or access specialized equipment through a simple contracted service arrangement, you really are only scratching the surface of possibilities. Through a shared commitment and benefit, you encourage your partner to offer other ideas to raise the game to an entirely new level.

The important point - To truly create a lasting open innovation capability, executive leadership must be involved throughout

Most organizations start out quite small with open innovation pilots and then “push” it out to the organization. It is only when executive leadership sees the early benefits that they begin to “pull” the concept to life and the effort catches fire. True executive support happens through involvement, actions and active sponsorship. This role cannot be delegated. John B. Rogers, founder and CEO of Local Motors, personified the commitment to open innovation with his personal passion and vision for his company’s active and involved user community. Later, Mark Herzog, President and CEO of Holy Family Memorial Hospital in Wisconsin shared his organization’s story and his commitment to the concepts of open innovation. Both executives outlined how instrumental leadership is to open innovation and how executive support is key to enabling a true shift in an organization’s culture.

The most thought-provoking point – Understand and unleash the idea of entrepreneurial energy in your organization for significant innovation results

The idea was introduced by Kevin Hartley, Vice President of Corporate Strategy for Green Mountain Coffee Roasters. Too often, organizations are not designed to find and develop billion dollar ideas. Yet, understanding the passion of an entrepreneur who knows they will be successful is a powerful insight, and if you tap into it, the result can be infectious. Babak Forutanpour, Internal Innovation Lead at QUALCOMM, presented an example of this concept in action with their FLUX teams (Forward Looking User eXperience). With minimal investment of the participants’ time, these brainstorming teams were responsible for the creation of an impressive portfolio of 50 patents, many of which are now in commercial development. The value here was that these teams performed with minimal investment (2% of their time and minimal funding) yet they created significant results and are now considered a core part of QUALCOMM’s innovation efforts. Clearly this is a powerful concept in practice if you can figure out how to harness it your organization.

Did you attend Co-Dev this year? What were your top learnings?

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What's your view? Add your question or comment
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