

Digital customer-centric Innovation in Small and Medium Enterprises

International Business College (IBC), project partner 6, by Michael Christiansen

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Introduction

During the era of computers, digitalization has changed the world piece by piece. And also faster and faster. We are talking Industry 4.0, generation Z, mega trends. A huge opportunity to sell products and services all over the world - Globalization. Doing business is nowadays mostly communication with and via digital systems. Some people say that digitalization get the world smaller.

Digitalization can give some advances and disadvantages in relation to have a company. Advances because companies can sell products all over the world and disadvantages that your customers can buy products from others suppliers - all over the world. Often cheaper. A countermeasure to this trend is to invite your customers and bring them closer to you and your organization - your products and services. Perhaps by involving them. Involve and give the customers a good and easy opportunity do be a part in an innovative process. We call it "*customer-centric innovation*".

Basically, we need to rethink the way companies do business and behaviors the way we thing customers. New tools have been and will be developed. Terms like Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, machine learning and data analytics have already become known in many sectors of business management, like marketing, engineering and designing. Unfortunately, we nearly only see this in big companies. SMEs, especially in eastern Europe countries, are behind and are more conservative when adopting the new technology, looking for new markets and ready to engage their existing customers.

However, the complete benefits of new possibilities can be gained only if the entrepreneurs and managers of companies have an overall view of technology, methods and opportunities they offer.

The aim of this course is to enable target groups to have such an overall view that they understand opportunities, benefits, and risks of digitalization, including the ethical aspects.

Course

This course has been designed to fulfill the needs described above. The training, which contains both theoretical lectures, group works and practical training will be set to EQF- levels 4 or 5.

Target groups

The target groups of this training are

- founders,
- owners,
- managers,
- employees and
- company consultants / advises

of and for SME companies.

Objectives

The learning objectives of this course are set to serve SMEs in digitalization and innovation as well as possible. The concrete learning goal is that after attending the course the trainee has at least a sense of what innovative behavior, digitalization and digital tools can bring to his / her own business.

The learning objectives are

- Trainee understands the importance of digitalization in a globally world.
- Trainee understand what “*digital customer-centric innovation*” is
- Trainee understand the importance for a company, why and how to involve customers.
- Trainee knows two analyze tools for internally use, maturity of innovation and IT.
- Trainee knows the contemporary basic concepts of digitalization – the relevance of topics in this area should be ensured before each training session / course.
- Trainee knows the basic about digital international payment and transactions.
- Trainee knows tools that a SME can utilize when digitalizing their innovative process.
- Trainee has applied the tool during his / her practice period.

Schedule

This course is divided into three parts. The training begins with a 1.5 – 2 days theoretical part, during which the basic issues of each topic will be clarified by presentations and group work. This part will be followed by 12 – 18 weeks practice period in the company, during which the participant gets acquainted with the topics of the course in point of view of this company. During the practice period the participant will also prepare a presentation concerning the findings and ideas he or she gained during that period in the company. After the practice period is completed, a seminary of 1.5 – 2 days will be hold. In this seminary the participants will present their findings, discuss their experiences and ideas, and finally, everything will be concluded with a lecture / course / seminary.

1. Leading training
2. Practices in compagnies
3. Concluding seminary

Part I: First Workshop

Content of course

(1,5 - 2 days training – 15 hours)

Goals and tasks of the first workshop are to enable knowledge transfer regarding digital customer-centric innovation,

- create a common basis of knowledge among the training participants concerning global and international market opportunities.
- create a common basis of knowledge concerning digital innovation
- create knowledge concerning international digital payment systems
- create knowledge regarding the customers of tomorrow – generation z.

During this 1.5 to 2-days workshop the participants get to know (usually science-based) and digital pilot-models (prototype) and instruments from project-related research for structuring and solving problems and learn to apply them (mentally). This is intended to create a common conceptual basis for the further procedure in the training.

The models, digital tools and instruments presented as examples and design recommendations for practical use, ideally form a common framework in which, in particular, the existing experiences of the participants are to be integrated in order to pursue the training objectives. The experience of the participants should serve to supplement or modify the proposals for structuring and solving problems given by the research.

Thus, at an early stage of the training, a necessary adaptation of the proposed models and instruments to the individual needs and characteristics of the participants on site, usually with different frameworks and conditions, should take place.

Before the first workshop, a trainer / consultant designing the course should select and modify the models, instruments and other material applicable to just this country, area, branch and companies in question. The material presented in this curriculum consists of common examples and works as models and stimulus for trainers.

The role of the trainers

It is a task of the trainers / consultants to take into account the individual needs and particularities of the participants on site in a face-to-face training. This requires a high degree of knowledge and experience with the use of interactive and participant-centered didactic methods on the part of the trainers. A further focus of the first part of the training is to introduce the participants with the planning, implementation and critical evaluation of their own project work they are involved in the second part of the training. Thus, another central goal of this part of the training is to give the participants important impulses for the implementation of the presented models and instruments in their own project. The application and implementation of the presented models and instruments by the participants "at home" is, so to speak, the focus of the second part of the training concept.

First day

Note: The material presented below is examples and stimulus, which should be applied and modified according to the country, area, culture, background, level and needs of trainees, and also according to knowledge areas of trainer. The times are suggestions and may vary depending to the weighting of topics (see above).

	Time	What	Materials
1	8:00	Welcome and presentation Perhaps an icebreaker?	Evt. Name tag - challenge
2	8:15	Theme 1; The world as “local” market	
	10:00	Short Break	
3	10:15	Theme 2; Internally analyzes	
	12:00	Lunch	
4	12:30	Theme 3; Extern analyze	
	14:00	Coffee and tea	
5	14:15	Theme 4; Innovation strategy	
	15:30	End day 1	

Second day

	Time	What	Materials
6	8:00	Welcome following up on that we discuss yesterday	9 dots - challenge
7	8:15	Theme 5; Practice digital innovation tool	
	10:00	Short break	
8	10:15	Theme 6; International payment	
	12:00	Lunch	
9	12:30	Theme 7; How to handle data	
	14:00	Coffee and tea	
10	14:15	Theme 8; From analyze to action	
	15:30	End – next step	

Part II: Learning at the Work Place and Project Work

(12 - 18 weeks self-study and practice in company)

During the company specific practice students compile the assessments given during the training phase in the point of view of each company (general maturity of innovation and IT, answering to the questions presented above describing the contemporary situation, what should be done, how, are there barriers and / or enablers, how to evaluate. The results will be briefly presented in the concluding seminary, separate or together with the project work presentation.

Goals and tasks of the self-study-phase are

1. Accompaniment and support of change processes in enterprises, from the formulation of objectives, description of measures, conception of implementation to impact analysis by training and process-oriented, if necessary, also technical consulting,
2. Application and transfer of knowledge into the individual practice of the participants on site

In this part, the participants have the task of applying the knowledge acquired in the first part and the knowledge of how to shape their own practice in the sense of the training idea in their companies /

organizations. For sustainable learning, it is necessary that they plan, implement, evaluate, critically reflect and document their own project or activities to improve a situation on site under their individual framework conditions in the "here and now".

This phase with the duration of approx. 12 – 18-weeks is accompanied and supported by professional advice and support given by the trainers / consultants. In principle, the participants should apply and implement the knowledge they have acquired in Part 1 themselves. As a rule, however, advice and support are often required in order to apply the process of adapting the knowledge acquired in Part 1 of the training appropriately under the real conditions on site and to lead one's own project to success.

The role of the trainers/consultants

The support given by the trainers can vary from a rather simple general consultation in the sense of passing on relevant information to an intensive accompaniment in the sense of coaching. In individual cases, it is usually necessary to find out, what kind of support it is needed to enable the individual participant to pursue his or her individual project goals.

In this phase, it is quite possible and even usual, that, when applying the models and instruments presented in the first phase in practice, the individual project proceeds differently than initially thought and planned by the participant. Even in such situations, the trainers of the project team can provide valuable support in pursuing the "actual" project goals.

This second part of the training enables in particular the very welcome didactic aspect of working on concrete improvements in one's own company / at one's own workplace, which is associated with a high motivation to learn. In this learning process, the company management and other employees are usually intensively involved in what is actually done at the workplace, thus achieving joint learning and strong multiplication effects in the training.

Further advantages, i.e. what has been learnt, is directly implemented in everyday business life, or the innovations associated with project work are in the interest of company's management, quickly become visible and motivate managers to promote further training for the workforce and to use it as a strategic instrument of company management. The advantages also respond to the particular needs of small and medium-sized enterprises, which are constantly suffering from a lack of time as the biggest obstacle to training.

Part III: Conclusion Workshop

(1,5 – 2 days seminary – 15 hours)

Goals and tasks of the conclusion workshop are to

- Reflect (evaluate) on the successes in the dimensions of individual, operational and structural changes and change processes,
- Identify supportive and obstructive conditions of change processes and
- derive “lessons learned” for further change processes

In the third part of the training, the participants will present and discuss the experiences and the insights gained as well as their individual projects. Both the participants and the trainers have as their particular task to review the projects and to reflect on whether, or respectively what, contribution they make to the sustainable pursuit of the overarching training idea to strengthen the capacity and ability for innovation-policy and workplace innovation. The exchange between the participants can provide them with very valuable impulses on how to make their own project even more successful. In this context, an important goal can also be to show which major obstacles are responsible for "not-yet-successes" in order to work on this in the future.

The role of the trainers/consultants is to

- Enable constructive exchange between the participants,
- Focus on the common basis for the pursuit of (general) training objectives, and
- Moderate an instructional discussion on the identification of supportive and obstructive conditions of change processes and present contributions for a possible reduction of resistance in the tracking of individual projects.

Schedule of the workshop

Note: Two shorter pauses (with coffee) and one longer pause (lunch) will be held during each day.

First day .

1) Welcome, registration and material, 0,5 hour

2) Presentations of students, discussion and the feedback of the trainers – continues, if needed, in the second day

Second day

3) Customer-centric and innovation – Concluding lecture including

- Concept of Human capital
- How the digitalization can help daily work
- How the digitalization can help sales force
- How the digitalization and innovation can help management
- How the digitalization can help strategy planning
- How the trainees can / should continue with their own project / company / business
- **Length 2-4 hours**, depending to the time allocated for student’s presentations.

4. End of the course, diplomas, etc.



Internally Analyze tools

A screening process to measure the maturity of innovation

- Is it normal in your business area to innovate? Yes / No
- Do you have an Innovation strategy in your company? Yes / No
- Do you have innovation financial statements? Yes / No
- Do you have KPIs to measure Innovation in your company? Yes / No
-
- Do you involve employees in innovation projects? Yes / No
- Do you have project-managers to manage innovative ideas? Yes / No
- Do you guide your employees for Innovation Courses? Yes / No
- Do you use innovative-software in relation to customers? Yes/No

Scale

understanding. 0 = Non 5 = medium 10 = All ways

- How much is innovation a part of your culture in your company? Scale 0-10
- How much do you (as a company) normally involve your customers in an innovation process? Scale 0-10
- How much do you (as a company) normally involve your suppliers in an innovation process? Scale 0-10
- How good are you (as a company) to share knowledge/ideas with customers or suppliers? Scale 0-10
- How often do you do living labs? Scale 0-10
- How often do you do field tests? Scale 0-10
- How fast will you say you can improve new ideas in your own company? Scale 0-10

A screening process to measure the maturity of the company – IT

Digital Readiness/maturity level questions	YES	NO	Yes	NO
Do you have personal emails?				
Do you have a web-site?				
Do you have a web-shop?				
Do you have a digital order system?				
Does your website have a chat function?				
Does your website have a FAQ section?				
Do you use e-Banking?				
Do you confirm online automatically?				
Do you have a CRM-system?				
Do you send out digital invoices?				
Do you save your documents in a sky?				
Do you save your documents locally on your computer?				
Does your company have social media (Facebook, LinkedIn etc) presence?				
Do you have chatbot?				
Do you do online training?				
Do you have e-digital support?				
Do you work with big/right data?				
Do you utilize online meeting systems, ie Zoom, Teams etc?				
Do you ever receive digital feedback from customers?				
Do you have an it-employee in the company ?				
Do you buy it-guidance/help externally?				
Do you have a e-marketing budget?				
Do you have a e-marketing employee (content marketing)?				
Do you have customers living + 50 kilometers away from you?				

Links (Examples)

- <https://ci-smes.eu/>
- https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes_en
- <https://www.tuni.fi/en/study-with-us/computational-big-data-analytics>
- <https://www.aalto.fi/en/aalto-leaders-insight/2018/excellent-discussions-on-digitalization-and-the-ethics-of-ai>
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/globalization/>
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275133520_The_digital_generation
- <https://www.pwc.co.uk/issues/megatrends.html>
- <https://www.quora.com/What-is-an-innovation-What-are-some-of-the-modern-innovations>
- <https://www.walkme.com/glossary/digital-innovation/>
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1471772718300757>
- <https://kvanto.com/>
- <https://razorpay.com/learn/digital-payments-india-definition-methods-importance/>
- <https://analytics.google.com/analytics/web/provision/#/provision>
- <https://www.mentimeter.com/>