

On your marks... Get set... Innovate!

CBS has staked out the field for the Instant Innovation Camp to set up in order to innovate the school's way of teaching innovation. The happy but busy campers seem willing to trudge through a heavy downpour of theory in order to enjoy one and a half days of setting up case-solutions and striking problems

SLIGHTLY CAMP

By Alexandra Bode

Neon-coloured post-its, highlighters and empty coffee pots are scattered all over the place. The laughter and humming voices of over 60 people fill the room. Is this how instant innovation takes place?

Observing the scenery of the second Instant Innovation Camp at CBS, one might think the Masters students from CBS and other universities all over Europe are just having a good time brainstorming over crazy ideas.

But a closer look reveals that the Masters elective course on innovation is not just that. It's a highly concentrated case oriented day-camp directed at dealing with real-life problems that the participating companies have identified in their processes.

- By using the camp approach instead of a normal lecture style, both the students and the participating companies that provide the cases can interact more closely and learn from each other, explains Christoph Hienerth, visiting associate professor at CBS' Department of Innovation and Organizational Economics and responsible for the theoretical part of the sessions.

But is this really a camp? Where are the sleeping bags, the bleary-eyed but happy campers?

Camping in the gap

Sarah Buus Nielsen, Jacob Krarup and Andrew Leitch, all CBS Masters-students, certainly look like happy campers, but their level of sleep seems balanced and so are their reasons for participating in the Instant Innovation Camp:

- You get the opportunity to work in an innovative way, think out of the box and to get to know how differently people think. This is really important in work life, says Jacob Krarup.

- It is not just a business case on paper. You actually see results and get instant feedback on what you do, explains Sarah Buus Nielsen.

So is everything instant in this camp, like a soup powder you just pour water on?



Sarah Buus Nielsen (second left), Andrew Leitch (light blue shirt, beige pants) and Jacob Krarup (right of Andrew) brainstorming with their group and DONEnergy company representatives. The camp's set up of laid back collaboration between companies and students is a new approach to teaching.

- I wouldn't exactly call it instant, but effective. It is amazing how much we got done in such a short time, adjusts Andrew Leitch.

This view is shared by HR manager Lars Hilberg from BRFkredit, one of the six companies – DONEnergy, BRFkredit, Codan, Nestle, Arla and FDB – participating in the current camp:

- It has been an energetic and very fast paced afternoon, and I have a good feeling as we got a lot of different input from both students and the other companies, Lars Hilberg appreciates.

Credit or cases first

While the camp definitely is a new way of working for the participating company representatives, the elective actually requires a lot of ordinary lecture time for the students:

Before the actual workshop days

in collaboration with the companies and the camp facilitators from Marketing Consulting Services (MCS) – a Hellerup based consultancy that invented the camp approach – the students follow a three heavily theory oriented hours per week, seven week long series of lectures that provides them with theoretical backgrounds and tools to succeed at the workshops.

In order to gain credits for the course, students have to hand in an individually written assignment that links the acquired theory to their case company. The dilemma arising from this is, as CBS student Jakob Stigler comments:

- You don't really know whether to focus on the theory for the assignment in the end or whether you should build on the diverse backgrounds in your group and use theory that is unrelated but helps the company you are working with.

Holistically diverse

Despite these challenges the organizers are confident in the concept and emphasize the benefits of the second part, the actual camp days in the afternoon of November 19th and all day long on December 3rd:

- I am convinced that by the co-creation of students and company representatives merging different working styles, knowledge and viewpoints, truly innovative ideas can be generated, says business developer Frederikke Kroon, founder of MCS.

Marie Smed, CBS student and MCS project manager for the instant innovation camp elective, adds:

- The concept is unique at CBS. It is important for CBS to realize how beneficial it is to incorporate this amount of diverse backgrounds in a project – both from the outside in the form of the Øresund Entrepreneurship Academy (ØEA), Lund University (LU), the actively participating companies and MCS as facilitator and from within CBS' student body.

Innovation on all levels

With a lot of participants being enthusiastic about the project, the question arises as to why CBS is not more innovative on its own part. So far, the instant innovation camp is the only one of all electives to be held in such a holistic and collaborative form:

- Setting up the camp requires a huge amount of time, work and commitment from everybody with preparations taking approximately three to four months for each edition of the camp – an effort way greater than for most other electives, elaborates Christoph Hienerth.

Despite the effort he recommends that other CBS departments join the project or set up something similar themselves. His argument is that this approach could help CBS maintain its status as one of Europe's leading business schools – and make it one of the most innovative ones, too.

On another continent, CBS' first steps in the day-camp-field of teaching innovation have already been closely observed: Christoph Hienerth and his team will soon pay a visit to another leading business school to present their concept and to promote the advantages of this new teaching method – it seems as if Harvard is looking for an innovative enhancement to its famous business cases on paper...



The Arla-team discussing how to innovate milk and make it a cool drink – supported by theory-tools, flipcharts, lots of their own creativity and coffee (with milk of course!).

The Instant Innovation Camp elective will be on offer again in spring 2009 under the new name Tools for Sustainable Innovation – co-creating future business models with industry.

For questions on the course format, assistant professor Christoph Hienerth can be contacted by mail at: ch.ino@cbs.dk.

Companies interested in becoming partners and submitting a business case can contact business developer Frederikke Kroon at MCS: fk@mcscph.dk.

Find pictures, videos and more information on www.instantinnovati-oncamp.dk

Camp or not?

Read more about what happened during the final workshop on December 3rd on www.cbsobserver.dk