BUILDING AN INNOVATION ENGINE: How some organizations manage to innovate consistently, while others fail.

This 14th IFAD Innovation Talk was structured as a Master Class by Chris Heemskerk, Founder of the Innovation Alliance and former Head of Scaled Acquisitions, Google North America. Gladys H. Morales Senior Officer Global Head of Innovation IFAD moderated the event, which also included a Q&A section with lively engagement from the audience. Closing remarks were delivered by Andrea Geremicca Director General of the European Institute of Innovation for Sustainability (EEIS).

As a kick-off, Chris Heemskerk identified some of the main challenges that might be experienced while leading innovation, such as funding, internal resistance, lack of strategic vision, management, and unclear roadmaps. He then moved to talk about his professional background, explaining what brought he and his team to the creation of *The Innovation Scorecard™* – a comprehensive framework designed to help identify innovation opportunities within organizations. His framework allows the measurement of innovation efforts in four areas:

1. Culture;
2. Organization;
3. External dimensions; and
4. Effectiveness.

> **Speakers and panellists at the event**
>
> - Chris Heemskerk, Founder of The Innovation Alliance and former Head of Scaled Acquisitions, Google North America
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> - Andrea Geremicca, Director General, European Institute of Innovation for Sustainability
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> - Moderator: Gladys H. Morales, Senior Officer Global Head of Innovation IFAD

Two questions were at the centre of the class:

(1) *Why do some organizations manage to innovate time and again, while others just fail?* and

(2) *When is it that we identify the need to innovate?*

Chris pointed out that teams need to be *willing* and *able* to innovate; they need a purpose, shared values, and rules of engagement in order to create a sense of community and therefore the willingness to innovate. It is also important to recognise the *moment supreme*, that is, the moment in which the requirements to innovate – budget, time and morale – are in place. He pointed out that most leaders believe innovation is key but that they neither rely on a strategy of innovation, nor are they able to have their staff aligned with what innovation represents for them. This led him to the creation of *The Innovation Engine*, a method or framework used to help companies in developing innovation strategies.

> *"Vision is nothing more than a best educated guess of what the future will bring and what vehicles will help you to get there."*
> ***Chris Heemskerk***
> *"If we really want to innovate, we really have to engage our stakeholders. We have to go and look for partnerships."*
> ***Andrea Geremicca***

Chris highlighted that, in general, the greatest costs for an entrepreneur are related to the lack of information. As a matter of fact, what successful entrepreneurs rely on is a complete knowledge of the playbook of the game they are playing. In this regard, pondering Marc Randolph's statement "nobody knows anything", he highlighted the need to test ideas and collide them with reality.

In his closing remarks, Andrea Geremicca highlighted how the best lessons learned from the event are related to the fact that one can make better decisions in investment and innovation if a systematic approach is used. Doing this, organizations can reduce and mitigate risks, with a better use of their resources. Moreover, with rigorous methodology and tools such as the Innovation Scorecard™, organizations can really

help innovation, scalability, and sustainability. He stressed the need to look for partnerships, like the one established between EIIS and IFAD to build an organizational capacity to develop skills and innovation. He pointed at education as one of the most important and underestimated tools, concluding that, if today's world is like a sinking boat, more than rewarding people who offer "to remove the water", society has to educate younger generations to think about "how to fix the hole in the hull".

During the Live Q&A that followed, Heemskerk underlined that education is key in acquiring appropriate engagement mechanisms to drive innovation, and that creativity and digital spaces are crucial in supporting innovation in low-income countries. He also stressed that managers and leaders have to "bite the bullet" and take some risks according to the best educated guesses, recalling that organizations need to have a good "Kill-rate" (rate of discontinuation) and therefore be brave and ambitious.

> *The event aimed to answer the following questions:*
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> - What is needed to lead for innovation?
> - When to innovate?
> - How can The Innovation Scorecard™ help organizations to innovate?
> - How do the world's leading innovators operate?
> - How do you build an innovation engine for your organization?
> - Introduction to Design thinking and Innovation Accounting.

If you are interested in the discussion with the audience, please consult the Q&A report and the event recording on the event page.

CDI would like to thank the participants for taking part and for making the event such a success and showing how increasing interest and ample opportunities to create systematic approaches for improve global comprehension of progress.

Missed the event? Watch it online!

- A recording of the event can be found here.
- If you would like to skip directly to certain sections of the event, the times are listed in the table below.
- Join the IFAD Innovation Network to receive our updates and to contribute to the knowledge sharing and learning of our innovation community of practice. https://ifad.dgroups.io/g/IFADInnovation

Time (minutes)	Section
00.00-01.20	Welcome by moderator Gladys H. Morales
01.20-36.05	Keynote presentation by Chris Heemskerk
36.05-38.43	Comments by Gladys H. Morales
38.43-57.54	Q&A
57.54-58.40	Last comments by Chris Heemskerk
58.40-1.01.44	Closing remarks by Andrea Geremicca