

CASE

Fresh ideas for fresh apple juice

Philips

Enjoying a glass of freshly-squeezed carrot juice for breakfast is a wonderful start to a Sunday morning, don't you think? Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could give yourself this treat or variations of it with apples, oranges or pineapples at home every day – freshly made, and almost effortlessly?

by Stefan Posch

Philips is one of the leading companies that offers solutions that will grant this wish, in the form of juicers. The company has been in this business for many years and in order to stay ahead of the competition, is in constant need of innovations – innovations resulting in new models that go beyond a simple face-lift and bring real, new benefits to their users.

The company, especially its center for kitchen appliances in Klagenfurt, Austria, is well equipped for this challenge. For example, in order to understand customers' needs and problems, they established a customer application center many years ago. There, people like you and me are invited to try out a variety of products and are observed while doing so. This is a powerful source of insight when it comes to finding levers for real innovations.

Another pillar of Philips' success in creating new, great products out of ideas is its development process, with a plethora of expertise in any necessary technical field. The most outstanding pillar, however, is the culture of creativity that can be experienced at the Philips site in Klagenfurt. Creativity is the core competence that this location has consciously chosen as its mantra. It is visible in the design of the office: a fresh and colorful layout full of well-decorated prototypes among individually designed workspaces. You can also

see it in the attitude of the employees who work together in mixed teams on new kitchen appliances of all kinds.

Juice the juicer up

We want to tell you the story of the next generation juicer that started in 2009 and that we were invited to accompany from the very beginning – the so-called »front-end« phase of the innovation process. In 2009, Roland Waldner, responsible for the function development team and mastermind of the creativity culture of Philips Klagenfurt, was given the task of developing a completely new, next generation juicer with his team. He saw this not only as an opportunity to come up with a great new product, but also as a chance to further deepen the value of creativity and creative thinking in his organization. Targeted creative thinking is something that can be learned and also demands constant training. Switching from daily operational work into a very productive and yet crazy creative mode is a value for an innovative organization that does not come without investment.

In close co-creation, we used the early phase of the project to pursue two paths in parallel. On the one hand, we drafted a sequence of several ideation workshops, knowing full well that they would be needed



Philips Avance Juicer: a real-life innovation project.



throughout the project even if the topics of each of these sessions had not been defined at the beginning. On the other hand, we conducted a training in deep dive ideation for creative problem solving. A large group of employees – not just those involved in the project – were part of this training. We fueled the practical part of this training continuously with new tasks of the juicer project that called for creative problem solving. This is the good thing about real-life innovation projects: if you allow for it, tasks that require a creative solution pop up almost every day. In contrast to the classic picture of the innovation funnel where ideas are just created in the beginning and are then just executed, our experience shows that an innovation project is rather a journey that needs the willingness and ability of its participants to switch from hard execution work into a playful, yet serious mode of creativity. This is where project work and training supported each other in a perfect manner.

The juice was worth the squeeze

After we finished the first training phase, employees who became very enthusiastic about this way of working got trained as internal facilitators of creativity sessions. In the meantime, the project had progressed

into the tough phase of realization. Finally, after three years, a new product was introduced to the market. The Philips Avance Juicer Collection offers ten percent more juice than other juicers on the market and takes only a minute to clean. It became such a huge success because it satisfied so many user needs. Especially the easy-to-use and fast cleaning design made it the most highly demanded product on the market.

Innovation culture

In 2012, the product won the Red Dot Design Award and in 2013, it was named the best juicer by Stiftung Warentest*. It took the team about four years from the first ideation workshops to product launch – a long journey with many ups and downs as well as countless challenges that had to be solved with creative thinking and acting. In the end, it has not only led to financial success, but also to an internal innovation success story that fuels a living corporate innovation culture. ●

*Stiftung Warentest: A German consumer organization and foundation that investigates goods and services in an unbiased way.