

iTeam: Having a Voice of Opinion

Mijanur Rahman, Roche Products Ltd., Welwyn Garden City, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

As a new starter coming straight from postgraduate study, it is difficult to comprehend and have a voice in such a vast industry. It can be difficult for any newcomers to express themselves and develop a fresh perspective on the processes that define the pharmaceutical model. Roche Products Ltd. conducts regular informal i-Team meetings which focus on innovation. These meetings are held with colleagues from all echelons of the department covering a large spectrum of experience. This paper focuses on how a new starter can be effective in these meetings and how it allows them to gain a voice in the pharmaceutical industry, as it is difficult and daunting at times to provide your own opinion. The paper also provides an insight about the i-Team and presents real examples of projects/tasks that I have been involved in directly stemming from the i-Team initiative.

INTRODUCTION

Entering any industry which is new to someone can be quite overwhelming especially if it is the pharmaceutical industry. Being a new starter in the pharmaceutical industry can present many hurdles, such as understanding processes and being able to offer your opinion. This paper provides guidance and advice for other new starters. It provides a great insight from a new starter and shares some real life experiences to help encourage anyone just starting or considering a career in the industry. Innovation plays a big part at Roche Products Ltd. Roche is extremely passionate about innovation and this enthusiasm to improve and develop has filtered down into different functions within the company. This paper focuses on how innovation is important and how the Statistical Programming and Analysis (SPA) department at Roche is pursuing innovation by creating the i-Team. It also focuses on how new starters can be innovative and gain a voice in the industry.

INNOVATION

What is innovation? Innovation can be defined as the creation of new ideas leading to new, improved products, processes, services or technologies. Invention is not the creation of new ideas, it is putting these ideas into practice, bringing it to market, exploiting them to add value and improve quality of new or existing products and services. It is an employment of "out-of-the-box" thinking to generate new values and bring significant positive changes to society, organisations or industries.

Why is innovation important? Innovation is significantly important for various different reasons and on many different levels. For all firms and industries, innovation is the main driver for growth and development. It is known that innovation leads to wealth creation and technological revolutions. There have been many books and articles written about innovation and various famous quotes. Some well-known famous quotes are presented below [1].

"For centuries before Google, MIT, and IDEO, modern hotbeds of innovation, we struggled to explain any kind of creation, from the universe itself to the multitudes of ideas around us. While we can make atomic bombs, and dry-clean silk ties, we still don't have satisfying answers for simple questions like: Where do songs come from? Are there an infinite variety of possible kinds of cheese? How did Shakespeare and Stephen King invent so much, while we're satisfied watching sitcom reruns? Our popular answers have been unconvincing, enabling misleading, fantasy-laden myths to grow strong." Scott Berkun – bestselling author of *The Myths of Innovation*.

"All work and no play doesn't just make Jill and Jack dull, it kills the potential of discovery, mastery, and openness to change and flexibility and it hinders innovation and invention." Joline Godfrey – innovator in financial education for children and families.

"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man." George Bernard Shaw – co-founder of the London School of Economics.

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." Thomas Edison – an American inventor.

There are always new creative ideas in the pharmaceutical industry, here at Roche innovation is a major part of continued success and evolution. In the Statistical Programming and Analysis (SPA) department, informal meetings

PhUSE 2012

are held which specifically focus on innovation. The people that attend these meetings form the i-Team.

I-TEAM

The i-Team consists of colleagues from all different levels of the department (junior, senior, and management), meeting up and expressing their ideas, thoughts, and creativity to become a more efficient department and improve our processes. The i-Team is all about driving innovation, allowing people flexibility to attend. Although, it is not mandatory to be present at these meetings; there are always a considerable amount of attendees. These meetings are very much informal allowing anyone to express their ideas or opinions. The i-Team always encourages everyone to get involved, and allows anyone who is interested in a project or challenge to undertake them and then launch. It allows everyone to contribute to the success of innovation within the department and gain inspiration from others by listening to their ideas. Everyone who attends the i-Team is encouraged to have an open mind and not to think about restrictions of an idea; as it could be possible to achieve. There are always considerations to make the meetings more fun and creative to capture bright innovative ideas; brain writing has been employed to achieve this.

Brain writing is a more interactive way of brain storming; it consists of a group people writing their ideas on their own sheet of paper. After 5 minutes, the sheets are rotated to different people in the group to build on what the other participants have written on their paper. This process is continued until all permutations are exhausted. This is a very interesting way to generate ideas, it allows people to think outside of their own comfort zone, get inspired and provoke different ideas. By employing this method, it also allows everyone to get involved; with brain storming, some members might feel embarrassed or shy to present their thoughts or people with stronger personalities may push their ideas through more. These problems may be eliminated by adopting the brain writing technique. Another method the i-Team has used to generate ideas is brain drawing.

Brain drawing consists of having flipchart sheets around the room, each with a topic or an idea. People approach one flipchart at a time, drawing their ideas. The concept is that people add to what is already there, and in the end there will be a collage of pictures. By employing this method, it allows people to have a break from verbally creating ideas and people who prefer non-verbal methods to contribute. In addition to brain storming/writing/drawing, the notion for the i-Team is actually developing or launching these ideas.

When I had first started at Roche, I had found it quite difficult at times to understand certain processes and be able to offer my thoughts on new products or services. Getting involved in the i-Team has really helped me become more thought provoking, creative and vocal by gaining a voice. It can be quite intimidating at first when attending the i-Team as there are a lot of people with great knowledge about Roche and the pharmaceutical industry. However, the i-Team is very welcoming with a very friendly atmosphere, which allowed me to settle in very quickly and feel comfortable. The most important thing was not to be intimidated (even though I am at a junior level), and understand the importance of innovation in order to succeed and grow as a team; I realised that I did have something to offer. I believe that every new starter adds a fresh perspective and visualises innovation from different angles. For the first few meetings I had sat there and listened to try and understand the views and beliefs of some people. By listening intently and asking questions at these meetings (there's no such thing as silly questions), I believed I had understood the importance of innovation in any industry and it was about time I got involved.

GETTING INVOLVED

It is very easy to sit back and just get on with your regular work. I believe that the real performers and entrepreneurs are the people who are not afraid to try and make a difference, to step out of their comfort zone and be inventive. Despite the fact that I had little experience, I decided to challenge myself and try to become part of the success of the i-Team. There were many projects or sub-teams available for me to choose from, or I could have even started my own project. A few projects had caught my attention that I felt really passionate about and felt that I could make a contribution. The Life Cycle project was the first project that I become heavily a part of.

LIFE CYCLE

For every new starter entering our department (SPA), it is difficult for them to have an understanding of the process of the reporting event for a study or drug, and SPA's input through the process. The i-Team had created an idea to break the process down into stages, showing pictorially the project lifecycle by creating a simple document or poster to help new starters or anyone who has an interest to understand. This document was aimed to be Roche specific information about the study process to make it easier for new starters. This was a difficult task as there is a lot of information to collate and then condense. As I have not been in the industry long, I did not know all the stages or understand all the stages myself. It was decided to make a one page document and poster with each stage broken down (shown below). In the life cycle document/poster, each stage has an explanation in what it contains and how SPA contributes. The document had been created by using the pooled laptop, which is another creation by the i-Team.



PhUSE 2012

Innovation doesn't always have to be so grand and magical. This simple idea of a one page document explaining the life cycle of the study process, gave new starters or other functions in the company a great platform to comprehend the different stages or events of a study. The document also included a lot of other relevant information, such as links where more information could be found for each stage, many useful acronyms one should know and find useful; as industries invariably have a lot of acronyms and the pharmaceutical industry is no different.

This was a challenge for me; however, I had a great support from the i-Team and colleagues within the department. Working on this project allowed me to be creative and to try and improve or make a difference to my department. As mentioned before there are many projects available in the i-Team for one to be a part of. Two of the projects which the i-Team has worked on are, New Starters Training and the Pooled Laptop.

NEW STARTERS TRAINING

There is a lot of information a new starter has to comprehend when entering the SPA department. The project Life Cycle provides a great basis for new starters to understand the flow of the study process. However, it does not give them any physical practice in performing certain procedures of which SPA undertake. How great would it be if there was a 'dummy' study for new starters to work on as soon as they enter our department, to allow them to gain this valuable experience? This is the idea which the i-Team had invented. The idea is to set up a 'dummy' study on the UNIX system with appropriate data, and various programming tasks to create outputs and manipulate data.

Introducing this training will allow new starters to experience real life scenarios which they may face in the industry, such as data issues (partial dates, missing data etc.). Become more confident in using macros and in house reporting tools. This would give extensive experience on using SAS®, working with data and understanding much more about the study process.

POOLED LAPTOP

There are times when someone may require particular software urgently. The process of installing software and your computer is quite time consuming and costly. What if there was a computer which had distinctive software available and is free and open to use for everyone in the department? The i-Team had created the Pooled Laptop which allows everyone and anyone to use for this purpose.

The pooled laptop is a laptop which is available for use by any member of the Welwyn Biometrics team. It is designed to be a time and cost saving solution in times when specialist software is needed for reasons such as annotating CRFs, preparing e-SUBs and using specialist software amongst others. Rather than having to request this software needed via SOS which takes time and costs money whenever this is installed on a different desktop or laptop, people will be able to borrow the pooled laptop which has the software needed already installed. Such software's include Adobe Acrobat Professional, Microsoft Project Professional, SAS® 9.2 (windows), Microsoft Visio Professional and Open Text Explorer.

CONCLUSION

In any industry, innovation is the way forward. It allows growth, stability and improvement. The i-Team achieves this by conducting regular meetings specifically focusing on innovation. No matter at what level one is in the department, anyone can be innovative, including new starters. The i-team allows new starters to be inventive, to try and make a difference and have a voice. As a new starter myself, the i-Team has made me aware how important innovation is in order to succeed. It can be difficult for new starters to share their thoughts and opinions, but a new starter should not shy away from letting their voice being heard. By getting involved in the i-Team it has allowed me to become part of projects which I am passionate about and make a difference to the department. No matter how long one has been in the industry, there can contribute to the success of the company by being inventive.

REFERENCES

[1] Paggu - <http://www.paggu.com/getting-into-roots/what-is-innovation-why-innovation-is-important/>

Quotations:

Scott Berkun – bestselling author of *The Myths of Innovation*;

http://www.dailygalaxy.com/my_weblog/innovation/

Joline Godfrey – innovator in financial education for children and families;

<http://ecosalon.com/40-best-quotes-on-innovation/>

George Bernard Shaw – co-founder of the London School of Economics;

<http://www.innovationmanagement.se/2011/08/16/25-inspiring-innovation-quotes/>

Thomas Edison – an American inventor;

<http://www.realinnovation.com/content/c090119a.asp>

PhUSE 2012

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During my first year at Roche and in the pharmaceutical industry, many people have helped me in myself development. I would like to thank, Christine Leigh, Christopher Price, Alexander Hughes, Matthew Beeby, Nathan James, Ross Farrugia and Neeraj Malhotra. Without their encouragement, input and support, I would have found it very difficult to develop in such a vast industry.

RECOMMENDED READING

Berkun, S. The Myths of Innovation

Clayton, M. Christensen. The Innovator's Solution: Creating and Sustaining Successful Growth

Spilsbury, R. The Pharmaceutical Industry, 2009

CONTACT INFORMATION

Your comments and questions are valued and encouraged. Contact the author at:

Mijanur Rahman

Roche Products Ltd.

Hexagon Place, 6 Falcon Way, Shire Park

Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL7 1TW

Work Phone: +44 (0)1707366531

Email: Mijanur.rahman@roche.com

Brand and product names are trademarks of their respective companies.