UNICON Team Development Conference:  
*Innovate or Evaporate*

Innovation Through Experimentation

Mike Malefakis  
Associate Dean  
Columbia Business School  
Executive Education
Which of these statements best describes your Exec Ed dept?

A. We are innovating too quickly, it's chaotic
B. We are innovating at about the right pace
C. We don't innovate enough

Submit your vote at: cbsee.participoll.com
Today’s Topics

- Test polling app (experiment #1)
- Barriers to Innovation
- Approaches to Innovation
- The Columbia Story
- Techniques for Overcoming Barriers to Innovation
- Innovation through Experimentation Frameworks
- References & Resources
innovation

- The process of translating an idea or invention into a good or service that creates value or for which customers will pay

experiment

- a scientific test in which you perform a series of actions and carefully observe their effects in order to learn about something

- something that is done as a test: something that you do to see how well or how badly it works
Innovate or Evaporate!
A. University culture
B. Limited resources
C. Faculty
D. Hesitation to change from what has worked in the past
This will never work!

Attitudes toward change and innovation
Table Talk

What are the barriers to innovation in...

- your institution
- your department
- your team
- in yourself
Although colleges and universities are often perceived by outsiders as stagnant institutions, both faculty and presidents agree in the survey that campuses are more innovative than the public gives them credit for being. Nearly half of both groups say that colleges foster a "moderate amount of innovation."

Source: Attitudes on Innovation: How College Leaders and Faculty See Key Issues Facing Higher Education. (Selingo, 2013)
The Big Picture in Higher Education

- Both professors and presidents are in agreement that the focus of discussions on innovation should be around changes to the teaching and learning model, but current discussions are instead focused on technology and cost cutting.

Source: Attitudes on Innovation: How College Leaders and Faculty See Key Issues Facing Higher Education. (Selingo, 2013)
Source: Attitudes on Innovation: How College Leaders and Faculty See Key Issues Facing Higher Education. (Selingo, 2013)
The best approach to achieving innovation is through...

A. Research and analytics
B. Piloting & testing
C. Brainstorming
D. Client feedback

Submit your vote at: cbsee.participoll.com
Which statement do you agree with most?

A. Innovation should be incremental.

B. Innovation should be radical.

Submit your vote at: cbsee.participoll.com
In the context of Executive Education, what approach to innovation works best?
Explain your opinion.
Who should drive innovation?

• Both faculty members and presidents feel that the **faculty should be drivers of change**, but presidents don’t see professors in this role currently.

Source: Attitudes on Innovation: How College Leaders and Faculty See Key Issues Facing Higher Education. (Selingo, 2013)
Who is driving innovation at your organization?

A. Faculty
B. Staff
C. Senior Leadership
D. Clients
E. None of the above

Submit your vote at: cbsee.participoll.com
“People who are best suited to search for new business models and conduct iterative experiments usually are not the same managers who succeed at running existing business units. **Internal entrepreneurs** are more likely to be rebels who chafe at standard ways of doing things, don’t like to follow the rules, continually question authority, and have a high tolerance for failure.”

Steve Blank (Lean Startup)
The Columbia Story
The Columbia Story

The Challenge: How do you turn around an Exec Ed organizational culture after a period of when cost cutting was the #1 focus?
The Columbia Story

- Reframe the value proposition of Exec Ed as more than a profit center: An Innovation Platform for the School.

- Reframe innovation as sound risk management instead of a risky gamble.

- *Just Do It*

- Make small initial investments before trying anything too big.

- Try more than one alternative solution “don’t put all your eggs in one basket.”
The Columbia Story

• Measure & track outcomes carefully – readjust assumptions based on outcomes

• Embrace mistakes and failure as part of the learning process. What is your ROF?

• Break down silos and promote collaboration – across the department, the school and the university

• Innovative ideas and insights come from everyone in the organization
“Innovation is not just the idea, it is the action that brings the idea to life. Innovation requires action, persistence and resources in the form of people, time, space and funding. If any one of these ingredients is missing, innovating often becomes impossible and/or unsustainable.” Veronica Thomas

“We have been trying to develop a culture of bringing and sharing new ideas and thoughts with each other that helps us have a growth/innovative mindset. People have space for sharing insights and capturing great new ideas and stimulating each other.” Yoshie Tomozumi Nakamura

“We need innovation to adapt to our changing business environment. This requires focused innovation efforts. The innovation effort needs to be supported by clear strategies and processes.” Jason Belland

“Some of the things that have helped us create an innovation ecosystem are strategy workshops that included voices from all levels of the organization, not just senior management. Another is transparency in data sharing so that the entire team can know the state of the business in real time (not quite there but almost).” Jason Belland
“Taking a real options approach in which we started with low financial risk, low financial reward with fist online program and have been moving to higher financial risk, higher financial reward. This has allowed us to gather proof points along the way without having made significant financial investments.” **Amy Deiner**

“We have created an environment where it is ok to fail or not have the biggest wins, but you have to apply the learning of the experience. Sometimes you have to ‘just do it’ to gain knowledge. We can’t let the frustration win. By this I mean, any innovative idea usually brings change that will probably mean a different way of doing business and the way people work.” **Anthony Madonna**
“There is a sense of leeway to experiment, try out new things and discuss both the results and shortcomings in a supportive environment. I think most folks feel comfortable disclosing “failures”, which is almost a pre-requisite for an innovative mindset. **If you are afraid to fail, or share those failures with peers, you’ve already lost.**” *Matt Harty*

“**Without a culture that says, ‘hey, why not?’ we'd have a very hard time getting the numerous innovative programs, enhancements and engagement activities off the ground.**” *Clay Shedd*
Table Talk

What techniques have you used to overcome barriers to innovation on the job?
Framework for Innovation through Experimentation

Method

1. Launch Efforts Quickly then Iterate
2. Set Goals and Track Progress
3. Reward Experimentation
4. Communicate & Share Best Practice
5. Kill Off Mediocre Efforts
6. Plan for Version 2.0 and beyond
7. Make it Easier to Launch and Experiment

Source: 5 Steps for a Better Innovation Culture through Experimentation and Failure by Stefan Lindegaard
Other Tips

• **Put Aside Expertise:** approach an innovation through a lens of inquiry rather than expertise

• **Let data determine direction:** The more often organizations experiment, the faster they gain data to inform the next potential breakthrough.

• **Collaborate with your Competition**

Busse, Meg. “Experimentation: A Shortcut to Innovation.”
Innovation through Experimentation
Articles for UNICON members

Dropbox Link
References and Supplemental Reading


References and Supplemental Reading


Thank You!

..and remember think big, test small and if your test does not work, what is your ROF?