



Insights from Supporting Clients with their Innovation Agenda

read about recent innovation projects a-connect
was involved in and their key takeaways

At a-connect, we work with clients across a range of industries on their innovation agendas. We are always intrigued by the diverse challenges clients face when driving innovation – such as driving impact, achieving cross-company traction and collaboration, and finding the right balance between ideation and processes. Here, we highlight a couple of recent innovation-related projects we have been involved in, and the important takeaways.

Case Study 1: Helping a client revisit their innovation processes to develop strategic foresight

One of our clients – a leading global flavors and fragrances manufacturer – asked a-connect for support in revisiting their regional innovation process. The goal was to optimize the process so as to allow the organization to leverage market insights, sparking innovation that could respond to upcoming consumer trends.

With this goal in mind, a-connect prepared and facilitated a workshop with the regional Innovation Council, which was structured into sessions that triggered the team's thinking around consumer trends and helped the group bring critical issues around the existing innovation process to the table. During the workshop, the team worked on best practice proposals that would allow the organization to develop strategic foresight around key market trends, with a clear protocol for how to leverage this foresight for new product development and commercialization. In parallel, the group revisited roles and responsibilities within the innovation process, so as to optimize the organizational setup.

Based on the workshop results, the client was able to form task force teams and create roadmaps to formalize and roll out the improved innovation process. Roles and governance were clarified, and the Innovation Council developed a mission statement to drive the innovation efforts going forward.

Case Study 2: Supporting a biopharma client in driving innovation

We supported one of our biopharma clients in their objective to fuel innovation around their core product portfolio by leveraging services and technology. While they had a sound portfolio, a couple of their flagship products were facing loss-of-exclusivity, and they were therefore looking for new avenues through which to strengthen their market position.

The client had good success in pockets with some of their drug device combinations and innovations, but believed a systematic approach was lacking in proactively driving innovation

by leveraging services and technology. As a consequence, they wished to conduct a more structured and deep review of potential 'beyond the pill' type opportunities.

a-connect deployed a small team and helped structure and scope the engagement in different phases, working with a cross-functional stakeholder team to deliver this project. We supported the identification of key unmet needs in stakeholder journeys for one of their therapeutic areas, and used a combination of analysis and workshops to generate and flesh out ideas to address challenges, prioritize ideas into key opportunity areas, and recommend a selection of pilots. The project was highly successful in the implementation of pilots in this therapeutic area, and we also helped develop a playbook of this process that the client could use to roll out to other therapeutic areas.

Key takeaways:

It is critical to showcase impact and value: We observed that, in order to ensure the implementation of ideas, you need to demonstrate tangible value. While the ideation process itself can be very exciting, the 'rubber meets the road' when you ask for funding from senior management to support these ideas. A lot of these efforts lose traction at this stage. It is therefore key to keep this end in mind, in order to ensure impact while engaging in this process. It is important to align on the level and rigor of the expected business case early on in the process.

Clarity on the innovation process is key: No matter how many high-quality ideas are generated within and outside the organization, you need a clear process in order to successfully leverage them. Market insights need to be captured on an ongoing basis, and prioritized based on strategic relevance and revenue potential. The company should not only encourage a culture of innovation, but should also provide clear channels through which ideas can be collected (from within as well as from outside the organization).

Innovation needs to be supported by an effective commercialization/go-to-market strategy: In today's ever-evolving market environment, speed to market is key for a company to stay relevant. As such, there has to be a clear focus on rapid commercialization following the collection, prioritization and use of innovative ideas in new product development.



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