

## **Innovation camp methodology**

The main goal of the innovation camp is to stimulate creativity in groups. Mastering creativity in groups requires an understanding of concepts such as creativity, group dynamics, the psychology of individuality or learning processes. However, there are several main principles that INNOCAMP PL has developed as a leader of more than 10 camps. They also apply to the work of educators.

First: , "Say YES! Participants and their ideas are fragile and sensitive in the initial stages, so say , "yes and..." instead of , "yes, but...". Build up camp participants' ideas and don't criticize them.

Use energizing exercises instead of breaks. When campers feel tired and lose concentration, energizing exercises will bring in new energy and improve concentration, while after a break people will be less focused and more lazy. According to a scientific experiment, people can work for up to 18 hours without breaks - except for lunch and dinner breaks - if they use energizing exercises.

Knowledge of all kinds is valuable. Participants should not represent one discipline. They should use all the knowledge they have, drawing it from all aspects of their lives. So avoid focusing on your participants' education, job or position.

At the beginning of the camp, avoid personal presentations that are designed to specifically highlight the occupation or skills of individual group members. In this way, group members will not judge a person's ideas by his or her background.

Allow mentors to direct the group's attention to building their own ideas rather than imposing their own. Encourage groups to give positive feedback, such as , "What I liked about your idea was..." or "...and then we could...".

Avoid discussions. In discussions, we want to win and be right. Discussion takes a competitive form, not a cooperative one. Mentors should try to eliminate group discussions and introduce cooperative forms of expression. Encourage them to combine different ideas and create one together.

One task, one due date. Assign groups only one task and set only one due date for return, if and only if the previous task has been completed. This way, participants can focus on the task and not worry about scheduling the process. When a group has to do more than one task, it wastes energy and time on planning and structuring. The role of the mentor is to control the process of the task and make the students feel responsible for the task given to them.

Divide the whole process into small tasks to avoid unnecessary thinking, planning and structuring. If the group spends more than 10-20 seconds understanding a task, it means that the task is too complex and should be divided into several smaller tasks.

Find new locations that participants have never visited before or ones that are rarely visited. This will ensure that participants do not have any habits associated with the location.

Before the start of the camp, collect all watches, cell phones and laptops so that participants are not distracted.

The innovation camp model is based on principles drawn from the field of innovation and entrepreneurship.

- **The principle of diversity:** diversity is important in two different ways. First, the students who attend the camp are from different specialties and work on a specific task in interdisciplinary groups. This is usually the first such experience for them. This phenomenon provides many benefits, such as insight into other specialties, a better and deeper understanding of one's own specialty, and results in the creation of more interesting ideas and innovative results than when working in a single disciplinary group. Secondly, students who attend the camp work in cooperation with the University and business companies. Through this cooperation, they apply theoretical knowledge and solve specific problems of the business world or volunteer/public organizations. They have the opportunity to meet and work with people who face such problems on a daily basis.
- **The principle of horizontal thinking:** this principle, which is also known as the "principle of divergent thinking," is very much related to the principle of diversity and signifies the need to think outside the box, be creative, innovative and interdisciplinary. Interdisciplinarity has been recognized before, for example, by De Bono, who observed that it was not a physiologist but an engineer who, through the use of multiplier knowledge, discovered the purpose of long loops in kidney tubules (De Bono, 1968). Moving between different fields of science is a well-known driver of idea generation and entrepreneurship. The best ideas are usually found at the intersection of different sectors, fields, disciplines and cultures (Johansson, 2004). Horizontal thinking is especially important in the early stages of the camp, when participants' minds are open to other fields of knowledge and people.
- **The principle of parallel thinking:** camp participants work in groups most of the time, where parallel thinking is very important to achieve cooperation and coordinated action (De Bono, 1995). Minds should be set on the challenge posed to the group and participants should give their best to work in the same direction, especially during the subsequent challenges/tasks at each stage of the camp. Despite the fact that disagreements and discussions are inevitable at camp, participants should display a constructive attitude and strive for a high level of concentration. Students should circumvent any obstacles and avoid misunderstandings. This may lead camp organizers and mentors to take practical steps to strengthen concentration, such as they may ask participants to give up their watches and cell phones for the duration of the workshop/camp.
- **Principle of Problem Orientation:** Problem Based Learning (PBL) is a very well-known approach in learning and often seen as a fundamental approach in the field of entrepreneurial teaching (Hanke et al., 2005). Knowledge and specific topics and issues are no longer delivered to , "passive learners," but are assimilated by , "active learners" who face a challenge as they try to solve a problem. The innovation camp model dictates that teaching , "about entrepreneurship" should be changed to teaching , "in entrepreneurship" and , "for entrepreneurship. The overall goal of learning is for students to acquire deep disciplinary knowledge combined with knowledge about entrepreneurship, innovation, leadership skills and experiences in the field. Therefore, personal qualities and skills must be trained. These include a sense of self-efficacy, the ability to recognize creativity and opportunities, the ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity, and complex problem solving.

- **The principle of learning by doing:** doing is a key element of the learning process during the innovation camp. Generally speaking: "doing, thinking and speaking" are the basic elements of such a process than , "listening, reading and memorizing" (Lobler, 2006; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2000). Action in the learning process is consistent with Kolb's experiment, based on the „learning circle," which suggests that practice (or simulated practice) is fundamental in the learning process (Kolb, 1984). However, it is worth remembering that in innovation camps, it is necessary to go beyond familiar practice through experimentation and future orientation to reach the „novelty".
- **The principle of future orientation:** creating/discovering, evaluating and exploiting bold ideas is the heart of the entrepreneurial field (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) - this implies the principle of future orientation. Developing ideas and pursuing innovative challenges means entering unknown territory rather than absorbing past and present knowledge. It is about perceiving and evaluating a possible future state or solution before it becomes a reality, labeled as , "present" (C. Otto Scharmer, 2007).
- **The principle of facilitation (facilitation):** facilitation is important for two reasons. First, the group needs attention and facilitation. Therefore, trained mentors (facilitators) monitor group processes and intervene when needed, advise the group on how to get rid of a barrier that inhibits their process, propel the process forward when ideas flow in too slowly, alleviate the psychological atmosphere and physical well-being of group members to maximize cooperation and concentration. Second, facilitation is needed in a slightly deeper sense, related to the learning process. Comparing an innovation camp to a traditional school lesson: here the role of the teacher is played by a mentor, and students are transformed from passive consumers into active producers of new knowledge.

In addition to these general principles, a number of specific principles can be identified for the organization and conduct of the camp process.

#### **Rules regarding innocamp logistics:**

- Neutral location, outside the university/classroom,
- Involvement of outsiders, especially from private companies,
- Well-defined roles: camp organizer, group mentors and participants,
- Participants divided into interdisciplinary groups.

#### **Rules for the camp process:**

- The process should be result/solution oriented and related to the overall goal of the camp,
- Participants should know only the basic and necessary information about the camp before it begins,
- The entire camp process should be carefully prepared and planned in detail,

- Mentors should stimulate or support the whole process through all kinds of treatments and movement exercises,
- Time pressure should drive the whole process.

The results of the camps are usually positive for students, business partners and university authorities alike. Evaluations and reports from the camps show clear results that prove that no one is left a loser and everyone is a winner. Students gain important and complementary educational experience, companies gain access to student resources and powerful input into the innovation processes they are working on, and university authorities gain new ideas on how to commercialize university patents and innovative ideas.