

Preface

In 15th-century Spain, the Port of Cádiz was a hub of ship builders, sailmakers, sailors, merchants, captains and rich noblemen. All these men had one thing in common – they shared the dream of unknown territory where great riches awaited. And fueled by this dream, they embarked on great adventures. They did not always chart the right course, were hit by storms and suffered disasters along the way. They learned new things and had to improvise with whatever they had at hand. And yet, because the captain and his crew believed in their dream and because they worked together to achieve a common goal, the seafarers ultimately did return to Spain with great riches.

Lean innovation is about discovering new territory and about efficient realization of a dream. We enjoy working in environments where focused action transforms dreams into results. Strategy and innovation have been our professional passion for more than ten years. And during that time, we have designed development organizations and innovation processes, produced product strategies and developed products. We have coached leaders, project managers and specialists in innovation work, and we have participated in development projects as sparring partners and coaches. All of this has taught us that innovation has the strongest impact on the bottom line, and creates the highest employee satisfaction when the company does a good job in a few key areas:

- Innovation work should be based on a good understanding of the customer's situation and needs.
- Participants and departments need to show respect, openness and responsibility.
- Management should ignite an innovation dream that is strong enough to overcome the challenges that arise during the process.
- Management should have an active and visible management style that helps the innovation projects achieve their goals.
- Progress, results and structure should be kept in focus so that good ideas and good intentions are not lost along the way.

In our experience, the companies that manage to be both 'soft' and 'hard' at the same time achieve the best innovation results.

We want to show you how leaders can work with these two aspects and reduce the distance between themselves and their knowledge workers while keeping their eye on the target.

This book is based on the premise that it is possible to improve knowledge and development work. No matter how good you are, you can always be better. Lean innovation is about creating an innovation system that continuously improves itself, so it becomes the company's primary competitive weapon.

Our work as management consultants has given us the opportunity to observe innovation processes in many different sectors, companies and functions. We want to express our thanks to the companies that have asked our advice on tackling innovation challenges. Our experiences from working with them form the foundation for this book.

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