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Managing innovative talents

How well-known companies attract, engage and retain the talents that drive their future

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Abstract

Innovation is the means for successful implementation of new ideas in the company to produce materials, processes, outputs, or services which are new to the company. The vision of any innovation driven company is accomplished with a good inflow of innovative talents blessed with the capabilities of thinking out of box and generating new ideas with the entrepreneurial mindset. Thereby, managing innovative talents i.e. identifying, attracting, engaging, and retaining innovative talents is of prime importance to companies.

Previous research has mostly focused on talent management, employee attractiveness and retention strategies from a general perspective and not specifically focusing on innovative talents. This study aims to study the practices used by well-known companies work to identify, attract, engage, and retain innovative employees with the help of different enablers and company elements like culture, employer branding, talent management and the company/management structure. It is built on mini case studies of ten companies identifying themselves as innovative as well as interviews from three experts.

Using qualitative research techniques, the study analyzes the perspectives of the HR/Employer Branding Manager, Innovation Managers, and Innovative Talents from the case companies to understand how they work with innovation and talent management. These perspectives are compared across the different case companies as well as within a single company. The findings indicate that all the surveyed case companies recognize the importance of innovation and work with it in varying degrees. Also, there are noticeable similarities and differences that can be observed among the case companies when classified according to their innovation maturity. Further, differences are also observed to be present in the perceptions of the different personnel within the same organization with regards to the research questions in the study.

The findings of this study offer a basis for future research to create a more comprehensive study of strategies to identify, attract, engage, and retain innovative talents with a global presence, comprising quantitative methods and an in-depth exploration of innovation. Further, the findings of the study can be used as a general guide for established as well as new companies aiming to work with innovation and managing innovative talents effectively.

Key words: Innovation, Identify, Attract, Engage, Retain, Talent Management, Employer Branding, Company Culture, Company Structure

Disclosure

This thesis is partly based on research conducted in collaboration with Claudia Sundberg. The shared material used in this thesis consists of 29 interviews that were conducted together. Earlier versions of this thesis have chapters that were written partly in collaboration. Therefore, the introduction, theoretical framework and methodology chapters partly consist of sources and text from earlier versions that have been sourced and written together during the collaboration. The analysis, discussion and conclusion sections were written individually. Hence, the final text is the author's responsibility.

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1. Introduction

The first chapter introduces the study's topic covering a background of the subject's importance and how it has been studied previously. Following the aims and objectives leads up to the purpose of the study and the research questions it aims to answer.

“Innovation” - This is a word that has become synonymous with companies looking towards staying relevant and ahead of the emerging trends in an increasingly VUCA world. As ideas, technologies and ways of interaction keep changing rapidly, simply being consistent is not sufficient for a company to thrive. Rather, companies are embracing innovation, making efforts towards recruiting innovative individuals and making conscious efforts to incorporate it into their work culture. Morad, Ragonis and Barak (2021) states that interest in innovation has increased in the latest decades, resulting in a variety of non-unified definitions.

A similar claim is echoed in (Mayfield, 2011) where they mention that obtaining a consensus definition is difficult since innovation has been studied across all different academic disciplines. Therefore, Morad, Ragonis and Barak (2021) aimed to define a comprehensive conceptual model of innovation via analyzing and synthesizing 100 definitions of innovation. They suggest a multidisciplinary definition:

“Innovation is defining a need or a problem, generating new or changed ideas, and developing an outcome in accordance with new or changed ideas, implementing a new or improved outcome for the addressee, and adopting a new or improved outcome with added value.” page 11

As stated by Damanpour (1991, cited in Mitropoulos et al. 2000), innovation can be technological such as a new product or a process technology, or administrative as in case of a new structure or administrative system pertaining to company members. Similarly, Amabile & Fisher (2015) refer to innovation as the successful implementation of creative ideas by a company, meaning to produce materials, processes or outputs that are new to the company, while the opposite of innovation would be routine operation. This description helps to shed light to Morad, Ragonis & Barak's definition since it also presents an opposite to the concept of innovation. Therefore, these two descriptions together form the full picture of how innovation is defined in the theory chapter of this study.

Innovation can occur in different forms depending on its origins. When a new technology/business practice disrupts the existing markets and poses challenges to incumbent business, it can be categorized as *disruptive innovation* (Christensen, Raynor, and McDonald, 2013). On the other hand, innovations involving the application of significantly new technologies or ideas into markets that are either nonexistent or require dramatic behavior changes to existing markets are categorized as *radical innovations* (McDermott, and O'connor, 2002).

Innovation can also arise from the improvement of existing technologies/business models. *Incremental innovation* can be defined as making improvements or additions to a company while maintaining the company's core product or service model (Rubin and Abramson, 2018).

Similarly, when a company is partial to a product or process and it simply wants to improve them to advance efficiencies, it can be termed as *sustaining innovation* (Wong, and Sambaluk, 2016).

The importance of innovation and pursuing an innovative strategy has been discussed in numerous studies. According to (Geroski and Machin, 1992), the success of well-known companies depends largely on the development and application of highly innovative technologies and products. They observe that competitive pressures in most markets are so strong that firms must innovate to survive. Similar thoughts are also expressed in the work of (Mayfield, 2011) where they mention that innovation is a driving force of the 21st century and there is a constant need for businesses to innovate. They further observe that performance is the most highly studied innovation outcome.

The importance of innovation and the adoption of innovation-based strategies as a driving force behind growth is evident from the preceding discussion. However, managing and driving innovation is a non-trivial task. Igartua, Garrigós, and Hervas-Oliver, 2010 discuss that one of the key challenges in designing an innovative environment is that it may require redesigning the company. Companies or upper management may not always be receptive to such changes. Unfortunately, complacency is not an option in today's fast-moving world.

As discussed in (Cole, 2019), well-established brands like Blockbuster and Toys R Us had to shut down simply because they did not adapt themselves and their business models with the changing times. Their reluctance to innovate caused them to lose out to the emerging digital marketing segment to other players. Even though both these well-known companies had a huge and dedicated customer base, their complacency and not being able to see the vision for the future and adapting accordingly is what cost them their business.

A company needs to put in place the appropriate framework and strategies to manage innovation. According to Riederer, Baier, and Graefe (2005), innovation management is the economic implementation and exploitation of new ideas and discoveries. They also define innovation management to cover the implementation of an innovation culture in a company. As discussed in Tidd & Bessant (2018), managing innovation requires skills and knowledge significantly different to the standard management experience, because most management training is aimed to maintain stability.

Additionally, as Klein & Knight (2005) observe, innovation management should include efforts to implement innovative ideas successfully. According to the authors, the failure of an innovation to achieve the gains expected is often reflective of the ineffectiveness of the implementation process rather than the innovation.

It is important to understand what the 'management' part of innovation entails and the job of an innovation manager. According to Bočková (2010), an innovation manager should be characterized by qualities like activity, intuition, finding associations, the art of working with metaphors and inspiration, logic, energy, knowledge of the area in which the person operates. The definition of innovation management by Riederer, Baier, and Graefe (2005) mentions the

term 'innovation culture'. As discussed in Subramanian 1996, well-known companies driven by innovation have distinguishable characteristics from non-innovative companies. Wan, Ong & Lee (2005) identified five factors that are conducive to nurture innovation in well-known companies – decentralized structure; presence of company resources; belief that innovation is important; willingness to take risks and willingness to exchange ideas. Hansen & Grosse-Dunker (2012) caution against promoting an innovation culture where success is measured purely on economic terms leaving no incentives for well-known companies to focus on how to address social and environmental aspects.

Innovation management is one perspective to understand how companies adopt innovation. But what about the people who are responsible for creating and implementing the innovative ideas? Denti (2018) describes how previous researchers have studied some of the world's most innovative companies and how they place emphasis on recruitment as a key to their adaptability in a changing world. As discussed in (OECD, 2000), several studies have shown that a lack of qualified employees represents one of the biggest barriers for innovation.

Cerinsek & Dolinsek 2009 proposes that well-known companies should pay more attention to identifying creative employees who possess proactive entrepreneurial potentials as well. Sommer, Heidenreich & Handrich, 2016 identify that a main priority of well-known companies is to recruit potentials that are characterized by an innovative and creative personality. Further, they also mention that recruiting high potentials is the foundation for creating knowledge and innovation. Clearly, the recruitment and retention of talents with an innovative mindset is a key point for achieving innovation.

The identification of innovative talents is a challenging task. Cerinsek & Dolinsek, 2009 propose the use of a questionnaire that concentrates on measuring talents' attitudes towards the identified underlying characteristics of innovation competency. However, the authors also conclude that research is still ongoing towards developing a model for identifying and developing talents' innovation competency that consists of quantitative and qualitative methods.

In contrast, Hunter, S.T., Cushenbery, L. & Friedrich, T., 2012 discuss the limitations of the use of questionnaires and situational judgement tests to identify innovative talent as they are dependent on how the responses are scored. Similarly, Sommer, Heidenreich & Handrich, 2016 observe that current literature falls short to provide empirical evidence on whether and how the communication of company innovativeness affects employer attractiveness and especially attracts innovative talents.

Clearly, the identification and retention of innovative talent by well-known companies is a question that does not have a single defining answer. There are suggestions and techniques proposed in the literature to identify innovative talent, but these come with their own set of limitations. In this thesis, I aim to explore and gain insights about the relationship between innovation driven well-known companies and innovative talents. Specifically, I try to understand how well-known companies driven by innovation make efforts to identify, attract, engage, and retain innovative talent as well as design a culture that is conducive to innovation.

I also strive to examine the differences in perspective of innovation managers, innovative talents, and human resources (all part of the same company) when it comes to the meaning of innovation for them. Further, I will also examine the innovation management practices and strategies within a single company as well as comparing them across all the surveyed companies.

1.1 Aim & Objectives

This study aims to explore how the well-known companies work to attract, engage and retain innovative talents and to understand the perspectives of the innovative talents on what makes them attracted, engaged and motivated to stay within the companies. The first objective of the study is to conduct ten in-depth mini case studies on different well-known companies to understand how these companies work to attract and retain innovative talents.

The interviews with three different types of informants were conducted – talent working with HR/Employer Branding, employee working with managing the innovative employees, and employee who is considered as innovative and has been in the company for a considerable amount of time as acknowledged by the other informants. By comparing the different mini case studies on these popular companies, it will be possible to understand the similarities and differences in the strategies they have in place from the HR/ Employer Branding and Innovation Manager’s perspectives in order to attract, engage and retain the innovative talents within the company.

Also, it will help the reader to understand whether they are in line with the perspectives of what made the innovative person attracted to and motivated to stay within the company. Further, another objective of this study is to interview three ‘experts’ in related fields to explore which company elements described below help with influencing attraction and retention of innovative talents.

1.2 Research purpose

The value of this study lies in the fact that it will illustrate how Talent Management, Innovation, Employer Branding and Company Culture help the company to attract engage and retain the innovative talents. This study will help to address the gaps in the current available research by using the perspectives of important innovation drivers of the company i.e. the innovation managers and the HR/Employer Managers to get innovative talents in the company and also understand the motivating reasons for the innovative talents to stay within the company. This study will also be useful for companies to gain an understanding on perspectives of attraction, engagement and retention that are similar or different across different roles within the companies.

Further, as compared to existing literature who base their innovation management surveys on companies working in a specific sector/domain, I will use responses drawn from companies working in different domains and use these perspectives to compare and contrast how they are working with working with branding strategies to attract the right talent , managing and

retaining the innovative talents, creating an environment and culture for fostering innovation and find patterns of similarity and differences among them.

This study is intended to find answers to the following research questions:

- How the Human Resources/ Employer branding Managers are working to attract, engage and retain the innovative talents?
- How the Innovation Manager works with innovation and engage with the innovative talents?
- What attracts innovative talent to these companies?
- What motivates innovative talent to stay with these companies?

Although the following questions were not part of my primary formulation, I found these company elements important while conducting the interviews. These aspects are important to be considered to provide answers to the primary questions.

The secondary questions are:

- How does the innovation culture play an important role in attracting, engaging, and retaining the innovative talents?
- How does the hierarchy/structure of the company help in attracting, engaging, and retaining the innovative talents?
- How does employer branding and talent management help in attracting and retaining the innovative talents?

1.3 Delimitations

The primary delimitation of this study is that it works with a limited sample set of 10 well-known companies operating from Sweden. Due to this small sample size, it may not be accurate to generalize the observations in this study to all companies across the country. Further, since all the chosen companies are operating in Sweden, it can result in the country culture and practices influencing the company practices and add a certain bias to the results. The selection of companies from different countries would have been a feasible way to reduce the impact of this bias.

Also, this study narrows down the focus on talent management in innovation by analyzing the perspectives of HR, innovation managers and innovative talents. However, the role of innovation as a performance indicator, innovation audits and standards are a part of engaging and retaining the innovative talents within a company that I choose to not explore in this study. Consequently, the results of this study do not reflect these factors influencing talent management and the analysis part of this study does not cover the innovative talent management problem comprehensively. The results of this study are primarily of a qualitative

nature derived from comparing the different perspectives obtained from the different members in the company.

Aspects of innovation pertaining to sustainability, environmental and societal responsibilities, and their role in attracting, engaging, and retaining the innovative talents in the company are considered in this study. With an increasing importance placed by innovative talents on a company's performance across these factors while selecting a place to work, it might be worthwhile to augment the results obtained by incorporating these factors in a future version of the study, if possible. That would allow one to understand how these factors impact the talent management aspect in addition to the conventional metrics used in this study.

1.4 Thesis outline

The remainder of the thesis is organized as follows

Chapter 2 - Theoretical Framework: Relevant literature is presented in this chapter which is further divided into three parts. The first part covers previous research related to the primary research questions. The second part covers previous research related to aspects found in the empirical material as relevant to the secondary research question. The third part combines and summarizes the two previous parts in a conceptual model.

Chapter 3 - Methodology: The chapter presents the research approach, method, design, and a detailed description of the research process with discussions on ethical considerations. The chapter will conclude with the scientific criteria.

Chapter 4 - Empirical Material: This chapter presents the ten in-depth case company descriptions. This chapter will also discuss the descriptions of the expert interviews related to the secondary research questions.

Chapter 5 - Analysis discussion and findings: The chapter discusses in detail the order of the companies based on their innovation maturity. This chapter will also deal with the comparison of the key aspects from the perspectives of HR/Employer Branding Manager, Innovation Manager, and the Innovative Person to provide answers to the primary research questions by comparing the case companies.

Along with this, the chapter also discusses the similarities and differences in the perspectives of the HR/Employer Branding Manager, Innovation Manager, and the Innovative Person within the case companies. To answer the secondary research questions, the chapter further presents more empirical material from the expert informant's interviews and compares the identifiable patterns found in the empirical material to previous research. The chapter ends by presenting the limitations of the study.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion: This chapter concludes the research questions, presents practical implications and suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

The following chapter defines and describes aspects, theories, and previous research relevant to the fulfil the purpose of the study. The chapter is divided into three parts, the first covers a literature review on the primary research question connected to the talent management of innovative people. The second part covers a literature review of the secondary research question, describing company elements related to the attraction, engagement, and retention of innovative talents.

This will further illustrate what makes the talents stay with the company together with the efforts made by HR and management structure to increase employee engagement. The concluding part covers a conceptual model combining the sub-chapters to conclude how the topics could be related in an analysis with a short summary.

2.1 Talent Management

Talent management as a system of knowledge-based human resource management practice has several connotations both in practice and theory (Story, 2007). According to Scullion and Collings (2011), talent management is the group of activities concerned with talent attraction, selection, development, and retention of employees in strategic company positions. In its widest form, talent management is concerned with identifying, developing, engaging/retaining, and deploying of "talent" in a particular company setting (CIPD, 2006).

As discussed earlier, the primary research questions in this study pertain to the efforts made by human resources/employer branding managers and innovation managers to attract, engage, and retain innovative talents as well as what attracts and motivates innovative talents to stay with well-known companies. In the first sub-section, I explore how companies attract innovative talent. This is followed by a discussion on the techniques used to assess innovativeness during the hiring process as well as what makes innovative talents stay with a company.

2.1.1 Attracting innovative talent

Ambler and Barrow (1996) define the employer brand in terms of benefits, calling it “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company. A different definition is given in (Sullivan, 2004) that defines employer branding as “a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm”. Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, identify that brands are among a firm’s most valuable assets and are increasingly being used in human resource management. They also highlight the fact that firms are using employer branding to attract recruits.

The impact of employer branding on the performance of a company is discussed in (Aldousari, Robertson, Yajid, M.S.A. and Ahmed 2017). They use qualitative and quantitative research methods to demonstrate that an advanced employer branding strategy leads to increased productivity. Although the study does not directly talk about using branding as a way to attract talent, one can correlate the observations from previously discussed studies to infer that

talented individuals who become a part of an company based on employer branding will contribute positively with regards to productivity.

The role of employer branding in attracting human capital to a company is explored in (Wilden, Gudergan & Ling, 2010). The authors observe that the product brands of a prospective employer appear to influence the decision-making process of potential employees. (Elving, Westhoff, Meeusen and Schoonderbeek, 2013) also discuss the role that employer branding plays in job advertisements to attract talented individuals by doing a comparative study of job advertisements. Their analysis of the results indicated that potential employees strongly valued employer branding when looking at job advertisements.

Also, employer branding was also a strong measure through which potential employees gauged their possible future relationship with the company. Similar observations are made in Chhabra and Sharma 2014 as well. According to their survey, prospective employees show a strong preference for the brand name as well as the corporate culture while choosing a place of work. The importance of employer branding and the efforts of companies to invest into creating a brand name are discussed in Moroko & Uncles, 2008; Martin, Gollan & Grigg, 2011 as well.

In the context of this thesis, the next question to ponder upon is – how does employer branding play a role in attracting innovative talent? It is well established in several studies that the ability of companies to innovate is related to the knowledge of its employees (Khandekar and Sharma, 2005) (OECD, 2000). However, as discussed in Sommer, Heidenreich, and Handrich 2017, previous studies have focused on employee attractiveness in general and not on the investigation of factors that attract innovative employees.

They use this as a basis for their own study to determine what these attraction factors are. They observe that potential employees with an innovative mindset value an innovative company environment. Based on their study, the authors observe that innovation culture and the innovations in the product portfolio of a company are an important key to attracting innovative employees. They propose the development of an employer branding strategy based on these aspects to increase the prospect of hiring innovative employees.

Martin, Gollan and Grigg (2011) examines the employer branding strategy development over ten years for the Royal bank of Scotland (RBS). In this case, out of several steps taken by human resources, leadership, and senior management to achieve the desired employer branding results, there is a strong emphasis on increased focus on innovation. The RBS study highlights innovation as a key factor for building a positive brand image. RBS also increased focus on learning which generated new and innovative ideas. This observation is consistent with the ones in Ukko and Saunilla (2013) and Johnson and Johnson (2004). These studies establish the interlinked nature of learning, innovation, and brand image.

However, there are certain challenges pertaining to employer branding. As discussed in (Edwards, 2012), an overzealous strategy towards employer branding driven purely from a marketing standpoint may drive a rift between HR and the rest of the company. According to this study, companies may focus less on the overall well-being of employees and use them to achieve a positive corporate brand image. Similar concerns are also raised in (Aggerholm, H.K., Andersen, S.E. and Thomsen, C., 2011) which talks about the importance of adapting

the employer branding strategy with respect to the current situation of a company and societal pressures.

Based on the discussion, employer branding is an important part of a company's effort to attract talent. However, the relationship between employer branding and its role in attracting innovative talent has not received extensive attention from the research community. The existing research primarily focuses on what could be the factors to attract innovative talent. In this study, I strive to explore and understand the steps taken by the human resources and innovation managers of a company to attract innovative talent and the role of employer branding therein.

2.1.2 Identifying innovative talent

According to the study in Sommer, Heidenreich, and Handrich, 2017, a main priority of companies is to recruit high potentials characterized by an innovative and creative personality. The question to ask here is – how do companies identify innovative talent?

Jaussi and Benson, 2012 identify that creative people differ from their colleagues as they possess a set of unique personality traits and characteristics. They discuss a variety of techniques to identify such individuals – using puzzles and scavenger hunts, reaching out to online communities through gaming, viral video and social media, programming contests and creative internships. According to the authors, identifying creative employees is challenging as it requires a rethink and redesign of the recruitment process.

Cerinsek and Dolinsek, 2009 identifies innovation as the overlap between entrepreneurship and creativity. They argue that some people (e.g., creative inventors) are good at creating, conceptualizing, and generating ideas, but weak at realizing them. Companies should therefore pay more attention to identifying creative talents who possess proactive entrepreneurial potentials as well. The authors propose using questionnaires that concentrate on measuring talents' attitudes towards characteristics of innovation competency to identify innovative talent. However, the authors also conclude that research is still ongoing towards developing a model for identifying and developing employees' innovation competency that consists of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Hunter, Cushenbery, and Friedrich, (2012) discuss the factors to focus on while hiring innovative people. The aim of most interviews is to assess a candidate's disposition or personality (Huffcutt, Conway, Roth, & Stone, 2001). Despite this goal, it is frequently unclear what is being measured in an interview, particularly in unstructured interviews. Interviewers' assessments of personality, for example, have been found to be more highly correlated with cognitive ability than the personality trait interviewers are trying to assess. They propose the use of situational judgment tests (SJTs) that provide candidates with a scenario or situation and ask them to provide a response indicating how they would or should behave in that setting.

Amar & Mullanelly 2017 discuss the use of psychometric tests and other formal tools to assess and identify innovative talents. They identify the traits and qualities of an innovative person and evaluate a set of commonly used personality assessment tests (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)) to understand how these can be used to identify innovative talents. When using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) test, they observe that personality type ENTJ

(Extraverted, Intuitive, Thinking, and Judging) is the most innovative. On the other hand, when they evaluate the DISC personality assessment and the DISC personality types, they conclude that someone who has both Driver and Influence tendencies would be the best innovator.

Based on the preceding discussion, it can be observed that companies and recruiters are relying on a combination of several different techniques and approaches to identify creative and innovative talent. When discussing the use of psychometric tests to identify innovative people, Amar & Mullanelly 2017 discuss that determining full personality types as a result of answering a few “yes” and “no” questions may not be always accurate as people are dynamic by nature and their current state of mind may influence their answers. As a result, these studies may not always be accurate.

The caution behind using these tests is discussed in Boštjančič and Slana, 2018 where they observe that the most common activities that companies reported in relation to attracting talented employees from the market were scholarships and cooperation with universities. They observe that very few companies participating in their study use psychometric testing to identify talent, and even fewer use evaluation centers. They also mention that their study results indicate that they are still unable to provide a uniform definition of the talent management process. Marshall, 2015 observes that recruitment processes and practices based on outdated standards may not be suitable for identifying creative and dynamic people.

Clearly, the identification and assessment of innovative and creative talent is a non-trivial task. Since innovation and creativity is a human trait that can manifest itself in several ways, having a standardized one-size-fits-all approach to assess these qualities is challenging. Cerinsek and Dolinsek, 2009 observe that research has demonstrated that to gain reliable and valid information on employees’ innovation competency, a mixture of methods should be carried out. Based on the discussion in the preceding paragraphs, companies are revamping their recruitment techniques to better identify such talent.

On the other hand, it can also be interesting to understand if companies can identify someone who has a potential for innovation but do not identify themselves as an innovative individual. As Cerinsek and Dolinsek, 2009 observe, creativity and entrepreneurship are both important aspects of innovation but it’s highly possible that these qualities are not found in the same person. In this case, it would be beneficial for companies to identify people with complementary personality traits and put them in groups together to drive innovation-based growth. In this study, I try to understand the strategies and techniques the surveyed companies use to identify and assess innovative talent.

2.1.3 Engaging innovative talents

According to Saks and Gruman, 2014, employee engagement has been identified by many writers as the key to a company’s success and competitiveness. There are various definitions of employee engagement. An early definition can be found in Kahn, 1990 where it is defined as “the harnessing of company members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”. Shuck and Wollard, 2010 define employee engagement as “an individual

employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired company outcomes". In other words, employee engagement is needed to ensure that employees remain dedicated and focused towards realizing the vision of a company.

So, what are the factors and company practices that result in a high employee engagement? According to Anitha, 2014, the following factors predict employee engagement – workplace, wellbeing, compensation program, team and co-worker relationship, leadership, working environment, policies and procedures, training, and career development. The same study also establishes a positive link between employee engagement and employee performance. Similarly, Joshi and Sodhi, 2011 identify the following six management functions as determinants for employee engagement - job content, compensation/monetary benefits, work-life balance, top-management employee relations, scope for advancement and career growth, and team orientation/teamwork.

Osborne and Hammoud, 2017 conclude that the bond between leaders and employees is an essential element for engaging employees and identify the following themes to increase employee engagement – rewards and recognition, empowering employees and building a bond between leaders and employees. Rao, 2017 places emphasis on building trust, finding out aspirations and expectations of employees and assigning tasks, accordingly, improving employee attitudes, creating a healthy company culture, encouraging creativity, empowering employees, and caring for their mental wellbeing as some of the key techniques to create an effective employee engagement strategy.

As can be seen from the preceding discussion, employee engagement is an important factor in determining the productivity and success of a company. Management as well as human resources need to be involved to build and sustain a workplace environment that fosters engagement and is attractive to potential employees as well (Lockwood, 2007). The next question to ponder upon is this – what are some of the factors that influence the engagement of innovative talent?

According to the study by Nawaz, Hassan, Hassan, Shaukat, and Asadullah, 2014 in the manufacturing sector of Pakistan, employee performance improves when they feel that the company is considerate of them. This feeling is augmented by the presence of training and empowerment programs that increase employee engagement which in turn is found to have a positive effect on employee creativity. Gichohi, 2014 proposes the hypothesis that the level of employee engagement will be positively related to the level of staff creativity and innovation.

Based on a survey among library workers in Kenya, the author illustrates this correlation and highlights that employee engagement assumes a critical precursor role to creativity and innovation at the workplace. According to Sundaray, 2011, empowerment is an important factor influencing employee engagement. The leaders of high engagement workplaces create a trustful environment in which employees are encouraged to give input and innovative ideas to move the company forward. Slåtten and Mehmetoglu, 2011 identify three drivers that lead to creative employees capable of exhibiting innovative behavior – empowerment, company vision and commitment. A successful employee engagement program is an important way to realize these driving factors.

Unsworth and Parker, 2003 argue that engagement and innovation are both intentional acts and are linked to tasks. In a similar vein, Richman, 2006 discusses that highly engaged employees are motivated, use their experience and creativity to satisfy customers and deliver results, know how to take intelligent risks, and exert extraordinary effort to do whatever it takes to make and keep the company successful.

Rao, 2016 conducts a survey with employees drawn from five leading innovation companies in India to understand the link between engagement and innovation. According to the results, majority of the respondents stated that there is a close and positive relationship between employee engagement and innovation. They strongly believe that engaged employees perform at a higher level and bring passion and interest to their job, which often leads to innovation in the workplace. The study goes on to conclude that good innovation and engagement practices are inextricably linked.

Kumar and Raghavendran, 2015 observe that the company culture must be infused with a creative spirit to drive innovation. To achieve this goal, the authors created a firm-wide contest called Maverick to kindle playful engagement and creativity. The authors discuss that a post completion survey of the contest impact illustrated that employees thought it had a positive impact on attributes like teamwork, challenging environment, motivation, learning and development and reward and recognition.

The work by Ukko and Saunilla (2013) strives to study the relationship between reflection-based learning and innovation as well as how reflection can drive innovation. The authors argue that since reflection involves learning from and thinking about past actions with a view towards influencing the future, it is a natural fit for driving innovation. Based on their interviews with the company, the authors concluded that a reflection-based strategy facilitates innovation by providing a common platform for employees to express their ideas.

As Rao, 2016 observes, although there have been several studies in the field of innovation and employee engagement, there is little systematic understanding of how engagement can drive innovation in companies. This subject is still not a well-studied area in academic research field, though many of the studies have been carried out by management consultancies and research houses. However, a common theme running across the papers surveyed in this section is that engaged and empowered employees are better motivated and equipped to handle innovation related challenges.

An effective employee engagement that can align employees to the company's vision, provide adequate learning and training opportunities, scope for career growth and positive interaction with management leads to committed and dedicated employees. These employees can then take on challenges that require them to think outside the box and rise to the creative challenge. In this study, I try to explore the perspectives of human resources (HR) and management towards engagement strategies for innovative talent.

2.1.4 Retaining innovative talent

A company can only sustain its innovation driven output if the innovative talent remains loyal to the company and produces output of the desired quality. In other words, merely identifying, recruiting, and engaging innovative talent is not enough – companies must ensure that these talents are retained. The retention of innovative talent is an important aspect that merits analysis from two aspects – the requirements of the innovative talent that make them stay and the efforts taken by the company to provide an environment conducive to innovation.

Nolan, 2015 discusses the expectations of millennial employees from their workplace and the strategies management and HR of innovative companies need to put in place to retain these employees. According to the study, the primary sources of dissatisfaction among employees are – lack of work-life balance, lack of meaning in the work, low enticement, and management styles. In order to address these issues, strategies such as flexible work arrangements, the use of internal branding to add a higher emotional value to the company's relationship with its employees, matching employee job tasks with business goals, high levels of enticement and an open business environment that promotes activity and self-development and viewing employees as individuals with unique needs and talents are discussed in the study. Management as well as HR needs to be involved in executing these strategies.

Similar thoughts are expressed in France, Leahy, and Parsons, 2009 as well where the authors identify current issues related to how R&D companies are responding to their human resources challenges to ensure viability of their workforce. Apart from work-life balance and managerial support, the study also discusses the importance of giving employees the support to strengthen their personal motivations to embark upon an innovative path. The authors discuss the use of feedback loops to ensure that individuals contributing innovative ideas early in a process get to know about the valuable outcomes they enabled, even if that value is not truly known for several years.

They also discuss the notion of sponsors as an associate who takes on a formal commitment to support another associate's success. The authors propose that these sponsors act as a safety net for the innovative employees and advocate for time, resources, and opportunities for them. Further, the authors observe that employees need to witness measurable steps in their development failing which they either leave or become demotivated. The use of sponsors to support innovative talent is also discussed in Osborn, and Marion, 2009 and Kanter, 1985.

According to Van Dijk, 2008, an integrated talent management approach ensures the balance alignment between talented people and their role. They observe that retaining talent through development and mentoring is an integral part of successful implementation. Kaye, and Jordan-Evans, 2001 identify that HR and managers should be both involved in the retention of key talent in companies. They propose that HR must be the designers of systemic retention processes, and they must be strategic thinkers. The day-to-day responsibility for keeping talented people, however, falls to managers and line employees. The following programs and processes are discussed to build retention strength: manager training, individual coaching, career development, one-on-one coaching programs for high-retention-risk people, and accountability mechanisms for all managers.

Hytter, 2007 highlights that workplace factors such as rewards, leadership style, career opportunities, training and development of skills, physical working conditions, and work-life balance, have an indirect influence on retention. Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy, and Baert, 2011 assess the influence of a learning and working climate on the retention of employees. The authors define the learning and working climate as the environment wherein employees both learn and work. This climate is characterized by guidance and appreciation at work; pressure of work; the amount of empowerment and the responsibility that employees experience; choice in job tasks and development; provision of challenging and meaningful work; and advancement and development opportunities.

Based on their survey results, the authors conclude that an “Appreciative learning and working climate” has the most predictive value in terms of retention. They observe that when companies want to retain their employees it is important to pay attention to the learning of employees. Employees who experience an appreciative learning climate in their company are more inclined to keep on working in that company. The positive impact of effective training and the presence of learning and development opportunities on employee retention is discussed in Hiltrop, 1999, Arnold, 2005, Herman, 2005 as well.

Based on the discussion in the preceding paragraphs, it can be seen that innovative talents look for work-life balance, incentives, an environment that fosters innovation, a strong support system for pursuing innovative work and the feeling of being of value to an company as strong reasons to remain attached with an company. The presence of an appreciative learning climate along with sufficient learning and development opportunities is another positive aspect that is associated with employee retention.

HR and management need to make sure that these aspects of employees are taken care of. This involves closely liaising with the employees to identify their areas of dissatisfaction and take appropriate steps to mitigate them. According to the observations from the surveyed literature, HR needs to be involved in designing and leading the strategy whereas the manager should be more involved in the day-to-day responsibility. The existing literature mostly studies the employee retention problem from a single perspective. In this study, I aim to approach this problem from the perspectives of different actors within a company and see if the visions of these actors align or diverge greatly from each other. I believe that this would yield an interesting set of observations to see how perspectives can differ even within a single company aiming to realize a single vision.

2.2 Company elements

In this section, company elements that contribute towards driving and nurturing innovation are discussed. These include a discussion on the practices of innovation management, origins of innovation, and innovation culture and environment.

2.2.1 Innovation management and company structure

What constitutes effective innovative management for a company? As the term suggests, it is important to understand what the ‘management’ part of innovation entails. This is where the job of an innovation manager comes into play. According to Bočková (2010), the main task

of innovation managers should consist of managing and controlling changes in the company based on the responses to internal and external stimuli of environment, in which the company operates, familiarization with a new look at the company from the perspective of the processes. The study also mentions that an innovation manager should be characterized by qualities such as activity, intuition, finding associations, the art of working with metaphors and inspiration, logic, energy, knowledge of the area in which the person operates and many others.

Similar opinions are expressed in Damanpour & Schneider (2009). As part of their study on managers in public companies, they postulate that personal characteristics of a manager play a more crucial role in the adoption of innovation than demographic characteristics. However, innovation management is not a trivial task. Ortt & Van der Duin (2008) discuss that innovation management takes place in an internal and external environment.

Strategy and company structure are important aspects of a company's internal environment, and they have an impact on innovation management practices. Further, Tidd & Bessant (2018) point out that challenges to innovation management also arise from the changes to the operating context of a company. They argue that current challenges around sustainability, development, energy, health, and automation, can be better understood and met by returning to the more fundamental innovation management themes, rather than by re-inventing fads and frameworks.

One fundamental paradox for companies is the conflict between prioritizing what is of importance today (operational work) and what is of importance tomorrow (innovative work), companies that manage to balance the two are referred to as ambidextrous. The impact and importance of having an innovation-based strategy in companies has been studied from different perspectives. Chen and Liu (2019) discuss how having an open innovation strategy can drive this ambidexterity in companies. They differentiate between exploratory and exploitative innovation as discussed in Reilly and Tushman (2013) and discuss strategies to mention the tension between these two approaches.

Exploratory innovation is focused on searching and experimenting with new knowledge whereas exploitative innovation involves refining existing strategies. Ambidexterity in a company, therefore, also refers to achieving the balance between these two strategies. According to Chen and Liu (2019) and the empirical studies presented their work, having both an inbound and outbound open innovation strategy can be a key enabler for achieving ambidexterity. Innovation management and leadership is complex, requires ambidexterity and to take in a vast amount of aspects in consideration.

2.2.2 Innovation culture and environment

After the innovative talents have been identified and recruited by a company, they become a part of the company. The next step is to make these new employees familiar with the company through the process of onboarding. According to Cable, Gino, and Staats, 2013, the onboarding of these new employees involves hearing about why the company they have joined is so special. They learn about the company's founders, its values and why they should be proud to be a part

of the company. The overriding goal is to show new employees “how things are done around here” and to instill in them a sense of pride in their new affiliation.

Graybill, Carpenter, Offord, Piorun, and Shaffer, 2013 assess the onboarding process in libraries and identify the following best practices recommended for onboarding – socialization, policies, safety, communication, mentoring/buddy, significant program length, checklist for all levels; and unique activities identified by individual institutions. According to Pike, 2014 onboarding programs are designed to drive faster time to productivity, reduce turnover rates and in turn, turnover costs, and drive assimilation of the company culture and values. Bauer, 2010 enumerates the four ‘C’s related to employee onboarding – compliance, clarification, culture and connection.

What about the demands placed by innovation on the onboarding process? When a company hires innovative talent, it is important to ensure that the onboarding process of these employees involves ways to align them to innovation vision and culture of the company. Mazzei, Flynn, and Haynie, 2016 discuss that an onboarding process that facilitates innovation should involve formal socialization practices such as employee orientation programs that emphasize innovation expectations. The authors discuss that the onboarding process should entail making innovation a part of the daily routine of employees. They also propose the involvement of top executives as well as non-managerial employees in the onboarding process.

Michaelis and Markham, 2017 propose that innovation should be made a core competency through innovation training. Based on their survey responses, the authors identify that companies expect new hires to have innovative skills and are not actively engaged in developing an innovative mindset among them. To alleviate this problem, the authors propose that managers should develop onboarding procedures that incorporate innovation competency tests.

Caldwell and Peters, 2018 indicate that onboarding should include efforts to engage, empower and appreciate employees as this results in employees contributing creative ideas and driving the company’s growth. Bočková, 2010 places the responsibilities of leading and inspiring employees towards the path of innovation on the innovation manager. According to the study, the innovation manager should also be a creative person himself/herself to successfully lead a team of creative people.

As discussed in Graybill, Carpenter, Offord, Piorun, and Shaffer, 2013, a common theme at many companies onboarding processes is indoctrinating new employees into the company culture. Consistent with this observation and the discussion in Mazzei, Flynn, and Haynie, 2016, innovative talent should be provided information about the innovation culture of the company. As discussed in Subramanian 1996, companies that are driven by innovation have identifiable and distinguishable company characteristics from non-innovative companies. Dobni, 2008 proposes a model of an innovation culture with four contexts representing different dimensions of innovation – intention, infrastructure, influence, and implementation.

According to Klein & Knight (2005), companies need to make sure that innovative ideas are implemented successfully. They propose that a company’s climate for innovation implementation, i.e. employees’ shared perceptions of the importance of innovation

implementation within the company is a critical factor. When this climate is strong and positive, employees regard innovation use as a top priority.

Wan, Ong & Lee (2005) identified five factors that are conducive to nurture innovation in companies – decentralized structure; presence of company resources; belief that innovation is important; willingness to take risks and willingness to exchange ideas. Similarly, Dombrowski, Kim, Desouza, Braganza, Papagari, Baloh, and Jha (2007) identify eight elements of innovative culture in a company - Innovative mission and vision statements, democratic communication, safe spaces, flexibility, collaboration, boundary spanning, incentives, and leadership. However, they also caution against the fact that all these elements may not be suitable for a given company and companies must carefully choose the elements relevant for them.

Onboarding entails making new employees aware of the environment and culture of the company and aligning them to the vision of the company. The existing literature in this context mainly focuses on the best techniques of onboarding from a generalized perspective. It would be interesting to gain an insight as to how the company culture and environment influences innovation. Also, the efforts made by human resources and innovation manager to convey the innovation culture and practices of a company to the new employees is also an interesting topic. This is another aspect of the talent management process I strive to explore in this study.

2.2.3 Origins of innovation

Innovations can also be categorized based on the level it takes place within a company. These include – process innovation, product innovation, company innovation, market innovation and employee driven innovation (Høyrup, 2010) (Danneels, 2002) (Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010). In this study, I shall be focusing on *process, product, and employee driven innovation* as the companies surveyed in the study were observed to follow these types (as discussed in the later part of the thesis).

According to Davenport, 1993, a process is a structured set of activities designed to produce a specified output for a particular customer or market and process innovation is combining a structure for doing work with an orientation to visible and dramatic results. Klepper, 1996 suggests that the value of process innovation is proportional to the level of output produced by a given firm. Adner and Levinthal, 2001 indicate that process innovation plays an important role in the market penetration phase of a company.

Reichstein and Salter, 2006 define incremental process innovation as innovation that is new to the firm but not new to the industry whereas radical process innovations are those innovations developed by a firm that are also new to the industry. They observe that the presence of R&D activities and the use of suppliers as an external knowledge source for innovation is associated with process innovation. Un and Asakawa, 2015 also highlight the relationship between R&D and process innovation and observe that collaborations with suppliers and universities appear to have a positive impact on process innovation.

In contrast, product innovation can be defined as the development of new products, making changes in the current product design, or using new techniques and means in the current production methods (Reguia, 2014). According to Boone, 2000, the result of product

innovation is a new product and the incentive for product innovation is determined by the profit level associated with this product. The success of product innovation depends on factors like financial performance, window of opportunity and market impact as discussed in Cooper and Kleinschmidt, 1987.

Un, Cuervo-Cazurra, and Asakawa, 2010 explore the role of external R&D collaborations on product innovation by a survey of samples drawn from manufacturing firms operating in Spain. Based on their results, the authors observe that collaborations with suppliers and universities are found to have a positive influence on product innovation. The observations are similar with the ones in Un and Asakawa, 2015.

Due to the nature of their work, product and process innovations are often linked and strategies to achieve them are pursued parallelly since the development of a new product may require changes in the process. Kraft, 1990 observed that the introduction of product innovation acted as a driver for process innovation. Martinez-Ros, 1999 explored the relationship between product and process innovation by surveying a large sample of Spanish manufacturing firms. As compared to the unidirectional relationship between process and product innovation discussed in Kraft, 1990, the authors observed that both innovation types influence each other. A positive association between process and product innovation was also found in Damanpour and Gopalakrishnan, 2001.

On the other hand, innovation directly related to the employees in a company is termed as *employee driven innovation*. According to Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010, employee-driven innovation (EDI) refers to the generation and implementation of significant new ideas, products, and processes originating from a single employee or the joint efforts of two or more employees not assigned to this task. They also identify the following driving factors for employee driven innovation – management support, creation of an environment for idea generation, decision structure, incentives, and corporate culture and climate. Høyrup, 2010 places employee-driven innovation in the broader categories of non-technical, non-R&D innovations and high-involvement innovation.

Hansen, Amundsen, Aasen, and Gressgård, 2017 observe that employees should be given some level of autonomy, combined with clear expectations and improvement to drive innovation. Further, managers should adopt a cooperative leadership style, show understanding towards the employees' ideas and give them support, especially during the initial phases of the innovation process.

Felstead, Gallie, Green, and Henseke, 2020 discuss that employee involvement is positively associated with employees' capacity and willingness to offer innovative ideas. The authors also observe that training and learning which encourages creative thinking has a strong link to innovation. Employee involvement can be related to employee engagement and is consistent with the previous observations linking employee engagement to innovation (Unsworth and Parker, 2003) (Rao, 2016).

These three types of innovation are often interlinked within a company. One of the key enablers for product and process innovations is found to be external collaborations with R&D in the form of universities, suppliers, customers, and competitors. Depending on the type of

innovation, certain collaborations are found to be more effective. On the other hand, employee driven innovation is found to be driven by strong managerial support and the presence of resources and support for the employees to carry out innovative activities.

Even though it is not a strong focus of the study in this thesis, I think it is interesting to see the different types of innovations that are followed in different companies and if the perception of these innovations vary among the different actors within an company. I shall be discussing this aspect of the innovation practices in the surveyed companies in the later sections.

2.3 Conceptual Model & Chapter Summary

The first part of this chapter presents an overview of the current research literature in the field of talent management. Specifically, the current approaches towards identification, attraction, engagement, and retention of innovative talents are discussed in detail. The chapter illustrates the responsibilities of the human resources/employer branding and innovation managers regarding the management of talent in their companies. It also highlights the requirements that innovative talents look for to stay associated with a company. In the second part of this chapter, the origins of innovation are discussed to identify whether they are driven by product, process, or employees.

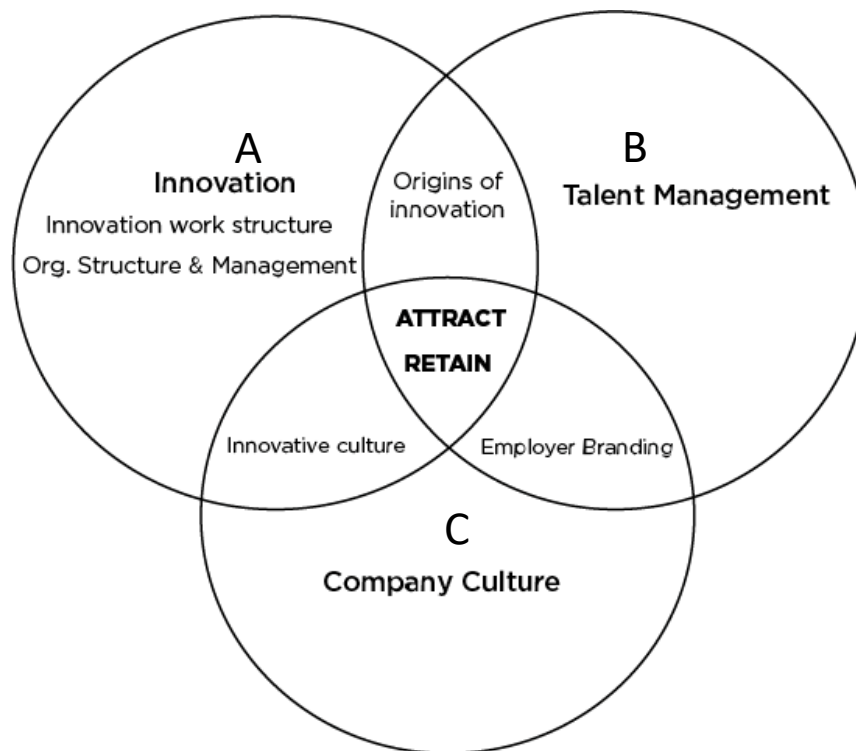


Figure 1 Conceptual model of theoretical themes, source: own creation.

The role played by the company culture and environment to foster innovation is also discussed. As is evident, the literature survey in this chapter aims to paint a picture of the current practices related to the issues highlighted in the research questions. To conclude this chapter, a model has been created to illustrate how the topics from this chapter are related to the attraction and

retention of innovative employees. The previously described theoretical aspects put into a framework and conceptual model as shown in Figure 1. The figure captures major concepts and sub concepts on the topics of innovative company structure, talent management and company culture. descriptions can be related to the concepts.

Figure 1 illustrates how the concepts could be linked and related. Set A describes innovation and the innovative work and company structure and set B describing how talent management is done by the companies by attracting, developing, and retaining the innovative talents; is the origin of innovation and the attract and retain. The common aspects for set B and set C; based on the theme of company culture is the employer branding and attraction and retention of the innovative talents.

The common aspects for set C and set A is the innovation culture and the attraction and retention of the innovative talents. From merging the three sets together, it is evident that the strategies and framework that the companies set for attraction and retention of the innovative talents are important factors. Thus, this figure helps to form a ground for analysis of the empirical material and base for further analysis and discussions.

3. Methodology

The following chapter describes and argues for the selected research method. The chapter defines the approach and design of the study, in addition to a comprehensive description of the research process covering sampling, data collection, ethical considerations, data analysis using model for categorizing and putting an order. Lastly, the chapter covers a discussion of the study's meticulousness and quality by assessing a number of scientific criteria.

3.1 Research Approach

According to Bryman & Bell, 2015, there are two major approaches in research – inductive and deductive. The authors describe inductive research as a technique that involves using the empirical data to guide the theoretical material. In other words, the researcher uses the empirical data to draw conclusions. On the other hand, deductive research is based on forming a theoretical understanding, collecting data, and drawing conclusions to explore the connection between theory and reality.

In this study, I use a research approach that is located between these two approaches with a slight inclination towards the inductive approach. In this study, a general theoretical understanding was present prior to data collection. However, the theoretical framework developed was iteratively extended and revised based on the knowledge acquired during the research process. Further, the research questions were also revised based on the findings and observations from the empirical data collected. The initial interview guides were devised based on an empirical interest in innovation together with my observations regarding innovative talent management.

The interview questions were subject to subsequent modifications based on data gathered during the research process. The analysis of the gathered information used the empirical data as the starting point as opposed to discovering patterns in reality supporting the previous theory.

Paying heed to the paradox of theory discussed in Yin, 2018, that theory tells us where to look whereas at the same time, it can also keep us from seeing. Based on this observation, the empirical data was used to guide the researcher towards directions of finding out theory that reflected, confirmed, or contradicted the empirical findings.

According to Denzin (1978 cited in Patton, 2015), this technique of combining induction and deduction can be described as abduction. He mentions that one of the problems with induction is that without proper interpretation, it is hard to let the facts speak for themselves. Further, he observes that it is often hard to find correspondence between gathered empirical data and previously developed models using deduction.

The abductive model combines the proposition development from the deductive model together with the theory construction of the inductive model. This enables one to record the occurrence of specific events and then use historical data to understand and generate the causes producing these events. In the abductive model, the researcher investigates theoretical as well as inductive patterns in existing theory and empirical data interpretations to find out if the theoretical patterns correspond to the inductive ones. Since the abductive approach offered this flexibility to learn and revise existing theory iteratively together with the empirical data during the entire study, it was chosen as the most suited approach for the purposes of this study.

3.2 Research Design

As a basis to understand the innovation management and talent management practices pertaining to hiring and retaining innovative talent in companies, mini-case studies were conducted on different companies. Olsson & Sörensen, 2011 defines case studies as research conducted on a person, group, or company. Alternatively, case studies have been defined as in-depth investigations of a person, group, community, or event (McLeod, 2019) or as an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units (Gerring, 2004). McLeod, 2019 mentions the use of different methods of data collection for case studies including interviews and observations together with researcher identified sources for collecting empirical material.

According to Yin, 2018, case study is a linear as well as iterative process investigating a phenomenon in its real-world context. Further, if a study requires in-depth description, a case-study based design is suitable. Supporting arguments for case studies for in-depth description is found in McLeod (2019) where the suitability of case studies in exploratory research is discussed.

The author mentions that case studies often provide detailed, rich qualitative, and multi-sided information allowing the researcher to explore a topic in detail. Similar support for the case study approach is found in Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, and Sheikh, 2011 as well. Based on these arguments in mind and the nature of this study striving to examine innovation and talent management from different perspectives using in-depth data and exploratory research, a case-study based approach was deemed appropriate.

The topics of innovation management and innovative talent management involves inputs from human resources, employees and managers combined with questions about company culture

and recruitment practices. Therefore, the topics explored in this study necessitate the collection of information from different people within companies.

Keeping this knowledge in mind, this study is based on 10 different case studies with each case study involving three respondents representing a different perspective. The case studies can therefore be referred to as mini case studies. According to McLeod (2019), a limitation of case studies is that it is hard to generalize the results obtained from them thereby limiting transferability.

To address this limitation, companies were chosen that were both different and similar in various aspects such as size, industry, and structure. Further, expert interviews from three different experts in the fields of innovation, employer branding and culture were added to the gathered data pool. These experts were not involved with the studied cases and acted as independent entities providing information about their experiences from various companies. However, the time constraints of the study prevented the addition of data sources that would have strengthened the transferability of the study.

Further, strengthening the transferability would have required a trade-off in the depth of the research. Keeping these factors in mind, the chosen approach was selected with a view to provide a balance between depth and transferability. The chosen approach in this study allows one to compare observations across cases as well as within cases. A larger group of small case studies in this case can be justified as the data needed to explain innovation and talent management in companies can be gleaned from them adding both depth and transferability.

3.4 Data Collection Method

The data collected for this study is primarily derived from interviews with three types of personnel from each of the case companies as well as three experts. Additional information gleaned from the surveyed companies' websites, online channels and other web-based content has collected and used to form grounds for comparison. According to Yin, 2018, multiple sources of evidence such as interviews and documentation are recommended to be used for case studies.

Further, Yin, 2018 also describes *triangulation* as the process of using different sources of information for studying a phenomenon. The author discusses that triangulation increases the credibility of the results by comparing information as well as determining how they converge on different levels. Three types of triangulations discussed in Yin 2018 and Thurmond, 2001 are used in this study. Data triangulation is the first type of triangulation used by utilizing different sources of information for the study.

In doing so, weaknesses in some of the data can be compensated using strengths from other data thereby reinforcing conclusions and reducing the risk of misinterpretations. The second form of triangulation known as theory triangulation was achieved by using different theoretical domains, models, and methods. Finally, methodological triangulation was achieved by using empirical data from the interviews as well as the documentations from the online presence of

the companies. According to Yin (2018), case study findings characterized by triangulation are supported by multiple sources of evidence thereby leading towards more accurate conclusions.

3.4.1 Sampling Process - Case Companies

The selection process for the candidate companies for the case studies used the purposeful sampling method as a combination of maximum variation and snowball sampling. Patton (2015) describes purposeful sampling as selecting information-rich cases to study which give insights into the research questions chosen for investigation. Instead of predetermining the set of companies to use for the study, an initial list of 24 popular companies was selected in the planning stage. 11 companies were approached from this set from which 5 agreed to participate in the study.

The remaining half were selected using snowball sampling. According to Creswell (2018), snowball sampling involves identifying cases of interest that are information rich by inquiring people who possess the information about such cases. In this study, the informants and selected experts provided recommendations about other companies whose participation would benefit the study.

A common theme running across the selected companies is their popularity. The main rationale behind choosing popular and famous companies was that a large trove of secondary data about these companies was available. This included information about the companies themselves, their working practices, and their performance as an employer. Also, it is a reasonable assumption that popular companies have active strategies to identify and attract talented employees.

According to Cable & Turban, 2001, company attractiveness among potential employees is related to their knowledge about the company. The correlation between the popularity of a company and its attractiveness among employees is also discussed in (Williamson, Cable, and Aldrich 2002, Moroko & Uncles, 2008). These observations support the rationale behind selecting companies based on their popularity for this study.

The 10 companies chosen for the study operate internationally working across industries like consulting, technology, manufacturing, and entertainment. The employee strength varies between ca 100-250000. The smallest and largest companies in the study were selected based on their distinctions in size. The remaining companies have an average employee strength of 32500.

According to Galende & De la Fuente, 2003, large companies are deemed attractive by employees. Greenhaus, Sugalski, and Crispin, 1978 also support this notion by observing that factors like higher job security, salary, and increased possibilities for development increase the attractiveness factor for large companies. These findings strengthen the justification for selecting large companies for the case studies.

The companies also show significant variations in their age wherein the newest company was found in 2017 and the oldest in the 1800's. This increases the variation among the candidate

companies which is desirable. As discussed in Suri (2011), it is important to make informed decisions about the sampling process when engaging in qualitative research. The author makes the point that the sampling methodology depends on the intent of the study being undertaken and discusses a variety of sampling techniques.

Among these techniques, the strategy in this study is found to be consistent with the maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling technique. This technique aims to find dimensions of variations and then finding samples that have a large degree of variability among these dimensions. Such a study is intended to yield data that depicts these differences as well as find shared patterns that emerge out of this heterogeneity which is consistent with the objectives in this thesis.

However, there are some concerns regarding this sampling technique as discussed in Sharma (2017). The author opines that this technique can be a victim of researcher bias and can be a deterrent for a study to be considered as representative. He also argues that the very nature of this sampling technique can also lead to readers not being convinced about the generalization achieved by the results obtained from them. Interestingly, the author is also of the opinion that these problems arise only when the judgement behind choosing the samples is arbitrary and ill-conceived. According to him, if the judgement criteria is based on a careful thought process and/or framework, the researcher bias is not a major issue.

3.4.2 Sampling Process - Case Informants

The sampling process involved selecting a primary point of contact within a designated company who was then queried to help identify the next type of informant. In other words, the company assisted in selecting the respondents who would be a best fit to provide responses to the research questions. In this study, the following types of informants were selected for conducting the interviews:

1. HR/Employer Branding – An informant in this group was chosen as someone hired to handle the tasks of talent management, employee attraction and other topics related to HR. Informants in this group had titles like *Global Employer Branding Specialist*, *People Business partner*, and *VP and Head of HR*.

2. Innovation Management – In this group, an informant was chosen who was in a management position responsible for other employees performing tasks related to innovation. Informants in this group had titles like *Innovation manager*, *Program Manager Innovation and Research*, and *Head of R&D Europe*.

3. Innovative Talent – The informants in this group were selected based on the response of people from the previous groups to a question that stated, “According to you, who is a person within the company who is innovative/was hired for their innovative talent and has remained with the company for a long time?”

Based on the criteria for selecting the innovative person, it can be observed that the definition of an innovative talent was not strictly enforced and was left to the interpretation of the informants to whom the question was posed. If a strict definition of being innovative was enforced while asking the question, it would have been difficult to evaluate who is deemed to be innovative within a certain company without any insights.

Further, it might have limited the scope of the study to focus on working groups that may work with innovation but not individually. This was observed during the interview process when some informants responded to the innovative talent question with an answer like “*I would suggest person X, but he/she is not an engineer, is that a problem?*”.

Considering these observations, this question was intentionally left open to interpretation. The informants were encouraged to put forth the name of people who based on their subjective view and underlying knowledge fulfilled the criteria being inquired. This strategy could be considered as a strength as the informants guided the selection of the candidates which resulted in people from different work groups being interviewed. Also, since the notion of ‘long time’ is subjective to companies, it is best to leave the judgement of the duration that defines a ‘long time’ to employees working within a company.

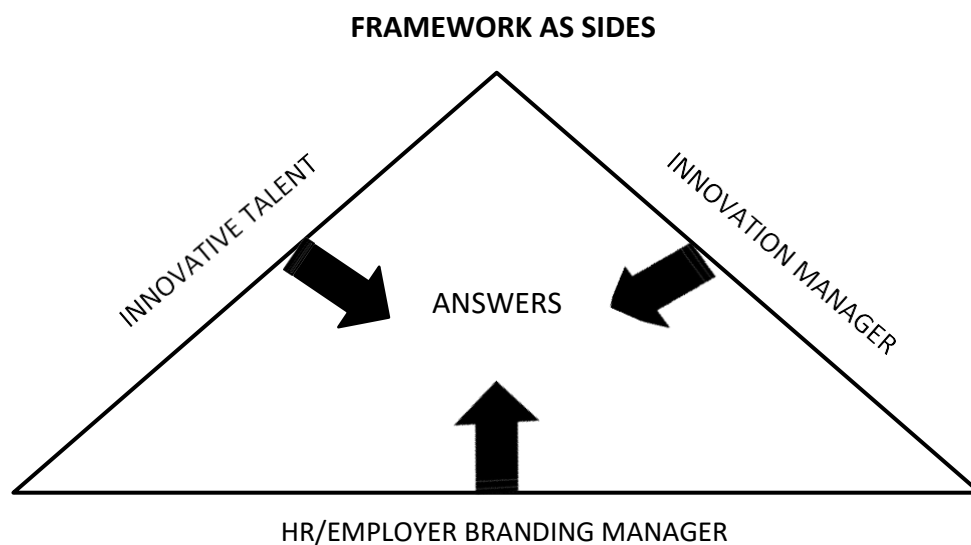


Figure 2 Analytical model - Triangle framework, source: own creation.

Figure note: The sides of the triangle represent perspectives of the three key informants to integrate in generating a view of the studied case company and to approach the research questions.

3.4.3 Sampling Process - Expert Informants

To increase the transferability of the conclusions and the empirical data, three expert informants were chosen to provide another perspective. The experts possess in-depth knowledge about their specific fields. Additionally, they have studied and worked with different companies over a course of time thereby accumulating knowledge about common practices methods and problems relevant for a broad number of companies.

Expert in Innovation –Preferred to be anonymous in the study, was recommended as an expert by the supervisor of this thesis project.

Expert in Employer Branding – Sara Sterner, co-founder of Universum Employer Branding Academy (Universum is a globally leading Employer Branding company, conducting the world’s largest research study on talent career expectations). Furthermore, Sara Sterner has founded, co-founded, and is a board member of many companies while she currently is positioned as CEO for an innovative company. Sara Sterner is a personal contact of one of the authors and was therefore selected for her broad in-depth knowledge within Employer Branding.

Expert in Company Culture – Linus Jonkman consults as a People and Culture Strategist and is well-known for his “Culture Book” developed for Prisjakt. The Culture Book has been used by other companies in guiding their Employer Branding and work with company culture. Linus Jonkman was recommended as an expert by Axis Employer branding specialist who have used Jonkman’s Culture book in her previous work.

3.4.4 Summary of informants from the case companies

Company Name	HR/Employer Branding Manager	Innovation Manager	Innovative Talent	Total informants
Axis Communications	1	1	1	3
Giant Tech*	1	1	1	3
Spotify	N.A.	1	N.A.	1
A-Z Networks*	1	1	1	3
IT-Clearly*	1	N.A.	1	2
King	1	1	1	3
AFRY	1	N.A.	N.A.	1
LeoVegas	1	N.A.	N.A.	1
Above	1	1	1	3
Factory Tycoon*	1	1	1	3

Table 1: Overview of informants from the case companies, Source: Own creation

Table 1 contains a summary of the number of informants in each category (HR/Employer branding manager, Innovation manager, Innovative talent) from each case company that were interviewed as part of the data collection process. The cells marked *N.A.* indicate an informant that was unavailable for the interview process. The overall aim was to secure at least 1 informant per company. Out of the 10 companies, there were 6 companies where all three informants were present which resulted in a balanced view of the different perspectives.

3.4.5 Interviews

As this study aims to understand the talent and innovation management within companies, obtaining the different perspectives of people who work with these aspects is important. As discussed in Guest, Namey, and McKenna, 2017, individual interviews are a good tool to gain multiple perspectives for the same question. This helps in gaining comparable insights which is difficult with group interviews where the collective mindset of the group may shape the response as opposed to individualized responses. Keeping this in mind, individual interviews were chosen as the option to get answers to the research questions.

Bryman & Bell, 2015 discuss those qualitative researchers should focus on interpreting a situation in a way that's like the informant. Further, three types of interviews in qualitative research are also discussed – structured, semi-structured and unstructured. In the structured interview, the main aim is to quantify and compare answers, so the questions are standardized. Comparatively, the unstructured interview does away with standardization completely.

According to Louise Barriball and While, 1994, semi-structured interviews are well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answer. This observation is consistent with the aim of this study to explore multiple perspectives of the same question without enforcing a standard set of questions.

According to Bryman & Bell, 2015, the presence of a rigid structure may be restrictive to the realm of reference of the researcher. Thereby, a minimal structure that can capture the informant's perspective and give an insight into hitherto unthought aspects for the researcher is needed. A lightweight structure was chosen for the interview questions in this study to capture the selected topics.

Additionally, the exploratory nature of the study required access to the perspectives of the informants that could result in new questions and thoughts about the study. Keeping these requirements in mind, semi-structured interviews were found to be suitable for the study and the same was chosen for the study.

The content of the semi-structured interviews conducted varied based on the informants and experts being interviewed. Some of the interviews, the interview guide could be followed as designed whereas for other interviews the informants chose varied paths and structures to provide their responses.

In other words, the questions were more of a guide to ensure that the desired topics were covered. As per the abductive research strategy, this adaptability was desired as it revealed

important aspects that were unknown prior to the interviews. In case the informants had doubts or reservations regarding the appropriate response to a question, they were duly informed that the answers were open to the informant's interpretation of the same. In case of any clarifications regarding the responses, email communication was used to resolve them.

A common practice followed for the interviews was that the informants were given their set of questions in advance via email. Additionally, the option to ask additional questions that arose organically during the interview was kept open. In the study by Myers and Newman (2007), the argument presented in favor of the semi-structured interview process is that it provides the freedom and flexibility for the interviewer and interviewee to shape the interview according to the flow of conversation.

They propose that the nature of the semi-structured approach leads to a more in-depth understanding of the situation by keeping the door open for spontaneity. However, this spontaneity can also lead to bias being introduced as discussed in Woods (2011). The author mentions that since semi-structured interviews do not always stick to a script, spontaneous questions may be asked to only some of the participants. This can then lead to a non-standardized set of questions and introduce bias in the data being collected.

The strategy of sending the interview questions in advance was a well-thought out choice that provided the following strengths. The intended informant had the opportunity of self-assessing themselves and their suitability in answering those questions. It was observed in at least three occurrences that the initial informant chosen suggested another informant more suited to answering the questions. Thus, it was ensured that the most knowledgeable and relevant person answered the questions thereby making the sampling process strong. Further, the informants had the time and opportunity to decide for themselves the amount of information that could be disclosed about the company or if anonymity needed to be requested.

This ensured that the study was sound from an ethical aspect by not putting the informants in a spot and forcing them to divulge sensitive information that they would not have done normally. Finally, the interview process could be optimized for time thereby allowing the informants to fit it into their schedules and not cite time constraints as a reason for non-participation.

All informants were asked for a 30-minute interview via Zoom. The interviews took between 30 and 45 minutes and were recorded. One informant declined participation due to time constraints, one asked to participate via phone instead, and one to answer the questions via email due to time constraints. These requests were all granted. Interviews via tools such as Zoom or Teams was perceived as the best alternative to personal interviews mainly due to the covid-19 pandemic that occurred during the time of data collection for this study.

3.4.6 Secondary data

Following the interviews, secondary data about the companies was collected and documented. This was done with a view to compare it with the primary data and strengthen the analysis. As discussed before, the secondary data comprised public information about the companies derived from their websites, social media handles and recruitment notices. Additionally,

websites like Glassdoor were used to find out the general perception of the companies as employers.

3.5 Iterative research process

By following the abductive design, the study was enriched by following an iterative process for the theoretical framework, research questions and data collection. The theoretical framework was used as a guide to formulate the interview questions. During the early stages of the interviews, additional themes emerged based on the response of the informants. This feedback was utilized to add a set of extra follow-up interview questions. In case the initial interviews missed themes identified later, questions were sent via email to collect the responses to the same. This iterative approach thereby allowed a deeper investigation of the topics.

The study started out with two researchers, but owing to some professional differences, there was a split. The same process of interviews and collection of the empirical data was done by Claudia Sundberg in the process of conducting interviews and setting up the questionnaire for the study in the first part. However, after the split, both went ahead with their own analysis and conclusion using the same data collected from the key informants of the surveyed companies.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The chosen informants were approached using multiple channels (email or LinkedIn InMail) wherein they received information about the researcher, the topic as well the purpose and aim of the study followed by a request to participate in a 30-minute interview. Informants who agreed to be a part of the study received the questions and a Zoom link well in advance. During the initial part of the interview, the informants were notified of the following:

- The collected data will only be used for research purposes within the realms of this master thesis project.
- You have the right to be anonymous if you prefer.
- You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time.

After the informant had responded favorably and accepted the aforementioned terms, they were asked for their consent in accordance with GDPR to allow the meeting to be recorded for transcription purposes. All the informants responded in the affirmative regarding the same. Some of the informants preferred their names and company details to be anonymous which was readily accepted. To guarantee anonymity, the informants were given a draft of the thesis in a later stage of the study following which they had a window of 2 weeks to review it.

They also had the right to ask for corrections in case of misunderstandings or a perceived breach of anonymity. The informants were also informed to not distribute the draft further either internally or externally since it might contain sensitive information. This information was sent via email separately to keep the identities of all the informants private from each other. These steps were taken with a view to guarantee anonymity and safeguard ethical concerns.

3.7 Data Analysis

The information collected from the interviews served the purpose of a naturally evolving iterative pre-analysis to identify broader themes of relevance for the primary research question. For example, with the help of the information, I could identify that culture, management/company structure, talent management and employer branding would be relevant themes to study in relation to the primary research questions. So, these themes were considered as the influencing factors to primary research questions.

After conducting all interviews, the audio files were transcribed. Information from the transcripts were then used as a base to describe the case companies on parameters on how HR/Employer Branding Manager works to attract and retain innovative talents, how the Innovation Managers work with innovation and engage with the innovative talents and the factors which attract and motivate the Innovative Talents to stay within the case companies.

Then, secondary data was documented about the case companies. This became the first basis of information leading to the first step of the analysis, to describe the case companies while balancing relevance and depth to communicate the data to the reader. The information also helped in the analysis of similarity and differences in the perspectives of the three key informants within the case company with the themes extracted from the primary and secondary research questions.

The second part of the analysis uses the information from the interviews to place an ordering amongst the case companies. To do so, an innovation maturity matrix described in (Viima, 2019) is used as an inspiration to group and sequence the case companies. The classification and sequencing is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Thereafter, the similarities and differences on the perspectives and opinions of the different case informants i.e. the HR/Employer Branding Manager, Innovation Manager and Innovative Talents towards the primary and secondary research questions were analyzed for the different case companies. In this part of the analysis, key themes were extracted from the case company descriptions and transcripts to analyze the co-occurrence of certain themes and words. The results of this comparison can be seen in the chapter 5 and on tables 3, 4, and 5 respectively.

The third part of the analysis related mainly to the secondary research question where the expert informant's transcripts were used firstly to establish influencing factors to the attraction and retention of innovative employees. Key phrases from the expert interviews were used to grasp a concept of relation between the elements, to thereafter go back to the case company descriptions and case informant's transcripts, to look for supporting or contradicting data. In the expert informant's descriptions, together with the case company descriptions, patterns, and possible directions of influential elements could be identified.

3.8 Scientific Criteria

According to Bryman & Bell, 2015, the quality of business research can be assessed using validity, reliability, and replicability. The authors discuss validity as the prime criteria that concerns the integrity of the conclusions generated from the research. Further, they describe

reliability as related to the stability in the measurement of a concept whereas replicability is described as a measure if the same study could be conducted again to report the same findings. Trustworthiness is suggested as a primary criterion for assessing the quality of qualitative studies by Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.8.1 Credibility

The credibility centers around the findings' truthfulness and correct interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To reach credibility a lot of different strategies are suggested by the authors, 'prolonged engagement' refers to spending enough time to understand and broaden the scope of the informant's reality while 'persistent observation' refers to finding depth in the collected material. The study's design as interviewing three different types of informants from every case company allows to reach both diverging aspects between informants and consistency in aspects mentioned by more than one, or with the help of each other understand the depth of the discussed themes.

As mentioned earlier, the study design is heavily built up on triangulation by multiple sources. Lincoln and Guba (1985) further mention 'peer debriefing' as a strategy for credibility, this study is peer reviewed in a formal opposition and has been overlooked by a supervisor. Therefore, there has been room for external parties to check the research and ask challenging questions. 'Member checking' is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as one of the most important strategies for ensuring credibility in a study. This strategy refers to letting the studied group check the data and analysis. In this study, all informants had two weeks to review the study at a late stage and ask for changes if the data had been misinterpreted.

3.8.2 Transferability

This criterion refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that detailed descriptions of the cases can increase transferability since the readers are independently provided with enough information about shared or unshared aspects that enables the readers to access transferability between cases. Therefore, this study provides in-depth company descriptions along with the comparisons within and among the case companies on common themes which enables the reader to assess whether the contexts can be viewed as similar enough to the reader's own context.

Regardless of the reader's specific context, the study's design is intentionally centered around cases with variety, therefore, one can argue that if similar themes emerge often in varying cases, they have higher possibility to occur also in different readers contexts. This means that patterns found in this study possibly can be applicable in other contexts due to the detailed empirical material collected. To further raise transferability, also the method, analysis and data collection are described as in-depth and transparently as possible to enable other researchers to use the same procedures in different contexts.

3.8.3 Dependability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the dependability centers to verify the consistency between the data and the findings via external audit. This means to assess the research process to confirm the accuracy of the findings. The current study's process had been supervised by an external researcher as supervisor. Therefore, one can argue that most issues related to dependability can be seen as controlled within this study. Dependability also centers around reliability.

Regarding reliability, the aim is to ensure consistent measurement through the chosen research design (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The selected interviewees for collecting the empirical data in this study are experienced professionals in their respective fields of work and have worked meticulously within the areas that are related to the study's topic. Thus, the sources could be deemed reliable. However, to conduct an exact repetition of this study could be proven difficult due to the research design, which is exploratory by its nature. Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews and open questions when categorizing the data adds to this challenge.

3.8.4 Conformability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) conformability centers objectivity issues in relation to the data and the researcher. The informants may not fully disclose the information due to several professional and personal constraints and on how they intend to present information. However, triangulation and anonymity can be used to diminish such risks. In this study triangulation is used, and anonymity has been offered to all informants. Regarding the researcher's relation to the data, a reflexive mindset has been used in relation to the data. One strength with the researchers position in relation to the data is the shared Swedish context and use of English in the interviews as a second language.

This shared context enables understanding of Swedish phrases presented via English language, as for example the expression "high to the ceiling" which is only directly translated between the languages but is not used in the same way in Swedish and English. Therefore, the researcher's position in relation to understanding and interpreting the data is somewhat strengthened in this study. The researcher has no conflicting interest in presenting any of the cases in a more favorable context. This means that the possibility of researcher biases related to such topics are low.

3.9 Chapter Summary

The method used in this study is of abductive nature and has been developed as an iterative process. Ten mini case studies have been conducted on companies that belong to different sectors and cater to the needs of different customers, however all the informants are working in Sweden which is the common denominator among all the companies. The empirical data collection is primarily centered around interviews with three types of employees from the case companies but also with three 'experts' who are not engaged with the case companies. The method uses triangulation of information for comparing some of the key aspects. Firstly, it will

used to compare the similarity and differences in the perspectives of the different informants within the companies.

Secondly, it will also help to compare between cases to find similarities and differences between them on some key aspects relevant to the primary and secondary questions. The figure 4 above describes the triangulation method used for comparing the three sides of the perspectives both within the case companies and between the different case companies. The numerical ordering of the companies in figure 4 is solely based on the sequence in which they were interviewed.

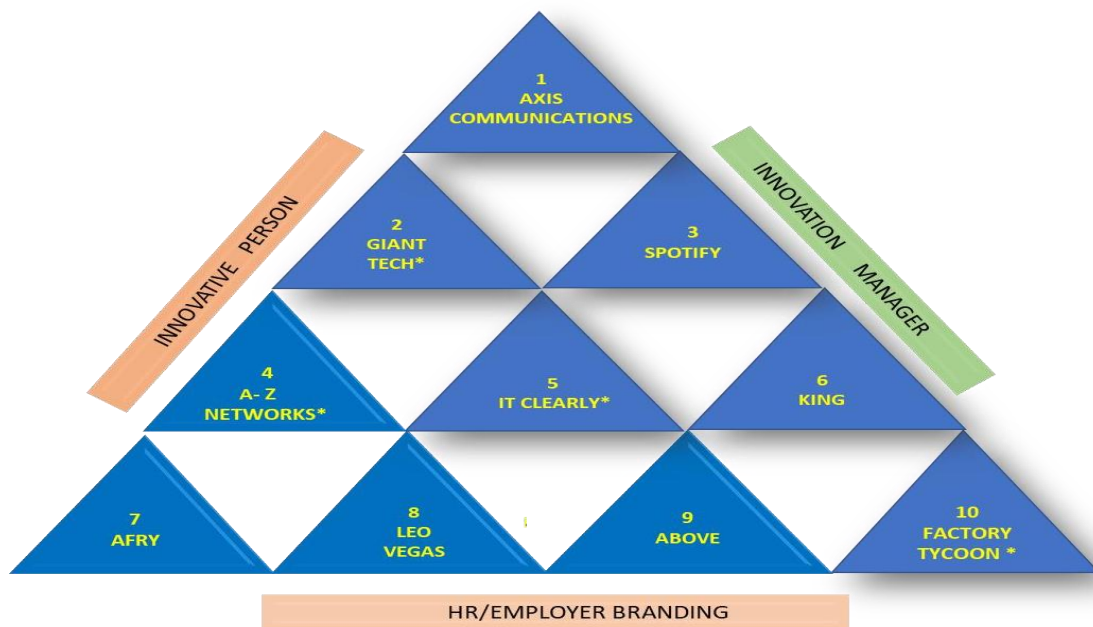


Figure 3: Framework from the three sides for the ten case companies. source: own creation.

Figure Note: The figure illustrates how the three sources of empirical material can be seen as one triangle with different sides or perspectives within every case company and at large between the ten different case companies.

4 Empirical Material

The following chapter starts with presenting in-depth descriptions of the studied case companies. The descriptions are written with the intention to provide answers to the primary research questions. This chapter also consists of in-depth descriptions of the expert interviews with the intention to provide answers to the secondary research questions.

4.1 Case company description

The following subchapter will present the readers an overview of the studied case companies. The primary and secondary research questions have been taken as a guide to understand the perspectives of the key informants within the case companies. According to Merriam (1988, cited in Creswell, 2018) there is no standard way of reporting case study research, so I will be presenting the insight shared by the different informants on the topics based on the primary and secondary research questions. Also, secondary data has also been used to describe the case companies. The collected empirical data will help the readers to understand the working of the Innovation Manager and the HR/Employer Branding Managers with innovation, how they attract, recruit, engage and retain the innovative talents.

This case descriptions will also present the reasons which attracted and motivated the Innovative Talents to stay within the surveyed companies. This case description will also help to understand how the company elements enable a conducive environment for the innovative talents to flourish in the companies. This chapter will further discuss the perspectives of the HR/Employer Branding Manager, Innovation Manager, and the Innovative Talents within the case company to analyze the similarity and differences on some of the perspectives based on some key themes.

This data will also be used to gain insights on the similarities and differences of perspectives and opinions between the key informants on themes based on the primary and secondary research questions within the surveyed companies. In this subchapter, some informants, companies, city, and country names are marked with an asterisk. This marking indicates that the company or informant have chosen to be anonymous in this study and therefore fictive names have been used.

To be gender neutral and conceal the identity of the key informants who wished to stay anonymous, their names have been substituted with numbers in the order in which they are presented in the text. The HR/ Employer Branding informants are abbreviated HR, the Innovation Managers are abbreviated IM, and the Innovative Talents informants are abbreviated IT.

Thereafter, the number 1-10 has been assigned according to the presented order of the case companies. For example, the HR/ Employer branding informant from the first presented company would be referred to as HR-1. For the non-anonymous informants, number

combinations are shown in parenthesis the first time the name is mentioned to remind the reader of the informant's type.

4.1.1 Axis Communications

It is a global company headquartered in Lund, Sweden delivering security systems. The company's main owner is the Japanese company Canon, however Axis operates autonomously. Axis was founded in 1984 and today holds Offices located in more than 50 countries and employs over 3600 people. Axis Communications AB (2021) work on the theme of innovation where they promote innovation as a core part of the company's DNA. They use a customer centric approach to drive innovation in products that they place in the market. The key informants include Tina Rudin Kaikkonen who works as a Global Employer Branding Specialist, Thomas Ekdahl who works as an Innovation Manager, Product Concepts & New Ideas and Carl-Axel Alm who works as a Concept Engineer.

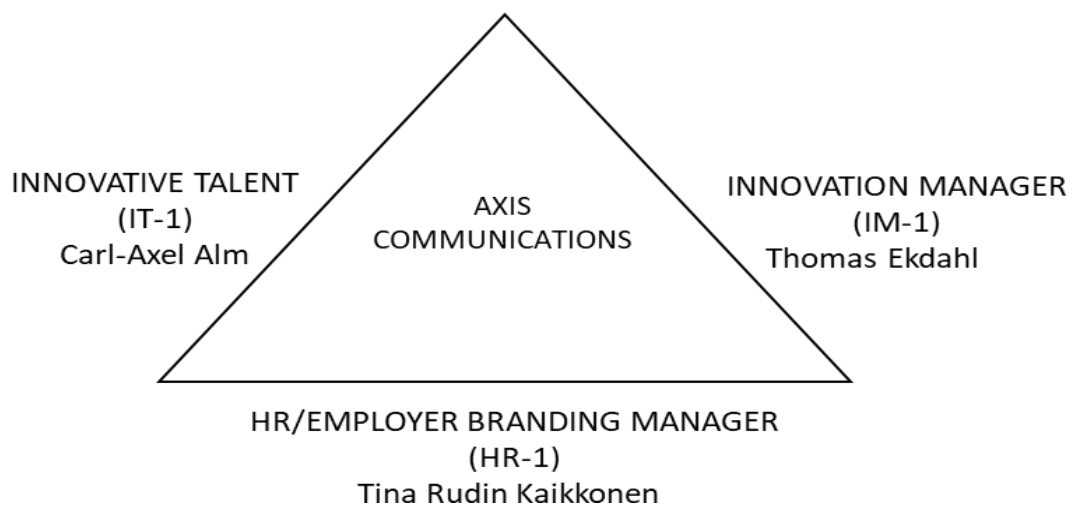


Figure 4: Key Informants from Axis Communications

4.1.1.1

This subchapter presents the answers to the primary and secondary questions as communicated by the key informants from Axis Communications.

How is the HR/Employer Branding Manager working within Axis Communications to attract innovative talents?

Tina (HR-1) shared that they have a 360-degree strategy which they have adopted to attract innovative talents to the company. The strategy is to facilitate the candidate journey by firstly identifying the talents, knowing about where they are and what kind of an environment they want to work with. She and the HR team are guided by the data driven approach where they specially focus on using different channels like via LinkedIn, Indeed, Academic works Young Professional Index, Randstad, Manpower and Univesrum to identify the needs of the talents

within specific roles and communicating it to the potential candidates through their vision. She informed that Axis depends on exerting a pull strategy to attract the talents. She highlights the importance of communicating Axis's uniqueness to attract the talents. This is done by working with employer branding, where the strategy is to use storytelling to communicate the values of togetherness, friendly and personal leadership that supports a good work environment with statements from managers like "my door is always open for you". After creating the awareness of the brand, they specifically target for innovative talents as "snipers" by communicating the special requirements and competencies for the specific roles.

The planning is done accordingly with detailed analysis on excel, a system product plan together with communications and marketing department and they support each other with resources. Tina further highlights the importance of Employee Value Proposition which states the core values which is understood by all the employees at Axis Communications. She also points out that the information is not available in homepage of the company to prevent the potential candidates from talking about them in an interview.

Tina shared the brand statement for Axis Communications to together create a smart and safe world is the purpose of the company and then she spoke about the attributes which was drafted after conducting a research where 1200 people working at Axis Communications worldwide were interviewed and asked "what it is really like to working in Axis" and clustered the information into key wordings in the attributes together with the involvement of 6 directors and managers who explained their forward vision of what the company wants to be in the future and using data from Univesrum to understand who do you need to be to be an attractive employer in the world.

The key words such as professional training and development, leaders and support by development, environment friendly and collaborative work environment were clustered and were made into pillars using the words from the attributes and defined them. This was used to summarize the Employee Value Proposition which became the reasons for why one should work with Axis Communication. This became the strategic foundation to build communication internally and this happened with the help of an external agency.

Tina also shared that she uses data from the global hiring forecast to understand how to communicate with the innovative talents and think more of 360-degree ways and all levels of attracting the talents to the company. Coming to recruitment of the innovative talents, Tina shared that it is the responsibility of the recruiting managers. She also shared that Axis is unable to get to their targeted head count like for example if they want 100, we get 95 and feels that there are innovative people, but the company needs more.

She points out that the innovators at Axis are given time and allowed to think a lot about innovation as it is the core business. She also points out that Axis is successful in creating a brand within the industry but outside the industry the visibility is low and is an issue, so she ensures that awareness part of candidate journey is given the utmost importance to show the uniqueness of Axis. The managers are responsible for recruitment of the innovative talents, and they are guided by the external recruiters who help them, and it is the managers who check the innovativeness of the potential talents.

How is HR/Employer Branding Manager working within Axis Communications to retain innovative talents?

Tina puts forward her views on data driven approach for highlighting the importance of internal communication for retention. Axis has had an approximate 5 % growth even during the pandemic, which indicates that people do stay with the company. Tina believes that innovative people stay at Axis because they are not overtly stressed with innovation and allowed to sit and think a lot about working with their innovative ideas and products. She uses the “pie” metaphor to put forward her views that an individual cannot look at single pieces of a larger “pie”, Tina emphasizes that it is probably is the whole pie that makes people stay.

In this pie, she mentions leadership, the purpose of being a part of creating a smart and safer world, the friendly work atmosphere, the perks, the benefits, and the communication with different people within Axis all help in retaining the innovative talents. Tina also shares that the average retention period of new freshly graduated talents is approximately 2.1 years, and it is roughly the same in all the companies.

She points out that it is dependent on the personal choice of the talents, but she surely feels that it is supremely important and something that she wants to improve in the future. Tina also points out that it is a culmination of salary hikes with combination of soft values is the reason why people stay with Axis Communications.

How the Innovation Manager within Axis Communications works with innovation and engage with the innovative talents?

Thomas (IM-1) states that Axis works in a structured way while working with innovation. It consists of sub-companies with formalized innovation groups separated from the operational side of the business as operations and innovation compete against each other. He mentions that there are formalized innovation group, working full time with innovation only and there are other innovation teams who have a diverse workforce, letting them be kind of self-sustained from the other parts of the org.

The innovative talents in these groups have the mindset to handle an undefined environment working with prototypes. The separation is a draw back because of the impact as Thomas feels that in his Product Concept team, they really need to convince stakeholders which is not the case with Product Development as they Already owned the resources, they already have the means for bringing this product to the market. The downside is that his team don't own the last step for it to become a product.

He also shared that some other parts of the company have "innovation week" 4 times a year when they put up ideas that they would like to develop, and they get time to it to and show the results. The innovation weeks are directed not only to have ideas for new products but also some kind of statement from the company that Innovation is very important and that the employees are expected to contribute in different ways. Even though it's not a full-time job, it's more kind of a distributed way of dealing with innovations. Thomas feels that innovation comes

from doing new stuff in order to learn something new or actually make something real that you have thought about for a long time and you basically know how to do it but you haven't had the time in your daily work. So, he feels that the purpose of the Innovation weeks is to have different flavors within the companies. Doing this so we have a very high level of Freedom within Axis to carry out these initiatives.

He also shared information on the internal program called axis exchange which enables interested employees to participate internal job rotation for working part time with the Innovation teams. He also shed light on The Innovation Greenhouse where every idea and discussions are welcomed without paying attention to roadblocks or the obstacle for how to work with those ideas. He states that it is more of an opportunity of creating an atmosphere that promotes innovation in a good way. He shares that it is often the 20-25 percent of the things that the team propose becomes a product in some form so the approach is more survival of the fittest; the best fitted idea will survive in a good way.

He feels that these events help in having conversation about new stuff all the time and it helps to collaborate with other innovative teams and this also helps him and his team to seek help in specific area and since they prioritize innovation, there is good dynamics in Axis where people try to contribute in their best way. Thomas feels that there are seldom occasions where things needs to be escalated further up to a certain management level but if they have some kind of prioritization, then meetings are held every third month when they really need to do a major effort then there is a need for the intervention from senior management otherwise it is usually accomplished by hands shakes with agreement on different levels.

What attracted Innovative Talent to Axis Communications?

Carl (IT- 1) knew the founder of Axis and was motivated to join a small company where he could work with the bigger picture and not be a small part of a big constellation. He participated in the interview and began his journey with Axis and has been with the company since 1993. He stated that he was the only hardware engineer during the initial days, and he got plentiful opportunities to explore and become a significant contributor to develop products and be an important pillar for the company. He feels that the culture has changed quite drastically with Axis since, but he still feels that he is in the center, and the things are changing around him.

What motivated Innovative Talent to stay within Axis Communications?

Carl says with a smile that he still feels that he can make a change and is one of the reasons for him to stay within Axis. He also pointed out that nowadays, things are complex and have several specialists working with the different parts of same product at the same time unlike the yester years where there was no existence or requirement of super specialist roles. He points to his emotions which have prevented him from leaving Axis.

He feels that his job with Axis is very luxurious and he along with a team of 8 people do not have any deadlines and their job is to all the time invent new things which have a potential to become a product. He further explains that his job is a kind of an engineer's dream where they can always use the available resources to buy new gadgets and products to test their ideas. He

further states that the team once in a while, need to convince management that this good idea can make money for axis within a couple of years and give a competitive advantage and come up with the products once in every two to three years which is not so stressful. He feels that Axis has given him a very good life with a good salary, but he points out that he would leave if it would become too much bureaucracy.

Culture within Axis Communications

After the interviews with Axis, the essence of their culture lies with the degree of freedom to explore with the new ideas, willingness of the employees to listen to ideas and being open to work with innovation. However, when “Openness” was suggested as a word to describe Axis culture, Tina stated that openness is good in Sweden but is not perceived with the similar views in countries which are characterized by dictatorships and this word is subjected to different interpretations. She explains that when they worked with setting up the global EVP (employer value proposition) openness was the only word that people had difficulties to connect to. This example highlights the complexity of global communication and employer branding that the company faces while setting up the core values for attracting innovative talents for offices operating globally.

4.1.1.2

This subchapter will use the interviews to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions among the key informants of Axis Communications based on the primary and secondary research questions. When it comes to working with innovation, both Thomas and Carl agree that they have plentiful opportunities to work with innovation and have the right environment to try new ideas and implement them into products. According to Thomas, concepts like innovation weeks, internal job rotations and innovation greenhouses that provide a safe space to discuss innovative ideas foster a culture of innovation.

Similarly, Carl also shares the same opinion that working with innovation is driven by finding new ideas and things that could be used in Axis products. Carl further explains that ideas are successful when it involves fulfilling three criterion - it enables working with new technology, is of some use for the end customers, and should be a good fit for the company’s product portfolio.

When perspectives between Thomas and Tina, they also have similar perspectives on the same topic. They are of the opinion that the value of innovation is a subject of daily discussion within Axis. As compared to the closed-door approach, Thomas observes Axis to be fully open and welcome people to visit. Tina also concurs with this observation and mentions that friendly and personal leadership that supports a good work environment with statements from managers like “my door is always open for you” go a long way in creating the right attitude to work with innovation.

However, when it comes to the issue of retaining innovative talents, there is a difference of perspectives between Carl and Thomas. According to Carl, the freedom of not having to work with product delivery deadlines makes people stay for a long time. Further, the fun and creative innovation process is cited by Carl as another reason promoting retention whereas according

to Thomas, the open culture of the company along with the readiness to consider ideas irrespective of their business potential is a key factor influencing people to stay. On the same topic, Tina has a similar perspective as Carl. However, Tina and Carl differ on their perceptions of the strategies to use increase retention. According to Tina, retention depends on the contentedness of the employees with the managers and leadership of purpose. However, according to Carl, innovation should be balanced with the business aspects of things. If innovative ideas are not picked up by the company due to cost reasons repeatedly, it may create dissatisfaction among innovative employees and lead to attrition.

Tina and Thomas also have a difference of perceptions regarding the recruitment of innovative talent. According to Thomas, there is access to skilled innovative people who are broad generalists. But sometimes, there is a need of specialists in the team with advanced knowledge of technology. Thomas is of the opinion that it is challenging to attract such talents as he and his team are not well acquainted with the new technology to make that judgement effectively.

On the other hand, Tina shares that the recruitment of innovative people to the company is influenced by the decision of the managers and they are responsible in assessing the innovativeness in the candidate for the specific role. Tina is of the opinion that the managers are well versed with adequate knowledge to hire the innovative people to the company whereas it is a challenge for Thomas to understand and assess innovation requirements during the hiring and recruiting phase.

4.1.2 Giant Tech*

International technology company headquartered in Swemere city* Europe and is responsible for delivering various technology solutions. The company has offices located in more than 100 countries and employs ca 100.000 people.

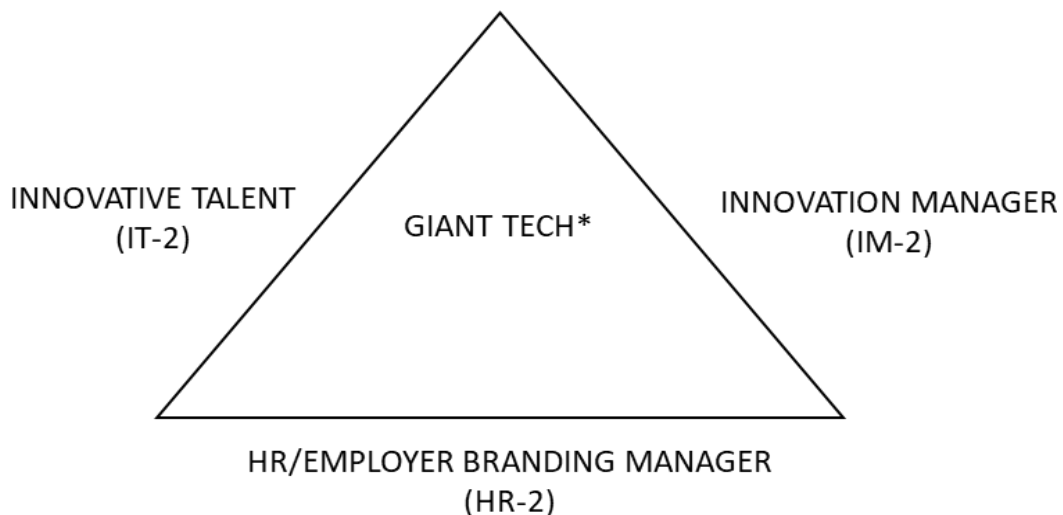


Figure 5: Key Informants from Giant Tech*

4.1.2.1

This subchapter presents the answers to the primary and secondary questions as communicated by the key informants from Giant Tech*.

How is the HR/Employer Branding Manager working within Giant Tech* to attract innovative talents?

HR- 2 states that Giant Tech* works a lot with their brand. They have a separate department to focus on strategy, talent management, talent acquisition, learning and development and employer branding. HR-2 points out that Giant Tech* bases their communication on both external and internal research. With the help of research, they have been successful in identifying 10 different target groups. They have different focus for what attracts these different groups. HR-2 shared some insights from the research that they have a report stating that Data engineers are mainly motivated by feeling valued, appreciate the opportunities provided by the company to hone and develop their skills, opportunities to innovate with flexible working hours. So, HR-2 shares that they use this report to understand the needs and requirements of the Data Engineers.

Then after knowing the factors, the company communicates their propositions with news about innovation, information about new products etc. to attract the target groups. The report also gives information that Data Engineers use channels as Youtube, LinkedIn etc. so they advertise information on these portals to attract the different target groups. According to HR-2, Giant Tech* uses their leading position within technology, their innovation possibilities, and the branding narrative to motivate people to take the chance of becoming the person who creates something new. HR-2 exclaims that as a Giant Tech* employee, one can have an impact on the world and be involved in solving difficult problems with the potential of being rewarded and recognized. HR-2 states that they use both paid and unpaid media to reach their audience and have a lot of collaborations with universities and communities where they arrange and sponsor events and conferences. HR-2 states that they have different strategies for students where the company offers internships and for senior talents, they conduct events to attract the competencies they need.

HR-2 also provides information to access the innovative talent, recruiters support managers to recruit. HR-2 states that they do not have certain tests for creativity/ innovativeness within their recruitment process, but that they rather look more on what the candidate has done before. HR-2 describes innovation as a process that grows over time which would be hard to perform a test on. HR-2 states that they do have tests, but the tests are more related to skills, and the tests are customized for the different roles. HR-2 states that the managers are aware of what products are coming in the market in the future and they are led by studies which enables them to know which kind of personality or skills can enable innovation with the potential market and accordingly recruit the right talents to the company.

How is the HR/Employer Branding Manager working within Giant Tech* to retain innovative talents?

HR-2 explains that there have been several occasions when employees have left the company and have come back to Giant Tech*. HR-2 claims that the reason that Giant Tech* is more innovative than the other companies is that they are working more with new and advanced products. HR-B1 also mentions that Giant Tech* provides immense opportunities to the employees to develop their skills. HR-2 explains that the employees learn a particular skillset from university but explains that this skillset may become obsolete in five years. So, the company emphasizes on making learning a habit, motivates the employees for personal development with the help of the company's own academy and external platform for trainings.

HR-2 states that they help the employees by providing the opportunity to learn new technology and skills like data scientists and certifications as per their need. HR-2 points out that these learnings are not mandatory but driven by employees or managers. HR-2 exclaims that they encourage the conversation between managers and employees. HR-2 feels that Manager should empower the learning of his/her team members connected to development goals. HR-2 feels that facilitating these developments opportunities motivates the employees to stay within Giant Tech*.

HR-B2 also mentioned that people usually stay 10-15 years at Giant Tech*. HR-2 stated that there are some challenges they face are on retaining the younger generation who currently stay for 5-10 years within the company. HR-2 points out that they need to focus more on retaining the younger generations. HR-2 has been working at Giant Tech* for 25 years and has had different jobs within the company. HR-2 has had a lot of freedom to explore one's own talent and develop skills in different roles. HR-2 sees this as an opportunity in large companies. HR-2 mentions that people usually start in one role and develop into others, where innovative people usually take managerial or expert roles where they do not have to manage people. This flexibility keeps the employees motivated and enables the company to retain the innovative talents.

How the Innovation Manager within Giant Tech* works with innovation and engage with the innovative talents?

IM-2 describes that Giant Tech* works with innovation on many different levels. They are mainly centered around three areas namely customer, product, and process development. For the customer area, they focus a lot on business intelligence and investigate other competitors about their offerings. They use innovation to come up with new ideas and products. They sometimes also focus on how they can surprise their customers and over-deliver. The Strategic Product Managers document their ideas in a "business use case" where they describe the idea, how it should work and why, how many hours it takes to produce and deliver. IM-2 further describes that they investigate standardizations in the product area and how they can implement standards differently to create patents which can be protected.

The patent business is quite big on its own parallel to the products. In the product area they have innovation in the product development process to continuously improve on the product.

IM-2 states that a lot of people think that innovation just happens at the spur of time, but according to IM-2 it is process driven. IM-2 exemplifies that sometimes, they take in a third party to investigate the solutions which helps them to be more radical. For the products, they have “invention disclosures” to document a process that they go through at least once a month to see if it is something that they can protect as a patent or not. Then they have a replica of “dragon's den” to see if it can move forward to become a real patent. They also collaborate with external parties, and they run a lot of “proofs of concepts” where they do a lot of tests on products in a new context by recording demos around software to be able to get a clear picture on the validity of what they have been working with.

In process development, IM-2 describes that innovation and improvements are seen as very much the same, even if the latter does not sound so fun. Both are equally important for Giant Tech*. IM-2 feels that if the company can deliver faster to the customer, then the total cost goes down, and they can lower prices which enables them to be more competitive. In the process of developing the products they have an “improvement backlog” where they always send in improvements and how to improve the process and the product. In the interview with IM-2, a lot of emphasis is put on the process of innovating.

IM-2 further describes the roles which demand innovation within the company’s framework are the strategic project managers who are expected to develop strategies need to be creative and radical. IM-2 states that there are employees responsible to incubate ideas on the “shelf” that have not been evaluated yet. IM-2 describes that sometimes two ideas are merged by the employees working with incubating ideas. IM-2 further describes the personal role which involves facilitation of innovation which requires IM-2 to collaborate with universities. IM-2 has access to innovative people across all the company’s offices round the world.

IM-2 also points out the value of open innovation by stating that without external collaborations it is not possible to aim in becoming the world leaders within their field, so IM-2 points out the importance of collaborate with universities, customers, technology lab where people try out new things with others to share ideas, expertise, and knowledge. IM-2 describe One part of IM-2’s role to find collaborators, usually it is in academia, research or science parks or partners and consultancy firms. IM-2 also states that It is about creating radical and disruptive ideas and using all different angles and tools that are possible to use to work with innovation.

IM-2 believes that the possibility to develop oneself and have a lifelong learning drives innovative people to stay at Giant Tech*. IM-2 further mentions the access to experts and the environment for development where they have state of the art tools that are constantly updated are also some of the reasons which motivates the innovative employees to stay. Furthermore, IM-2 believes that employees get triggered by the company's vision. He also highlights on the fact that the innovative talents have the possibility to work on a proof of concept for a month for a year without worrying about delivery to the customer to enhance their innovative skills and work with innovation.

What attracted Innovative Talent to Giant Tech*?

IT-2 came to know about Giant Tech* while pursuing career at the University. IT-2 was immediately attracted by the sector as IT-2 felt that the company's business line has a huge impact on humanity. IT-2 was also attracted to work in a multicultural set up which gave the opportunity to work with different cultures and diversity.

What motivated Innovative Talent to stay at Giant Tech*?

IT-2 describes that the personal motivation to stay is the diversity of tasks and people. The ability of working with different roles has helped IT-2 to learn and develop within the company. The continuous learning about something new and the ability to do something not done before in line with IT-2 's preferences have motivated IT-2 to stay and work with Giant Tech*.

Culture within Giant Tech*

HR-2 points out that the company's culture is based on exercising their Corporate Social responsibilities by working with supplier and shipping partners to send medication and playing a big role in serving the society during situations like pandemic. HR-2 takes pride in the associating with a brand and working with culture which is sustainable and engages the employees everyday. HR-2 explains their plans of working in transforming people's lives by shifting their focus from tech enabled to people centric by empowering everyone within the company.

4.1.2.2

This subchapter will use the interviews to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions among the key informants of Giant Tech* based on the primary and secondary research questions.

IM-2 and IT-2 have similar perceptions towards working with innovation and believe that the inspiration to work with innovation comes from the company's vision to be driven with innovation. Further, they also agree that working with innovation in a structured way with several checkpoints for innovation, reflecting on the possibilities of introducing innovative ideas and checking for patent possibility is a good strategy. When it comes to the constraints affecting the working with innovation, both agree that working with customer delivery often limits them to work with innovation. According to IM-2, there should be provisions for creative talents to work with innovation exclusively for a dedicated time without worrying about the daily activities to deliver as per the schedules. However, according to the information from the HR-2, this is a challenge which is handled case by case.

On the other hand, HR-2 believes that it is their responsibility to ensure that the innovative talent have state of the art tools and resources to perform their activities. Further, they also provide the liberty to choose the training and learning facilities and self-managing the careers which is consistent with the expectation of IT-2 to have access to learning opportunities as well as do something unique and exciting.

An aspect where the perceptions of IM-2 and IT-2 differ is in the origins of innovation. According to IM-2, innovation is mostly process driven which drives the employees to be creative with dedicated roads towards fostering innovation whereas IT-2 is of the opinion that it is a combination of the process and the mindset of the employees which help in fostering innovation. As per IT-2, innovation cannot be enforced upon people and needs personal drive from the employees to foster it within the company.

When it comes to the importance of collaborations, IM-2 emphasizes on the importance of external collaboration with universities for facilitating innovation is important. IM-2 believes that employees must develop their mindset and be curious about the new trends in the market. Thus, it is important to have interactions outside the company to broaden perspectives. On the other hand, the IT-2 highlights that internal collaboration within the different departments and experts of the company for solutions is a key factor that helps the team to work with innovation.

IM- 2 and HR-2 have a difference of perception regarding the attraction and recruitment of talents. According to IM-2, open innovation can be supported by having tie ups with science parks, universities, and consultancies to recruit talents who are willing to work full or part time. On the other hand, HR-2 focus is to use these tie ups to attract new talents and use social and print media to hire experienced candidates. HR-2 is solely focused on recruiting employees and does not have a separate strategy to attract people interested to collaborate as partners or work on part time basis as envisioned by IM-2. Further, HR-2 is solely focused on attracting the creative talents externally whereas according to IM-2, it is important to find and reassign employees within the company who are experienced and aware of the company process.

4.1.3 Spotify

Multinational company headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden delivering the world's largest music streaming service. Spotify was founded in 2006 and today holds offices located across 25 countries and employs over 6000 people. The key informant from Spotify is Martin Lorentzon who is the Founder of Spotify.

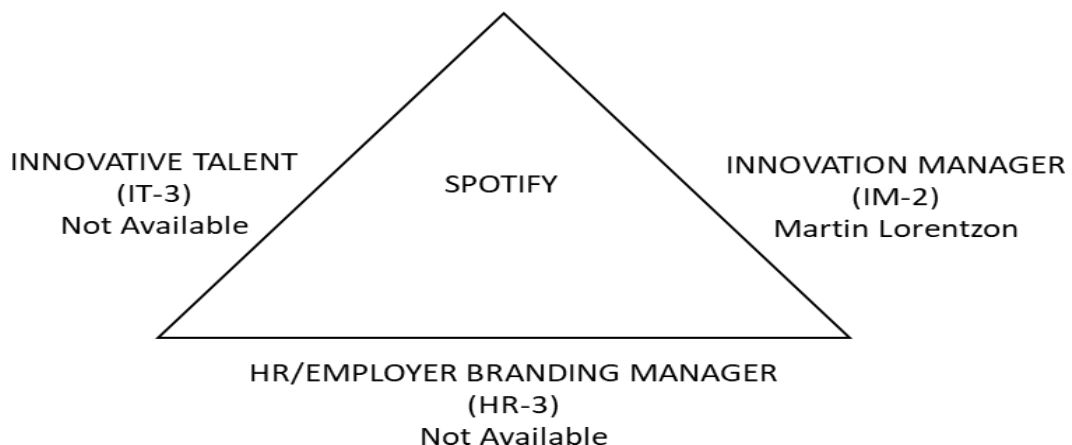


Figure 6: Key Informants from Spotify

4.1.3.1

This subchapter presents the answers to the primary and secondary questions as communicated by the key informant from Spotify.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager working within Spotify to attract innovative talents?

The interview did not cover this part and unfortunately no other informants from the HR/Employer Branding department of Spotify were available. However, Martin (IM-3) shared some insights on the on Spotify being the most popular and attractive working place in Sweden 2020 moving ahead of Google to retain the top slot. Martin believes that the reason for this position and popularity is firstly, due to the company culture secondly the product and the freedom to the employees to work from wherever they want. He feels that these are the main reasons which raises people's quality of life and freedom. These aspects put Spotify in a strong competitive position to recruit the best talents.

He also pointed out that Spotify's high rankings on job sites and portals like Glassdoor enables them to have a huge pool of talents to choose from for recruitment. Martin mentions that his innate ability to recruit good people and his personal traits of being an outgoing and extrovert person enables him to understand how people are, how they will react in the group. He also feels that he is good at predicting the future and these abilities have helped him to recruit the best talents for Spotify. Also, his curiosity to work with changes have enabled him to work within the arenas which have not been explored much. Martin also believes in having a structured way of finding innovative talents by having the co-founder, the Chief Technology Officer and the Human Resource Officer on board who then helps the company by attracting other innovative talents.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager working within Spotify to retain innovative talents?

The interview did not cover this part and unfortunately no other informants from the HR/Employer Branding department of Spotify were available. However, Martin states that it is the culture within Spotify that helps in attracting and retaining the innovative talents. He shared that the value of company culture is not well estimated by other companies but at Spotify it is the backbone for the success. He feels that maybe working with stringent rules and regulations might have had brought more success to the company, but he doesn't like to be associated with it. He believes in driving the company in the long run for which he believes that the culture plays a pivotal role in ensuring that.

He further believes that the employees are motivated to stay because they pay high salaries, have a "fantastic" office, have different tech events where people don't work on their normal tasks, and the freedom for people to "do whatever they want". Along with this, the employees are given the time to explore and develop themselves outside Spotify which Martin feels helps to bring in new ideas and creativity. He further mentions that they have internal education for promoting education. Martin sees himself as a "product of school" and is very firm about highlighting education's importance.

Furthermore, he explains how they do many activities together with added attractions like performances from artists, organizing parties, interesting projects, training rooms, Japanese relaxing rooms for power naps, gaming rooms, good food, and providing trainers for the employees who are concerned about health; helps the company to retain the talents. According to Martin, it is about asking questions like what the employees want and to listen to them, he listens to them almost all the time. He further mentions that they extend support to their employees a lot, if they want to travel they are welcome to do so, people who come from abroad also get support for their families who come along, for example free language education, flexible holidays so one can take out the “red days” depending on the employee’s will.

Martin believes that extended support to the employee's family helps with retaining the employee. The “work from wherever you want” initiative also helps to increase people’s quality of life, according to Martin, people are happy at Spotify. He raises the value of the Swedish culture and explains how Spotify brought the Swedish values to the US in 2011. Together with Barack Obama, they launched five weeks of holiday and seven months paid paternity and maternity leave for all American employees which was a huge success. The standard in the US was two weeks’ vacation and zero months paid maternity or paternity leave. Martin states that, if people take time off to spend with their children, they become better leaders, better workers, or better developers which in turn helps the company to function better.

How the Innovation Manager within Spotify works with innovation and engage with the innovative talents?

The interview did not cover this part and unfortunately no other informants from Spotify were available.

What attracted Innovative Talent to Spotify?

The interview did not cover this part and unfortunately no other informants from Spotify were available.

What motivated the Innovative Talent to stay at Spotify?

The interview did not cover this part and unfortunately no other informants from Spotify were available.

Culture within Spotify

Martin describes the company culture which is built on Swedish values where the individuals are free to become anyone they want to be, have any gender they like and love anyone they want. He also describes the culture as very professional with a perfect blend of hard work and fun. The climate and culture are so strong and powerful according to Martin, it is also the aspect that he is most proud of, and he describes it as “hard working people in combination with a fantastic company culture”.

4.1.3.2

This subchapter will use the interviews to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions among the key informants of Spotify based on the primary and secondary research questions.

Unfortunately, due to the unavailability of the interviews from key informants (HR/Employer Branding Manager and Innovative Talent), there was no data available to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions within the key informants of Spotify based on the primary and secondary research questions.

4.1.4 A-Z Networks*

Global conglomerate headquartered in the Oprary country * responsible for delivering various technology products. The company has offices in more than 30 countries and employ over 100.000 people.

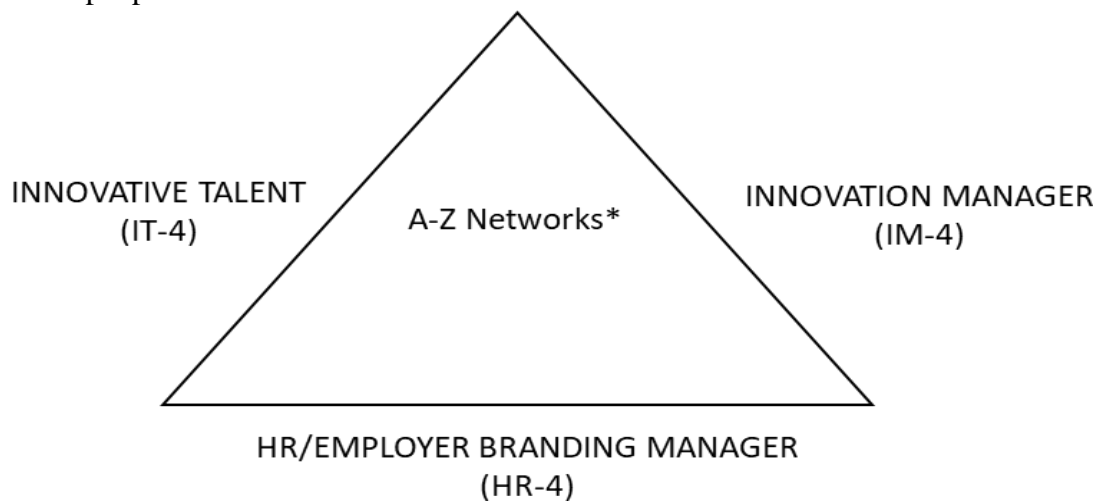


Figure 7: Key Informants from A-Z Networks*

4.1.4.1

This subchapter presents the answers to the primary and secondary questions as communicated by the key informants from A-Z Networks*.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager working within A-Z Networks* to attract innovative talents?

HR-4 states that innovation is inbuilt in the DNA of A-Z Networks*.HR-4 points out that it is because of their accessibility to innovative talents that company has success ventures with innovation. So, it is highly important for them to attract the innovative talents to the company. To do so A-Z Networks* base their recruitment on their values which are to be innovative and creative with the emphasis on the cutting-edge technology.

To reach the innovative talents, A-Z Networks * works with external collaborations like universities, provide sponsor ships to attract females and young people at tech, extend support to start ups and students to target young talents to the company. They communicate about their innovation driven culture, openness to change, provision of platform for new ideas and the opportunity to be part of experimentation in their Employer Value Proposition (EVP) to attract the innovative talents to the company.

They propose their EVP through videos and transformation ads. HR-4 also puts forward some of the challenges they face while attracting the right talents as most of the innovative candidates are headhunted by other companies and at the same time, it is difficult for them the talents with the knowledge and expertise of new and niche areas where there is less of talent pool and experienced candidates. To overcome these challenges, HR-4 points out that the managers are taught to portray themselves into offering something unique to take care of the needs of the innovative talents during the recruitment process. HR-4 also pointed out that during the recruitment process, they ask questions in a way to check the readiness of the candidate towards working with new process and understand the traits and insights of the candidate's competencies and also check for their innovativeness.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager working within A-Z Networks* to retain innovative talents?

HR-4 explains that a lot of employees stay for their whole careers within A-Z Networks* as the company offers good compensation and benefits along with high bonuses. HR-4 shares that the employees like the flexibility of being able to plan their own work. HR-4 feels that these reasons go a long way in retaining the innovative talents. HR-4 also highlights the importance of educating the managers to be the gate keepers and training them to change their mindset while working with the young innovative talents to have better retention within A-Z Networks*.

How the Innovation Manager within A-Z Networks* works with innovation and engage with the innovative talents?

IM-4 points that owing to the large size of the company, innovation seems to happen on several "islands" within the company that are more or less connected to each other. IM-4 points out that some parts of the company have more time and space for innovation than others. IM-4 is in- charge of managing acceleration program that serves as a platform to develop both internal and external innovative ideas. The team conducts events and helps innovative people with the support for their startup ideas in a variety of ways like feedback, guidance, and funding. They also collaborate with universities. IM-5 points out that the employees of A-Z Networks* are always welcomed to work within the acceleration program on a full time or part time basis on their ideas.

IM-4 also states that although A-Z Networks* is more innovative than most of the companies still IM-4 thinks that they should increase the innovation focus from the top management. IM-4 feels that although the company's vision and mission is webbed around innovation, still there is a need to foster the change in the mindset of the employees to work with innovation. IM-4

points out the need of providing incentives for innovation and facilitating opportunities among the employees to work with the new and innovative ideas.

IM-4 also explains that A-Z Networks* does have the infrastructure in place for generating and working with innovative ideas where they have idea inbox with a form where one can leave ideas, and the ideas are given feedback and development suggestions, but feels that there is a time constraint with this approach. IM-4 thinks that innovation would foster within the company when everyone's performance management is aligned to them working with innovation. Also, IM-4 states that with the creation of more recognitions for innovators with titles like “innovator of the month” would strengthen the focus on innovation.

What attracted Innovative Talent to A-Z Networks*?

IT-4 started to work at A-Z Networks * as a consultant and had always been interested to work with new technology. IT-4 really liked the colleagues and the opportunities at the workplace, and this attracted IT-5 to become an in-house employee. IT-4 got interested in creating new and unique products and was encouraged to create patents from the ideas. The patents were also rewarded monetarily, and this attracted IT-4 to start venturing out with innovation.

What motivated the Innovative Talent to stay within A-Z Networks*?

IT-4 explains that the position and manager give IT-4 the freedom to “work all over the place” and with innovation, something that not all managers do which motivates IT-4 to stay. IT-4 further mentions that the department where IT-4 works has a special culture which allows for innovation. The team is nice, the culture is open, where IT-4 has the freedom to explore and try out new things. However, if IT-4 points out that for IT-4 to switch jobs, it would be important for IT-4 to try out something completely new, at a company with an open culture that promotes trying out new things and work exclusively with innovation.

Culture within A-Z Networks*

IT-4 exclaims that A-Z Networks * is a good place to work with innovation but feels that this is limited to some offices and not propagated uniformly by the higher management across all the offices globally. HR-4 states that the south Swedish site has a certain pulse, open mindedness, openness to new ideas, and that innovation is in the walls and that the ceiling is high. IM-4 has studied their culture, so IM-4 feels that they are very open to differences in people, have a sense of belonging, a dedication to programming, and that competences are very respected.

4.1.4.2

This subchapter will use the interviews to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions among the key informants of A-Z Networks* based on the primary and secondary research questions.

IM-4 and IT-4 agree on their perception towards working with innovation. They believe that the company policies permitting people to work with innovation, given incentives for the same,

providing feedback, and the presence of pitching sessions with managers for the ideas generated is important to realize the business potential for the idea generation.

Further, both are also consistent in their opinion about open innovation opportunities via tie ups with students and external collaboration with small startups being beneficial to the company. They are also in agreement that innovation should not be limited to only R&D and product development teams, but other departments should be equally involved in it which is a sentiment echoed by HR-4 as well.

Coming to the issue of talent retention, HR-4 is of the opinion that a good compensation and benefits package is a key reason for retention of innovative talent whereas IM-5 holds the thought that innovative talents need recognition in the form of “innovator of the month” to foster innovation in the workplace and keep them driven. In the same aspect, IT-4 is of the opinion that it is the managers who play a vital role in retaining the innovative talents. According to IP-4, the managers should encourage talents to pursue innovation uniformly across all the departments.

When the issue of securing and promoting innovation is considered, IM-4 is of the opinion that innovation can be secured by connecting it with the performance management goals and have surveys to estimate employee innovation contribution. However, IT-4 holds the opinion that emphasis should be placed on making innovation a part of the company culture and propagating this culture uniformly amongst its global offices. Conversely, HR-4 and IT-4 both agree that management should promote innovation uniformly across all offices worldwide and promote innovation as a part of their culture.

4.1.5 IT-Clearly*

It is a global IT and management consultancy headquartered in the Eplurg* country delivering consultancy services. It has offices located in more than 30 countries and employ over 250.000 people.

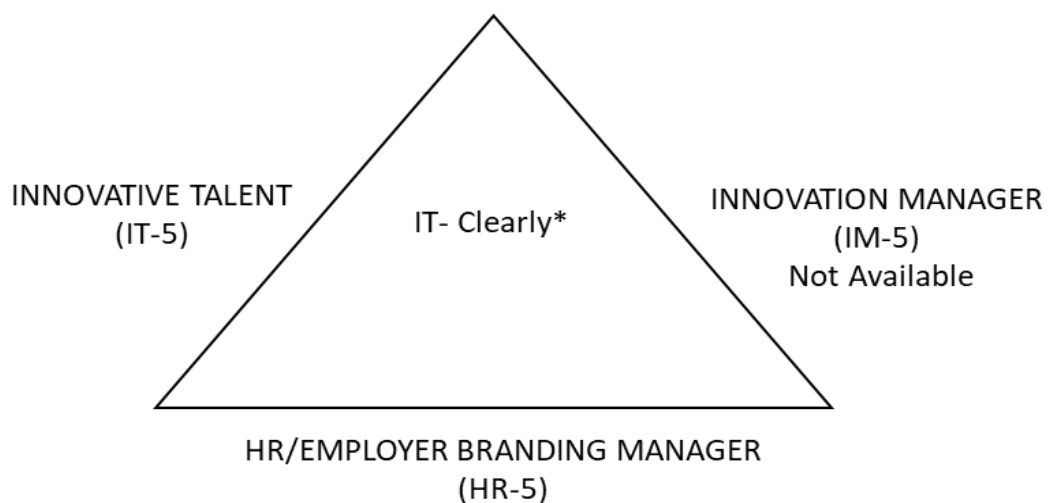


Figure 8: Key Informants from IT- Clearly*

4.1.5.1

This subchapter presents the answers to the primary and secondary questions as communicated by the key informants from IT-Clearly*.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager working within IT-Clearly* to attract innovative talents?

HR-5 shared that there is no specific strategy to attract innovative people but use employer branding and talent acquisition strategies as enablers to find the potential talents. HR-5 shares that they have many activities targeted to make their brand attractive to the potential candidates. The HR Manager points out that they share their success stories to keep the potential talents attracted about the company. HR-5 also shares that they use their employee's experience perspectives for attracting the right talents to the company. HR-5 feels that this is important to showcase achievements like unique technology solutions or work within innovation for their target audience. HR-5 further states that innovative people are always on a lookout for development opportunities and HR-5 feels that the company is associated with great brands and are front runners within their fields which makes IT-Clearly* one of the preferred places to work. HR-5 also points out how they are competing against companies like Spotify and Klarna for talents as they have higher brand awareness in the tech sector and find this a challenge for them as the talents would rather work for such companies. HR-5 also shares that although they have strategies in place but is not quite sure whether these are impressive enough to attract the innovative people.

HR-E1 shares the plans of working with ambassadorship in a structured way with the managers engage them in sharing content in social media. HR-E1 also describes people who are developers are innovative and they usually do not apply for jobs very often. Therefore, IT-Clearly* seek the help of the recruiters on a regular basis to search for talents via LinkedIn to forward their Employer Value Proposition where they talk about which opportunities that they are offered if they join the company.

HR-5 points out that it is necessary for IT-Clearly* to address their offerings to talent early in the conversations on topics to technology, development opportunities, network, team activities, work-life balance, purpose, CSR, diversity, and climate impact. Therefore, IT-Clearly* uses employer branding to make the talent aware of them and form positive brand associations, so once the talents are approached by the company, they will have knowledge about them, and this will foster positive associations.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager working within IT-Clearly* to attract innovative talents?

HR-5 states that the consultancies are always competing against their clients for retaining their talents. To overcome these challenges, HR-5 states that the company focuses on the complete employer journey according to the needs of their employees. This includes creating development opportunities that the employees need, keep them engaged in diverse projects, move them around in projects and between clients, and to enable them to have close dialogue with their managers to ensure that the employees develop the way they want to. HR-5 states

that this is what they intend to do and that and HR-E1 expresses the desire to excel with these strategies to retain their employees.

According to HR-5, a motivational factor for employees to be retained within IT-Clearly* is the balance in work life on a contrary to the popular belief that consultancies tend to make their employees overwork. HR-E1 shares some of their internal surveys which points out that most employees feel like they have good work life balance. HR-5 further mentions that in large companies it can sometimes be very apparent how innovation is smothered by processes, as a large employer it is of more importance to have processes and agile ways of working to enable innovation and to lift people's creativity and make the most use of the people's capabilities. However, HR-5 feels that this aspect is not properly addressed within IT- Clearly.

How the Innovation Manager within IT-Clearly* works with innovation and engage with the innovative talents?

The interview did not cover this part and unfortunately no other informants from IT-Clearly* were available.

What attracted Innovative Talent to IT-Clearly*?

IT-5 works in the part of the company that is more closely related to technology and the clients with less focus on models and methods than the larger parts of IT-Clearly*. IT-5 was attracted to IT-Clearly* since it was a larger company and perceived it as a platform for opportunities to present ideas to a “better place”. IT-5 wanted to provide the clients with new and better solutions and found IT-Clearly* could help IT-5’s dreams turn into reality. IT-5 had previously worked many years with commercial radio where IT-5 got attracted to the two-part complexity of the work. There, one must balance the costumers' needs (the ones who pay for advertisements) and the listeners' needs, which IT-5 saw as an attractive challenge.

What motivated Innovative Talent to stay at IT-Clearly*?

IT-5 states that the platform of opportunities is the motivating factor to stay within IT-Clearly*. IT-5 further states that there needs to be balance between people like IT-5 who are innovative and technology for delivering products as per the needs of the customer expects, so innovation from both technology and talent. IT-5 states that they need to be someone who delivers talent to their problems, and talent now is what is around. So, for IT-5, points out that the reason for being motivated to work is not the ability to with the boring stuff but it is because there are people who can deliver the crazy ideas.

IT-5 feels that only being driven by innovation wouldn’t have alone help in sustaining the company with no delivery. So, the combination from both sides of the platform is what motivates IT-5 to stay. IT-5 also states that a personal trigger is the way of seeing the truth and to explore the world around yourself to be challenged around one’s truths. IT-5 expresses that as long as challenges pour in and questions relating to the validity of the approach of IT-5 is challenged by others, IT-5 will not quit the company.

Culture within IT-Clearly*

IT-5 explains that there are differences in culture between the main part of the company and the part IT-5 works. In IT-5's section, they are more local and closer to technology and the customer, creating a more familiar feeling where they can be much faster in their work the colleagues are interested in everything they do and want to innovate and sell new solutions. In IT-5's group, the decision makers meet 2-3 times a week and are closely knit together. The culture is centered around togetherness and curiosity.

4.1.5.2

This subchapter will use the interviews to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions among the key informants of IT- Clearly* based on the primary and secondary research questions.

The interviews have been used to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions within the key informants of IT-Clearly* based on the primary and secondary research questions.

IT-5 and HR-5 agree that innovation happens in different departments. IT-5 feels that there is a time constraint when working with innovation and the provision of processes and an innovation system would be helpful to foster innovation. This sentiment is echoed by HR-5 as well in their opinion about the importance of processes and agile ways of working to enable innovation as well as using the talents available to foster innovation within the company.

When it comes to the issue of talent retention, HR-5 indicates that a key factor influencing retention positively is development opportunities provided by the company tailormade to the needs of the talent, the freedom to change projects and clients, and the opportunity to have discussions with their managers to choose their development paths.

HR also mentions work-life balance as another factor that increases retention. In contrast, the IT-5 cites the opportunity of working in a challenging environment, contributing to the core business of the company, the presence of talented colleagues as the main reasons inspiring them to stay with the company.

4.1.6 King

Swedish game development company headquartered in Stockholm; Sweden has been involved in delivering games where the most well-known is Candy crush Saga. King is owned by the American company Activision Blizzard since 2016. King was founded in 2003 and today holds Offices located in more than 5 countries and employs over 1400 people. The key informants from King are Stephanie Flodén who works as the Global Employer Brand Manager, Activision Blizzard King, David Nelson who works as the Head of Portfolio Games and Marcus Edwho is the Senior Creative Director for the company.

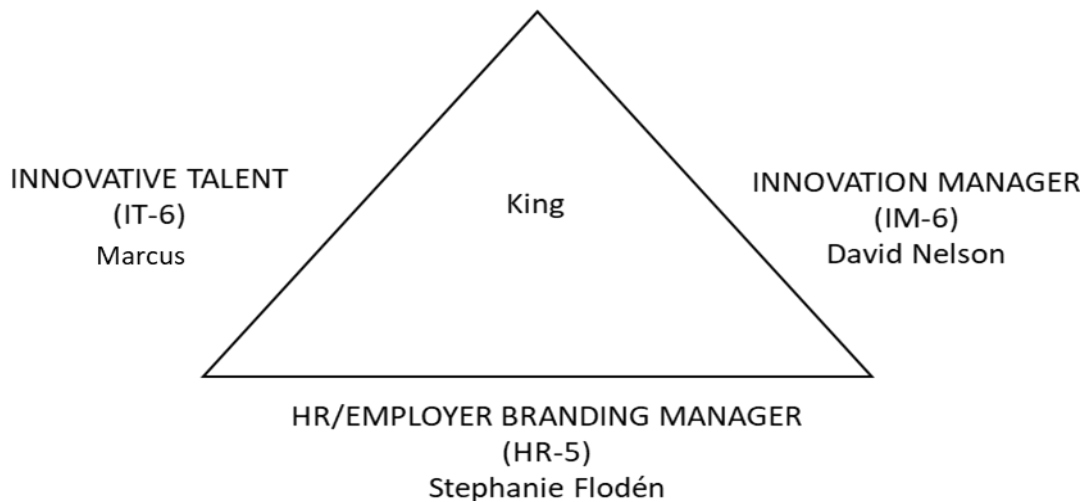


Figure 9: Key Informants from King

4.1.6.1

This subchapter presents the answers to the primary and secondary questions as communicated by the key informants from King.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager working within King to attract innovative talents?

Stephanie (HR-6) states that King focuses on specialized competencies in recruitment which is intertwined with innovation. She points out that it is a part of the trait they are look for in the talents. However, they do not have an exclusive strategy to attract innovative people. Activision Blizzard’s employer branding strategy is to use the voice of their employees to highlight their uniqueness with focus on communication on the joint passion to “Making the World Playful” and the endless opportunities the talents may have by connecting with the hundreds and millions of people who are playing the games every single day.

Stephanie states that the recruitment process is designed to check innovativeness through a series of interview questions centered around the company’s values. The company uses portals like career site, LinkedIn, Indeed, Glassdoor and similar platforms, sometimes they highlight ads via Instagram for placing their job ads. Another important part of their strategy according to Stephanie, is to work with targeted recruitment marketing as LinkedIn campaigns. She states that she sees the strategies as successful since the companies are highly successful with its business model.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager working within King to retain innovative talents?

Unfortunately, this part was not covered in the interview.

How the Innovation Manager within King works with innovation and engage with the innovative talents?

David (IT-6) states that King works with tons of innovation, but it is run differently in every department. The way they set up innovation activities change every year. David states that he has been experimental with 5-10 different ways to push innovation. He states that currently they use exploration days. During the exploration days, employees are free to work within subjects according to their preferences for personal development. However, it is mandated to share insights on their learnings with the team. He states that the subjects are quite varied like from reading a book, explore machine learning or try something out for the games. The two days gives the employees time to think differently, refresh their minds and deepen the creative thinking with new insights, which has a positive impact on the way the employees can develop their mindset and think about different possible ways to offer innovative ideas and solutions to the games.

While working on a day-to-day basis, David states that there is a person in every team who is primarily responsible for ensuring that creative things come into the games. He makes clear that person performs the job to make sure that ideas come in, not that only this person's ideas come in. David further puts forward his views on some of the innovation processes which involves brainstorming sessions, innovation contests often do not reflect their true purpose. According to him, the brainstorming sessions usually just touches the surface level of ideas and innovation contests, and similar set ups have a high degree of risk on motivation from participants along with the additional pressure of being good or bad at presenting ideas.

He also states that working in lab set ups is also not always satisfactorily as it is often disconnected from reality. David explains that innovation requires a mix of talents, and complex understanding of the people who are supposed to perform innovation. He describes how employee with a flair for analyzing numbers and creative employee can clash. The creative has an idea based on years of experience and intuition, while the employee with the entrepreneurial mindset prefers to generate ideas after analyzing numbers. According to David, ideas from the employee with an entrepreneurial mindset get prioritized since they can put an estimate percentage on what the idea could bring. David's suggestion is to let them both work together and try out their ideas in beta versions to foster cooperation among these different enablers and foster innovation in the company.

What attracted Innovative Talent to King?

Marcus (IT-6) was attracted to King as he felt that they offered a fast-paced environment for developing games. He also found that this could be achieved by working in small teams and the company gave him the perfect opportunity to work with innovation which is in line with his personality. He was also attracted to the values and the good leadership which ensured that the employees are well compensated and make the workplace a fun place for the employees.

What motivated Innovative Talent to stay at King?

Marcus highlighted on some of the aspects that did not go in the right direction for him in the past. Along with the success of the company with a rapid growth phase, there was an influx of colleagues and managers with different motivations. He felt that he was sidelined, and the company did not have a clear direction. He never supported the idea of introducing KPIs for measuring innovation and felt that the R&D set up of the company was driven by the motivation of earning money which killed innovation.

He had witnessed these changes in the company, but he tried to scrap through it by being motivated by revenge to stay and work with King. But now, he feels that he is motivated to lead the teams in the right direction and facilitate the learning process within King. At the same time, he feels that he is allowed a certain degree of freedom because of past successes and offered a good compensation with high degrees of trust. He feels that if there is a change in management in the future who directs him with what needs to be done may compel him to quit his job at King.

Culture at King

The webpage of the company, King.com Ltd. (2021), defines their culture as their magic sauce. They consider it as a special blend of creativity, passion, and collaboration. The company achieves it by getting great people to play well together in a creative environment to delight their players. They believe that the entrepreneurial mindset enables them to take smart risks, learn fast and share. King offers a great place to work by offering benefits and perks, competitive pay, coverage for the important life stuff like medical insurance, learning opportunities for employees through their learn@king portal, events such as Kingfomarket to facilitate a platform to share ideas and promote sustainability.

These make King an attractive brand for innovative talents to pursue their career. The company shares the essence of their culture by promoting their brand as a provider of an experimenting, learning, and adapting environment to continuously shape the industry in ways yet to be imagined, keeping the fun along the way in their job advertisements to attract the talents.

4.1.6.2

This subchapter will use the interviews to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions among the key informants of King based on the primary and secondary research questions.

The interviews have been used to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions within the key informants of King based on the primary and secondary research questions.

IT-6 and IM-6 agree with the structured way of working with innovation. Considering the talent retention issue, IM-6 indicates that innovative talents are motivated to stay due to the dynamic environment, creativity, and a strong mix of data so one can find out what works whereas IP-6 is of the opinion that degree of freedom provided to him because of previous successes, good

compensation and the establishment of a position where he is trusted motivates him to stay with King.

When it comes to fostering innovation, HR-6 opines that the success of the company is dependent on the innovativeness of the people. In contrast, IT-6 is of the view that although management specifically asks the employees to be innovative, missed targets and wrong estimates impact the credibility of innovative talents negatively. The view of IT-6 is that as it is difficult to work with estimates when working with novel ideas, there is often a compromise between which hampers fostering innovation in the company.

4.1.7 AFRY

Previously named ÅF, AFRY is an international engineering and design company headquartered in Solna, Sweden delivering consultancy services. ÅF was founded in 1895, acquired Pöyry 2019 and became AFRY. Today AFRY holds offices located in more than 40 countries and employs over 16.000 people. The key informant from AFRY is Sara Klingenberg who works as the VP and Head of HR, AFRY Industrial & Digital Solutions Division.

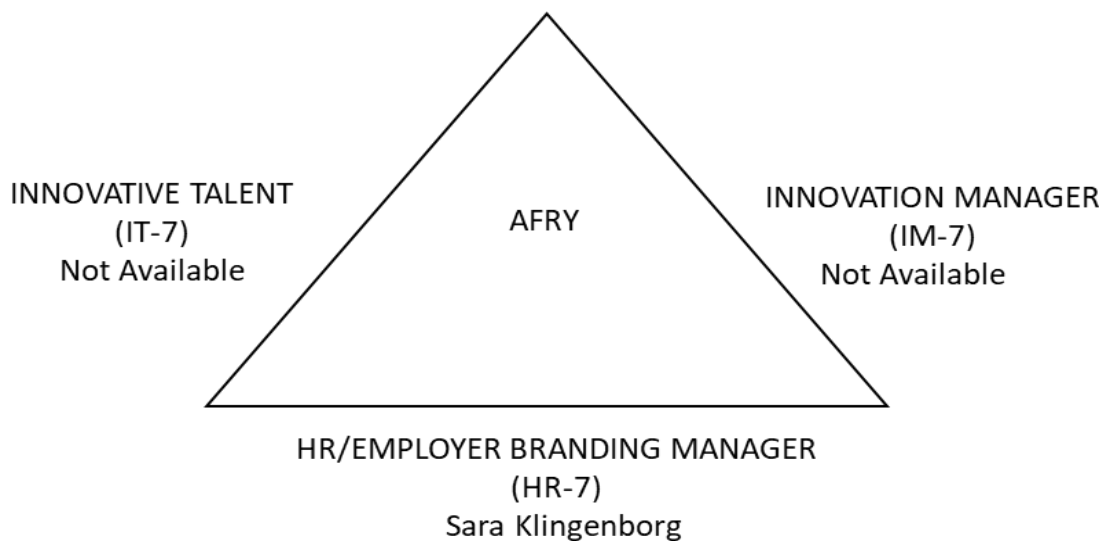


Figure 10: Key Informants from AFRY

4.1.7.1

This subchapter presents the answers to the primary and secondary questions as communicated by the key informant from AFRY.

How is HR/Employer Branding Manager working within AFRY to attract innovative talents?

For AFRY, it is a blend of innovative and entrepreneurial mindset is the key aspect of the talents whom they attract to work with them. Sara pointed out that it is important for the company to attract people who are not only innovative but also have a profound interest in

understanding the client's business. Sara states that the consultants they employ need to have a deep understanding of a power plant for example to be able to be innovative within that setting, Sara introduces a new term called "specialized innovation". To attract these specialized innovators, AFRY relies on their collaborations with universities by having individuals working both as consultants for AFRY alongside working at the universities.

Furthermore, Sara explains that they post job openings at their career page, LinkedIn etc. and produce specific ads to certain target groups. She also pointed out that they have a specialized department of 50 inhouse recruiters who work with advertising, headhunting to reach the innovative people, also engage a lot on word of mouth with their internal employees to get recommendations and contacts.

Sara states that the process of attracting the target set of specialized innovators is challenging as she feels that since they are approached by so many recruiters, it makes it difficult for them to attract the talents to the company. Therefore, AFRY needs to always be prepared on how to handle these candidates in a better way. She further explains that to attract these candidates requires a lot of selling from their side. Therefore, AFRY needs to properly communicate about how the talents will benefit from working at AFRY.

Furthermore, Sara states "we are not Google". According to her, AFRY is more of a traditional company since their clients are traditional who work in different sectors like steel, forest, energy etc. So, according to Sara, the management of these clients are not interested in working with innovation. Instead, the client needs to understand that the AFRY consultants have deep knowledge pertaining to the client's area of expertise and then comes the innovative layer.

According to Sara, AFRY's biggest problem when attracting the innovative people is in the early stage of the process where they need to communicate that AFRY is an innovative company. However, Sara states that it is relatively smooth later on in the recruitment process almost during the onboarding process where the innovative talents get interested and a bit surprised as most of AFRY's projects are relatively secretive and they can be more detailed picture about the projects and clients first at the interview stage, leaving the candidate with a positive surprise. Sara describes that by communicating about their innovative projects, for example the huge battery factory for Northvolt, attracts extremely innovative people who want to join.

To their help in the interview stage, AFRY has a lot of support material as guides for the managers who are recruiting. Sara states that the guides are impressively good and present a lot of questions related to innovation, for example how the candidate sells their ideas to someone. Further Sara explains that they need to re-organize themselves in a way to attract the "crazy innovative" since it previously has not been their main target. Their current knowledge about how to attract is built on previous experience along with trial and error. Sara states that since they have hired so many, AFRY knows what the candidates like to hear, what to pay them and if they are interested in bonuses etc.

She also points out that since most of the development happens at the client's site, it is very difficult to make the company work together and have channels or ways to attract those innovative ideas for the company so she has plans to have such inhouse set up for AFRY as

she feels that it might have good effects on highlighting AFRY as an innovation driven company.

How is HR/Employer Branding Manager working within AFRY to retain innovative talents?

Sara mentions that they need a different strategy to retain the innovative consultant. She differentiates between the highly specialized consultants and the innovative consultants by stating that the former is more interested to go deep into working with clients and offering technical solutions to them and often stay at the client's site and develop there whereas the latter is broader and requires plentiful projects to keep them interested in working with AFRY. The main problem for innovative employees according to Sara, is that they get bored, they need something new to hone their skills and develop themselves with new learnings and new clients.

Sara further states that some of the bigger challenges to retain the innovative talents is when the clients become competitors which is the case with most of the consultancies. Sara states that AFRY would never go to the client to try to recruit their employees to AFRY as they give clients the supreme importance. To tackle this problem, she states that AFRY tries to cooperate with the clients to solve their talent problems by helping them to attract talent instead of competing for the same.

Sara states that promoting the benefits of being a consultant, training and education facilities for the consultants are some of the ways which help them to prevent the drain of consultants from AFRY to the clients. She also states that AFRY can almost never compete with salary, not because they pay bad, but because buying consultants back with money is not the way of buying loyalty and retaining them instead, they focus on internal employer branding to make themselves attractive to retain the innovative talents.

How the Innovation Manager within AFRY works with innovation and engage with the innovative talents?

Unfortunately, Innovation Manager was not available as an informant from AFRY. However, Sara pointed out that AFRY's consultants work a lot with innovation at the clients' sites and are focused on helping the clients to innovate than to drive the clients innovation. She highlighted the fact that AFRY consultants are specialist engineers from a broad variety of fields that handles difficult problems of all kinds.

Sara describes that recently AFRY have started to become innovative themselves by setting up a partner company called Digital X which works cross-functionally across the whole company. Digital X works with large very broad digitization projects, for example to digitize a whole city. Sara also plans on implementing idea inboxes as a good way to start the innovative process, however, AFRY at this stage is looking for alternatives to structure the innovation process inhouse as it may help in attracting, engaging and retaining the innovative talents.

What attracted Innovative Talent to AFRY?

The interview did not cover this part and unfortunately no other informants from AFRY were available.

What motivated the Innovative Talent to stay at AFRY?

The interview did not cover this part and unfortunately no other informants from AFRY were available.

Culture at AFRY

According to the company's website ÅF PÖYRY AB (2021) the culture of AFRY is open, dynamic, and innovative and company believes that continuous development of their people is the key to ensure that.

4.1.7.2

This subchapter will use the interviews to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions among the key informants of AFRY based on the primary and secondary research questions. Unfortunately, due to the unavailability of the interviews from key informants (Innovation Manager and Innovative Talent), there was no data available to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions within the key informants of AFRY based on the primary and secondary research questions.

4.1.8 LeoVegas

Swedish entertainment company headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden delivering mobile casino games. LeoVegas was founded in 2012 and currently has offices located in six countries and employs over 900 people. The key informant include Jenny Borgquist who works as the Head of HR North, LeoVegas Group.

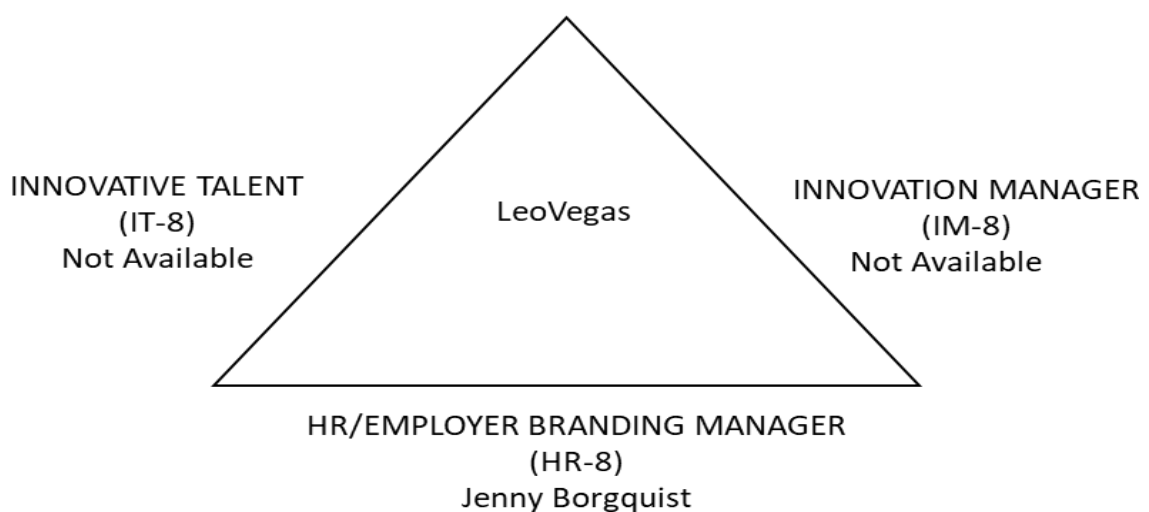


Figure 11: Key informants from LeoVegas

4.1.8.1

This subchapter presents the answers to the primary and secondary questions as communicated by the key informant from LeoVegas.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager within LeoVegas work to attract innovative talents?

According to Jenny (HR-8), the competencies which they look for in their talents are their tech competencies and innovation capabilities. She further states that they reach out to their target group by posting job ads on their career site and other platforms like LinkedIn, Glassdoor, Stack overflow, Indeed and other popular channels. She also states that marketing campaigns on Facebook and Instagram also serve the purpose of reaching the target group. Apart from the usual ways of attracting the talents, Jenny also highlighted on a new strategy which they have recently come up with is of having podcasts in the form of job ads.

The podcasts give them a strategic advantage over other companies to give the candidates a better understanding of their culture and enhance their attractiveness. Jenny also stated that they currently work with the employer branding by showcasing their culture and leadership to their target audience and she feels that they can do a lot more with that. She also shared that diversity is supremely important and that the company puts in efforts which are directed towards attracting talents globally. Currently, the team in Sweden has around 230 employees from 40 nationalities.

During the interview, Jenny was especially asked how the image of an online casino affects the employer branding. She replied that they communicate responsible and safe gaming example, LeoPlaySafe. She also explained that LeoVegas is vigilant over the rules and regulations that surround the gaming industry and promote that while communicating it to attract the innovative talents to the company. She also discusses the challenges that the company faces while attracting talents with tech capabilities is that the existence of so many other industries that are of special interest to the talents and due to the “war for talent” which makes it difficult for her and her team to attract the innovative talents.

Jenny stated that firstly LeoVegas provides a coding challenge followed by an interview to know the skills of the interested candidates. This is performed to understand the capabilities of the candidates to solve problems in new ways. Afterwards, they have structured culture interview to avoid unconscious biases followed by discussions pertaining to how the candidate possibly can contribute to the team with emphasis on diversity. Jenny feels that this way of having interviews with the talents helps them to assess the innovation capability, attitude, mindset, and personality traits of the talents which help them to get the best of the talents to the company.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager within LeoVegas work to retain innovative talents?

Jenny highlights the flat company structure where the individuals can take their own initiatives and run their own projects, the company culture and the leadership are the factors that help in retaining innovative employees. However, she also mentions that LeoVegas is crossing from

the growth phase to the maturity phase and with this a lot of emphasis is on working in an environment of regulations. Jenny points out that this phase may indirectly impact the innovative persons as they may not like to work with regulations, and this might be a reason for attrition. However, she feels that the company is at a better position to provide better compensation to the employees.

She states that LeoVegas can afford to compensate well, and maybe could add a little extra to balance for the less attractive parts from the industry perspective. Jenny also discussed the challenges they might face when some of the highly innovative and entrepreneurial employees might feel that they belonged more in the startup phase of the company and might therefore leave LeoVegas. During the interview Jenny is also asked about a rumour that online casinos pay high salaries to attract and retain by trying to compensate for the controversial image. Jenny states that the rumour partly could be true, but not very applicable for tech employees since they are well compensated regardless of industry, implying that the difference in that case is small.

How the Innovation Manager within LeoVegas works with innovation and engage with the innovative talents?

Unfortunately, Innovation Manager was not available as an informant from LeoVegas. However, Jenny pointed out that the focus of the Swedish part of LeoVegas is on technology, where innovation is key to their success example- For developers, it is stated that one part of their role should be dedicated to innovation, where they put high emphasis on creating ideas, programming, developing, and deploying ideas. She also stated that all the departments are expected to work with innovation and there are no formal roles for innovation. However, Jenny states that innovation should come from all parts of the company, not just top management, or the employees.

Jenny further explains that the company was founded in 2012 and has since then experienced a rapid growth phase but now the company is listed and is starting to become more mature. So, there is a transformation going on now at LeoVegas where they now must balance innovation focus with regulations, processes etc. However, efforts are being taken in the direction to not to be too structured, where “simplicity rules” is one of their main attitudes to not kill the innovative spirit. Jenny pointed that LeoVegas is innovative and offers a fast paced and open environment to support new ideas. But she feels that now with the maturity phase, it may look less innovative today.

What attracted the Innovative Talent to LeoVegas?

The interview did not cover this part and unfortunately no other informants from LeoVegas were available.

What motivated the Innovative Talent to stay at LeoVegas?

The interview did not cover this part and unfortunately no other informants from LeoVegas were available.

Culture at LeoVegas

Jenny describes LeoVegas as a challenger company with the “LeoCulture” of striving hard for improvements and being better at making things happen with the self-driven and motivated employees. According to Jenny, “Leo Leadership” is all about leading self-driven employees as an important part of their culture and a large contributor to how they work with innovation. These are the cultural aspects that they try to communicate in employer branding.

Furthermore, Jenny describes that this culture was developed from the beginning, the CEO is one of the co-founders who has a truly entrepreneurial spirit. This aspect affects how they are communicating externally and how they bring in innovation. According to Jenny, a good thing is that the CEO is an important symbol of innovation and entrepreneurship in the company. Furthermore, they are proud of being a diverse company where they see different backgrounds, genders, ages etc. as positive contributors to innovation.

4.1.8.2

This subchapter will use the interviews to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions among the key informants of LeoVegas based on the primary and secondary research questions.

Unfortunately, due to the unavailability of the interviews from key informants (Innovation Manager and Innovative Talent), there was no data available to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions within the key informants of LeoVegas based on the primary and secondary research questions.

4.1.9 Above

Scandinavian innovation agency headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden delivering innovation consultancy and agency services. Above was founded in 2017 and today holds offices in three countries and employs ca 100 people. The key informants include Ana Barbosa who works as a Digital Design Manager, Fredrik Silfver who is the CTO and Co-Founder of Above and Victor Johansson who works as the Senior Experience Designer.



Figure 12: Key Informants from Above

4.1.9.1

This subchapter presents the answers to the primary and secondary questions as communicated by the key informants from Above.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager within Above work to attract innovative talents?

Ana (HR-1) highlighted that the company web page along with their presence in social media like Instagram helps in creating awareness about their company. However, she points out some of the challenges that the company faces is to regularly update and add information about the company as she pointed out that they are a small company and there is no dedicated team or member who is in charge of working on updating them which she feels are some obstacles they have in sparking an interest about the company among the innovative talents. She also mentioned that the company recently hired Head of communications as it is important to attract people and getting the name and reputation out. Ana pointed out that they have been working a lot in engaging the designers and like the people in the company to always write about things related to design and innovation and so that is a big effort to kind of creating this impression find the company attractive.

She also pointed out that while doing this they need to strike a balance between how much are they trying to attract the potential innovative talents and how much they are trying to attract clients because when she feels that they need to be handled in different languages. On one hand, they want to highlight the fun aspects for attracting the innovative talents but on the other hand, the clients need to know that they are professional. Ana pointed out that a lot of considerations like challenges and concerns are made while attracting the innovative talents to Above.

However, Ana stated that mostly they hire good talents based on the recommendations of the employees working with Above and have bonus systems in place for referrals. She feels that this is the most cost-efficient way of attracting and hiring the talents however, she feels that diversity gets compromised with such recruitments.

When asked about whether they specifically check for creativity/innovativeness in the candidates to which she replied that they look at their projects and asks specific questions to the interested candidates to understand their ways of thinking and personal questions like what they do as a person and what kind of projects excites them to deeply assess the candidates.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager within Above work to retain innovative talents?

Ana pointed out that the diversity of project is one of the reasons the innovative talents get challenged on a weekly basis which are based on different topics and context that the employees need to learn about in a very short time frame and feels that these trigger the innovative mindset of the employees and keeps them motivated to stay and work with Above. She also highlighted the fact that the employees need to collaborate in cross functional teams comprising of Mechanical engineers, digital design including UX UI, software engineers, hardware engineers and work together in different projects which gives plentiful opportunities

to learn about building designs, prototyping etc. Ana feels that these factors are the reasons which motivate the innovative talents to stay and develop within Above.

How the Innovation Manager within Above works with innovation and engage with the innovative talents?

Fredrik (IM-9) explained that Above works with innovation within the scope of their clients. He pointed out there are several difficulties in making and creating a market and distribution channels for an innovative product for their own product portfolio. Fredrik describes Above as an innovation driven consultancy that attracts the clients by providing innovative solutions or ideas which are in line with their client's future aspirations. Some of the clients of Above includes Google, Facebook, Sonos and Ikea to whom they provide innovative ideas and solutions.

Fredrik described that they use a variety of tools and resources and investigate trends and different kinds of enablers to come up with ideas and try them out via experiments and prototypes. He also stated that Above's senior management is not involved in onboarding the innovative talents to the team but rely on the judgement of the innovative people to select new innovative members for the company. The senior management ensures that there is fair and equal compensation and that there is some mix of genders and seniority level. Fredrik states that they do not put aside time to be innovative and creative, they don't believe in just adding time as a component to bring out creativity.

He knows that a lot of companies have innovation days and weeks concept to foster innovation in the company whereas, Fredrik believes that one needs a particular opportunity or challenge to foster creativity. Furthermore, he specified on the need of resources, tools, inspiration, and freedom. According to Fredrik, they are after people who see innovation more as a lifestyle than a job. If the company has access to people with this specific mindset, eight hours of set aside time are nothing compared to the time they spend in their spare time. Then he believes that such innovative talents should be provided with money to buy tools to try out their ideas. Fredrik believes that it is very important for their company at this phase to be thinking inside the box to create something new and interesting.

What attracted the Innovative Talent to Above?

Victor (IT-9) got in contact with Above (under a different name at the time) via personal connections. He was driven towards Above as he is not interested to work in companies which have strong leadership and Above seemed to him as a new kind of company, not very traditional with the possibility of doing anything and he really got attracted to the company after joining and working for a week duration.

What motivated the Innovative Talent to stay at Above?

Victor described the work life culture of Above to be "something really cool with a wild west of people and culture." He also finds the work to be really challenging and fun at the same time he can work with his dream clients and have his own role descriptions. There is a high degree

of trust among the colleagues, and he is also trusted by others. These are some of the reasons which makes him be motivated at the same time be happy and contented by being associated with Above.

Culture at Above

Ana states that Above offers a conducive environment for innovation driven enthusiasts. Ana also describes the culture as open minded and inclusive. Although the work is hectic, still no one is adding extra layers of stress on top of it and understand each other's need for space. Fredrik shared his views on the culture by citing examples of some companies who focus on the best and fastest way to increase sales rather than doing great work. Ideally what gets rewarded is the work that needs to be done, but what tends to happen is that what gets rewarded is the culture you get. If the culture is to sign deals individually, your KPI is becoming your culture. Then, collaboration takes a hit since there is no reward connected to it, and that does not reflect a good culture.

So, at Above, they try to fight we look at the behaviors they like to have and try to reward collaboration. Fredrik, within his scope has tried to create a nurturing creative climate by onboarding passionate people. According to Victor, Above has no such thing as hierarchy or "this is not your domain", instead, it is like they have one team where everyone is allowed to speak up and people listen to the ideas respectfully. Victor further states that the culture changes constantly, it is open, flexible, and adaptable since every individual influences it.

4.1.9.2

This subchapter will use the interviews to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions among the key informants of Above based on the primary and secondary research questions.

The interviews have also been used to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions within the key informants of Above based on the primary and secondary research questions.

Considering the challenges in fostering innovation at Above, Fredrik and Victor agree that the presence of interesting people and projects which bring purpose to them helps in fostering innovation. Also, they both agree that innovation is driven by future opportunities to work with the best clients. According to Victor and Ana , Above is an attractive company with diverse projects that require different disciplines to work collaboratively. This enhances the learning opportunities by interacting and collaborating on building designs and prototyping.

When it comes to talent retention, Fredrik believes that good compensation and rewards are key to increase talent retention. In contrast, Victor is of the opinion that it depends on the work culture and environment. For Victor, having good colleagues who can create a trusted and safe environment to work with innovation will be the key factor inspiring them to stay with the company. Also, Fredrik believes that there are limited opportunities and resources inhouse to develop a new product and expand on their portfolio whereas Victor feels that being unable to

work with portfolio development may result in reluctance in working with other companies doing portfolio development inhouse.

According to Fredrik, the compensation offered to the talents is competitive according to the market. However, Ana does not share a similar perception and mentions that this might be a factor affecting retention negatively. Further, Ana indicates that the company offers a creative environment as compared to their clients which encourages retention. In contrast, the Fredrik is of the opinion that talents leaving for better opportunities is quite common and the company should focus on making their main business interesting to retain the talents.

Victor and Ana also differ on their opinions regarding diversity. According to Victor, there is good diversity in the team with innovative talents, but Ana feels that the recruitment process driven by employees bringing in other employees from their own circle often limits their ability to offer a diverse background of innovative talents to the company.

4.1.10 Factory Tycoon*

Global Industry corporate group headquartered in Briday city*, Sweden delivering industrial products and systems. They have offices located in more than 30 countries and employ over 20.000 people.

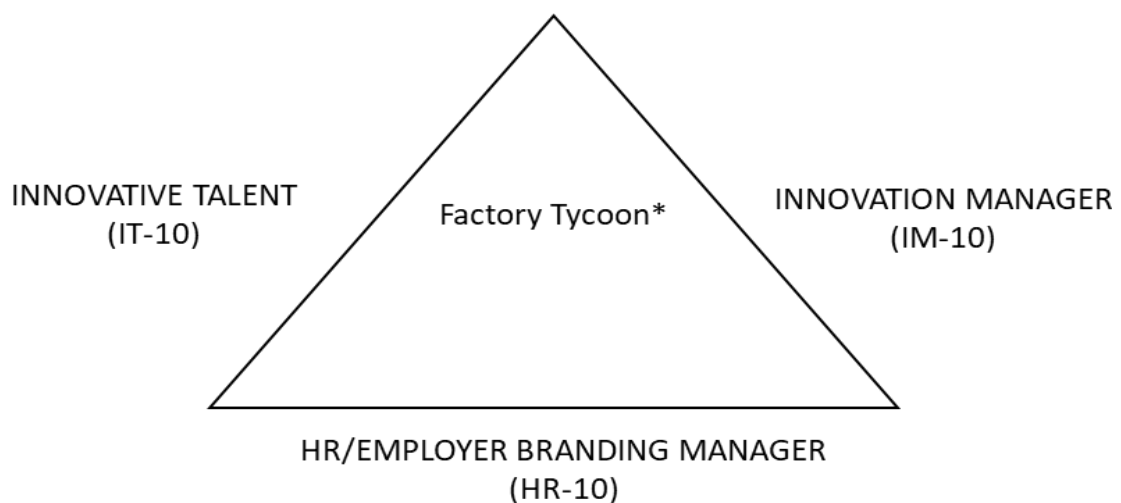


Figure 13: Key Informants from Factory Tycoon*

4.1.10.1

This subchapter presents the answers to the primary and secondary questions as communicated by the key informants from Factory Tycoon*.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager within Factory Tycoon* work to attract innovative talents?

HR-10 interview highlighted Factory Tycoon* decentralized way of working where they have no centralized R&D but different smaller R&D departments working locally, distributed around the world. HR-10 further states that it would be difficult for the company to compete without innovation. Because they have a premium brand and premium customers require premium products, while premium products require innovation. Therefore, HR-10 states that innovation is one of their strengths and in the DNA of the company.

HR-10 states that there is no straight answer about how Factory Tycoon* works to attract innovative talent, these questions are handled locally at every site since the local need and the local target audience is different. However, according to HR-10, “to drive global innovation” is definitively a topic that is in focus for their message to talents, In their EVP, in their core values, and in their strategy. To communicate with their target audience, HR-10 states that they share job posts mainly on their web page and LinkedIn, but with local variation in other channels. At times they have used videos as a complement to traditional job postings. To assess candidates' innovative capabilities is not something Factory Tycoon* regulates centrally, HR-10 states that some might have tools for it locally, but they have no formal way of doing it.

How the HR/Employer Branding Manager within Factory Tycoon* work to attract innovative talents?

HR-10 states that strategies for retention are handled locally as well, HR-10 describes “what you need to keep one in India is different from what you need to do in Sweden”. HR-10's own motivation to stay with the company for ten years is a combination of different things, where company culture is one of them, followed by good managers, nice co-workers and an interesting job.

HR-10 states that a lot of people have been in the company for a long time but not able to back it up with accurate data and numbers. HR-10 feels that the company does not have systems in place for recording the retention data for innovative talents.

How the Innovation Manager within Factory Tycoon* works with innovation and engage with the innovative talents?

IM-10 explains how the R&D team is working together with the process, product, and sales teams to work with innovation. According to IM -10, ideas for product improvement comes from varied stakeholders i.e. from their suppliers, customers, partners, and the different departments of the company. According to IM-10, the company does not have a structured way of working with innovation and there is no exclusive time for the employees to work with their innovative ideas.

IM-10 describes that they begin with the ideation phase which involves the “blue collars” who have a ticket system to send suggestions to the production management team who investigates the ideas. The ideas generated from the tickets are documented and looked by the team to assess the business potential from the ideas. According to IM-10, they have meetings regarding

prioritization of resources every second week. IM-10 along with the sales manager, decides if the ideas should be taken forward or not after having reviewed marketing's insights to the ideas.

IM -10 believes that both processes and the mindset of the people engaged in bringing forward the new ideas on the table are the enablers for innovation. IM-10 also believes that there is not much distinction between normal and innovative talents. According to IM- 10, every talent is innovative in his/her thoughts and ways of working with new ideas and processes.

What attracted the Innovative Talent to Factory Tycoon*?

IT-10 describes how the journey started with Factory Tycoon* straight after upper secondary school. IT-10 had started working from a young age and was involved in activities “on the shop floor” and has worked the way up to the current managing position in a career span of 30 years.

What motivated the Innovative Talent to stay at Factory Tycoon*?

IT-10 states that there are plentiful opportunities to develop within the company. IT-10 states that without a higher education it is very hard to pursue a career now. IT-10 also mentions the development opportunities from “Factory Tycoon* University” with a variety of courses. IT-10 further states that the company is not very stringent like other established companies with rules and regulations. IT-10 feels that the employees have the freedom to run their own company inside the company” i.e. decentralized approach. IT-10 states that this degree of freedom and the possibility to influence have been the factors for IT-10 to be motivated to work. IT-10 gets really bored from routine work and is grateful for the possibilities of working with diverse tasks at Factory Tycoon*.

Culture within Factory Tycoon*

The key informants describe the culture of the company all over the globe as openness to new ideas, a quest for not remaining in status quo with the decentralized approach. The employees can take ownership, responsibility and they have an internal drive to try out new things. The key informants' further states that Factory Tycoon* resonates well with the inclusion and have employees from different cultures working together towards the same goals and objectives. The key informants also describe the company as multicultural with good transparency. IT-10 states that Factory Tycoon* was more entrepreneurial before, now they have more rules, but IT-10 still sees the culture as quite free which helps in taking quick decisions and work with new ideas and improvements.

4.1.10.2

This subchapter will use the interviews to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions among the key informants of Factory Tycoon* based on the primary and secondary research questions.

The interviews have also been used to compare the similar and difference in perspectives and opinions within the key informants of Factory Tycoon* based on the primary and secondary research questions.

In relation to the innovation structure, IM-10 and IT-10 indicate that the innovation work in the company is unstructured. There is no department which specifically works with innovation, and it is mostly related to continuous improvements which require working with new ideas and implementing them into products. Also, IM-10 and HR-10 both agree on the fact that the transparent and open culture with the decentralized decision-making model enable people to take decisions in the best of interest of the company and feel committed to work with it.

However, there is a difference in perception about the decentralized structure. IM-10 is of the opinion that only their department is decentralized as opposed to other parts of the company. However, according to HR-10, every department is decentralized, thereby enabling the recruiting managers to post job advertisements as per their requirements. IT- 10 indicates that lot of managers work in a very structured manner and finds that it is not the best approach to foster innovation.

When it comes to the drivers of innovation, IM-10 feels that innovation is driven by the innovation ideas generated from different departments of the company together with customer needs and preferences whereas IP-10 feels that it is the creative mindset of the employees which helps in bringing up innovative ideas and processes to foster innovation within the company.

Coming to the issue of assessing innovation, IM-10 feels that everyone is innovative in some aspect and there should be no distinction between innovative people and people who prefer routine work. HR-10 is of the opinion that all positions don't require to be innovative. The need for innovation depends on the roles and the department where they apply, and the managers have the freedom to recruit them following the framework and guidelines of the group.

Considering recruitment strategies, HR-10 indicates that there is no centralized recruitment team handling recruitments globally but they have the group framework, policies and the tools are in place for the local hiring manager to able to run the recruitment process in a smart way. Further, HR-10 believes that being a premium brand with customers demanding premium products and bringing products require innovation. This motivates the company to stay innovative and this is fostered by the innovative people. However, according to IT-10, hiring is generally restricted to people from the same trade and that limits out of box ideas. Since the recruitment is done locally, the recruitment managers hire the same kind of people.

4.2 Expert Interviews

This subchapter will present the views of the experts on the role of the different company elements namely- the company culture, management and company structure, talent management and employer branding in attracting, engaging and retaining the innovative talents within the companies.

EXPERTS			
NAME	EI - 1	Sara Sterner	Linus Jonkman
AREA OF EXPERTISE	Innovation	Employer Branding	Company Culture

➤ **How does the innovation culture play an important role in attracting, engaging and retaining the innovative talents?**

Sara Sterner highlights the importance of the company culture while hiring the innovative talents, nurture them and retain them in order to foster innovation in different companies. She uses examples from her own work experiences from different kind of companies to show the importance of culture.

She gives the examples of service consultant firms which are driven by leading people, the culture plays a very important role. She pointed out that people who are hired into such firms are not super interested to work with other people but should take their own initiatives and bring forward innovative ideas. Then she pointed out the importance of having an open culture as she feels that if people have ideas but there is no one to listen to them or the ideas are ruined by others, then this will prevent fostering of innovation within the company.

Sara also highlights the importance of the company culture which should aim at bridging the gap between the innovative talents and the other departments example - who are responsible for marketing and selling the products because many a times the engineers fail to understand the marketing team and it is super important for both the marketing and R&D to together work with innovation to foster innovation in the company.

She takes up the example of a software company which hires engineers for R&D. She feels that they are very creative and come up with new ideas and also aim for perfection of their products but then it is not aligned to the expectations of the customers, so they have tough time dealing with the commercial teams. These innovative talents are always looking for opportunities to make new products and not much keen to work with maintenance of the products or make corrections to the products, so she points out that the hiring people should consider that while hiring innovative people that they should not only work with new products but also work with improving them from time to time failing which may affect their retention policies and may drive the innovative talents to leave the company for better pursuits.

She also highlights the importance of managers in fostering the company culture. She points out that managers have the responsibility to bring in everyone from all the departments to the standup meetings everyday where the employees get the opportunity to interact and talk about the failures and setbacks in order to get valuable feedback or tips on solving the issues from others who might have faced the same challenges. This kind of environment may help in bringing the people close together, understand each other which fosters cooperation and the commitment to work together to achieve the innovation related goals of the company.

Linus Jonkman feels that companies have an important role in nurturing the innovative talents in the company through the context of culture and the huge impact it has on innovativeness of the company.

He broadly categorizes the companies into two types:

1. Agile company- where the foundation is built to try new ideas without the fear of failure as it is understood that 80% of the time, the new ideas and proposals will never reach to their final destination.
2. Traditional companys – where any failures are hard to deal with and this becomes the important reason for attrition of the innovative persons.

So, he specifies that the strategy for any company should be to promote the idea is trying new ideas to stay competitive but at the same time ensure a physiological safety and culture to keep experimenting with ideas irrespective of their outcomes.

He explains the three layers of company culture which are to:

- Work in conjunction with the core values of the company to draw the purpose and
- Have guiding principles to the core values and display the correct core values
- Live upto the expectations of the core values like team- work, democracy etc.

He feels that these go a long way in attracting the right talents and living upto the expectations help in retaining the innovative talents to the company. He gave the example of Ikea who have diversity as one of their primary focus and is one of the best companies which follows the three layers of the culture, and this helps them to attract and retain their diverse employees.

He also points out that Culture is not only about empowering people but also aligning it to the key business model of the company. Like eg. if a company wants to work with sustainability, then the culture should be updated accordingly as it serves the purpose of hiring innovative talents who want to work exclusively with sustainability. So, the culture is always changing and evolving and to keep it alive so will make people feel a sense of belonging and feel responsible for something which can have an impact.

He also shared about the thought process he had behind writing the culture book for employer branding and how it became a recruitment tool to attract the innovative talent to the company. The main inspiration behind writing the book was to share some stories of the employee's journey in the company where he was working before; which was collected overtime and the company's commitment towards fulfilling the expectations against the core values which are inspiring; to attract the right innovative to the teams. He explained that generally the companies follow the speed dating to attract innovative talents to the team but generally people who are creative always looks for companies which have different routes to employer branding and get attracted accordingly. So he used the digital version of the book and used it for recruiting developers for one of the companies for whom he was handling recruitment. He utilized LinkedIn to track the developers and send them the digital version of the culture book. This attracted a lot of response and curiosity among the potential innovative talents, and this became a cost-efficient recruitment tool.

He also engaged in sharing story from his professional journey where he worked in an company where there was a hidden culture of making the employees work to a determined level of excellence and the company did not work to demarcate the top performers as they wanted all the employees to work within the set levels. This was against the core values which was set by the company, and this made him leave as he found that the company's core values are not

aligned to the best of interests with the employees. So, he feels that the companies should have clarity with the expectations they have and the determined level of engagement for the employees and this is of supreme importance while retaining the innovative talents.

According to EI-1, the culture of the company should speak about showing passion in using structures for bringing about innovation. Create sense of safety, belonging and knowing that idea will be taken care of and not be dismissed with a certain degree of respect is important to foster innovation within a company. EI-1 gave example of one manager who was interviewed by EI-1 told that she had an employee who had an idea and communicated with her but didn't want to kill it and encouraged him to work with it and turned out to be very good, so it is necessary to be gentle while treating the ideas. Creating feeling that someday is listening to you are important for company to promote a conducive environment for working with innovative talents.

➤ **How does the hierarchy/structure of the company help in attracting, engaging, and retaining the innovative talents?**

Sara pointed out the importance of the company structure in retaining the innovation talents by sharing some interesting insights on what kind of a structure kills the innovativeness of a creative person within the company. She pointed out that a very structured hierarchy where people are not entitled to take decisions and must rely on a series of approvals to go ahead with their decisions are not empowered and they may feel that it they cannot grow and flourish within the company. This kind of a structure may limit their recognition which will eventually make them leave the company.

She also pointed out that the innovativeness gets subdued when the super innovative person is made to work as a manager where 80% of the time goes in managing people and administration. She shares her views that people who have a perfect blend of being super innovative and at the same time have good problem-solving skills should be made managers otherwise this can kill the spirit of innovation in the creative person leading him to leave the company and resulting in attrition.

She highlighted the fact that it is very important for the company to create an environment conducive for the creative talents to work in by pairing them up with managers who offer them the space to work with their ideas and give them more responsibilities to work to their full potential. She also speaks about sponsors who help the innovative people as cited in paper by France, Leahy, and Parsons (2009) and in Osborn, and Marion, 2009 and Kanter, 1985, where it highlights how the presence of sponsors gives a sense of security to employees and they have the freedom to pursue their innovative ventures. This helps them to attach a sense of value to their work and remain associated with the company in the process.

She also shared examples of companies where the management structure i.e. fostering innovation from top to downplays an important role in making it attractive company to work with. Along with this, when the employees are enabled to work with bigger impact on sustainability, this becomes super interesting and attracts innovative people to the company.

She also highlights the importance of the EVP (Employee Value Proposition) which plays an important role in engaging the innovative talents within the company. According to Sara, the EVP should entail features like working for a cause and should emphasize on encouraging people to expand their knowledge base by enabling learning and development opportunities. She points out that startups are super attractive to work with but with time this may not attract innovative talents if the founders and managers do not want to grow and expand their business. She feels that the unwillingness to grow may deprive them of offering good compensation and benefits and this may lead to attrition of the innovative talents to the companies offering better compensation and benefits.

According to Linus, structure and management plays an important role in fostering innovations within the companies. He feels that structures are rigid and forms the framework to promote creativity where Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is about success and deployments of ideas, and this is in conflict of interest with innovation. This kind of structure dictates salary and promotions are dependent on those success factors then this structure will not work with innovation.

He also pointed out that the culture also plays a crucial role in managing performances as a part of the structure. He shared the story of CTO of hotels.com who have lot of competitors so have to be fast in getting ideas and innovative and put ideas into use and have small tests and see attraction then put in market so they came up with some new features in a country and were so fast to deploying and people in support didn't know about feature but this didn't lead to outrage as the people knew that the culture is to work with innovation and speed was chosen more so this serves an example where blend of culture and structure work in favor of fostering innovation in companies.

EI-1 pointed out on how management communication is important to create an atmosphere of innovation driven by employees. EI-1 highlights the supreme importance of communication from the company's side whether there is a requirement for all the roles require the candidates to be innovative in their approach and contribute ideas accordingly. EI-1 emphasized on asking questions like do the candidates consider themselves innovative or not during the interviews to understand the traits of the candidates and their willingness to work with innovation.

Secondly, EI-1 pointed out that sometimes, the management promotes ideas like "lone genius" or "single entrepreneur", so the employees have a general perception that it is the responsibility of the one person to significantly contribute to the project so miss out on collected way of working with innovation. Thirdly, EI-1 also emphasizes on the importance of company's way of reflecting on the employee's engagement in idea generation is necessary. EI-1 gives the example from past interview where EI-1 had spoken to an innovative person from the company. The innovative person conveyed to EI-1 that her innovative ideas have never been accepted nor given feedback, so she was not sure whether she is a perfect fit to have an interview with. This shows that the management should take an effort to provide feedback to the employees who provide ideas irrespective of whether they are accepted or not.

EI-1 also shared some interesting insights on how the company should not take advantage of employees who continuously come with ideas and work outside their working hours to work

with innovation. The senior and middle should handle the ideas with care and should also contribute to ideas generation which can be ambidextrous company, and this is leadership and importance of balancing creativity with daily work.

➤ **How does employer branding and talent management help in attracting and retaining the innovative talents?**

Sara put forward her views on the importance of Employer Branding which helps in acquisition of the innovative talents to the company. She shared how the startups and consultancy firm's investments in employer branding activities have helped them to attract the fresh graduates and young professionals to the companies and have helped in shaping up their careers accordingly as compared to the traditional /established industries who have been operating for many years.

She highlighted that nowadays, there is a trend among the young professionals who are interested to work in innovative and fast paced environment and management consultancy firms have used employer branding extensively to establish themselves as premium brands which hire the best of talents and also nurture them and enable them to work with different domains and clients. They keep the professionals engaged with good projects, interesting and top clients which gives them the experience of independently working in different environments.

This helps the young professionals to get a fast-track career and increase their chances of joining the traditional companies with better roles and positions with higher salary which would have not been the case if they would have joined them before getting experience working in consultancies. She also points out that there has been a gradual shift in which the management consultancy firms hiring engineers and giving them the opportunity to work with marketing and sales which has made it a challenge to find engineers working with the traditional industries and there is a dearth of innovative talents in the traditional/well established companies.

She also explained the importance of employer branding being driven by all the departments and not only driven by the HRM department along with its importance in retaining the innovative talents. She emphasized that HR and marketing departments should sync together to make the employer branding a success. She also pointed out some examples where the management consultants helped with establishing figures for the HR team which attracted the attention of the CEO and CTO's and helped in getting budget for the HRM department for establishing a good employer branding strategy for the company which enabled them to attract innovative talents.

She gave example of an company where the sales department was working fine but they had a bad reputation and people were leaving the company, so the HRM department took the situation under their hands organized a lot of trainings to people and engaged the marketing team to get aligned with the culture of the company and this communication of working together helped in retaining talents in the company.

Linus Jonkman shared on the importance of having different employer branding strategies to differentiate between innovative talents and normal talents. He shared that the companies have an important role to play when it comes to facilitate a conducive environment for the innovative

people to stay. He pointed out that normal talents can flourish in an environment where the emphasis is on high productivity and people working in sync with the different systems in place set by the framework and guidelines of the senior management. However, he pointed out that innovative talents on other hand are most of the time curious and courageous and have opinions and not written in Job descriptions so it depends on the companies on how they handle with these minds, some may like the employees who have ideas and put them forward, but some may not like it, so it comes down to the kind of culture that prevails in the company.

He gave the example of a developer who did not have the support of school education and got idea to learn about coding and then in a couple years developed a lot and ended up doing it with days without considering salary, so he considers that the companies should have different strategies for retention while dealing with creative people. He sees them as artists who have vision and courage, and it falls as a duty of the company to nurture them well. The same person was furious, and he didn't like, and he threatened to leave the company so this is something connected with the innovative people – who are sometimes driven by emotions so the companies have to work differently with their approach to retain them.

Linus Jonkman shared his views on evaluating the methods and strategies towards employer branding like number is working or not by having key performance indicators for engagement, retention, Employee's Net Promoter Score (ENPS) and benchmark the rest of the company and all the roles example data of no of salespeople in IT industry there is data for comparison between engagement and retention which can be easily corelated.

He also shared possible ways to measure engagement which takes a long time to really derive data for understanding and he points out that most of the time it is not effective as the questions are sometimes not common for all the employees participating in the engagement surveys. So, he points out that the effective way is to measure on the same aspects for a considerable period and then focus on changing questions like introduce flexible hours, coaching by manager, wellness hours to see how the engagement level changes and have set points and see the changes and make the changes with all these studies and derive data accordingly. He feels that it is important to convince the senior management for running these projects and shares his views that it is easy when the CEO who already thinks that this methodology and approach is the best way to understand the engagement factors within the company.

When asked about talent management perspective being different for innovative and not innovative talents, Sara replied that experiments and studies have been conducted which have showed that good managing skills and working in the company is independent of the person being an overachiever or not a super talent. The outcome of this experiment was that grades are not a reflection of being a better employee for the company. It is more dependent on how an individual takes up their responsibilities and have successful ventures in the company. She also feels that the talents should be managed by all departments and emphasized on the need of company values to have the people with the right mindset to work within the company.

Linus shared his views on the concept of top talents being more innovative than normal talents, he pointed out that it is quite abstract word to him, and it is to be avoided. He pointed out that someone have a skill rare and sought after like example machine learning which is scarce and

the person could work anywhere and considered to be top talents but like someone top talent like working with the best of companies in the world can be considered as top talent so set of skills have which is of super importance now but this doesn't relate to IQ or personality or other aspects which does not make them the ideal candidates to work within the framework of the companies.

Also, he pointed out that the level of engagement in companies should be designed separately for innovative and normal talents. He also points out that innovative talents may be placed at the top in one in one company but the same person can be not given the same position in other company as some companies make some non performing or low performing individuals on fast track and make the employees feel more worth so they start applying for other jobs ad and not loyal and others feel less engaged so it's a losing game, because net level of engagement is low.

5.0 Analysis

The following chapter firstly gives an overview of the cross-case findings followed by the order of companies based on the level of maturity by using inspiration from the Innovation Maturity Matrix. This chapter will further analyze the similarities and differences of the perspectives of the HR/Employer Branding Manager, Innovation Manager and the Innovative Talent of the different case companies based on some key aspects.

5.1 Overview

Based on the interviews of the informants from the different case companies, a common binding thread running through them was the recognition of the importance of innovation and the need to work with it in some manner. The extent to which the different companies worked with innovation and their strategies to identify, attract, engage, and retain innovative talents varied among the companies as expected. However, none of the informants regarded innovation as something strange or being irrelevant to their operations. Rather, it was recognized as an important factor to drive the growth of a company.

5.2 Innovation Maturity Matrix

To establish an ordering amongst the companies, I derive inspiration from the Innovation Maturity matrix (Viima, 2019) to classify the case companies into the four distinct groups namely the beginner, traditionalist, scaling and advanced based on the factors: maturity and scale from the data collected from the informants of the respective case companies.

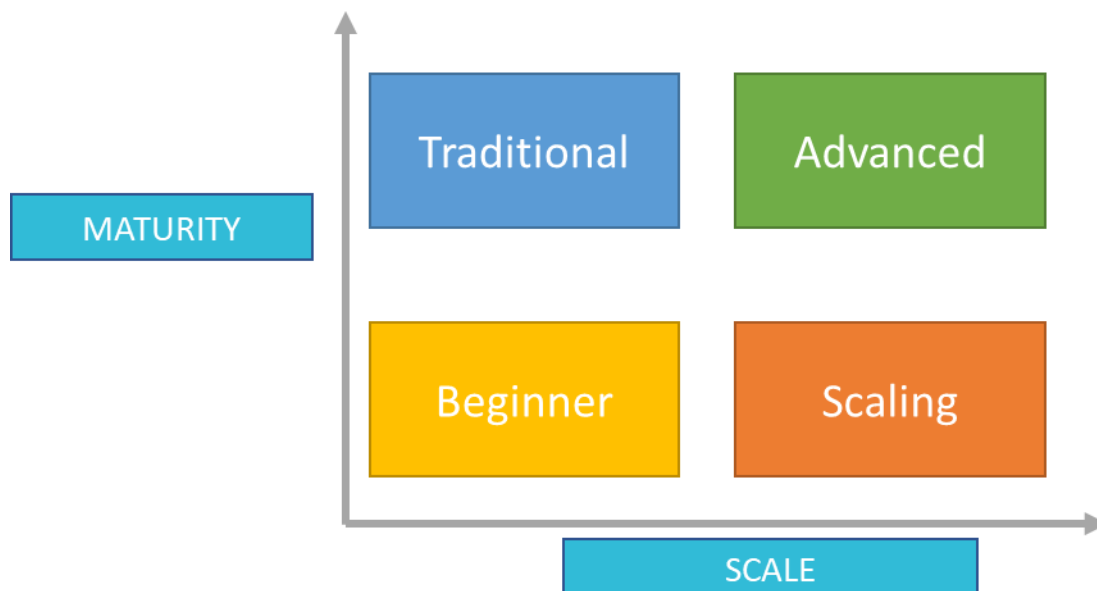


Figure 14: Innovation maturity matrix (adapted from Viima, 2021)

Figure note: The two axes namely the Scale and Maturity are used as factors to determine the group and order for the case companies.

The degree of scalability is used as the factor to classify the different case companies based on the spread of innovation within them i.e. the case company having departments exclusively dedicated for innovation is placed at the top of the table and the company with no departments exclusively dedicated for innovation is positioned last.

Serial No	Case company name	Group	Scale (spread of innovation across the company)
1	Giant Tech*	Advanced	Departments dedicated 100% to innovation. Other roles and departments also work with some aspects of innovation
2	Axis Communications	Advanced	Departments dedicated 100% to innovation. Other departments give freedom to employees to choose to work with innovation
3	Spotify	Advanced	Uniformly across all departments within the company
4	LeoVegas	Scaling	Across all parts of the department
5	King	Scaling	Different ways across all departments within the company
6	A-Z Networks*	Scaling	Different departments across the company but less connected
7	IT-Clearly*	Scaling	Different departments across the company.
8	Factory Tycoon*	Traditional	Within R&D and product management departments in different locations
9	Above	Beginner	Driven by individuals who work with clients to offer them innovative solutions
10	AFRY	Beginner	Occurs mostly at the client's site and not within the company

Table 2: Ordering of the case companies based on the Innovation Maturity Matrix, Source: Own creation

Based on this factor, the highest ranked companies in the table are the ones that have departments that are 100% dedicated to innovation in addition to innovation work in other departments. The lowest ranked companies in the table are the ones that have no innovation occurring within the company. Rather, innovation is either driven by individuals working with clients or at the client site themselves. The intermediate ranks have the companies

whose scale lies in between these two extremes. The objective for this classification is to allow readers to observe the similarities and differences of companies within the same maturity group towards the key aspect illustrated in Table 2 as well as use this ordering to observe the similarities and differences among the perspectives of the different informants of the case companies as discussed .

5.3 Discussion on perspectives

This subchapter discusses the perspectives of the Innovative Talent, Innovation Manager and the HR/Employer Branding managers on key aspects which provides answers the primary and secondary research questions. This chapter will further analyze the similarity and differences of the perspectives of the Innovative talent, Innovation Manager, and the HR/Employer Branding managers on these key aspects. The chapter also analyses the perspectives of the expert informants and compare them with the perspectives and opinions of the informants from the surveyed companies.

5.3.1 Perspectives of innovative talent

Table 3 illustrates the similarities and differences in the perspectives of the innovative talent from the surveyed companies. These are people who have stayed and worked with the corresponding companies for a long period of time. They were identified by using the inputs from the other informants in the companies. Due to time constraints of the study, interviews with innovative talent from all the surveyed companies could not be arranged and those inputs are absent from the table.

This table is provided to enable the readers to understand and compare the following key aspects of an innovative talent's perspectives – the readiness to be open to work with innovation related tasks, embracing creativity, constraints in the workplace with regards to pursuing innovation and the nature of these talent's interactions with teams.

Key aspects	Readiness to be open to work with innovation	Embracing creativity (Attitude, process, both)	Constraints to being innovative at work	How do the innovative person work with teams
Giant Tech**	High	Process and Attitude	Scheduling delivery time of the products	Collaboration with other teams to design solution and reflecting on innovation checkpoints
Axis Communications	Medium	Attitude	Time consuming process of establishing and selling products in the market	Collaboration within the team and with managers of other teams
Spotify	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
LeoVegas	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
King	High	Process and Attitude	KPI for performance management	Working with centralized experimentation group to run experiments related to innovative ideas/products
A-Z Networks**	High	Process	Promotion of innovation varies across worldwide offices	Works with team to provide feedback about ideas generated within the acceleration program
IT-Clearly*	High	Process and Attitude	Lack of a common platform and system for sharing individual ideas within the company	Non organized social network for mutual exchange of new ideas
Factory Tycoon**	Medium	Process	Structuring innovation	Collaborate with improvement groups, external agencies, or consultants
Above	High	Attitude	Round the clock innovation, working with frameworks, and following methodology places time constraints on product delivery	Working with diverse set of people having varied competencies Establishing communication within teams to design innovative projects inhouse
AFRY	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

Table 3: Perspectives of Innovative Talents from the surveyed companies. Source: Own Creation

5.3.1.1 Readiness to be open to work with innovation

This aspect indicates the degree of willingness and readiness of an innovative talent to be aware of the changes around them and align their working patterns in response to these changes. For comparison purposes, I quantify the entries in this column as *high*, *medium*, and *low*. An entry of *high* in the table signifies that the concerned personnel show demonstrable willingness work with innovation as identified from the interviews. It also indicates that the personnel have adequate support and availability of resources from management to carry out innovative work. Similarly, *medium*, and *low* signify a corresponding level of decrease in these parameters.

Based on the entries in the first column of the table X, it can be observed that all the entries fall into either the high or medium categories demonstrating a good degree of willingness to embrace innovative work. Comparing these to the observations in Geroski and Machin, 1992 and Mayfield, 2011 that highlight the importance of innovation within an company, it is heartening to see that the topic discussed in the literature is echoed in the response from the surveyed companies as well. Companies are in fact, recognizing innovation as an important factor and innovative talents are working with it in these companys willingly.

From the results in the table, innovative talents in the following companies exhibit a high degree of readiness to be open to work with innovation – **A-Z Networks***, **Giant Tech***, **IT-Clearly***, **Above**, and **King**. Based on the interviews, A-Z Networks* is of the belief that the journey from the generation of an innovative idea to making a market-ready product requires good pacing which is only possible with adequate management support. Further, the management vision of A-Z Networks* promoting innovation with an accelerator program as well as providing dedicated working hours for innovation related tasks inspires employees to be creative and innovative.

In a similar vein, Giant Tech* also relies on the companys vision to deliver high quality customer experience to drive innovative work and encourage learning opportunities. These are consistent with the eight elements of innovation culture discussed in Dombrowski, Kim, Desouza, Braganza, Papagari, Baloh, and Jha (2007) – Innovative mission and vision statements, democratic communication, safe spaces, flexibility, collaboration, boundary spanning, incentives, and leadership. The importance of communicating company vision to drive innovation is discussed in Slåtten and Mehmetoglu, 2011 as well.

On the other hand, the IP from IT-Clearly* identifies innovation in every opportunity and uses selective categorization of information based on current and future needs to drive innovation. Similarly, the IP from King scores high in this aspect on account of identifying with a continuous experimental and improvement mindset to improve past products. These can be related to the employee driven innovation strategies discussed in Kesting and Ulhøi, 2010 and Høyrup, 2010 where the individuals drive the innovation strategy.

In the same key aspect, **Axis Communications and Factory Tycoon*** score a medium based on their responses. Factory Tycoon* indicates that there has been a shift in the company environment from entrepreneurial to rule-based which has hampered the ability to be innovative at work. Similarly, Axis Communications also points to the company needs that require innovation to be balanced with the standardization process as a constraint towards being

innovative. As discussed in Klein & Knight (2005), companies need to make sure that innovative ideas are implemented successfully. They also mention that employees' shared perceptions of the importance of innovation implementation within the company is important. In case of these two companies, some of the company elements act as deterrents to this perception thereby lowering the score to medium.

5.3.1.2 Embracing creativity

This aspect discusses the perceptions regarding the source of innovation. To compare the responses in this aspect, I use the following entries – *attitude, process, and both*. An entry of attitude signifies that the concerned personnel is of the opinion that innovation comes from the creative mindset of the person who perceives himself/herself as an inventor and is curious to work with new and innovative ideas. An entry of *Process* signifies that the personnel believes that the process of working with innovation and the need to bring new and enhanced products in the market inspires them to be innovative at work. An entry of both *Attitude and Process* signifies the need of both creative mindset and process driven innovation to sustain the business of the company.

As can be seen from the table, **A-Z Networks*** and **Factory Tycoon*** indicate a process driven approach leads to innovation according to their perception. According to the IP from A-Z Networks*, interest towards innovation is generated by the opportunity to work with new things, getting the drive from management to write patents, receiving compensation for the patents and witnessing the innovative ideas manifest themselves as added features for the products. This ties in with the observations in France, Leahy, and Parsons, 2009 that mentions the importance of communicating the changes influenced by the innovative ideas to the employees to inspire them further towards the path of innovation. Similarly, the IP from Factory Tycoon* indicates that being process driven and finding adequate solutions is important to sustain innovation for the company.

On the other hand, the responses from **Axis Communications** and **Above** perceive an attitude driven approach towards innovation. The IP from Axis communication is of the opinion that a passion for thinking outside the box and a mindset of always trying to find ways to improve things is the right attitude for being innovative and creative. Similarly, IP from Above also believes that it is the self-driven passion towards working with different and new projects is what drives innovation within the company.

Finally, **Giant Tech***, **IT-Clearly***, and **King** are of the opinion that a combination of process and attitude is a driver for innovation. The IP from Giant Tech* believes that innovation is driven in the company by combining the following two factors – (A) the company goals to work with innovation and having checkpoints for innovation; (B) the mindset of the person to take up challenges and have personal development goals aligned to innovation. Similarly, IP from IT-Clearly* feels that along with the innovative mindset, it is also necessary to have systems in place for working with innovation. IP from King also feels that not only the mindset but also the resources and management's readiness to work with structured innovation can foster innovation within the company.

5.3.1.3 Constraints to being innovative at work

In this section, I explore the responses pertaining to the constraints that hampers the informant's ability to work with innovation. According to the IP from A-Z Networks*, senior management does not propagate innovation uniformly across all offices worldwide. This hinders the company in Sweden to develop pace with the development of the ideas into products as the core of innovation is not uniform throughout. Similarly, the IP from Factory Tycoon* also shares the views that since managers spend more time on structuring reports, they have less time to spare towards being operative, finding solutions and driving innovation. The importance of management support towards driving and promoting innovation has been discussed in Nolan, 2015, France, Leahy, and Parsons, 2009, Damanpour & Schneider (2009). The responses from A-Z Networks* and Factory Tycoon* highlight this fact as well.

According to the IP from Giant Tech*, prioritizing and working to deadlines to deliver a product in the market hinders the participation of employees in innovation forums where rapid exchange of innovative ideas is carried out. Similarly, the IP from Axis Communications also highlights that the time-consuming process of getting a product to the market lengthens the journey from innovation and implementation thereby making it difficult to work with innovation on a daily basis. Since the results of innovation are not immediately visible, it acts as a deterrent to pursue innovation. The IP from Above also mentions that working with frameworks and following methodology places time constraints on product delivery which in turn creates a need for round the clock innovation which is hard to realize.

When it comes towards company practices, the IP from IT-Clearly* mentions that there is a need to have a platform to share ideas as well as create a system to aggregate ideas from different employees to drive the creation of innovative product/process for the future. IP from King shares his views on the fact that with the success of the company, there is a division of the talents into tech specialists and the careerists (management). The specialists only want to innovate within their field, leaving the question about who is going to drive innovation within the company unanswered. There is a dearth of people who are willing to take the risk of venturing out with the innovative ideas which has become a constraint to working with innovation at King.

5.3.1.4 How do the innovative person work with teams?

The final column in the table is to gain an understanding of how the innovative people from the surveyed companies work in teams to foster innovation. The IP from A-Z Networks* mentions the accelerator program which creates a platform for gathering ideas from external collaborations with students and startups. This is followed up by providing feedback on the possibility of a business potential of these ideas by engaging the students and startups with managers. The IP also mentioned the assistance provided by their team to help in implementing these ideas and provide the necessary funding.

This is consistent with the observations of Klein & Knight (2005) that merely having an innovation strategy is not enough – it needs to be implemented successfully as well. Similarly, the IP from Factory Tycoon* discusses working in collaboration with an improvement group,

external agencies, and consultants to find out solutions that are then measured across the parameters of time, productivity, and quality improvement.

Compared to the external collaboration approach, the IP from IT-Clearly* indicates that networking with different teams and having an informal platform to mutually exchange and share innovative ideas has helped in fostering innovation in the company. Similarly, the IP from Informant from Above indicates that the large mix of people within the company with different competencies enables them to have a knowledge base and find new opportunities to work with in the future. This helps them to deliver a feasible solution but at the same time be open to explore the other horizons. Establishing communication with technical specialists and availability of resources also helps to realize the feasibility of the innovative ideas/products and solutions. The IP from King mentions the presence of a centralized experimentation group that helps structure experiments with the purpose to drive innovation and profit for company. This group also maps out the engagement for the innovative games and products.

When it comes to working with innovation within a single team, the IP from Axis Communications mentions that their work is driven by working on technologies that work, fulfill a particular customer need, and fits the company's core business. The whole idea generation process is based on these factors and are helpful in conveying the message to product managers to drive implementation of the innovative ideas. Similarly, the IP from Giant Tech* also mentioned teamwork and collaboration as the way to write, define, and design solutions. This process contains several innovation checkpoints to reflect on the possibilities of introducing innovative ideas or check for the possibility of patents.

5.3.2 Perspectives of innovation manager

In Table 4, I analyze the similarities and differences of the opinions and views of the innovative managers from the surveyed companies. This table is provided to enable the readers to understand and compare the following key aspects of an innovation managers perspective – working with innovation, origins of innovation, access to innovative people, and Processes in place for documenting ideas and allocating resources.

Key aspects	Working with innovation	Origin of innovation	Access to innovative people	Processes in place for documenting ideas and allocating resources
Giant Tech*	Customer's needs and preferences Competitors Product development Process driven innovation	Mindset Departmental needs External collaboration with universities Company vision	Sourced from offices operating worldwide	Separate systems to document new ideas with business potential and product improvement ideas
Axis Communications	New product development	Specific recruitment of creative people Working with innovation within the company	Access provided through skilled innovative people who are broad generalists	Same systems used for new as well as existing ideas
Spotify	Through formal education	Good recruitment team Founder's vision to work with innovation	Sourced from within the company	NA
LeoVegas	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
King	Process and system driven Customer' needs and preferences	Collaboration within teams Structured way of working with innovation Structured management of innovative people	Sourced from cross functional teams	Same systems used for new as well as existing ideas
A-Z Networks*	New product development	Mindset of the employees Company support in the form of time to work on innovation and incentives for dedicated innovation work	Sourced from external collaborations, specific job titles, and departments	Same systems used for new as well as existing ideas
IT-Clearly*	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

Factory Tycoon*	Customer's needs and preferences Process driven innovation Product development	Collaboration with external partners and students from Universities Collaboration within different departments in the company Personal mindset of the employees towards innovation	Sourced from within the team	Same systems used for new as well as existing ideas
Above	Customer/ client driven	Special recruitment Collaboration in cross functional teams	Sourced through collaboration with different teams and departments within the company	Same systems used for new as well as existing ideas
AFRY	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

Table 4: Perspectives of Innovation Managers from the surveyed companies. Source: Own Creation

5.3.2.1 Working with innovation

In this aspect, I compare how/why the different surveyed companies work with innovation. The following broad themes related to this aspect were identified from the interviews – customer offerings, comparison with competitor, product/process driven, and company vision.

New product development was identified as one of the key themes for working with innovation. According to the IM from Giant Tech*, they investigate the standardization process as well as implementing the standard with patents that creates revenue. Similarly, the IM from Axis Communications indicated that the company's vision which emphasizes to work with innovation gives them the drive to develop new products in the market whereas the IM from A-Z Networks* mentioned that their perception on working with innovation is related to the development of new technology and products gaining new customers in the process. The IM from Factory Tycoon* mentioned that their work with innovation was related to improving their product portfolio and offerings.

Another recurring theme that was observed in the aspect was that customer needs and preferences was a driving factor for working with innovation. According to the IM from Factory Tycoon*, the inspiration to improve their product portfolio was based on the requirements of their customers. The IM from King also mentioned customer need and focus areas as a focus area when working with innovation. In a similar vein, the IM from Above also

mentioned the roles of the customer/ clients to drive new projects that define their future products/services which inspires them to work with innovation.

Apart from the product driven approach to work with innovation, some respondents also mentioned as their work with innovation being process and system driven as well. The IM from King mentioned that processes and systems also play an important part in their focus areas when working with innovation. According to the IM from Giant Tech*, their process driven approach is driven by closing and reviewing a long running development cycle to identify potential areas of improvement. This is followed by collaborating with a third party to investigate and suggest radical solutions for the same. A similar response echoing the importance of processes and systems driving the innovation process were provided by the IM from Factory Tycoon* as well. The interlinked nature of process and product driven innovation has been discussed in Kraft, 1990, Martinez-Ros, 1999 and Damanpour and Gopalakrishnan, 2001. The observations from the surveyed companies indicate that both these strategies are considered important while working with innovation.

Additionally, the IM from Giant Tech* mentioned that another aspect of working with innovation is governed by looking into their competitors and developing roadmaps to be the first mover in the market with new offerings. The financial aspect of offering products at a lower price to customers was also mentioned. Interestingly, only the IM from Spotify mentioned that the provision of training and learning facilities for the employees working in the company has helped them to work with innovation.

5.3.2.2 Origins of innovation

In this aspect, I try to explore the different sources of innovation based on the responses of the innovation managers. These sources can be specific recruitment, employee mindset, specific department needs, collaboration with external parties, activities within the company to promote innovation and special recruitment team.

Collaboration in different forms was identified as a key source of innovation amongst the surveyed companies. According to the IM from King, inter and intra team collaborations within the company along with structured way of working with innovation to identify ideas with business potential is a key driver. Further, it was also mentioned that managing innovative people involves determining if innovative employees have the vision to understand the impact of their innovation. If not, then they are connected to people who can provide this clarity.

This is somewhat related to the ideas of innovation sponsors discussed in France, Leahy, and Parsons, 2009, Osborn, and Marion, 2009 and Kanter, 1985. This observation was also corroborated by one of the experts, Sara who highlighted the fact that companies should create an environment conducive for creative talents to work by pairing them up with managers who offer them the space to work with their ideas and also give them more responsibilities to work to their full potential.

The IM from Giant Tech* mentions external collaborations with universities as a catalyst to generate new ideas and perspectives coupled with the company vision to be the market leader play a big role in fostering innovation within the company. Similarly, the IM from Factory

Tycoon* also mentions the role of collaborations with university students as well as feedback from all verticals of the businesses like customers surveys, suppliers, partners, and employees working in the different departments of the company are the channels which drive innovation.

In a similar vein, the IM from Above also mentions collaboration in cross functional teams and working with the recent trends as a key enabler for innovation. The process of converting ideas followed by experiments running prototypes help them in coming up with innovative products and services. Dombrowski, Kim, Desouza, Braganza, Papagari, Baloh, and Jha 2007 mention collaboration as one of the key elements of innovation culture in a company. The positive impact of collaborations (universities, suppliers, customers, competitors) on both process and product innovation has been discussed in detail in Reichstein and Salter, 2006, Un and Asakawa, 2015 and Un, Cuervo-Cazurra, and Asakawa, 2010. Comparing the entries from the first two columns in Table 4, this relationship can be seen from the responses of the surveyed companies as well thereby providing a confirmation for the results of these studies.

Another theme that was identified from the study for this aspect was the role of the personal mindset of the people in driving innovation. According to the IM from Giant Tech*, the mindset of the people and their capability of thinking out of the box leads to innovation. The IM from Factory Tycoon* also mentions the personal mindset of the people working for Factory Tycoon* to innovate as a factor to foster innovation across the company. The IM from A-Z Networks* also mentions that the creative mindset of the employees along with the facilities provided by the company to support the employees and get incentives for their dedication towards innovation helps in fostering innovation in the company.

Finally, hiring employees with the right mindset and driving innovation through employee engagement was highlighted in the response of the IM from Axis Communications. According to the response received, facilitating engagement through activities like Axis Exchange, Innovation greenhouse, innovation weeks, and daily discussions on the value of innovation throughout the company helps to foster innovation within the company. The IM from Above also placed emphasis on having the special recruitment process to attract the creative people to work with innovation as a driver for innovation. In a similar spirit, the founder of Spotify mentioned that his ability hire good people, understanding how people are, how they react in the group and being good at forecasting the future helps to keep the spirit of innovation linger on at Spotify. The importance of the recruitment team was also mentioned in this context. According to Sommer, Heidenreich, and Handrich, 2017, a main priority of companies is to recruit high potentials characterized by an innovative and creative personality. It is interesting to note that this priority can be observed in these responses from the IMs of the surveyed companies. This underscores the importance of having the people with the correct innovative mindset to drive innovation in a company.

5.3.2.3 Access to innovative people

In this section, I compare the surveyed companies based on their perception of their accessibility to innovative people working for the company. The access to innovative people can come from within the team, cross functional teams, external collaboration, and other offices operating worldwide.

According to the IM from King, access to innovative people is found from working with cross functional teams set up with a blend of analysts and creatives. This work structure coupled with well outlined expectations, provision of tools, resources, and people to enable them to provide innovative solutions. Compared to King, the IM from Giant Tech* mentions the global pool of innovative talent across their offices worldwide as a source to access innovative talent. These people are important in fostering the innovation journey for the company. The IM from Above indicates that the company has several designers and engineers worldwide who love experimenting with solutions intuitively. This coupled with a balanced age mix helps in fostering a creative environment within the company. However, gender diversity is a challenge and that sometimes limits innovation within the company.

In contrast to the diverse pool of talents that the IMs from King and Giant Tech* have access to, the IM from Factory Tycoon* mentions that access to innovative people is sourced from within the product development team who help in driving innovation at the workplace. However, the responses from Axis Communications and Spotify indicate that their available pool of innovative talent is comprised of employees across the company and not restricted to a single team. According to the Spotify founder, there is a good accessibility to creative talents who blend in with their innovative ideas and together with his entrepreneurial skills work together to foster innovation in the company. The IM from Axis Communications also indicates there is access to skilled innovative people who are broad generalists. However, it is a challenge when more specialists are needed to have knowledge about advanced technology.

Among the surveyed companies, the IM from A-Z Networks* indicated that access to innovative people is achieved through external collaborations with universities and startups who are funded regularly through A-Z Networks* Innovation Fund. In addition to this, access to innovative people is also provided through innovative people from specific departments of A-Z Networks* who work with innovation or are particularly interested to work with the creation of new products and solutions.

5.3.2.4 Processes for documenting ideas and allocating resources

In this section, I compare the responses of the innovation managers from the surveyed companies regarding the processes they have in place to document their innovative ideas and allocate resources to foster innovation. Specifically, it is analyzed if the companies have separate or similar systems for new process/product vs improvement of existing process/product.

The surveyed companies apart from Giant Tech* reported that the same systems were used to document innovative as well as existing product/process ideas. The IM from King informed that the company used the concept of exploration days to give all the employees the chance to explore different things to think broadly and stay motivated. The exploration days are not targeted for extracting business ideas. The responsibility for documenting the ideas and overseeing the ideas within the company lie with the product owner and product lead. According to the IM from Factory Tycoon*, the company uses a ticket-based system where the employees raise tickets and the ideas are documented there. The ideas are continuously

evaluated based on a business potential and prioritized as per the need of the project by her and the sales manager.

In case of Axis Communications, the IM shared they have concept one pager, pod series, an internal YouTube channel which are easy to display to others with a good scalability for documenting ideas. These ideas are evaluated, and the best ones are taken into consideration. Following this, a collective decision is taken by the team members on how to carry this idea ahead and then resources are proactively provided to the interested people. The resource allocation is dynamic with weekly meetings and discussions on prioritizing the ideas in different ways and decisions of collaborations with other teams are also taken. Similarly, the IM from A-Z Networks* mentioned the use of an ideas inbox where ideas are documented from all sources and feedback is provided for the ideas. The resource allocation is done more on demand and workshops are organized for fast-track cultivation of the ideas.

According to the IM from Giant Tech*, they have a different strategy for documenting ideas. The strategic product managers working with customer perspective document their ideas as a business use case. Also, innovation is documented on improving the products through monthly invention disclosures. These are used to evaluate whether they can be patented or not and can be worked with in the future. They also document proof of concept with external partners and improvement backlogs where employees always send in suggestions for improvements for process and products.

As per the responses of the IM from Above, it is a challenge to develop new products with the kind of work that they do as it offers small margins. Also, getting the distribution channels for the new products is difficult with their current business model. So, they find new projects and create solutions followed by pitching these solutions to the clients. So, they have separate inhouse projects and the prototype and projects are documented for public views and used to attract innovative talents.

5.3.3 Perspectives of the HR/Employer Branding Manager

Table 4 helps in the analysis to determine the similarities and differences of opinions and views of the different managers working within HR/ Talent Requisition/ Brand management from the surveyed companies. This table enables readers to understand the key aspects on their strategy to attract the right target group, the working efficiency of the strategy to acquire the right talents to the company, the recruitment process with special emphasis of innovativeness among the potential employees, strategies to retain the talents, emphasis on the company culture which plays a pivotal role and motivating reason for the talents to stay withing the company.

Key aspects	Strategy to attract target group	Factors facilitating strategy to attract the right innovative talent	Does the recruitment process assess innovativeness?	Challenges in retaining the talents
Giant Tech*	Different strategies for talent acquisition – Young vs experienced talents	External collaboration with universities for young talents Social media and events for experienced	Yes	Higher attrition rate for the young professionals
Axis Communications	Employer Branding Outreach programs Talent Acquisition Employee Value Proposition	Collaboration with external agency Working within the company with different departments	Yes	Higher attrition rate for the young professionals
Spotify	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
LeoVegas	Employer branding Outreach programs	Use of podcasting (novel technique needing additional time to quantify its success to attract innovative talents)	Yes	N.A.
King	Employees voices Outreach programs	Company's success stories	Yes	Not Applicable
A-Z Networks*	Employer branding Talent acquisition	Using videos to communicate core value of innovation and company vision	Yes	Non-uniform drive for innovation across departments Slow paced of innovation work
IT -Clearly*	Employer branding Talent acquisition with recruiters Employee value proposition Engaging the managers and employees of the company	Collaborating with recruiters Collaboration with clients	No	Competition from clients and start ups

Factory Tycoon*	Employer branding Employee Value Proposition	EVP aligned to innovation as a core value for all the businesses	Yes	Lack of a centralized retention framework or policy
Above	Employees voices and stories of working with innovation	Brand value and reputation	Yes	Compensation and benefits
AFRY	Employer branding Outreach programs	Clients driven by innovation External collaboration with recruiters Extensive use of social media and promoted advertisements on LinkedIn	Yes	Competition from clients Compensation and benefits

Table 5: Perspectives of the HR/Employer Branding Managers from the surveyed companies.
Source: Own Creation

5.3.3.1 Strategy to attract target group

In this section, I strive to understand the similarities and differences in the strategies adopted by the surveyed companies to attract the target group. These strategies include employer branding, separate talent acquisition methodology for young and experienced talents, employee value proposition and outreach programs.

According to the HR from IT-Clearly*, there is no specific strategy for innovativeness, but employer branding is used as a tool to attract talent. Social media activities and providing marketing materials/campaigns are the novel techniques used for employer branding. The focus is on technological solutions with high degrees of innovation to attract talent to create the reputation for the brand. They collaborate with recruiters for talent acquisition who scout for innovative talent on LinkedIn that can benefit the company. The introduction of employee value propositions and opportunities in the early phase of recruitment has been observed to be favorable. A strategy called ambassadorship is being introduced to provide basic guidelines and skills for managers and employees to engage them with recruitment and learn how to share content with social media.

Compared to the general recruitment strategy of IT-Clearly*, the HR from Giant Tech* discusses the separate channels used by the company to recruit the innovative talents based on the age and experience. The young and fresh graduates are attracted via campaigns and internships whereas experienced talents are recruited via conferences and seminars as part of

their employer branding strategies. In a strategy similar to IT-Clearly*, they also focus on posting advertisements on both social and print media for better and wider coverage.

In contrast, the HR from Factory Tycoon* mentioned that the strategies adopted by them are tailor made according to the specific competencies required for the role i.e. they look for competencies suited to the local needs with framework and policies from the group. They have different approaches with the decentralized model and advertisements are targeted to attract the right talent to the different teams. They align the employee value proposition to innovation as a core value for all the businesses to help them to attract innovative talents.

In case of Axis Communications, the corresponding HR discussed the 360-degree strategy adopted by the company to attract innovative talents. After the talents have been identified, they are introduced to Axis as a company and its uniqueness. To achieve this, job ads are created in a movie format with storytelling and information about compensation and benefits. The importance of employer branding comes into play while communicating the importance of leadership, the drivers of the positive work environment, discussion about innovation, and agile work methods during the recruitment process. As with the previous companies, Axis also relies on finding innovative talents on websites like Indeed and LinkedIn. According to the HR, Axis also uses its own website and its career section to attract talents.

From the table, it can be observed that IT-Clearly*, Factory Tycoon* and IT-Clearly* use employer value proposition as a strategy to attract the target group. The importance of employee value propositions in attracting and engaging the innovative talents within the company is also highlighted by Sara in the expert interviews. According to her, the employee value proposition should entail features like working for a cause and should emphasize on encouraging people to expand their knowledge base by enabling learning and development opportunities.

According to the HR from King, their employer branding strategy is driven by the voices of their employees. The company amplifies and highlights the uniqueness of the different companies within Activision Blizzard (AB, A, B and K). As they have a huge advantage in engagement in the form of hundreds of millions of people playing their games daily, they also have endless opportunities to innovate. This factor is utilized by them to attract innovative talents. They also use recruitment websites like LinkedIn to run targeted recruitment marketing campaigns to reach the creative talent pool. In a similar vein, the HR from Above also uses the voices of the employees as part of their branding to attract innovative talents. Although Above is relatively small as compared to King when it comes to company size, they both pursue similar strategies to attract innovative talents.

Employer branding in the case of LeoVegas is done through podcasts showing culture of the company to attract the right talent as informed by their HR. Being a regulation driven industry, it is important for them to balance innovation with regulation and this aspect is communicated while seeking potential innovative candidates. Special emphasis is put on the criteria of self-managed individuals who feel responsible to the society while placing products in the market. This is promoted in the employer branding to get the right innovative people to the company. According to the HR from A-Z Networks*, they also strive to communicate the company

culture through video enabled job advertisements. Apart from this, employer branding is done by engaging themselves with startups and students from different universities to attract them towards the company. Further, efforts are being made to attract women to the technology jobs and creating sponsorship programs for young talents.

The importance of the company culture to attract the innovative talent is mentioned in the expert interviews as well. According to Sara, it is important to have a company culture that is conducive to innovation so that creative employees feel that their voices are being heard. She also mentions that the culture should aim at bridging the gap between the innovative talents and the other departments. Linus Jonkman is also of the same opinion and mentions that culture is not restricted to empowering people but also aligning it to the key business model of the company. He further discusses the need to have a company culture that is constantly evolving in response to the surrounding environment thereby keeping the interests of innovative talents sustained. EI-1 also agrees with these observations and mentions that having patience and respect for creative talents is vital to create a culture conducive to innovation.

In case of AFRY, the strategy to attract the creative talents towards is facilitated through offering opportunities to the talents to work with innovative clients. The HR from AFRY shared how the company is planning in promoting digitalization by connecting the innovative people who have knowledge and information, highly educated individuals working in university and office with the traditional industries who plan on working with innovation in the near future with an interesting portfolio of innovative projects.

Based on the preceding discussion, it can be observed that the surveyed companies use employer branding and communicating the vision of the company in some form or the other to attract the innovative talent. The responses from the expert interviews also highlight the role of employer branding to attract and retain the innovative talent. According to Sara, the investment of startups and consultancy firms in employer branding activities have helped them to attract fresh graduates who are eager to work in an innovative and fast paced environment. Further, she also discusses the importance of employer branding being driven by all the departments and not only driven by HR. Rather, she emphasized that HR and marketing departments should sync together to make the employer branding a success.

Another expert, Linus Jonkman discussed the importance of having different employer branding strategies to differentiate between innovative and normal talents. According to him, normal talents flourish in an environment characterized by high productivity and people working in sync with the different systems in place set by the framework and guidelines of senior management. As opposed to this, innovative talents are curious, courageous, and have opinions of their own which the company needs to take note of and nurture. Thus, he holds the opinion of different employer branding strategies for different types of employees.

The role of employer branding in attracting human capital to a company is explored in (Wilden, Gudergan & Ling, 2010) and Elving, Westhoff, Meeusen and Schoonderbeek, 2013. Sommer, Heidenreich, and Handrich 2017, observe that innovation culture and the innovations in the product portfolio of a company are an important key to attracting innovative employees. They

propose the development of an employer branding strategy based on these aspects to attract innovative talent. Martin, Gollan and Grigg (2011), Ukko and Saunilla (2013) and Johnson and Johnson (2004) establish the interlinked nature of learning, innovation, and brand image. The observations in these studies are corroborated by the findings from the interviews in the section as it can be observed that communicating the vision of the company especially pertaining to innovation forms an important part of attracting the correct talent for the surveyed companies. Also, given the demands of the current times, the use of web-based recruitment tools and websites is also an important aspect of the talent identification process as seen from the discussion.

5.3.3.2 Factors facilitating strategy to attract the right innovative talent

In this section, I compare the surveyed companies to understand the factors that help these companies to attract the innovative talents. These factors include clients, economy, company structure, external collaborations, social media presence, branding activities, good influx of experienced people, success stories within innovation and brand values.

According to the HR from IT-Clearly*, collaboration with recruiters who have a good hit rate on LinkedIn InMail coupled a positive change in interest has helped them to have a good influx of innovative candidates. Also, However, the Covid-19 situation has created some difficulties in this process and has led to longer response times for onboarding. This has resulted in people leaving halfway. They also face difficulties in finding people with innovativeness complying to the language of clients when hiring worldwide. Giant Tech* also uses external collaborations to locate innovative talent according to their HR. However, the collaboration is done primarily with universities to get young talents inclined to work with innovation from the grassroots level. They also utilize social media extensively along with events, conferences, and seminars to generate interest among the experienced talent pool to work for them.

Like IT-Clearly*, AFRY also uses job postings on company's web page, other channels like LinkedIn, buying advertisements to reach target groups, a good network of 50 internal recruiters for headhunting and inspiring the internal employees to attract innovative people. However, according to the HR from AFRY, it is tough to generate interest among the innovative people as they are secretive and AFRY does not propagate themselves as an innovative company.

Collaboration with external agencies to attract innovative talent is also used by Axis Communications. According to the response from their HR, they conduct internal research using information from external agencies to search keywords that are used by candidates to get information about the potential innovative candidates as well as understand the requirements of the company to become an attractive employer. The recruitment strategy is supported by the communications and marketing team, employee value propositions and making a brand statement about creating something new.

The HR from Factory Tycoon* mentioned that aligning the employee value proposition to innovation as a core value for all the businesses has helped the company to get innovative talents. However, the lack of a centralized innovation department has led to the R&D department being solely responsible to come up with innovative products for different

businesses which is a drawback for the company. King also uses a strategy to highlight the company's success stories working with innovation as a factor to attract innovative people to the company. In contrast to using the company's work with innovation as an attracting factor, the HR from Above indicates that the strategy of hiring people from a particular domain by establishing contacts with them and having good reputation works for them to attract the innovative talents. However, it is difficult to get people with the required competencies for new fields and domains. Further, time constraints in creating and posting job advertisements on social media with the changes makes it difficult for them to get responses.

Companies also report the use of web-based and audio-visual tools to propagate information about their strategies and work to attract innovative talent. LeoVegas uses podcasting as a tool to reach out to the right talents whereas A-Z Networks* uses videos to communicate the vision and transforming the advertisements to meet the values as a thinking feed to the innovative candidates to attract them.

5.3.3.3 Does the recruitment process assess innovativeness?

In this section, I try to examine if the recruitment process of the surveyed companies checks for the quality of innovativeness in the potential candidates and the challenges involved in the same.

The HR from IT-Clearly* mentions that the company does not have specific strategy for innovation exclusively, so the tests conducted as part of the recruitment process are not designed to measure innovativeness. Rather, it comprises of mathematical and programming tests and role dependent on case studied tailor made to suit the needs of the clients.

In case of Giant Tech*, the information from the HR is that they utilize the result of studies that enables leaders to be informed about the personality traits or skills that can enable innovation within the potential market. This information is used to check for innovativeness as one of the core competencies through their global recruitment process. Similarly, the HR from Axis Communications mentioned that managers get help from the external agencies during the recruitment process to check the innovativeness of the candidates. However, the hit rate for hiring is not satisfactory. One of the main issues faced by Axis is that there is a higher demand for innovative talents.

According to the HR from King, the recruitment process differs depending on company, disciplines, and seniority. But in general, the process includes a couple of interviews and tests. They check innovativeness through the interview questions that are connected to their core values. Similarly, LeoVegas has a recruitment process that is targeted to the needs and desires for the role in the initial rounds according to the response from the HR. Specific interviews are conducted with structured approach depending on the desired competencies for a role. The check for innovativeness is done as a mindset in a set of framed questions related to working within company and working in team in the second round of interviews.

The recruitment process for Factory Tycoon* comprises of personal tests to understand the personal traits of the candidates and their ability to think out of the box. However, they are targeted for specific competencies and not uniformly across all positions. the recruitment takes

place in a way to fill the positions targeted to fulfil the needs of the companies located globally but the challenge is that there are limited resources to follow up and see how effective the recruitment has been with the decentralized approach. In the case of Above, personal connections and recommendations from employees together with a presence on social media helps in attracting the innovative talents. There are no personality tests to check creativity, but a structured set of questions is used to assess the same.

The HR from AFRY mentions that the recruitment department has several support material/recruiting guides, with questions regarding innovativeness whereas A-Z Networks* uses competence-based questions along with questions based on themes of innovation helps in assessing the candidates towards their readiness to work in a fast-paced changing environment. This also enables them to get the personality traits and insights of the candidate's competencies. However, the challenges that remain are the difficulties to get the talents with new and niche areas where there is less of talent pool and experience people, so the managers are taught to sell themselves and offer something and take care of their needs.

As is evident from this discussion, all but one of the surveyed companies use some kind of strategy to assess innovativeness during the recruitment process. Hunter, Cushenbery, and Friedrich, (2012) discuss the factors to focus on while hiring innovative people. The aim of most interviews – either explicitly or implicitly – is to assess a candidate's disposition or personality (Huffcutt, Conway, Roth, & Stone, 2001). Amar & Mullanely 2017 discuss the use of psychometric tests and other formal tools to assess and identify innovative talents. From the expert interviews, EI-1 emphasized on asking questions on the self-assessment of candidates on their innovativeness during the interviews to understand the traits of the candidates and their willingness to work with innovation.

Based on the responses from the surveyed companies, it can be observed that they are indeed using a combination of the different techniques discussed in the literature to assess innovativeness. However, as discussed in Hunter, Cushenbery, & Friedrich, 2012, Cerinsek and Dolinsek, 2009, Amar & Mullanely 2017 and Boštjančič and Slana, 2018 innovation assessment in interviews is a challenging task and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to answer this question. In line with the surveyed companies' responses, innovation assessment needs to be carried out keeping in mind the specific requirements of a company and the position being filled. This often leads to a combination of methods being used for the assessment process as was evident from the responses of the survey.

5.3.3.4 Challenges in retaining the talents

In this aspect, I compare the responses of the surveyed companies with regards to their views on the challenges and strategies associated with retaining the innovative talents. These are some of the factors analyzed as part of this aspect – competitor, branding, high attrition rate of young professionals, compensation and benefits, work life balance, retention policies and framework, company framework, balance between regulations and innovation.

As per the HR from IT-Clearly*, their retention strategy for innovative employees is carried out by tailoring the employee journey to provide these employees with development opportunities, the chance of being frontrunners in their field, internal success stories for

employer branding, engaging them in right projects, moving within clients and projects, and dialogues with managers to see their development. However, the challenges in this case arise from competing recruiters in the form of startups and even the own clients of the company who offer better opportunities to the employees. However, according to the IT-Clearly* HR, it is an accepted reality that affects retention and hence the focus lies on filling the gap of people rather than spoiling the relationship with client. AFRY also faces similar challenges in retaining talent when their own clients become competitors for the recruitment of their employees.

According to their HR, this is handled by proposing a business model to develop a relationship between the clients and consulting firms to get the best people to work by involving HR director of AFRY with other big clients. Further, even though AFRY cannot compete on the salary and compensations aspects with the big companies, they provide facilities like education, freedom to change clients to broaden experiences, and using employer branding to convey why AFRY is a better place to work to retain their innovative talents. Since most of the AFRY employees work on client sites, the future strategy is to increase their internal operations to drive innovation further.

According to the HR from Factory Tycoon*, the challenge towards retention of innovative talents is the lack of a centralized framework and policy for retention of employees. Similarly, the HR from Axis Communications mentions that they are faced with the challenge of having higher attrition rate for young professionals. To increase retention, importance is placed on leadership as the available data shows that people leave the bosses and the team. An emphasis on the leadership aspect along with offering friendly workplace, benefits, and perks, having discussions with people on innovative ideas coupled with the fact that the founder works alongside are used as strategies to retain the innovative talents.

A-Z Networks* faces the challenge of a non-uniform drive for innovation across their global offices as mentioned by their HR. This slows down the pace of innovation thereby making it difficult to retain innovative talent. According to the HR, management should be engaged from top to down and across all departments to mitigate this. As part of their retention strategy, they provide the opportunity of working in diverse groups and having employees with different backgrounds to work with innovation. The importance of a management structure that fosters innovation from top to down in making a company attract and retain innovative talents is also mentioned by one of the experts, Sara.

The retention strategy in Above is focused on facilitating on request trainings, conferences etc. which are driven by the employees according to the HR from Above. Also, providing the employees with the opportunity to work with diverse projects to enable faster learning within group constellations also plays an important part in retaining the innovative employees. The retention challenges include the compensation and benefits. In contrast, the HR from LeoVegas mentions that the key challenge in retaining the innovative talents is creating a balance between regulations and innovation. Since working within a tightly structured framework often leads to making compromises with innovation, it leads to attrition of innovative talents not willing to work in such environments. To mitigate this, the employees are given the choice to be self-driven and try out new ideas, run projects, and create value irrespective of position to keep the entrepreneurial and innovativeness alive within the company.

The problem of working with innovation in a very tightly structured environment was also discussed in the expert interviews. Linus Jonkman mentioned that if key performance indicators (KPI) is all about successful deployment of ideas with salary and promotions being dependent on them, there is a conflict of interest with innovation in that case. According to Sara, a very structured hierarchy where people are not entitled to take decisions and must rely on a series of approvals to go ahead with their decisions are not empowered. This creates discontent among creative employees who feel bogged down with the structure.

Some of the key themes that arise from this discussion find echoes in the surveyed literature as well. According to Nolan, 2015 and Kaye, and Jordan-Evans, 2001, management and human resources play an important role in the retention strategies of companies. These studies discuss that although it is up to human resources to design the retention process, it is the responsibility of the managers to fulfil the daily responsibilities to keep talented people associated with the company. The positive impact of a supportive and appreciative work environment, learning and development opportunities together with work-life balance on the retention of employees is discussed extensively in Hytter, 2007, Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy, and Baert, 2011, Hiltrop, 1999, Arnold, 2005, and Herman, 2005. Based on the responses of the HR from the surveyed companies, it can be observed that these key themes keep appearing in some form or the other when retention strategies are discussed. However, the internal structure and working pattern of companies often place challenges on the retention strategies as observed in the case of LeoVegas and AFRY.

5.4 Observations

The preceding sections discussed the ordering of the companies according to the innovation maturity matrix as well as the similarities and differences of the perspectives of the innovative talent, innovation manager, and the HR/employer branding manager. It is interesting to see if further nuanced observations about the case-companies can be made by using the maturity ordering of the companies in conjunction with the perspective comparisons.

If the two highest ranking companies in the maturity ordering are considered (Giant Tech* and Axis communications), comparing the corresponding responses of the informants from these companies in Tables 3,4, and 5 yields some interesting insights. There is an emphasis on collaborative work between different teams, innovation being driven through new product development, recruiting people with an innovative mindset, assessing innovation during the recruitment process, and collaborating externally with universities, agencies etc. to find innovative talent. Interestingly, both these companies also report that a key challenge they face in retaining talents is the higher attrition rate for young professionals.

This observation might seem counterintuitive – young people should be more driven towards work requiring creativity and innovation. However, when considering the responses of the innovative talents regarding the constraints of being innovative at work in these companies, time is mentioned as a factor. The gaps between designing and launching a new product as well as strict product delivery deadlines often force the innovative talents to compromise their work with innovation.

As discussed in France, Leahy, and Parsons, 2009, individuals contributing innovative ideas should be made aware of the valuable outcomes they enabled, even if the actual value is not realized in the short term. In this case, the young innovative talents might feel disillusioned about their worth and contribution due to the lack of feedback. This in turn leads to them leaving the companies. It is hard to generalize this observation with the limited sample size and the lack of measurable metrics, but it qualifies as a reasonable assumption. It might be worthwhile for these companies to investigate this aspect to improve their retention policy.

On the other end of the spectrum, the lowest ranked companies in the table are the ones that have no innovation occurring within the company (Above and AFRY). Rather, innovation is either driven by individuals working with clients or at the client site. The responses of the informants from these companies indicate that although there is a high degree of readiness to work with innovation, the presence of rigid structures and frameworks in their daily operations prevents a widespread adoption of innovation. Consequently, the innovation activities are mostly driven by the individuals and client requirements. Although these companies use employer branding, external recruiter collaborations, and the use of social media to attract innovative talent, they face challenges in retaining these talents due to the nature of the spread of innovation in them.

The informants from these companies indicate that the compensation and benefits offered by them together with competition from their clients have an impact on their retention policy. Since most of the innovation happens on the client site, the innovative talents are often lured away with the promise of an attractive compensation package as well as a working environment more conducive to innovation. Again, this is a reasonable assumption but is a good feedback for these companies to create an environment that fosters innovation.

The remaining companies in the sequence inspired by the innovation maturity matrix have varying scales of innovation adoption ranging from being spread across multiple departments to being restricted to a subset of the departments. Based on table 3, these companies report the following constraints to be innovative at work – using KPIs for performance management, uneven promotion of innovation, lack of a platform to share ideas and attempts to structure innovation. Compared to the top companies having dedicated departments for innovation, these companies report that certain structural and work practice related changes need to be made to make innovation more pervasive within the company. Looking at the responses in table 5, these constraints are also cited as the factors influencing the retention of the innovative talents.

It is interesting to note here that all the companies report challenges in retaining innovative talents irrespective of their ranking on the maturity model. The presence of dedicated innovation departments, supportive management, time and resources, and attractive benefits is not enough to retain talents. This indicates that the problem of identifying, attracting, engaging and retaining innovative talents is quite nuanced and requires critical examination from multiple angles.

6. Conclusion

This chapter discusses the research questions and presents both research and practical implications. Lastly, it discusses the limitations and presents some ideas and thoughts on the scope of future work.

6.1 Discussion

To recap, the primary research questions being discussed in this study are:

How do HR/Employee branding managers and innovation managers identify, attract, engage, and retain innovative talents?

What attracts and motivates innovative talents to stay with their companies?

The research questions focus on how well-known companies recruit and work with innovative talent along with the expectations of innovative talents from their companies that motivate them to work there for a long time. As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, innovation and talent management are important topics and have been studied in separate ways extensively. However, previous studies have focused on employee attractiveness and retention strategies in general and not on the investigation of factors that attract innovative employees (Sommer, Heidenreich, and Handrich 2017).

One of the key findings from this study is that all the surveyed case companies recognize the importance of innovation and work with it in varying degrees. In order to establish an ordering among the surveyed companies, the Innovation Maturity Matrix (Viima, 2019) described in Chapter 5 was used to group them according to scale. Scale here denotes the extent of spread of innovation in the company. When comparing the companies based on this ordering, the findings reveal that although the companies share several similarities in their strategies of working with innovation, they also report problems with retaining talents. This problem occurs irrespective of their position in the ordered list.

However, the reasons that have a negative impact on the retention vary. The top-ranked companies report that the time gap between the generation of an idea and its implementation causes employee dissatisfaction whereas the low ranked companies report that the offer of better compensation leads to employees leaving. Although these results are based on a qualitative analysis of the collected data, they are reasonable assumptions and can be used by the companies to identify the gaps in their retention strategies.

Coming back to the research questions addressed in this study, I start with discussing the findings from the responses of human resources (HR) and employee branding manager informants from the surveyed case companies. In a company, the HR department is tasked with the responsibility of identifying, attracting, and screening talents so it's a natural starting point to begin this discussion.

A key finding from the responses of the HR informants is that they use one or more of the following strategies to attract innovative talent – employer branding, social media presence, employer value proposition, communicating the vision of the company, outreach programs,

and using separate strategies to attract new and experienced talents. According to the informants, employer branding is achieved by showcasing their innovative products, using stories from current employees, social media, relating the employee value proposition to innovation, audio-visual tools, and podcasts.

The expert informants also discuss the role of employer branding to attract and retain the innovative talent. These findings are consistent with the role of employer branding in attracting employees as discussed in (Wilden, Gudergan & Ling, 2010) and (Elving, Westhoff, Meeusen and Schoonderbeek, 2013, Sommer, Heidenreich, and Handrich 2017). Further, the findings also suggest that the surveyed case companies are aware of the importance of a good online presence and the use of social media as well as podcasts to attract innovative talent.

One of the main challenges faced by companies while hiring innovative talents is – how does one evaluate the innovativeness of a potential employee during the recruitment process? The existing research in this aspect indicates that there is no single correct answer to this question (Hunter, Cushenbery, & Friedrich, 2012, Cerinsek and Dolinsek, 2009, Amar & Mullanelly 2017 and Boštjančič and Slana, 2018). Interestingly, most of the HR informants from the surveyed case companies indicated that they do assess innovativeness during the recruitment process.

This assessment is done using different techniques such as using the result of studies that provide information about the personality traits/skills exhibiting innovation, using external agencies to do the assessment, specially designed interview questions and tests, and relying on the innovation managers to assess the innovativeness. As discussed in the existing literature, it's not feasible to have a single method for innovation assessment and companies must use techniques suitable for their line of work. This is consistent with the findings from this study as well. However, as we shall observe later in this section, there is often a gap between the perception of the HR and innovation manager when it comes to the assessment issue. The assessment of innovation in companies is an interesting topic with further research potential and can be explored in a separate focused study.

Coming to the issue of retaining the innovative talents, the findings suggest that the following factors contribute positively to the same – development opportunities, benefits and perks, work-life balance, education, freedom to change clients, employer branding, creating a balance between regulations and innovation, and leadership. Conversely, the presence of a rigid working environment, competition from external clients, disengaged management, slow pace of innovation rollout, and the unavailability of time and resources to carry out innovation emerge as the factors leading to employee attrition. These findings find their echoes in the existing research in this subject (Hytter, 2007, Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy, and Baert, 2011). However, as will be discussed later in this section, sometimes there is a difference in perception between what the HR and the innovative talent regarding the factors promoting retention.

When it comes to the perspective of the innovation managers, a key theme that emerged was that innovation was driven by new products, new processes and systems, and customer needs and preferences. This was consistent with the interlinked nature of process and product driven innovation as discussed in Kraft, 1990, Martinez-Ros, 1999 and Damanpour and

Gopalakrishnan, 2001. Another key finding from the responses of the innovation managers was that collaboration in different forms was identified as a key source of innovation.

These were identified as inter and intra team collaborations, external collaborations with universities, and collaboration in cross functional teams. The positive impact of collaborations on both process and product innovation as identified from the responses of the innovation manager follows with the observations on the same topic as discussed in Reichstein and Salter, 2006, Un and Asakawa, 2015 and Un, Cuervo-Cazurra, and Asakawa, 2010.

When the primary research question about the role of the innovation managers in identifying, attracting, engaging and retaining innovative talents is considered, the findings indicated that the informants mentioned that hiring the correct people with the innovative and creative mindset is one of the key factors to drive and foster innovation in their respective companies.

Different techniques to increase the engagement of innovative talents in the form of recognitions like 'innovative employee of the month', innovation greenhouse, innovation weeks, and innovation sponsors were some of the key themes that emerged from the responses. Although not all the surveyed case companies follow all these techniques, these techniques provide a good overview of the innovation managers thought process about working with innovative talent.

In case of assessing the innovativeness of an employee during the hiring process, the findings indicate that the innovation managers find this process challenging. They are of the opinion that everyone is innovative in some aspect and it is hard to separate out the innovation traits during the recruitment process. Further, the findings also suggest that the innovation managers sometimes find themselves lacking in the technical knowledge and up to date information that is needed to make this assessment. The responses from the innovation managers are in line with the ones discussed in Hunter, Cushenbery, & Friedrich, 2012, Cerinsek and Dolinsek, 2009, Amar & Mullanelly 2017 and Boštjančič and Slana, 2018.

As discussed previously, the informants from the human resources section indicate that innovation is assessed during the interviews and often defer this responsibility to the innovation managers. Clearly, there is a gap in perception here between these two personnel. This is an interesting insight from this study that might be of use to the companies to streamline their innovation assessment process and techniques. Finally, coming to the issue of retaining talents, the findings suggest that an innovation driven culture, encouragement of new ideas, compensation and benefits and good social network all contribute positively towards employee retention which is in line with the findings from the HR informants.

Finally, the findings from the responses of the innovative talents are discussed. These findings and observations strive to answer the second research question discussed previously. According to the responses, a majority of the informants indicate a high degree of willingness to embrace innovative work. Adequate management support, promoting innovation, company vision tied to innovation and employee driven innovation all emerge as key themes encouraging this readiness. Similarly, the sources of innovation for the innovative talents emerge as being driven by attitude, process, or both.

When it comes to the question of the factors that make innovative employees stay with their respective companies, the following themes emerge – freedom to work with innovation, friendly work atmosphere, learning and development opportunities, perks and benefits, collaborative environment, and adequate management support. Conversely, strict deadlines, non-propagation of innovation culture, lack of a platform to share ideas and an aversion to risk-taking all contribute negatively towards retention. Also, as discussed previously, the lack of feedback also creates dissatisfaction among the innovative talents. On a high level, the perceptions of the HR and the innovative talent seem to align well on the themes of retention.

However, the comparison of perspectives within a single company often highlights gaps between these perceptions. The HR is concerned with high level factors like compensation, benefits, and work-life balance whereas the innovative talents report issues in their daily work environment such as a feeling of being valued, supportive colleagues and balancing innovation with business as being important factors influencing their interest in work and by extension, the motivation to stay with the company. As discussed in Nolan, 2015 and Kaye, and Jordan-Evans, 2001, it is up HR to design the retention process, but it is the responsibility of the managers to fulfil the daily responsibilities to keep innovative talents with the company. So, the takeaway from this finding is that both the HR and managers should be aware of the requirements of the innovative talents to increase retention.

6.2 Practical and research implications

This study was intended to serve as an exploration into the role of the HR and innovation managers to identify, attract, engage, and retain innovative talents together with the factors that make innovative talents stay with their companies. The purpose is to contribute to the literature studying the interlinked nature of talent management and innovation. It is intended to serve as a guide as well as a deep look into the surveyed case companies practices when managing and working with innovative talents. This study builds upon the existing literature that approaches this problem from different perspectives by trying to create a combined analysis of these perspectives – comparing different companies as well as comparing perceptions within a single company. It is intended to be a guide to the participating case companies to understand where the gaps in their perceptions lie as well as comparing their strategies with the other companies. Further, it could also be used as a guide by upcoming companies looking towards making innovation a part of their portfolio by looking at the current practices in the market.

Based on the discussion of this research, there is practical relevance in improving the recruitment process and retention strategies for innovative talents. The findings show that some of the requirements of the innovative talents are not met by the HR alone and a more orchestrated effort from the management is needed to maintain the same. Also, the time gap between the proposal of an innovative idea and seeing it in implementation needs to be shortened. Also, it can inspire the companies to ask the right questions while recruiting innovative talents to assess their innovativeness accurately. For example, the selection of the recruitment team should be done based on their knowledge of the corresponding domain so they can perform the assessment effectively.

6.3 Limitations and future work

The observations in this study are based on interviews conducted with personnel from well-known companies operating in Sweden. This makes it difficult to generalize and extrapolate the results for companies based in other countries. Even within Sweden, the results cannot be generalized with a high degree of confidence due to the relatively small sample size of the case companies (10) that was chosen due to the time constraints of the study as well as the non-availability of certain informants and companies. Further, the nature of the study conducted as well as the analysis of the gathered empirical data is done on a purely qualitative basis. As a result, there are no measurable metrics on talent management and innovation that have been generated in the study. Also, since the mini case study approach was used in the data collection, it was not possible to ask questions to obtain a comprehensive overview of all the different aspects of talent management and innovation. Some of these include the role of innovation as a performance indicator, innovation audits, ethics, and standards. Consequently, these aspects are missing from the analysis of the responses received from the case companies.

As part of the future work, it would be interesting to extend this study to companies operating in other countries worldwide to understand if a specific country's policies and environment play a significant role in influencing innovation practices and the attraction, identification, and retention of innovative talents. As the findings show, there is no standard way of assessing innovation during the hiring process. It would be interesting to carry out further study in this respect by investigating how other well-known companies assess innovation during their hiring and if there are overlaps in these methods. Further, introducing questions in the interview to glean metrics related to talent management and innovation might be a good strategy to add a quantitative angle to the study. Also, a more comprehensive understanding of the different aspects of innovation and their relation to talent management needs to be carried out to understand the relationship between these two factors better.

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