



REWIND TRAINING PLANS

ICT for Process and Product Innovation

REWIND

Relaunching Enterprises through Workers' Innovation
and New dynamics

December 2023



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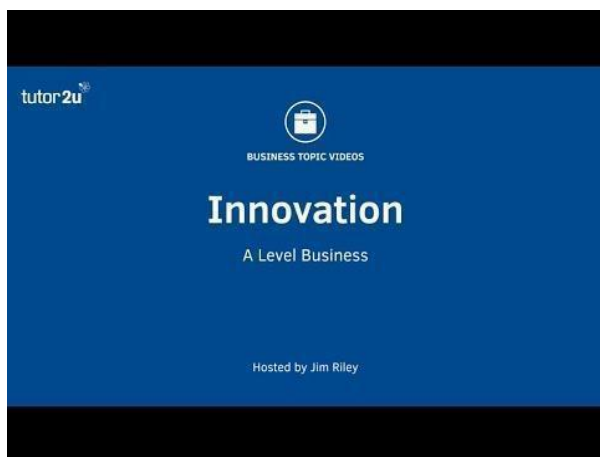
Introduction to the Module

This module is aimed at equipping VET professionals with resources to implement training actions on the application of technological innovation in the WBO to develop new products, services, and processes.

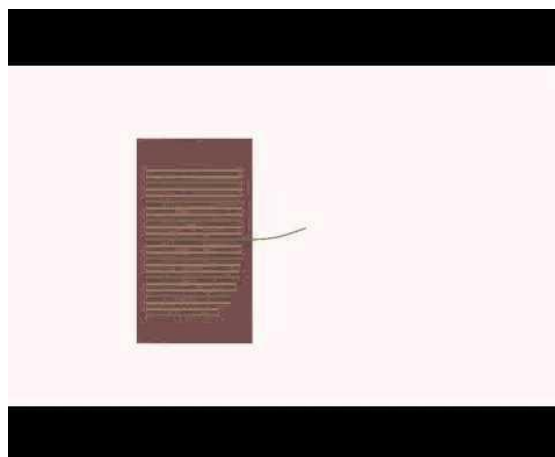
In it, we will focus on the following areas to demonstrate that ICT for process and product innovation is an opportunity in WBO processes:

1. What is technological innovation.
2. Technological innovation tools.
3. How to adapt a technological innovator profile.

Multimedia resources



Innovation (Product and Process) – [YouTube Video](#)



Product innovation – [YouTube Video](#)

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module, the learner should acquire the following knowledge, skills, and competences:

Description of the unit of learning outcomes: This module aims to equip VET professionals with resources and strategies to implement training actions on the application of technological innovation during WBOs as a strategy to develop new products, services, and processes.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

| Actions/achievements | Knowledge | Skills | Attitudes |
|---|--|--|---|
| Relate technological innovation to an opportunity for growth/improvement in an entity's offer in WBO processes. | Describe different types of technological innovation. | Identify the dimensions of technological innovation. | Support the transmission of the importance of technological innovation. |
| | Recognise the technological tools an entity can apply to innovate its offer and processes. | Analyse the types of technological innovation and their different effects and needs. | Assess the suitability of different types of technological innovation. |
| | Explain the technological innovator profile. | Design strategies to adapt the entity into a technological innovator profile. | |
| HandsOn/Guides Learning Hours: 5 Self Study Hours: 3 Assessment Hours: 2 | Total Learning Hours: 10 | | |

Theoretical part

1. What is Technological Innovation?

Technological Innovation is a process by which companies introduce new products, services, processes, or business models into the market, using new or improved technologies. This process can help to improve or expand a company's product and service offerings, which in turn can lead to increased efficiency and profitability.

A good definition of technology could be: the body of knowledge, know-how, experience, skills and techniques by which the environment is changed, transformed and used in order to create goods and services that satisfy our needs and desires. It consists of a combination of productive factors to produce goods and services.

This process can be internal or external to the company. In the first case, the company uses its own resources to develop new technologies and products. In the second case, the company may acquire technologies or products from other companies through strategic alliances, mergers, or acquisitions.

Technological innovation can take place in different areas of the company, such as production, marketing, logistics or human resource management. Companies can use different approaches to innovate, such as incremental improvement, disruptive innovation, radical innovation, or social innovation. In the following we will explain more extensively these terms.

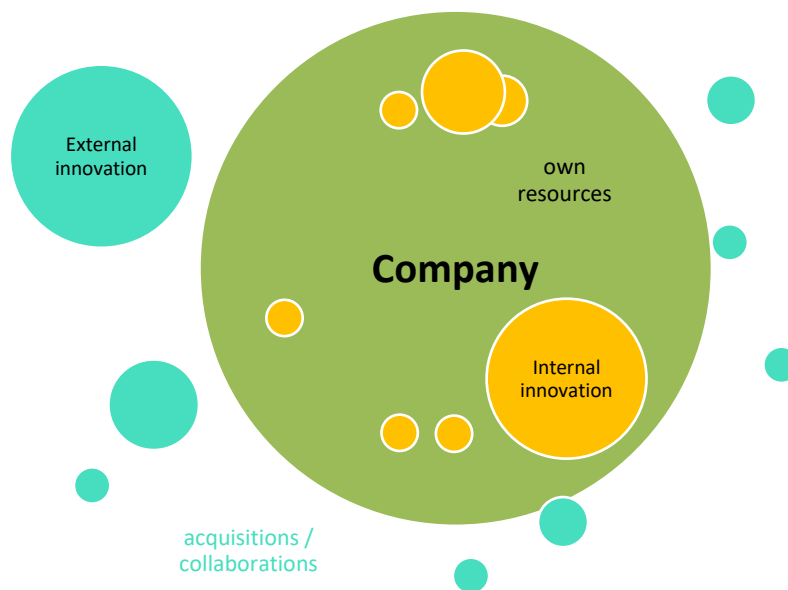
By innovating technologically, companies can improve the quality and efficiency of their products and services, which can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, technological innovation can provide a company with a competitive advantage in the market, allowing it to differentiate itself from its competitors and increase its market share.

In short, technological innovation is essential for companies to improve and expand their service and product offerings. By adopting new technologies and innovative approaches, companies can increase their efficiency,

improve the quality of their products and services and gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Dimensions of Technological Innovation

Technological innovation can be internal or external to the company, and both can be used to improve or expand the supply of services and products.



Internal dimension

Internal technological innovation refers to the research and development of new technologies and products carried out within the company. This involves using the company's resources and capabilities to innovate in areas such as production, product design, supply chain management and process automation, quality control, etc.

Internal technological innovation can be a slow and costly process, requiring significant resources for research, development and specially, staff. However, it can also provide the company with greater control over the

innovation process and the intellectual property of the technologies developed.

External dimension

On the other hand, external technological innovation refers to the adoption or acquisition of technologies and products developed by other companies or centres. This can be achieved through strategic alliances, mergers, and acquisitions, or through collaboration with other companies and suppliers.

External technological innovation can enable the company to benefit from the expertise and resources of other companies and accelerate the innovation process. It can also provide the company with access to technologies it does not possess and to new markets and business opportunities.

In this case, the control over the process and the cost (in terms of time, resources and personnel) varies from in-house, but still requires an internal structure capable of supporting it.

In short, both internal and external technological innovation can be used by companies to improve and expand their service and product offerings. Internal technological innovation allows the firm to have greater control over the innovation process, while external technological innovation can provide access to new technologies, resources, and business opportunities, a priori, more inaccessible.

1.1. Types of Technological Innovation

Technological innovation is an important process and strategy for companies wishing to remain competitive and improve their product and service offerings. There are several types of technological innovation that can help companies achieve this goal. Four of the most common types of technological innovation are described below:

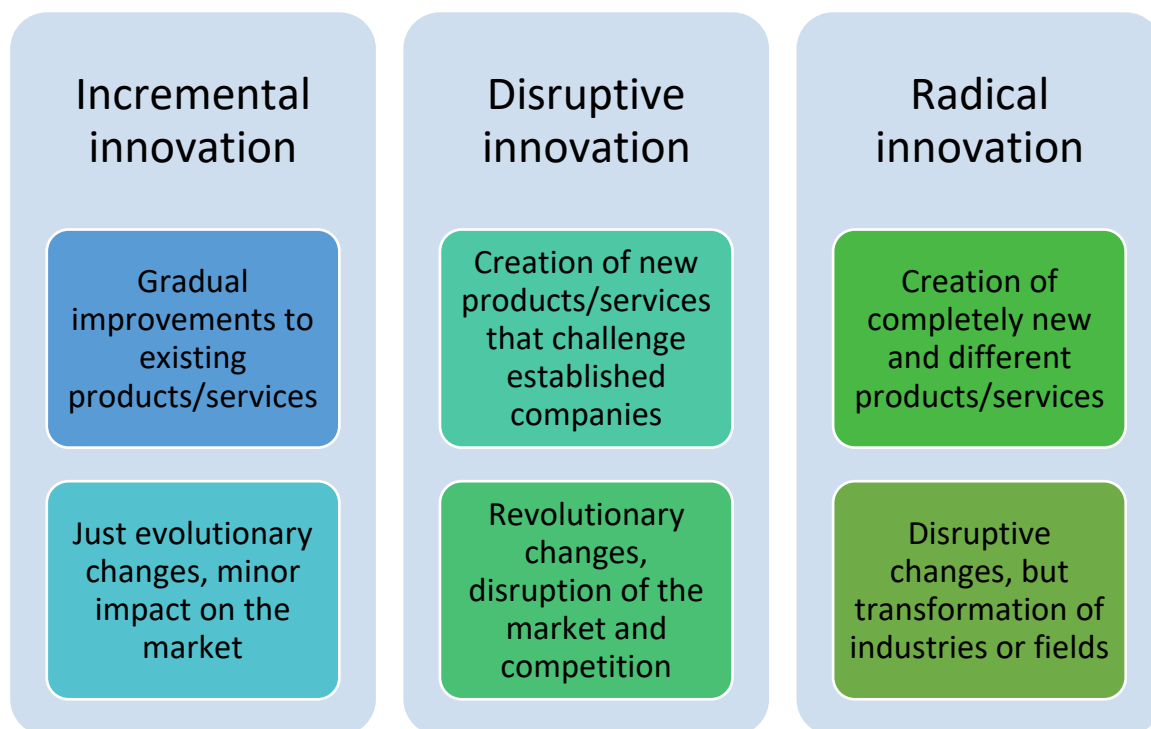


Figure 2. Types of technological innovation

Incremental Technological Innovation

This type of innovation focuses on making incremental improvements to the company's existing products or services.

These are usually consecutive small improvements in the efficiency, quality, or specific functionality of existing products/services. Incremental innovation is a safe and stable way to improve product and service offerings, as it builds on the company's previous knowledge, experience, and customers and collaborators feedback.

A simple example of incremental innovation for a service could be adding new interaction functions, shortening the time in which a service is performed, providing new ways of communicating with the customer. In the case of a product, an example could be adding new accessories, new flavours, connection with other devices, improving the design, the packaging...

Disruptive Technological Innovation

This type of innovation focuses on the creation of new products or services that change and challenge the market or sector in which the company operates.

Disruptive innovation does not follow the traditional model of incremental improvement but seeks to create different products or services solving problems that existing products and companies do not address. Disruptive innovation can be challenging for established companies, as it requires a different mindset and business culture than that used for incremental innovation.

A simple example of disruptive innovation could be: a mobile phone industry dominated by companies offering expensive and complex devices with many advanced features. In this scenario, a company introduces a new mobile phone simpler and cheaper, but with a focus on battery life and ease of use.

Although the new phone is not as advanced as those of the leading companies, it meets the basic communication needs of users and becomes very popular among those looking for a more affordable and easy-to-use option. This disruptive innovation changes the market and creates a new demand. In this case, technologies are not disruptive themselves, but their application in a new business model can be.

Radical Technological Innovation

This type of innovation focuses on creating new products or services that are completely different from existing ones in the market. It often involves high risk, as companies must invest heavily in R&D to create something truly new and different. Radical innovation may require a change in mindset and corporate culture to succeed.

A simple example of radical innovation could be the field of medicine. Traditionally, invasive surgeries required large incisions and lengthy recovery time. However, the introduction of robotic surgery has been a radical innovation in this field. Robotic systems allow minimally invasive surgery to be performed through small incisions and the use of surgeon-controlled robotic arms.

This advanced technology has revolutionised the way certain surgical procedures are performed, reducing risks, reducing recovery times and improving outcomes for patients by introducing technological breakthroughs or entirely new approaches that transform an industry or field, bringing about significant change and disrupting traditional ways of doing things.

1.2. Benefits of Technological Innovation

Meeting the diverse needs of consumers.

If there is a need, there can be technological innovation that provides a simpler solution to a complex issue.

For example, teams can effectively organise activities and cooperate using the project management platform Trello. Users may use boards, lists, and cards to keep track of progress, assign tasks, and interact with team members using its straightforward and user-friendly design. Teams' various demands are organised and collaboratively met through Trello's novel approach to task management.

Making social, personal, and work life easier.

This is achieved by making even the most tedious tasks simple and encouraging.

For example, Slack is a messaging app that makes team collaboration and communication easier. In addition to enabling real-time messaging, file sharing, and connection with other productivity applications, it replaces email chains. Slack streamlines and improves social, personal, and professional connections inside teams by centralising communication and eliminating the need for continuous email exchanges.

Renewing and expanding the range of products offered by a company.

This helps the company stay relevant and become more competitive within a specific industry or market.

For example, Small companies may now take credit card payments via mobile devices thanks to Square, a payment processing platform.

A compact card reader that connects to a smartphone or tablet makes it simple for companies to handle payments while on the road. By giving their clients easy and safe payment choices, Square's creative solution has enabled numerous SMEs to increase their product offerings.

Attaining better positions within the industry.

This is particularly important for companies that want to be better prepared for unexpected changes.

For example, a platform for email marketing called Mailchimp aids in the automation and creation of email campaigns for organisations. To maximise email marketing efforts, it provides a user-friendly interface, editable templates, and sophisticated statistics. SMEs may enhance their email marketing tactics, more effectively reach their target audience, and get a competitive edge within their sector by utilising Mailchimp's cutting-edge capabilities.

Increasing sales.

By making a company more attractive through generating new or different ideas, solutions, and experiences for customers.

As an example, SMEs may use the e-commerce platform Shopify. It gives companies all the resources they need to build an online store, control inventory, handle payments, and monitor sales. SMEs may boost their online sales and compete in the digital market thanks to Shopify's user-friendly design and wide selection of capabilities.

2. Technological innovation tools

The application of technology will allow changing a company's offer from different axes, allowing, among other things, the improvement of efficiency, the development of products and services or the customer experience.

2.1. Improving business efficiency

Some of the tools that can be considered for this purpose are:

Process automation

Implementing process automation involves using technology to streamline and automate manual tasks and workflows. This reduces human error, increases efficiency, and frees up resources for more strategic and innovative activities. Automation can lead to technological innovation by optimizing processes and enabling the exploration of new ways to improve efficiency and productivity.

Process automation improves business efficiency by reducing manual labour, minimizing errors, and speeding up task completion. It allows for the allocation of resources to higher-value activities, increases productivity, and enhances overall operational efficiency.

Digitization of information

Digitizing information involves converting analog data or physical documents into digital formats. This enables easy access, storage, and sharing of information across different systems and platforms. Digitization facilitates the integration of data and opens possibilities for advanced analysis and insights.

It promotes technological innovation by providing a foundation for data-driven decision making and the development of new digital products or services too.

Digitization of information improves business efficiency by eliminating manual paperwork, reducing storage and retrieval costs, and enabling seamless access to information. It enables faster information exchange, improves collaboration, and enhances decision-making processes.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves extracting meaningful insights from large and complex datasets.

Through techniques like statistical analysis, data mining, and machine learning, organizations can uncover patterns, trends, and correlations in their data. Data analysis drives technological innovation by providing valuable insights that inform decision making, identify areas for improvement, and support the development of innovative solutions or strategies.

Data analysis improves business efficiency by enabling organizations to make data-driven decisions, optimize processes, and identify opportunities for improvement. It enhances resource allocation, identifies cost-saving measures, and supports proactive decision making based on insights derived from data.

Data-driven decision making

Data-driven decision making refers to using data and analytics to guide the decision-making process. It involves leveraging data insights and evidence-based information to make informed and objective decisions. Data-driven decision-making fosters technological innovation by reducing reliance on intuition and guesswork. It enables organizations to identify

opportunities, mitigate risks, and make strategic decisions that drive innovation and competitive advantage.

Data-driven decision making improves business efficiency by ensuring decisions are based on accurate and relevant information. It reduces the likelihood of errors, minimizes risks, and improves resource allocation. It enables proactive decision making, enhances operational efficiency, and drives continuous improvement initiatives.

2.2. Improving the supply of products and services

Some strategies that can be considered for this purpose are:

Design of Innovative Products/Services

The design of innovative products/services involves incorporating new ideas, features, and functionalities to create offerings that stand out in the market. It drives technological innovation by pushing boundaries, exploring new technologies, and addressing unmet customer needs.

Technological innovation improves the supply of products and services by enabling companies to optimize their offerings based on customer preferences and behaviour. It allows for real-time feedback and data collection, enabling agile product development and customization. It also facilitates efficient inventory management and logistics, leading to improved supply chain operations.

Customization of Products/Services

Customization allows customers to personalize and tailor products/services according to their specific preferences and requirements. By integrating technology, companies can offer flexible configurations and options, enabling customers to create unique solutions.

Technological innovation improves the supply of products and services by enabling mass customization and efficient production of personalized

offerings. It optimizes manufacturing processes, reduces waste, and enables just-in-time production. It also facilitates real-time data exchange and feedback between customers and suppliers, leading to a more responsive and efficient supply chain.

Integration of Technology in Products/Services

Integrating technology in products/services involves leveraging advancements like IoT, AI, or connectivity to enhance functionality and performance. This innovation leads to smart, connected, and intelligent offerings that provide enhanced value and improved user experiences.

Technological innovation improves the supply of products and services by enabling the integration of smart manufacturing processes, IoT-enabled supply chain management, and real-time data analytics.

It enhances operational efficiency, enables predictive maintenance, and optimizes inventory management. It also enables remote monitoring and updates, reducing downtime and improving overall supply chain performance.

2.3. Improving customer experience

Some of the tools that can be considered for this purpose are:

Real-Time interaction

Enabling real-time communication channels such as live chat, video conferencing, and social media platforms to engage with customers instantly. Enhanced customer engagement through real-time conversations helps building stronger relationships and emotional connection with customers. Also, real-time interactions enable prompt resolutions and minimize customer wait time.

Multichannel Integration

Integrating various communication channels and touchpoints to create a seamless and consistent customer experience. In this way, from the customer point of view, they can interact with the company through their preferred channel, increasing satisfaction.

Digital Customer Experience

Creating a seamless and user-friendly digital customer experience through websites, mobile apps, and online platforms. This leads to an enhanced usability and ease of navigation: customers can effortlessly interact with digital interfaces, find what they need, and complete tasks smoothly.

Internet of Things (IoT) Integration

Leveraging IoT devices and sensors to gather customer data, provide personalized services, and enable smart interactions. With this, connected and intelligent products offer advanced features and functionalities, improving the overall experience.

3. How to adopt a technological innovation profile in the company

3.1. How to identify technological needs for innovation in SMEs

How could we identify the need for technology in an SME?

The business world is constantly growing and developing, and along with this process, technology is being incorporated in all fields as time goes by. It is also part of SMEs, which are faced with the need to adapt to these advances to stay in competition continuously, and especially at the time of WBO, where a change can lead to another to adapt to the great impact that are causing technological changes, maintain or increase their income.

It is necessary to evaluate if a new technology, product, service, or project is practical and achievable before starting the innovation process. It helps assess the potential benefits, costs, risks, and challenges of implementing the new solution and compare it with other possible options. It also provides valuable insights and recommendations for decision-making, planning, and execution.

By following these steps, SMEs and workers in the middle of a WBO process can thoroughly identify the need of technology and evaluate the feasibility of implementing a new technology, making informed decisions about its adoption:

- Stay updated

Be informed about the latest technological trends and advancements relevant to your industry or sector. This can be done by monitoring industry publications, attending conferences or webinars, and networking with

professionals in your field. Understanding emerging technologies and how they can be applied will help to identify opportunities for innovation.

- Assess the current company processes

Evaluate the existing processes and operations within the SME. Identify areas where technology could potentially improve efficiency or enhance customer experience. Look for tasks or activities that are time-consuming, error-prone, or resource-intensive, as these are potential areas where innovation can bring significant benefits.

- Evaluate the existing technologies in the company

Apart from evaluating the existing processes, also evaluate the technologies already implemented regarding production processes, communication, operations, organization, etc. Evaluate the compatibility of current technologies with emerging trends and assess whether they can support future growth. This could be done internally or externally through technology audits. This will help to identify gaps or areas where technology upgrades or investments are necessary with experts' support: technology consultants, industry experts, or innovation specialists who can provide insights and guidance specific to the industry and business needs.

- Engage employees and stakeholders

Assess the level of commitment the company and its professionals have towards technology implementation. Involve them at all levels of the organization in the innovation process. They often have valuable insights into areas that could be improved through technology. Encourage open communication and idea-sharing to gather suggestions and feedback. Additionally, consider involving key stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, or industry partners, to gain external perspectives on potential technological needs. This could also involve conducting market research, analysing customer feedback, or observing industry benchmarks to identify areas of improvement.

- **Prioritise**

Once you have identified potential technological needs, prioritise them based on their potential impact and feasibility. Develop an innovation roadmap that outlines the steps, timeline, and (material and staff) resources required to implement the identified technological solutions.

Consider factors such as budget, resource availability, and the organization's capacity to adopt and integrate new technologies.

Short Summary

Technological innovation can be internal or external. Internal innovation involves using the company's resources to develop new technologies and products, while external innovation involves acquiring technologies or products from other companies through alliances, mergers, or acquisitions.

There are different types of technological innovation. Incremental innovation focuses on making small improvements to existing products or services. Disruptive innovation creates new products or services that challenge the market. Radical innovation involves creating completely new products or services that are different from existing ones.

To adopt a technological innovation profile, companies can utilize various tools. These include process automation, digitization of information, data analysis, data-driven decision making, design of innovative products/services, customization, integration of technology, real-time interaction, multichannel integration, digital customer experience, and IoT integration.

There are several benefits of technological innovation, such as meeting consumer needs, making life easier, expanding product range, achieving better industry positions, and increasing sales. Assessing the feasibility of technological innovation is essential to evaluate potential benefits, costs, risks, and challenges before implementation. To assess feasibility, companies can evaluate existing technologies, filter necessary tools, assess commitment, identify risks and compliance, analyse marketing strategies, monitor document handling, observe administration processes, and identify areas for improvement.

By adopting a technological innovation profile and utilizing the appropriate tools, companies can improve their efficiency, enhance their product and service offerings, and gain a competitive edge in the market.

Tips

1. Show the major examples and types of technological innovation that are possible.
2. But also show that there are not only BigTech companies, and that the application of such an innovation to SMEs should be simplified according to an analysis of possibilities and resources.
3. Invite the opinion and support of experts (from major companies, technology, innovation, industry, or sector).
4. Emphasise the importance of develop a comprehensive implementation plan, including timelines, resources, and contingency plans.
5. Provide training and support to employees to ensure effective adoption and usage.

Table 1. Acronyms used

| ACRONYM | DESCRIPTION |
|---------|--|
| VET | Vocational Education and Training |
| WBO | Workers Buy Out |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IoT | Internet of Things |
| AI | Artificial Intelligence |
| SMES | Small and Medium-size Enterprises |
| AR | Augmented Reality |
| R&D | Research and Development |

Training Activities

Case Study: Zappar Ltd. – 90 minutes

Step 1 – Read the following Case Study

Company description

Zappar Limited is a British company started in 2011 and operating in the ICT sector. Born as a spin-off from Cambridge University (UK), it develops augmented reality (AR) applications for smartphones, tablets, and wearables.

With this technology, its offer is based on connecting digital contents to real images through a camera or head-mounted display, making the virtual elements part of the real world. Zappar is a free app for iOS and Android devices using AR. It allows the user to “zap” things in the real world and explore hidden virtual content, which brings things to life.

The company invested in becoming the market leader for a community of content creators, pioneering the development of market-leading tools that will enable both technically gifted and unskilled users to create their own AR contents. This online tool offers the simplest, most detailed, and cost-effective AR creation tool on the market for big corporates, small businesses, and individuals.

Innovation Strategy

Zappar recognized that their technology had the potential to overcome challenges faced by other augmented reality (AR) systems. To leverage this advantage, they chose to keep the technology proprietary and develop it internally. This decision allowed Zappar to advance their business model and expand beyond the entertainment industry to other markets.

They transitioned from a closed to an open business model, continually reinventing themselves.

Innovation Relevance

Initially, Zappar operated with a closed business model, resembling a traditional advertising agency, in the entertainment sector. However, as they ventured into different industries, they started involving customers from various sectors in product development. This led to revenue-sharing contracts and a shift towards a more open approach. With the development of the Zapcode Creator platform, Zappar aimed to democratize AR by allowing technically unskilled individuals to participate. Their ultimate goal is to create an ecosystem where Zappar's proprietary technology facilitates crowd-sourced AR operations worldwide.

Drivers

Zappar recognized the importance of business model innovation. Even after developing their technology, they continued to evolve and grow by adapting their business model. Their open innovation strategy was based on their proprietary enabling technology, with the intention of engaging a large user community and establishing Zapcode as an industry standard.

Barriers

Finding the right balance between internal R&D and external co-development can be a challenge, as demonstrated in the case. Zappar had to navigate the complexities of managing their internal research activities while collaborating with external partners.

Overall, Zappar's innovation strategy focused on leveraging their technology, engaging customers in product development, and transitioning to an open business model, positioning themselves as a central player in a democratized AR ecosystem.

Step 2 – Reflect on the following questions

Do you think this story has similarities with your company?

What are your drivers and barriers?

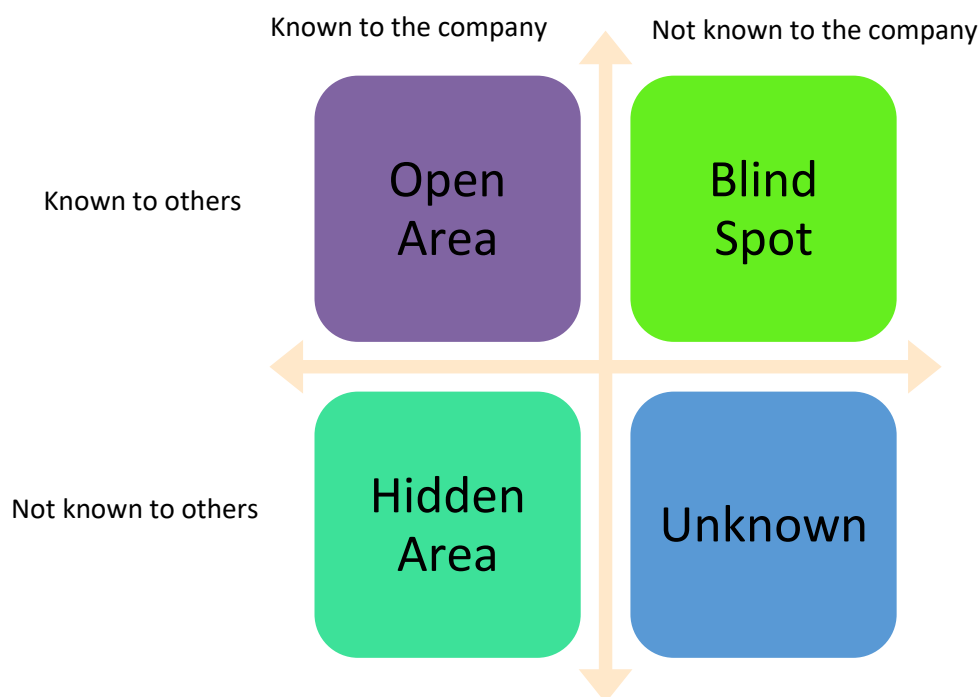
Company Johari Window – 30 minutes

Step 1 – What is the Johari Window?

The tool in question is known as the Johari Window after the name of its creators, psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham. The Johari Window is a tool from cognitive psychology.

Specifically, this model of analysis illustrates the process of communication and analyses the dynamics of relationships and self (or internal) analysis.

The theory is articulated through the concept of interpersonal space, which is divided into four areas (quadrants), defined by the information that is transmitted.



Step 2 – Our List

Make a list including 5 to 10 characteristics or products/services that define your company.

Step 3 – External List

According to your collaborators and customers feedback, generate a list of characteristics or products/services that define your company.

Step 4 – Build your window!

- Classify as OPEN AREA, those elements your company and others have identified in the different lists.
- Classify as BLIND SPOT, those that have been identified by others, but not by the company about itself.
- Classify as HIDDEN AREA those that the company recognise, but not others.
- The rest of the elements that do not fit into any category are left by discarding them in the UNKNOWN.

Checking the company Johari Window could make you reflect about the gaps between what the company offers and what the customers/collaborators expect. This could be a tool to start the inner analysis for setting goals and implementing technological changes in the company structure to improve its model.

Self-evaluation exercises

1. Which type of innovation involves making small improvements or additions to existing products, services, or processes?
 - a) Incremental innovation
 - b) Disruptive innovation
 - c) Radical innovation
 - d) Sustaining innovation

2. What is a key benefit of applying technological innovation in a company?
 - a) Increased market share
 - b) Decreased competition
 - c) Reduced costs
 - d) Maintaining the status quo

3. What is an important step in adopting a technological innovator profile in a company?
 - a) Avoiding collaboration with external partners
 - b) Maintaining a rigid and hierarchical organizational structure
 - c) Promoting a culture of experimentation and creativity
 - d) Focusing solely on sustaining innovation

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