

Managing the Fuzzy Front-End of Innovation

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Introduction

One of the authors' main motivations to publish this book is the need to raise the success rate of innovation projects undertaken by enterprises and organizations.

The emphasis placed by the authors in the fuzzy front-end of the innovation process is due to the fact that, within their experiences in the different fields of economic activity, they have repeatedly witnessed the decisive impact that this fuzzy front-end has in the fate and results of the innovation projects. When investing the necessary resources, using suitable human resources and promoting essential intangible capacities to cover the demands of this crucial period, it is possible to reduce the risk of failure of the innovation projects. The high rate of failure is not only related to the very nature of the innovation, which essentially means the attempt of something that has not been previously carried out. Many projects fail because of mistakes or deficiencies in the management of their front (early) phases, and these failings are often explained on one hand by the lack of analysis and poor planning, and on the other hand, by the insufficient use of management tools that can bridge knowledge, strategy and practices.

The two sections of this book pursue two main objectives: first, to deliver the reader the conceptual basis to understand the *why and how* of innovation management with a strict orientation towards market. Since an isolated application of methods and tools, without previously establishing a clear action line and without defining priorities, generally leads to realizing pointless efforts and incurring costs, which could be avoided. Both those who assume a leadership role in decision making and those who from their most specialized areas intervene in innovation projects, must understand innovation as a process incorporating multiple factors, areas and dimensions, and which implies certain complexities for the management and the employees. In this way, it is possible to count with the necessary elements to practice analysis and develop strategies. Based on this approach it is possible to begin with the implementation of tools, which allow materializing strategies.

Both the conceptual approach in the first section of the book, and the set of tools presented in the second section, arise from the practices of German companies and their successful innovation approaches.

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