

Author: Suneetha Moganti

Title of the Paper:

GAIN THE UNEXPECTED VALUE

Theme:

PROJECT MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP- LEVERAGING INDIA'S SKILLED POPULATION FOR COMPETITIVE EDGE

Keywords:

Cost effectiveness / Competitive Edge / Resource Utilization, PM best practices, Processes and Techniques, Innovation, Talent pool, Remote leadership for global projects, cross cultural teams

Abstract:

In today's rapidly changing world, every organization/system encourages all the employees/citizens to come up with ideas. Soon, there will be overwhelming number of ideas that add value to the business/country. It becomes challenging after "leave the harbor" phase due to the complexities associated with implementation and execution. In the present day corporate world ideas and resources are available across the corporation but the opportunities to leverage their skills across geographies and various business groups are extremely restrictive; a tool to collaborate and execute on the ideas becomes imperative.

This paper presents such a tool to connect and form a virtual team to execute the invaluable ideas that otherwise would find no staffing or funding. The tool ensures that the right resources are applied to the tasks at the right time optimizing the resource utilization and bringing tremendous value to the business. The opportunities to work beyond their daily jobs provide growth to the skilled force and further broaden their capability boundaries. This creates a win-win situation for all parties creating a more enjoyable work atmosphere. The tool to be presented has gained tremendous popularity within the corporation and has potential to be used by organizations that nurture innovation. It can as easily be applied at the national level where ideas can be gathered from anyone/anywhere and the execution can be carried out by individuals/groups with appropriate skills without any barriers.

Intent:

India's competitiveness has improved across the board, in particular business sophistication, and innovation. It has an opportunity to drive economic growth on the back of its rising working-age population. India risks this demographic opportunity if it cannot create quality employment opportunities at scale and train its growing workforce to excel in those jobs. With greater access to information and

growing aspirations among the nation's youth, the quality of opportunities that India provides will prove as crucial as the quantity. In the competitive world, conceiving ideas is one step and taking these ideas to execution is a huge challenge on its own. This paper presents such a tool to connect and form a virtual team to execute the invaluable ideas that otherwise would find no staffing or funding. It can as easily be applied at the national level where ideas can be gathered from anyone/anywhere and the execution can be carried out by leveraging India's skilled workforce without any barriers.

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Introduction

The paper covers few insights from Global Competitive Index report by economic forum and details on where South Asia stands in terms of competitive edge when compared to other regions of the world and where India stands when compared other countries in South Asian Region against the competitive influencers. It also describes from a PWC report on how the Working Age Group in India is when compared to other countries and indicates how it is expected to change in the next decade as a background. Further, it describes on the current challenges or barriers we are dealing with in taking the Ideation to next level. It talks about a tool to connect and form a virtual team to execute the invaluable ideas that otherwise would find no staffing or funding. The tool has gained great popularity within the corporation and has potential to be used by organizations that nurture innovation. In the same way, it can as easily be applied at the national level where ideas can be gathered from anyone/anywhere and the execution can be carried out by individuals/groups with appropriate skills without any barriers by leveraging the India's skilled population there by building the skills and capabilities necessary to drive

innovation. This will also avoid the nation's risk of stagnated talent. However, if India can create and build on such frame work utilizing the available capabilities for growth and to build new and innovative solutions, the opportunities, both at home and abroad, are limitless.

Competitive Index – Global, Regional, India

To understand where we stand in terms of the Competitive edge, let us examine few insights/highlights from “The Global competitiveness report 2016-2017” by World Economic Forum.

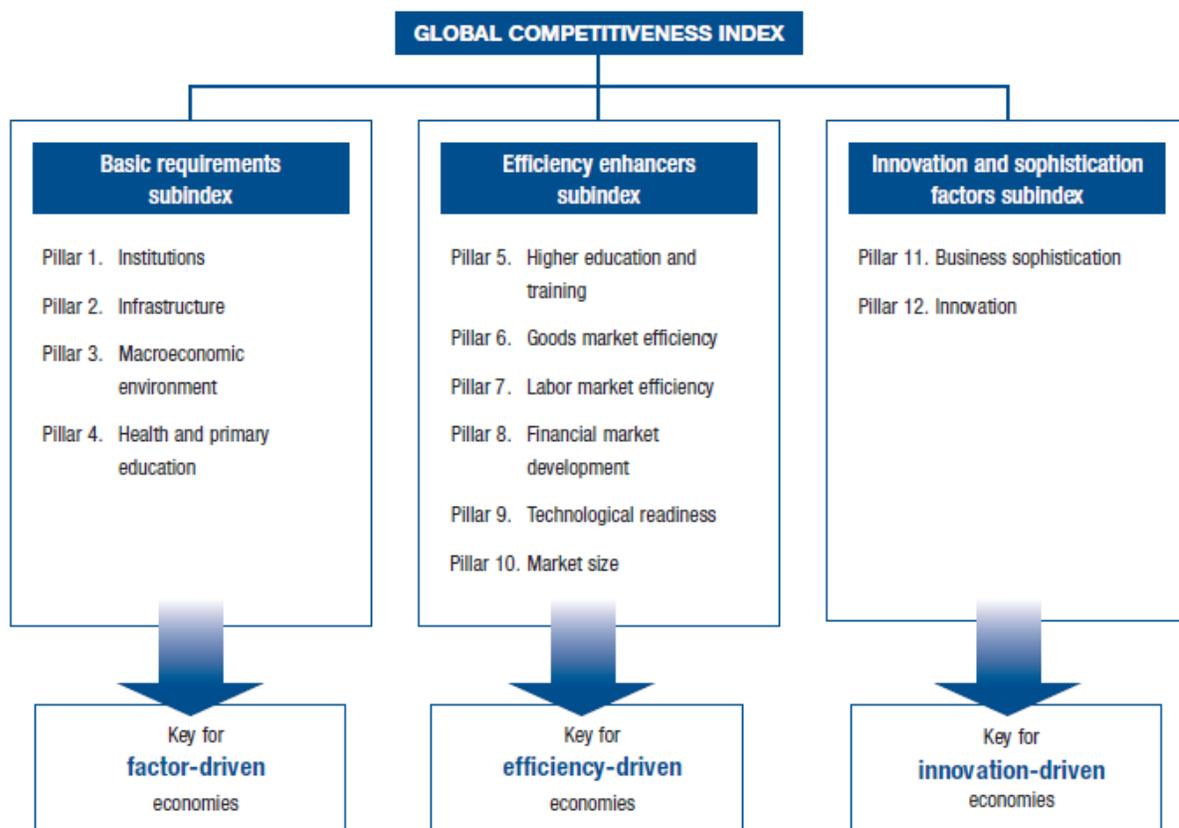


Figure 1 – Global Competitive Index – (Source: Economic Forum)

The Global competitive index is broadly divided and sub-indexed against Basic Requirements, Efficiency Enhancers and Innovation & Sophistication as shown in Figure 1. The competitive influencers were re-categorized against these sub-index groups are the key drivers factor driven economies, efficiency driven economies and innovation driven economies.

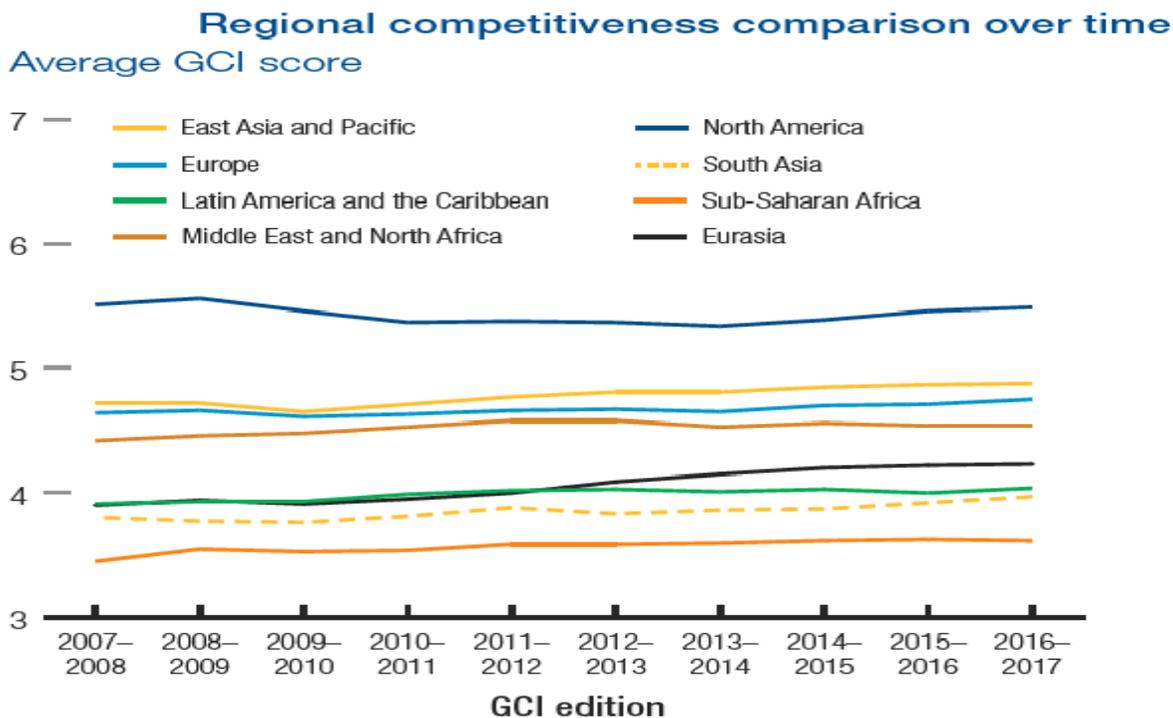


Figure 2 - Regional Competitive Index - (Source: Economic Forum)

If these key factors are examined at a regional level as per the trends in Figure 2, there are persistent competitiveness gaps between regions as measured by the GCI. The lack of convergence within and across regions represents an impediment to inclusive growth. It further explores the relationship between openness, innovation, and competitiveness in the context of cities' development and their integration into global value chains.

Performance overview

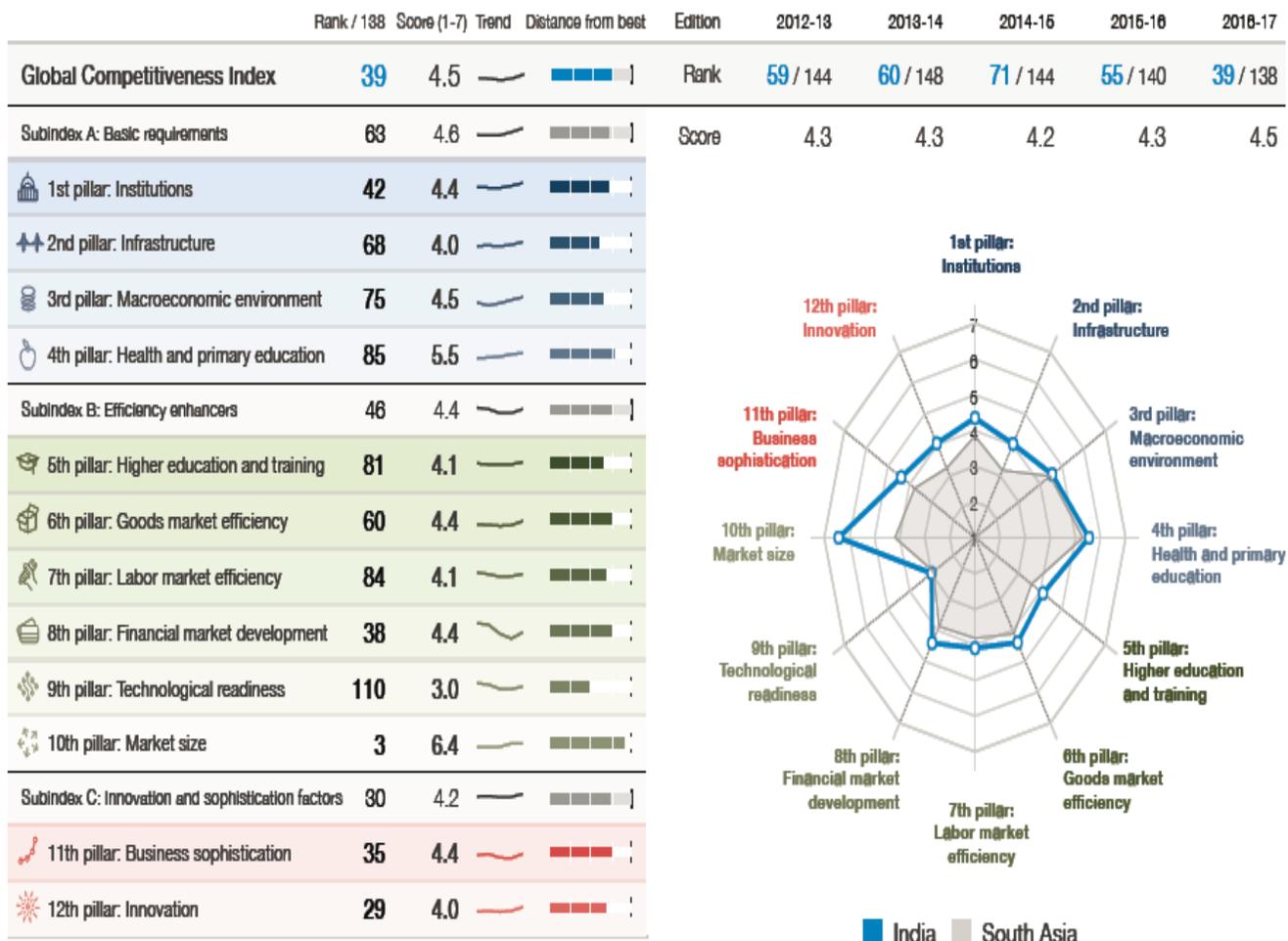


Figure 3 – India's Competitive Index overall Performance – (Source: Economic Forum Report)

India leads the group of South Asian economies, climbing to 39th/138 with improvements across the board, including institutions and infrastructure (42nd and 68th), which have been particularly important in increasing overall competitiveness. As per the trends shown in Figure 3, India climbs for the second year in a row, to 39th. It has a rise of 16 places in ranking which is largest this year when compared to previous year. India's competitiveness has improved across the board, in particular in goods market efficiency, business sophistication, and innovation. Improvement has been slow in recent years and further investment will be necessary, especially to connect rural areas and make sure they can equally benefit from and contribute to the country's development.

Working Age Population – India vs other countries

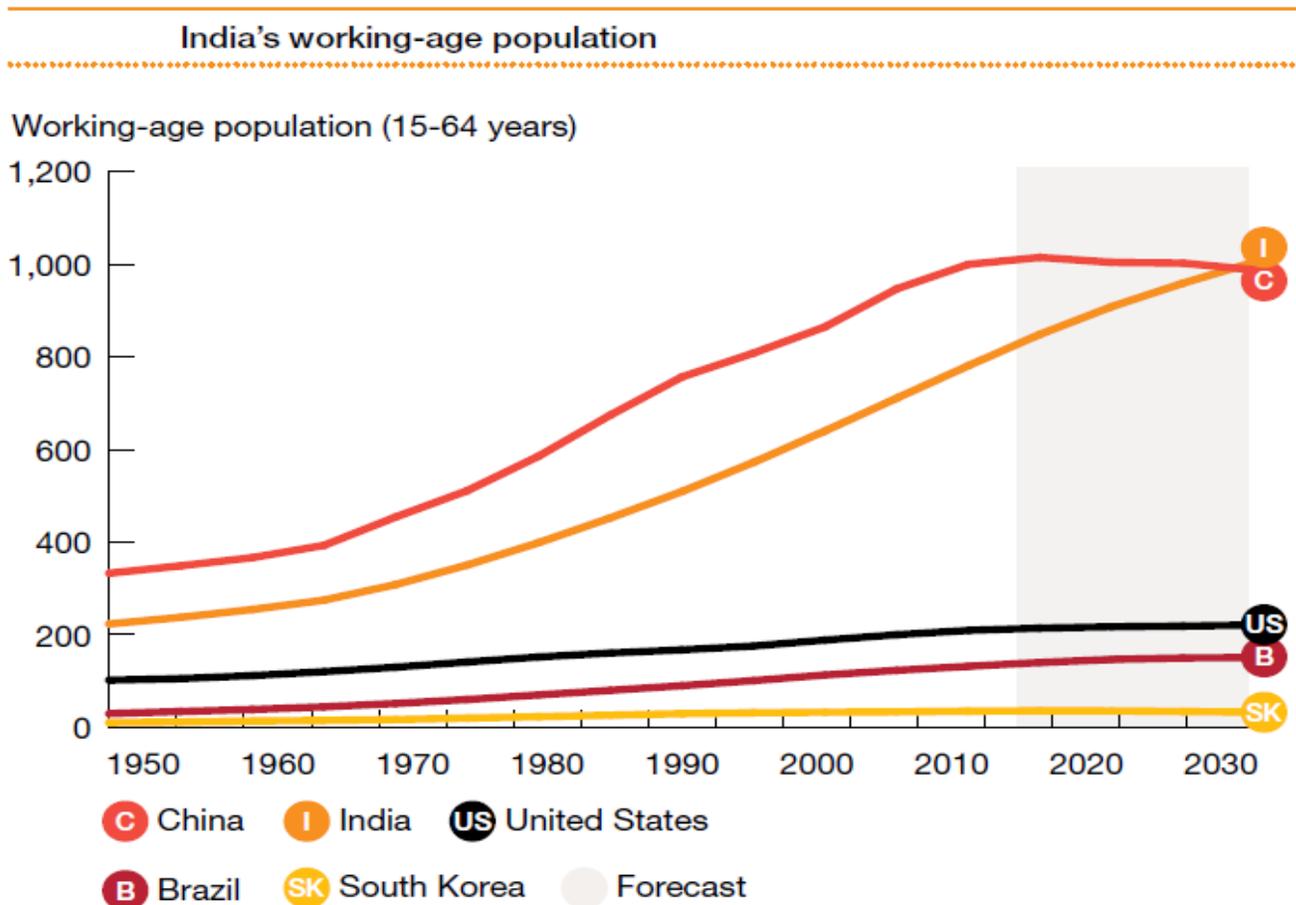


Figure 4 - India's working-age population – (Source: PWC Report)

India is a young country. As per the trend shown in Figure 4, nearly 65% of its population is younger than 35. It has an opportunity to drive economic growth on the back of its rising working-age population (those aged 15-64). This population has boasted a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 2% since 2000, a situation often referred to as India's demographic dividend. The nation is expected to add almost 10-12m people to its workforce every year over the next two decades, with the working-age population crossing the 1bn mark by 2030. As other growing economies confront a rapidly greying population, India's young population could fulfill demand for skilled workers worldwide. However, India risks squandering this demographic opportunity if it cannot create quality employment opportunities at scale and train its growing workforce to excel in those jobs. With greater access to information and growing aspirations among the nation's youth, the quality of employment that India provides will prove as crucial as the quantity.

Can ideation and innovation be managed?

Quite often "innovation" has been confused with "invention." "Invention" is usually best done by individuals. "Innovation" is generally best done by teams. Management and leadership go together as leadership is about "people." People usually contribute best when working as a "team." The manager's job is to lead and challenge each team member so that each member can perform to their maximum capability while working within the objectives.

If innovation is to be fostered in the conventional organization, "the role and practices of management require innovation as well. Innovation is directly proportional to the attitude of senior management. Without a corporate strategy to reach defined corporate goals, innovation will be misdirected and unguided. Innovations and inefficiencies are persistent anomalies in organizations. Actions of top managers should set the context, guide the process, clearly communicate and shield creative teams, appreciate distinctiveness in people and their thinking and welcome change. Out-sourcing of innovation to the selected group within the organization isolates those who may have the will to make the difference within their area of influence. Underlying principle for anyone in the sector is to innovate for Productivity, Optimize for Efficiency.

In the competitive world, conceiving ideas is one step and taking these ideas to execution is a huge challenge on its own. Obviously, without great ideas there's no execution. Creative people can come up with great ideas but they'll need management commitment for bringing their ideas to life. On the one hand, they should stimulate creativity and innovation by creating an environment for experimenting which also accepts failure. On the other hand, management needs to have a process in place to stimulate productive ideas and weed out the impractical ones. To be successful in this balancing act, management should be strongly involved.

Ideation to Innovation

Innovation is enabling the ideas. A collaborative approach should be used to make decisions and to move ideas from one stage to the next, connecting employees from different corners of the organization, as well as connecting to customers as needed. The biggest & maybe the most difficult part of this exercise is in the evaluation of ideas, creating a business case or funding and developing the idea. This is where the commitment from management can help.

The problem is that an organization's capacity for innovation stems from an innovation system which is a logical set of interdependent processes and structures that dictate how the company searches for novel problems and solutions, synthesizes ideas into a business concept and product designs, and selects

which projects get funded. Individual best practices involve trade-offs. And adopting a specific practice generally requires a host of complementary changes to the rest of the organization's innovation system. A company without an innovation strategy won't be able to make decisions and choose all the elements of the innovation system.

Without an innovation strategy, different departments/business units of an organization can easily wind up pursuing conflicting priorities, even if there's a clear business strategy. Sales representatives hear daily about the pressing needs of the biggest customers. Marketing may see opportunities to leverage the branding through complementary products or to expand market share through new channels. Business unit heads are focused on their target markets and they have their particular P&L pressures. R&D experts and engineers tend to see opportunities in new technologies. Diverse perspectives are critical to successful innovation. But without a strategy to integrate and align these perspectives around common priorities, the power of diversity is reduced or, worse, becomes self-defeating.

Productive Idea to Execution will need funding as a specific project. Lack of assurance makes it a question of survival for innovators. Innovations often become unstable because of funding. The course of innovation itself involves costs that may prove to be burdensome in hindsight.

Barriers to innovation can be divided into structural, process, competency and cultural barriers -most of which are associated with people. Once management systematically removes these barriers, the bottoms-up innovation should flourish. If innovation is strategically combined with cost effective initiatives, sustainability is achievable.

The below sections demonstrate on how we dealt with a few such barriers.

Integrating with the World

We discovered and redefined our boundaries. Emerging IT trends like crowd sourcing, computing, internet of things, open source development etc. They all convey one central message as Collaboration, Synergy, optimization of time and resources as the key requirements in the competitive field. A Quality Control analyst interested in Analysis and Research, Java resource interested to work on Machine Learning/ Artificial Intelligence; BPO resource interested in coding, Finance Manager interested in Project Management and many such interests outside the individual scope of job definition. We redefined our boundaries to discover our potential.

We created robust soft connectivity or an interface to build a platform that is essential to connect enthusiastic people and improve participation. Access to a qualified and talented work force, innovation and research and development policies are helpful to upgrading, digital infrastructure to deepen and broaden the connectivity.

Managing Complex Journey

Project Management in the form of network composition can indeed be Innovation Management!

However, this is not formally a line function but needs crucial line champions to be effective. Perhaps the championing mix changes with the innovation tasks identified as being worthy of pursuit identified by an Executive Board made up of the relevant "line champions" and chaired by the network Innovation Manager.

An organizational level online portal or an interface which provides you with the diversified opportunities across geographies, functions and technologies has been launched. On one hand this tool helped empower the organizational learning and development goals, organizational growth eco system. On the other hand, it has addressed the funding barrier to move the unattended productive ideas to the next level. This tool acts like an online exchange platform between the aspiring talent and the Innovation Managers as shown in the Figure - 5

Feature set of the online portal:

- Post Tasks & Notify People
- Search tasks & People
- Review Applicants & Assign Tasks
- Tracking & Reporting
- Build Work History along with feedback
- Rewards and Credits added to their Talent assessment
- Customization and MIS Reports.

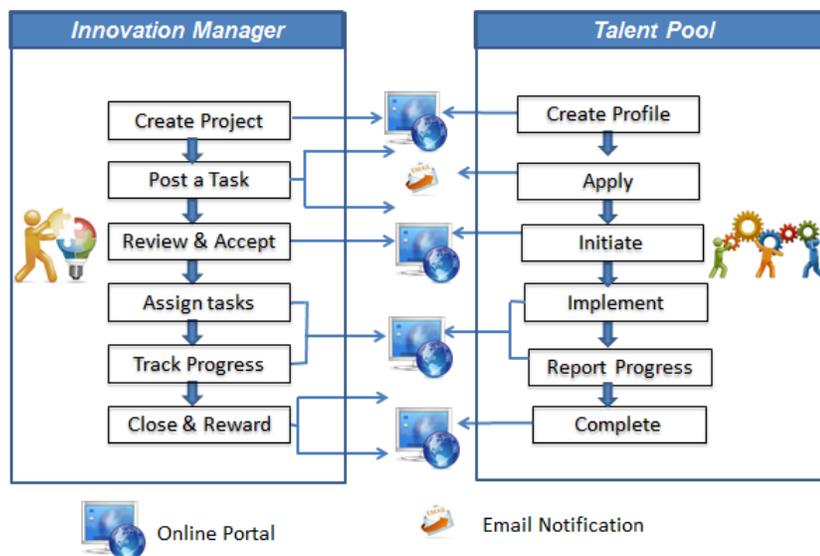


Figure 5 - Online Portal workflow

Innovation Manager's Role:

- Innovation Manager has to own the responsibility of providing any related permissions, software licenses, environment access, documentation, Software and other tools etc.
- If we have bigger tasks, create a new project, break into smaller tasks and link the tasks to the project created so that it would be easy to track.
- Review the applicants and assign it to the right resource to the task.
- Progress on the allocated task should be tracked, reviewed and updated in the portal regularly; responsibility lies with both the Innovation Manager and the Task Seeker.
- Task should be closed once the task is completed.
- Feedback should be provided and awarded with the credits as per the policy.
- In case of Duplicate assignment of any task, credits to be awarded to both of the task seekers.
- MIS Reports can be viewed by the Senior Management Team Only

Talent Pool / Task Seeker's Role:

- He or she should indicate the hours available per day
- Title of the Task seeker could be something like Developer, Business Analyst, Reviewer, Tech writer, Tester, Manager, Designer, UI expert, etc. as applicable
- Task seeker can subscribe for any technology/product/business irrespective of the knowledge on the same to check receive notifications for tasks posted in the areas interested.
- Utkarsh is also not intended for any Pre/Post Task activities like maintenance, follow up etc.
- Progress on the allocated task should be tracked, reviewed and updated in the portal regularly responsibility lies with both the Innovation Manager and the Task seeker.
- Task should be closed once the task is completed.
- In case of Duplicate assignment of any task, credits will be awarded to both the task seekers.

Surviving the End of Funding

- This tool will help in many ways to overcome the funding barrier for the unattended productive ideas or business cases.
- Creation of on-demand workforce : Scarcity vs. Abundance
- Tap Unutilized Capacity across Projects & Effectively Utilize the Potential of Enthusiastic Associates
- Build a virtual team for Parallel Execution
- Creation/Utilization of Talent in an Optimum way
- Engaged and Experienced Talent

- Cost Effective Avenue

Dealing with young Talent with raising expectations

- Broadening Opportunities
- Building new networks with other Teams.
- Upgrade Skills there by Creating a Competitive/Collaborative Landscape.
- Nurture the Culture of Freelancing/Cross Contribution in BR.
- Transparent Platform to Showcase their abilities

The development of the above described online portal itself is a classic use case in itself. The idea has been conceived and discussed with the senior executive board. This has been approved as a productive idea and is taken up by an Innovation Manager. Innovation Manager formed a virtual team to design, develop, test and get this live. This has been achieved within 6 weeks and every one contributed absolutely out of their interest and outside their daily job capacity. Since then more than 100 tasks were posted and executed using this portal.

Hidden Challenges

- More Promotion & Awareness is required
- Adoption at all levels
- More Attractive Credits policy
- Differentiation and Significant Recognition for the participants

Conclusion

National Skill Development Corporation has a website which invites ideas from any one. It hosts information on innovative solutions, practices, models and other relevant research in the skill development space. These can be used by practitioners, Government agencies, policy makers, corporates and other stakeholders that contribute to this growing and vibrant ecosystem. The idea is to promote the inclusive innovation. By implementing the above concept or the tool, we can provide access to the qualified and talented work force, where we can form virtual teams and work towards the implementation of the idea with in each sector and post the results broadly. Innovators are ready for the challenge but without building the skills and capabilities necessary to drive innovation, the nation risks stagnation. However, if India can create capabilities for growth and new solutions, the opportunities, both at home and abroad, are limitless. We can leverage the India's skilled workforce for attaining a competitive edge. In this competitive world, we can get the unattended productive ideas to execution while providing the opportunities to work beyond their daily jobs enables growth to the skilled force and further broaden their capability boundaries. Innovation Managers play a key role in getting the right talent at the right place to derive the UNEXPECTED VALUE out of the collaborative virtual teams.

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