EXPERIENCES WITH IDEA-PROMOTING INITIATIVES – WHY THEY DON'T ALWAYS WORK

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ABSTRACT
In new product development, a central activity is to provide new ideas. Over the last decades, industrial practice has provided experience with stimulating employee creativity and establishing idea-promoting initiatives. Such initiatives are often labeled Idea Management – a research field of growing interest. In this paper, I examine three different idea-promoting initiatives that were carried out in Grundfos, a leading pump manufacturer. In the analysis, I address the understandings of idea work that are inscribed in the initiatives, and the role these initiatives play in the organization with respect to idea work. Furthermore, I look into what makes these initiatives 'work' or 'not work'. The analysis is based on an in-depth case study made in Grundfos based on 40 interviews with R&D professionals and managers. The managerial implications of the study are that managers should be aware of the understandings of idea work that are inscribed in the idea-promoting initiatives, since, in order to work, they must fit to some extent with the understandings embedded in practice.

Keywords: idea work, idea management, change programs, case study, socio-technical

1 INTRODUCTION
In 1880, a wooden box was placed on a wall at the William Denny & Brothers shipyard in Scotland for collecting ideas from employees. It was the first of its kind, but ever since then, companies have implemented many similar concepts in order to tap great ideas from employees. Working with ideas, e.g. generating, developing and maturing them, is an essential undertaking and starting point for companies' innovation activities and is often approached in various ways in product development organizations. Some companies benefit from formal idea management systems, whereas others rely on more informal processes and networking among employees [1]. Although research and reports on best practice do exist, especially regarding IT-based idea-suggestion systems, making the concepts work in practice can still be a challenge. I have observed and discussed this with a number of Danish product development companies.
In this paper, I examine one company's experiences with a selection of such concepts. This is done in order to analyze why some concepts are immediately welcomed and implemented in daily practice, whereas others are rejected or only partly accepted.
The company under examination is Grundfos, a global enterprise that develops and manufactures a wide range of pumps for domestic and industrial uses. With increased attention from top management, Grundfos has over the last two decades carried out a series of initiatives aimed at stimulating and supporting idea work. The initiatives range from the global, in that they address the whole organization, to the local, which only affect a selected group of employees. The concepts examined here are: the Idea Bank – an IT-based suggestion system to which employees can submit their ideas; the Research & Technology Playground – a forum where resources and department time can be granted to employees who have a technical idea they would like to develop; and Innovation Intent – an innovation vision that should function as a guiding star for future idea work at Grundfos.
The paper is organized as follows: First, I introduce my research question and methodology. Then, I present two theories within change management and social construction of technology in order to characterize and analyze the three selected idea-promoting initiatives carried out at Grundfos. This is followed by a description of Grundfos and its general history with idea-promoting initiatives and then by an analysis of the three selected initiatives. Finally, the discussion and managerial implications are presented.

2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

The research documented in this paper is conducted as a part of my PhD project, which is carried out in collaboration with Grundfos. The overall theme for the PhD project is socio-technical and organizational dimensions in the early phases of idea work in product development. The empirical data used in the project is mainly obtained through qualitative interviews with Grundfos' organizational members engaged in research and technology, product and business development, as well as marketing and human resources. Reading through the transcribed interviews made it apparent that an ongoing theme was what I have labeled 'idea-promoting initiatives', which are initiatives implemented at Grundfos in order to stimulate, support and steer ideas and the work with them. This observation has led me to pose the following research question to be examined in this paper: What makes an idea-promoting initiative 'work' or 'not work'? In order to elaborate on this main research question, two further questions are posed: What understanding of idea work is inscribed in the different idea-promoting initiatives? And what role do the different idea-promoting initiatives play with respect to idea work? I answer these questions partly through a literature study, which helps establish the analytical context and criteria for analyzing the understanding of idea work and the role and dissemination of the different idea-promoting initiatives; and partly through a case study [2] I have conducted on idea work at Grundfos, which provides the empirical data for the analysis.

The forty interviews used as empirical data in this paper lasted from 42-71 minutes, were audio recorded, and then transcribed. The interview format was semi-structured, leaving room for the interviewees to describe what they felt was important with respect to the case in question. Twenty-nine of the interviews addressed 'general thoughts on idea work', and the interview questions focused on finding specific examples of ideas and the work with them, identifying the 'channels' ideas can be 'worked' through in the organization, and identifying idea-promoting initiatives. Eleven interviews addressed 'Innovation Intent' – Grundfos' innovation vision. The interview questions in this case focused on how Innovation Intent was initiated and implemented, by whom, and what role it plays in the daily work with ideas. In both cases, interviewees were selected partly by snowball sampling [3] (i.e. interviewees were asked to recommend new, relevant interviewees), and partly by examining the organizational chart and ensuring that a representative cross-section of the R&D organization was included. Interviews were conducted only in the Danish R&D organization. Coding the interviews was done manually in three steps: first step was observing that idea-promoting initiatives are interrelated with idea work; second step was to mark every time such an initiative was mentioned in the interviews; and third step was to categorize the different statements about the different initiatives. The coding was based on the principles of grounded theory [4], but the interpretation of the data was also guided by the theories presented in the next section.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To examine Grundfos' idea-promoting initiatives, I have applied two theories within change management and social construction of technology. These theories establish the analytical context and criteria for analyzing the understanding of idea work and the role and dissemination of the three selected idea-promoting initiatives at Grundfos.

Influencing employee creativity and productivity by establishing organizational procedures and structures is widely known across a range of disciplines in organizations, e.g. in production, product development and finance. Besides restructuring the overall organizational set-up of a company, the use of management concepts can also stir up things. Lean, Business Excellence and TQM are well-known examples of such management concepts, which act as recipes for achieving success in business. Historically, these management concepts can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century with Taylor's "The Principles of Scientific Management" [5], a change program addressing productivity and efficiency of manufacturing processes. Many new concepts have since sprung from manufacturing processes, and are now extended to also encompass many other processes such as product development and innovation processes. Examples of concepts in this field are Integrated Product Development [6], Concurrent Engineering, Lean Innovation and Idea Management.

In the context of this paper, I am especially interested in Idea Management. Idea Management aims at organizing and managing the generation, selection, and implementation of ideas for commercial use through a structured and controlled process. Many different tools exist to support this process, e.g. IT-based suggestion systems, idea competitions and creativity courses. No matter whether a management concept aims at improving manufacturing processes or product development activities, it is a program

that facilitates change; and management concepts comprise more than neutral diagnosis and tools. Kamp et al. [7] operate with three different analytical perspectives on change processes: change as a political process, a symbolic process, and a learning process.
In the political perspective, the management concept is viewed as a political program that is biased with respect to preference structures, how the future of the company is viewed, and what actors are attributed privileged roles. Focus is on how this program is negotiated in an attempt to extend and maintain its legitimacy and create support in the organization.
In the symbolic perspective, management concepts are carriers of symbolic meanings and can act as branding both internally in the company and to the outside world. The 'symbolic' concepts offer a new language for the organizational actors and give them an opportunity to associate themselves with the change process by letting them use the new language.
In the learning perspective, the management concept is viewed as an opportunity to learn. Focus is on how the organization functions as a learning environment. In order for the company to learn, participation from a large group of actors is required. They need to take ownership of the process. These three perspectives represent different takes on change processes and illuminate their different aspects and natures.
In the analysis of Grundfos' idea-promoting initiatives, presented after the case study, Kamp et al.'s analytical perspectives are used to characterize the understanding of idea work, which is inscribed in the initiatives.
To better understand how the management concepts' practical functions, social meanings and cultural identity are constructed – or more briefly, what understanding of idea work is inscribed in the different initiatives – a script analysis can be helpful. A script is the materialization of the designer's more or less informed presumptions, visions and predictions about the relations between the artifact and the human actors surrounding it [8]. Akrich [9] argues that "…competencies are distributed in the script of the technical object". If we read 'management concept' instead of 'technical object', it would mean that some decisions and actions are fixed by the management concept, whereas others are left to the initiative of human actors. Continuing with Akrich: "Technical objects define actors, the space in which they move, and ways in which they interact". Thus, the present construction of a management concept has consequences for how the change process is understood in the organization, how it is planned for, what actors are expected to take part, and what actors are excluded. In this line of socio-technical reasoning, it can be argued that whether a management concept is received and integrated successfully in an organization or not, and whether it 'works' as intended, depend on what constrains are inscribed into it – for example, does it appeal to those it is intended for? Does it let key players play their role? Or does it manage to configure a network that brings together relevant actors, whether human or non-human? De-scription is the analytical notion for how the users read or use the management concept in practice. To analyze what kind of understanding of idea work is inscribed in the different initiatives and what role the initiatives play, I use Akrich's script analysis.

4 CASE STUDY

Over the years Grundfos has carried out a wide range of different change programs to address either the whole organization or parts of it. In the following, I describe the initiatives carried out over the last two decades in Grundfos that are relevant to work with ideas in a technology and product development context. Before going into detail with these initiatives, I present a brief introduction to Grundfos and the broader organizational context within which these initiatives should be understood.

4.1 Grundfos and the organizational context

The starting point for Grundfos as a pump developing and manufacturing company was in 1945, when Poul Due Jensen, the founder, received a request from a local farmer to install an automatic water board. This demanded an efficient pump, which he could not find anywhere. So he began designing the pump himself, a characteristic that has followed the company ever since – *we'll do it ourselves*. Since then, Grundfos has developed and produced many different kinds of pumps for both commercial and industrial uses and has grown into a company with around 16,000 employees, an annual production of more than 16 million pump units, a net turnover of €2275m, and profit before taxes of €116m in 2009. Grundfos is represented by 82 companies in 45 countries. This makes it one of the world's leading pump manufactures in business today. Of the 16,000 people employed in Grundfos, around 500 are engaged in research and technology, product, and business development, in a so-called

Business Development Center. Actually, this could be said to be a misleading label since technological development or technological 'push' has been by far the most dominant activity in most parts of Grundfos' innovation history. Grundfos' greatest example of technology push was integrating the frequency converter with the motor and pump in the 1980s by using smart power chips. This set a trend in the whole industry. However, Grundfos is currently facing a period of transition, moving from being a technology-centered company towards a better balance between technology and market/business development. This also means that many different initiatives have been taken during the last couple of years in order to accommodate future challenges, such as increased competition and globalization. Among other things, a large restructuring of the organization was implemented during 2008, and Innovation Intent was launched. Although for many years Grundfos has emphasized technological development and leadership, it has also been aware that collaboration across the organization involving the market-side was necessary. To really understand Grundfos and its context, it is important to understand the legacy of Poul Due Jensen and the current role of Niels Due Jensen, the founder's son, who took over management as Group President after his father's death in 1977. Niels Due Jensen worked as Group President for 25 years, and functions as Group Chairman today. The welcome brochure from Grundfos' internal museum states that "*[the first pump] became a norm for Poul Due Jensen's work and the requirements he gave himself and his employees: A new product can only be justified if it is different and better*". And the brochure continues: "*Poul Due Jensen was however, not a man who was satisfied with a great result: The pump had to be improved further […]*". But Poul Due Jensen also encouraged collaboration among his employees. His motto was: "*There is not much a single person can accomplish alone; but there are no limits for what several people working together can accomplish*". And this still applies. Only a few people present in the Business Development organization today have experienced working with Poul Due Jensen, but many of today's employees have been in Grundfos for many years and have experienced Niels Due Jensen's engagement in development activities and his visionary mindset: "*If he had not done these things and said this is how it should be, then we would not have had the products we have today. We would not have had a three inch submersible pump. We would not have a sensor factory. Then we would have had the same products as everyone else. […] We should just be thankful that somebody has stepped forward and said; 'we shall have this', and then forced it through*" (Product developer 1). Many similar statements can be found in the interview material, and they bare witness that even though Niels Due Jensen is no longer formally engaged in the daily routines at Grundfos, he still plays an important role with respect to innovation activities and *"is contributing to keep a high level of ambition"* (Product developer 2). Niels Due Jensen is not alone however in encouraging innovative activity. Top management is also engaged in selected activities in the R&D organization and does not focus only on economic concerns. *"It is easier to get something off the ground here […] and it is very motivating that there is an interest in the things you work with"* (Product developer 3). In general, working with ideas and developing new technologies and trendsetting products are the life blood of Grundfos and a core activity for the R&D professionals.

4.2 Idea-promoting initiatives – an overview

Over the years, the quest for staying innovative has resulted in a series of different idea-promoting initiatives. The initiatives described in the following were brought to my attention in two ways; they were either carried out while I was in the organization, or the interviewees mentioned them in the interviews. Table 1 presents an overview of the different idea-promoting initiatives. The initiatives in Table 1 differ in scope, but overall they aim either to gather and develop ideas, stimulate creativity or strategically steer innovation activities. They also differ in relation to who in the organization is expected to engage in the different initiatives, it varies from specific groups to the whole organization. Despite that Grundfos seems to be a large hierarchy, studying the organizational chart, distance from top to bottom in the R&D organization is not that big in practice. This means that there is room for employees to take initiatives on their own as one did when he established an Innovation Day. And in this line initiatives can originate from many different persons and departments. The last column of Table 1 shows whether the initiative is still running.

It is apparent that a lot of the initiatives were taken during 2006. The main reason for this is that 2006 was announced to be Innovation Year by Top Management. This included an enhanced focus on innovation and brought along a definition of innovation: innovation = creativity x successful implementation. "*It was a global initiative focusing on strengthening a common understanding of*

what innovation means at Grundfos and how we as an organization may work determinedly to become even more innovative" (Annual Report 2006).

Table 1. Overview of idea promoting initiatives in Grundfos

Year	Initiative	Aim	Target	Originator	Running
1994	**Speed up the Grundfos Wheel**	Generate ideas to continuously improve Grundfos	Everyone at Grundfos	Top Management	No
1990's	**Idea Bank**	Gather and evaluating ideas	Everyone at Grundfos	Different managers over the years	Yes
2000-2007	**Creative@work**	Stimulate creativity and challenge habitual thinking	R&D, especially project teams	Department Managers, employees and IDEO	No
2006	**The Research &Technology Playground**	Clarify ideas and/or prepare ideas for inclusion in the Technology Planning process	R&D, especially those working with new technologies	R&T Management	Yes
2006	**Grundfos Challenge**	Students are challenged to come up with solutions to real-life business cases	Students of economics and engineering	Top Management and employees	Yes
2000	**Idea Catalogue**	Gather ideas in one document for later use	R&D	Individuals in different departments	Sometimes
2000's	**Creativity Room**	Stimulate creativity	R&D	N/A	Yes
2006	**Innovation Year**	Put innovation explicitly on the company agenda	Everyone at Grundfos	Top Management	No
2006	Innovation Model	Help discipline work with ideas	Everyone at Grundfos	Working group in Grundfos and consultancy firm	Yes
2006	Innovation Piano	Challenge habitual thinking – innovation is more than product innovation	Everyone at Grundfos	Consultancy firm	Yes
2005-2007	Innovation Day	Presenting and selecting ideas	Primarily R&D	Concept Manager	No
2006	Innovation Project Competition	Make different and more radical innovation projects	Everyone at Grundfos	Top Management	No
2008	**Innovation Intent**	Innovation Vision reaching for 2025	Everyone at Grundfos	Top Management	Yes
2008	Grundfos Talents	Finding and developing talents to realize Innovation Intent	Chosen Grundfos employees	Top Management and HR Management	Yes

As Table 1 shows, a range of different initiatives were carried out under the heading Innovation Year. To boost innovation activities, an Innovation Project Competition was held involving the whole organization worldwide. Some interviewees in my interview material stated that the biggest problem with the competition was that it lacked guidance. It was not clear what sorts of ideas management was interested in. Some of the interviewees also mentioned that it was this lack of guidance that lead to work with Innovation Intent, which should work as a guiding star for future innovation efforts at Grundfos.

5 ANALYSIS

I have chosen three of the idea-promoting initiatives presented in Table 1 for further analysis. These are the Idea Bank, R&T Playground, and Innovation Intent.

The Idea Bank is Grundfos' 'problem child' – it has existed for years but has never really become rooted in the organization and has been changed many times. But it has managed to survive changes in scope, administration, management and anchoring in the organization. This is also the reason I have chosen it for further analysis, along with the fact that idea suggestion systems are often considered to be one of the core activities in Idea Management and are widely studied in academia. Unlike the Idea Bank, the existence of the R&T Playground has been less turbulent and, according to Grundfos, more successful with respect to outcomes. Having chosen the Idea Bank, it is therefore interesting to examine what the R&T Playground is capable of that the Idea Bank is not. Many expectations rest on

the shoulders of Innovation Intent. It has been heavily promoted worldwide in the organization. Many hope that Innovation Intent and the tools it brings along will help steer future idea work. Innovation Intent is Grundfos' latest initiative, and it is much more wide-ranging and ambitious than previous initiatives. It can be interesting to examine whether Grundfos, in its launching of Innovation Intent, has learned from previous experiences and incorporated these lessons into Innovation Intent.

5.1 The Idea Bank

Employees worldwide have access to the Idea Bank through the intranet. By pushing the button 'submit idea', employees are led to a form they can fill in with details about their ideas. The ideas are screened by a screening board consisting of four persons in R&D. If the idea seems promising but needs more development, a facilitator can help improve the idea. In addition to the screening board, a day-to-day manager and a secretary are assigned to take care of the Idea Bank's daily administration. The executive management is carried out by the Idea Bank board, consisting of six persons, also within R&D, who are entitled to make decisions regarding the ideas and determine which ones should be considered for implementation in the technology or product planning process.

5.1.1 Inscription

The political understanding [7] of idea work inscribed in the Idea Bank considers ideas as fixed entities 'out there', ready for implementation. The main challenge in staying innovative seems to be to gather as many ideas as possible and thus avoid missing any promising opportunities. Ideas can come from anywhere – perhaps the next promising innovation is currently lying in the drawer of an engineer, on a manager's notepad, a or in the head of a salesman. In the symbolic perspective [7], the Idea Bank presents idea work as a democratic process, as everyone in the organization is welcome to submit their ideas. On the surface, this signals that working with ideas is not only confined to the R&D professionals but is truly a cross-organizational matter. To the outside world, it signals an 'open' organization that is up-to-date with the current trends in best product development practice. In the learning perspective [7], the Idea Bank offers an internal learning process, as facilitators exchange knowledge with the idea-submitters and collaborate in the process of improving the ideas. The characteristics just described coincide with the understanding of idea work inscribed by the Idea Bank's 'designer', but in practice, the concept of the Idea Bank is read quite differently by its users.

5.1.2 De-scription

R&D professionals consider work with ideas to be hard work. Ideas do not just pop up while taking a shower, or if they do, it is a result of a longer process of working with a specific problem, a new material or maybe a customer. For some R&D professionals, their ideas are too valuable to trust to the Idea Bank, since they view working with ideas as a core activity in development work. In the interview material, the Idea Bank is referred to as the 'parking lot', 'the graveyard', and 'the garbage bin', terms that suggest that ideas rarely come further after they have been submitted. *"The Idea Bank is roughly speaking a place where you can park your ideas and hopefully get others to continue work with them"* (Product developer 4). The Idea Bank is viewed by many as one of the last opportunities to get an idea through the organizational system. Many prefer to mobilize support for an idea through their own network or use alternative channels. According to R&D professionals' view, the main challenge for staying innovative is not how many ideas can be collected, but rather how to select the 'right' ideas. This is a challenge the Idea Bank is not designed to meet. In practice, ideas are submitted to the Idea Bank from many different Grundfos sites, not only R&D; however, since it is only R&D professionals who are represented in the management of the Idea Bank, it is inevitably the R&D agenda that decides what a good idea is for Grundfos. Therefore, the evaluation process is not very democratic.

Besides facilitating an internal learning process for idea-submitters by offering help to further develop their ideas, the Idea Bank also contributes to an organizational learning process. Currently, the Idea Bank board is discussing the future form of the Idea Bank, because its current scope and anchoring in the organization do not fit the future challenges Grundfos will face. But several attempts have already been made to adjust the Idea Bank and make it relevant for employees. One attempt was to call for ideas or solutions to specific problems. This was since modified to accommodate specific challenges identified by Innovation Intent. The possibility for facilitators to help idea-submitters develop their ideas was also incorporated along the way, since it was a problem that some ideas seemed promising

but lacked a profound basis for deciding to adopt them. Giving the Idea Bank a catchy name was also tried. Periodically, campaigns were carried out to increase focus on the Idea Bank, and then there have been several changes in management structure and the persons involved. However, the set-up does still not seem to accommodate the practices of idea work at Grundfos. Looking at the above 'de-scription', it is clear that the Idea Bank has not played the role intended for it, or at least only partially. It has neither worked as a tool for providing significant new ideas, nor as a tool R&D professionals prefer to use in their work with ideas. In the R&D context, the Idea Bank, then, does not play an important role with respect to stimulating idea work. However, it should perhaps not be written off totally, since it has a symbolic effect in the rest of the organization and the outside world.

5.2 The R&T Playground

The Research and Technology Playground is: "*a frame which, without unnecessary bureaucracy, must enable and render visible fast settlements of non-planned ideas concerning realization of "Quick-wins" as well as prepare ideas for inclusion in the Technology Planning by making initial settlements. The spirit is that the idea maker himself uses some of his department time to work with the settlement and/or put together a small team of colleagues*" (Grundfos intranet). The Playground is primarily targeted those R&D professionals who engage in research and technology development activities, and who have an idea that requires resources for further development. The Playground is managed by the Technology Manager, who grants the necessary resources. No specific amount of money is set. Resources are given as needed, but if the project evolves positively, the context within which it should proceed is negotiated. The best ideas in the Playground have been rewarded some years with a prize.

5.2.1 Inscription

The political [7] understanding of idea work inscribed in the Playground is that idea work needs a driver or champion who cares about the idea and is interested in developing it. Furthermore, developing ideas requires resources and colleagues to discuss them with. Symbolically [7], the Playground signals that it is legitimate to work with your own ideas, even if you are currently assigned to other development or research projects. Handing out rewards makes it even more legitimate, and is used as a means to encourage others to submit ideas. In a learning perspective [7], the name Playground indicates that this is a place where you can try things out and experiment with your ideas. If your idea succeeds, Grundfos will gain some quick-wins, and if the idea fails, Grundfos has still learned something, since in this specific area, clarification and insights have been gained.

5.2.2 De-scription

In the interview material, R&D professionals emphasize that in order to develop an idea and get the organization to accept it in practice, it is important to discuss it with colleagues, make it tangible through drawings or mock-ups, and mobilize support among decision makers. The Playground accommodates this process, because when Playground first accepts the idea, it is given a project number, which secures resources for further development, thus making it easier to build prototypes and demonstrate the principle of the idea. The project number makes it possible to book equipment and personnel in the workshop, and makes the department manager aware that the project is running. In practice, how fast a Playground project is carried out varies, since it is an activity that does not have the primary focus accorded to the 'official' development projects to which R&D professionals are assigned. Some projects are never completed, but there is general satisfaction with those ideas that do reach conclusion, useable or not, because clarification is achieved. Examples also exist of ideas that have turned into 'official' projects or are incorporated in existing ones. A good match exists between the understanding of idea work inscribed in the Playground and the idea work carried out in practice in R&D. It can be argued that the way of working with ideas – discussing with colleagues, building mock-ups and mobilizing support – has been institutionalized in the Playground, thus the de-scription matches the inscription. The Playground does play a role in stimulating idea work, especially by making it legitimate for R&D professionals to work with their own ideas. The question is whether those using the Playground would have found the means to work with their ideas anyway, if the Playground did not exist. "*It is for most parts a psychological thing, because this [work with your own ideas] you could have done always. This [the Playground] is just a name attached; engineers have always worked with their own ideas in every innovative company. The special thing here [at Grundfos] is that we accept it"* (Research and Technology Manager). Because the design of the

Playground fits very well with the existing practices of idea work at Grundfos, its contribution to the overall organizational learning process about how to facilitate idea work is limited. However, it has been discussed whether a similar initiative should be established in one of the business divisions. During the interviews, it was mentioned that the Playground is aimed at technical ideas, and that a similar initiative for more business-oriented ideas is lacking. *"I can see that [this material] is really moving in [my business segment]. […]. But I do not have the technical competencies required to formulate what it takes. [….] There is no place to go"* (Business developer 1).

5.3 Innovation Intent

In 2008, the Group President launched 'Innovation Intent', an innovation vision extending to 2025. A white paper was published internally at Grundfos describing the visions for the future and some of the steps Grundfos has to take in order to fulfill them. During 2008, the Group President went on tour to visit Grundfos' companies throughout the world and promote the new vision. Some of the vision's headlines: by 2025, Grundfos should have 75,000 employees; 1/3 of the turnover should come from other products than pumps; and 50 percent of the technology platforms should be new compared to 2008. The slogan for Innovation Intent is "Concern, Care, Create", which indicates that sustainability should come first, that Grundfos will be there for a growing world, and that new technologies should be pioneered. Along with the Innovation Intent, three innovation platforms are launched to guide ideas into specific business segments.

5.3.1 Inscription

In a political perspective [7], the understanding of idea work inscribed in Innovation Intent is that idea work is a core activity that is necessary in order to achieve the goals that are set. Furthermore, it cannot be up to the individual at Grundfos to decide what a good or relevant idea is. Ideas need guidance and R&D professionals, as well as everybody else employed at Grundfos, should have a strong shared conception of the direction in which Grundfos is moving. Innovation Intent is a guiding star for the long-term innovation efforts. Especially the innovation platforms shall help managers prioritize focus on and investment in new ideas. Inscribed in the Intent is also the understanding that business development is as important as technology development, and that customers should also be considered relevant for gaining knowledge and insights in the development process. A green policy and clean technologies are also emphasized as important dimensions in the work with ideas. In a symbolic perspective [7], Innovation Intent signals a high level of ambition – 'only the best is good enough'. Competent and qualified employees are needed globally to come up with truly original and game-changing ideas. In a learning perspective [7], Innovation Intent can be viewed as a project of transition in which Grundfos is working towards mastering innovation activities through a more professional and streamlined innovation process, a transition that is expected to contribute to the organization's learning curve with respect to how to stimulate idea work.

5.3.2 De-scription

Innovation Intent is still only in its very beginnings. At the time I conducted my interviews in spring 2009, only a preliminary structure for implementing the changes facilitate by Innovation Intent was agreed upon. Therefore, the Intent had not yet had any effect on the daily work with ideas; but the R&D professionals shared their thoughts about what and how they expected Innovation Intent would influence their future work with ideas. In a political perspective [7], it was clear that the R&D professionals' de-scription of Innovation Intent matched the inscription. Innovation Intent, among both managers and developers, is expected to work as a guiding star and help differentiate relevant ideas from those that are not so relevant. Especially the innovation platforms are welcomed. Some interviewees also stated that in the past Grundfos had successfully used visions to guide idea work, but on a much smaller scale and only locally in various departments or projects. In this respect, then, Innovation Intent accommodates the idea work practices already existing in the organization. However, only time can show whether such a large-scale vision aimed at the whole organization will have the intended effect. Symbolically [7], a high level of ambition is inscribed in the Intent, especially the aims of developing totally new technology platforms and receiving 1/3 of the company's turnover from other products than pumps. In spite of the high level of ambition, the interview material does not express any concerns about being able to achieve these goals; on the other hand, there are not

many comments about this. Some just observed that since they would be retired long before 2025, they questioned how much they could contribute.

With regard to learning, it is still too early to conclude what effect Innovation Intent can have on the organizational learning curve. However, during 2010, an organizational unit was established to work with the innovation platforms and make plans, especially about how to accommodate radical innovations. But these experiences are being kept secret for now from the rest of the organization.
It is difficult at this point to conclude whether Innovation Intent will come to play an important role in idea work or how the R&D professionals will integrate it into their idea work practices. So far, it has mostly been welcomed positively, and many expect at lot from it.

5.4 Summing up

In the foregoing analysis of idea-promoting initiatives, I have tried to answer the two sub-questions posed in connection with my main research question: What understanding of idea work is inscribed in the different idea-promoting initiatives? And what role do the different idea promoting initiatives play with respect to idea work? The analysis shows that the understandings of idea work inscribed in the Idea Bank, the R&T Playground, and Innovation Intent differ.
In the Idea Bank, ideas are viewed as fixed entities that are either intrinsically good or bad. The main challenge to staying innovative is to gather as many ideas as possible, and in this pursuit every employee in the organization is relevant.
The R&T Playground acknowledges that ideas need a driver to bring them forth. Furthermore, ideas have to be developed in order to be attractive to the decision makers in the organization. The R&T Playground is mainly targeted R&D professionals working with research and technology.
Innovation Intent views the work with ideas as one of the most important activities for achieving its goals. To stay innovative is especially a question of doing things differently than before, and every employee in the organization is expected to contribute. Especially R&D professionals, though, have a responsibility to lift future development activities up to a new level. What roles the initiatives play depend on how they are de-scribed by the users. The Idea Bank has neither provided significant ideas nor functioned as a tool R&D professionals prefer to use. However, it can be argued that the Idea Bank has a symbolic effect. The R&T Playground especially plays a role with respect to legitimizing R&D professionals' own work with ideas. It cannot be concluded as yet what role Innovation Intent has.

6 DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The focus of this paper is on examining the explicit processes, systems and roles established at Grundfos in order to stimulate and support idea work. Each idea that promotes initiative contains a script, which is the materialization of the designer’s more or less informed presumptions and thoughts about how idea work should be approached and by whom. However, certain understandings of idea work are also embedded in daily practices. This phenomenon could be called the company’s constitution in relation to its work with ideas ("idea constitution"), with inspiration from Woolgar’s [10] constitutive perspective on ideas and Hildebrandt and Seltz’ [11] notion of a company’s social constitution. A company’s idea constitution comprises the implicit norms, values and practices that exist in the organization regarding work with ideas – e.g. what gets to count as an idea, who sets the direction, who is allowed to work with what kind of ideas, and how should ideas be worked through the organizational system? The constitution is formed through organizational history, experiences, and negotiations, as well as conflicts and compromises. At Grundfos, the idea constitution has been built and rebuilt over the years. Both Poul Due Jensen – *we’ll do it ourselves* – and Niels Due Jensen – *contributing to keep a high level of ambition* – have influenced the constitution along with the changing organizational structures, new technological possibilities, and trends in society. The idea constitution in a company is constantly challenged by such influences. Especially idea-promoting initiatives are interesting, as they have been configured for the deliberate purpose of impacting daily idea practices. Idea-promoting initiatives or concepts can be configured differently depending on a range of design variables. On the basis of the analysis of Grundfos’ idea-promoting initiatives presented in the previous section, I identify three important design variables. The first variable concerns how the relations between the involved actors are configured: Who is supposed to provide the organization with new ideas, who should drive the ideas through the organizational system, and who is entitled to evaluate and make decisions about ideas? The second design variable concerns how

access to resources is configured: Are resources freely given or constrained, and who can they be granted to and on what grounds? The third variable regards strategic concerns: Is it a local or global initiative, what direction is set out if any, and what is expected to be gained from the initiative? Depending on how the idea-promoting initiative is configured, the idea constitution will be affected in different ways and to different degrees. My main research question, posed at the beginning of this paper, is: What makes an idea-promoting initiative 'work' or not 'work'? Here, it could be tempting to answer that idea-promoting initiatives work when the inscribed understanding of idea work matches the understanding of idea work exercised in practice, or what I label the company's idea constitution. However, in order for organizations to sustain innovative capabilities, it is important to move up the learning curve. If the current idea constitution is only reproduced in a new idea-promoting initiative, the question is how much it actually changes practice. Having said this, some degree of congruity is needed in order to make an idea-promoting initiative work. If the idea-promoting initiative is too different in its approach to actual idea work compared to the idea constitution, the risk is that the initiative would not be accepted at all, and then neither immediate benefits nor long-term organizational learning would be gained. To make an idea-promoting initiative work thus requires some degree of congruence between the initiative and practice, but not more than the idea-promoting concept still can challenge current idea practices and contribute to new ways of stimulating, facilitating and supporting work with ideas.

The managerial implication of the present research is that it is the interplay between the explicit processes, systems and roles and daily practices with idea work that it is important to address and shape. Thus, Idea Management is not a question of how formalized the processes, structures and roles a company can establish to steer idea work are, but rather how well they can get new initiatives to match existing idea work practices and still challenge conventional thinking. Following this line of thought, it is important that the designers who configure the idea-promoting initiatives and the managers who implement them are aware of the understandings of idea work that are inscribed in the initiatives and the norms and values that are embedded in the company's idea constitution.

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