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INNOVATION AT AIRBUS SAFRAN LAUNCHERS WITH A FOCUS ON IDEA CREATION

Abstract

Only those companies that can quickly realize new ideas and innovative concepts on the market will be successful in the future. Companies have to quickly respond to technology demands and to prepare for future challenges. The development of new technological skills, the proof of technical concepts and appropriate Intellectual Property (IP) to secure the knowledge are the base for new business, products and services. As a complement to the internal process it is essential to consider both the external expertise of state-of-the-art and open innovation results.

Airbus Safran Launchers (ASL) is a new company founded by its two mother companies Airbus and Safran. ASL is the prime contractor for the development and production of the Ariane 5 and Ariane 6 launchers, for research and development studies of future European launch programs as well as the ballistic missiles for the French marine. As a major actor in the world for civil and defense access to space, ASL is highly interested in catching advanced technologies following the trends and state-of-the-art of academic and research center's world and continuously to strengthen the assess external technology and innovation.

The actual paper gives an overview of the innovation management of the new company ASL with a particular focus on the early-stage phase of the innovation process - the idea creation and the process to its first application. The paper summarizes the challenges and barriers that innovative ideas face in large scale enterprises (LSE) including an open innovation approach. It further analyzes the ways and used approaches to navigate these challenges internally.

Based on this lessons learned analysis, the paper proposes methods on how to better address innovative ideas in LSE, getting away from pure blue sky innovation sessions where a lot of ideas are created that are in a lot of cases out of the company's core competencies. The analysis is motivated by giving answers to how to empower the in-house innovators to bring their ideas to market? How to find the ideas that matter? How to establish a good way to lower risk and to prevent the company from spending money on the wrong areas? How to come across the dilemma of needing high discovery skills in the early-stages, whilst needing high delivery and project management skills in later stages of the innovation process?