

High Tech NL Young Professionals never give up!

Developing entrepreneurship, innovative behavior and leadership in large companies

High Tech NL has been organizing activities for young professionals for more than five years. Over a year ago, the board of young professionals of Océ Technologies proposed joining forces with other boards of high-tech manufacturing companies in order to organize a joint event. High Tech NL was asked to facilitate the process. It took some time to design the setup. “Kickstart your corporate” was the title the boards came up with. The purpose of the event was to discuss ways companies can contribute to innovation by using their creativity, professionalism, and individual style, and how to overcome the obstacles in their way. The event took place on Wednesday, March 24th at the High Tech Campus in Eindhoven.

By Jos van Erp



Innovative behavior

Members of the boards of young professionals of Océ Technologies, ASML, VDL-ETG, Thales, NXP and Philips came together, at least six times, to prepare the joint event. Most meetings took place at the venues of the participating companies.



Lars Sørensen: “Welcome and please stand up!”

Together with Carlijn van den Berge, who is a communication officer at High Tech NL, several concepts were discussed before making a final decision. What could be the role of young professionals in a high-tech manufacturing company? How can they develop entrepreneurial and innovative

behavior and competencies in a corporate atmosphere where many procedures seem to have remained unchanged since the beginning of time? It was decided to organize a large event for the colleagues of the participating companies. Experienced managers were asked to be table hosts discussing relevant issues, and inspiring guest speakers were invited to share their ideas.

Seven essentials

Lars Sørensen, a well-known, versatile speaker and moderator, was asked to preside over the event. At about half past two, the reception hall of the High Tech Campus Conference Centre was filled with young professionals from six companies, as well as technicians and non-technicians, employees, graduate students and PhD candidates, Dutch and international young men and women. This diverse gathering of at least 180 visitors created an atmosphere of networking and discovery. This energy was recognized and used immediately by Lars Sørensen just a few minutes after everybody had taken their seat

“We are all unique and energy comes from the inside”

in the auditorium. He asked the participants to address an unknown neighbor and introduce themselves to one another. Lars was able to inspire the audience by going into the crowd and asking questions of several

people. This interactive opening to the meeting, in addition to the short but inspiring movie shown by Océ about the power of the individual, was highly appreciated. It is true that we are all unique and energy comes from the inside! After having created the right atmosphere, Lars gave the floor to Mr. Quintin Schevernels who had recently released his book "Suits and Hoodies". He surprised his audience by stating that only 1% of all start-ups really become successful. In fact, 50% of them become bankrupt in



Quintin Schevernels and Don Ritzen not wearing suits.

their first year of existence, but despite this, they should never give up! His seven essentials for successful business practice were real eye openers: dream big, innovation, product, culture, talent, focus and funding. His clarification of these issues really brought them to life, and you can read more about them in his book.

"Why do corporations need young professionals?"

More lessons were learned when Lars offered the participants the opportunity to ask Quintin questions. After thanking Quintin, he

gave the floor to Mr. Don Ritzen. Don is the owner of Rockstar Accelerator. He helps start-ups become successful. "It is inspiring to see how much people can achieve in a short period of time", he noted. Don presented some surprising examples of successful people who didn't stop believing in their ideas. Even if they failed, Don argued that they had made a step forward



Participants didn't stay in their chairs

because they had learned by experiencing something others hadn't. When one of the participants asked how to respond if their CEO is not prepared to listen to new ideas, Don answered "this says more about him and the company's culture than about you. Just don't stop knocking at his door and open his eyes!" One of the NXP managers confirmed later that afternoon that if his employees should ever knock at his door in vain, he or she should pinch him to wake him up. Quintin and Don answered questions from the highly interested young professionals, while both wearing jeans, not suits...



Table discussions

Learning and sharing

After a break, everybody joined a discussion table. The prepared issues included: what are the characteristics of innovative teams? How

can we encourage business model innovation? And, why do corporations need young professionals? Had these issues not been prepared, the discussions would still have been animated and instructive. It wasn't easy to

“Dream your dream and turn it into reality”

stop discussions after 40 minutes in order to start a new session, not because the new sessions were not interesting, but because there was so much more to talk about and share. A special thanks must be expressed to the 20 table hosts who took the



The High Tech Campus Conference Centre offers the right atmosphere

time to prepare and share their experiences with the young professionals. A wide range of managers and specialists were present: R&D directors, chief technology officers, quality managers, strategic business developers, and so on. It could be said that High Tech NL Young Professionals created their own joint corporate university!

Fold an aircraft and throw it on stage!

Although drinks and snacks were waiting, nobody wanted to miss the wrap up by Lars. And, as to be expected, he made something special out of it. He once again asked the audience to share some experiences one-on-one, and he was able to introduce his own kind of debriefing. Everybody was asked to write down their own conclusions, reactions, tips and so on, on a piece of paper. Finally, he

asked the audience to fold an aircraft out of it and throw it on stage in order for the organizers to collect them to, once again, learn from the participants' experiences.

The future is in our hands

“Young professionals are not exposed to business development.” “Innovation only seems possible at other companies.” “Think and act like a start-up.” “Never stop believing in yourself.” “Dream your dream and turn it into reality.” “Pitch your ideas.” “Don't be afraid to fail.”

“Encourage other companies to participate!”

These were just some of the takeaway messages the organizers collected. The conclusions were just as promising: “Very good initiative.” “This is fun.” “When is the next event?” “Don't forget to invite me.” “Encourage other companies to participate!” Of course, ideas to improve the concept were expressed as well, such as managing the number of people per discussion table, improving the description of the issues and so on. One of the participants concluded, “I am not the type of person to enjoy fast presentations and popular guys.” Point noted. But, the future is in our hands. Will you be wearing jeans or suits?



 **High Tech NL**

Jos van Erp, March 2016

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