Using design methods to build innovation capability in large firms: Volvo Group IT / IKEA Business Solutions

I am looking for one or two master theses carried out within the umbrella of a Vinnova-financed research project “Using Design Thinking to develop innovation capability”. Collaboration partners are IKEA Business Solutions and Volvo Group IT.

The thesis will be carried out as a “research master thesis” coordinated/supervised by Lisa Carlgren at Innovation and R&D Management (linkedin).

It is not yet decided to what extent the students will collaborate with the firms (see below). The firms came into the process late, related to the December 3rd deadline.

- one extreme is that it is a 100% research master thesis,
- the other extreme is that it becomes a regular company master thesis. It just isn’t decided yet, so you need to decide if the topic is interesting enough and if you can handle this potential variation!

Background:

*Innovation capability theory* assumes a system view of the firm – being innovative requires more than an innovation process or a creative innovation team. Important factors are for example culture, structure, processes, mindsets, leadership and strategy that may hinder or enable innovation.

*Design thinking* is a recent management concept that shows resemblance to how many designers think and work when they solve problems and come up with new offers. It is a human-centered approach characterized by exploring problems before solving them, short iterative loops, making things tangible, working in diverse teams and tight interactions with users. The method is taught in the course TEK495 (ask friends who have taken the course).

*In the research project* we are at the moment identifying issues that the companies have related to innovation capability. During spring we will select which issues to target, find creative solutions to these and start implementing some interventions. An important part is to follow up these interventions. The project is collaborative with a qualitative approach, and we seek to use design methods / a design mindset throughout the project.

Topics: (within the realm described above)

- In the case of IKEA. The topic will likely relate to enabling ways to bring in customer insights. Potential questions are how to create the prerequisites for bringing in customer insights (e.g. mindset shift, practices, interfaces), or how to engage local markets in co-creation. There is a possibility to interact with the company through interviews but due to a reorganization they cannot take responsibility for the students.

- In the case of Volvo Group IT, they are interested in improving an existing documentation system that everyone has to use but that does not work well, OR approaches to co-create with start-ups. The thesis could be supervised (and hosted) by them, but it depends on the match student interest/company goal. Also interviews. The reason for this fuzziness is because they are a bit late compared to the Master thesis application deadline.

- The third possibility is to study both cases within the same project.
The thesis is not of the type “understand and recommend” but rather “understand, take action, evaluate”.

**Wanted skills:**

I am looking for students who
- have taken at least one course about innovation
- have used or read about design methods in one way or another (this is not common at Chalmers so it is not disqualifying if you haven’t)
- enjoy doing literature reviews
- enjoy doing qualitative interviews
- Have a creative / collaborative spirit.

Please get back to me by email and tell me what program you are in, and why you are interested in the thesis and we’ll take it from there.

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