Not all that jazz! Jamband as a metaphor for organizing new models of innovation

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Abstract
This study aims to understand, using a longitudinal framework the relationship between themes within the "jamband" music genre and innovation jams as a model for organizational innovation. It suggests the conventional metaphor for innovation-jazz, which has dominated our way of conceptualizing models of innovation, limits our understanding of contemporary and emerging forms of innovation. The study situates the jazz and jamband metaphors within the management literature and provides a comparative view between the music genres to enrich our understanding about organizational innovation. Three emergent themes evolved from this study that provides insight into organizing emerging models of innovation that are evocative of the jamband music genre. Using the themes of sense of community, collaborative feedback and knowledge sharing and expertise integration, this research explores how IBM Innovation Jams evolve from a concept, tool and service. The study concludes with a discussion on the implications of the findings for theorizing about new models of organizing innovation.

1. Music as a metaphor for organizing

Using music and jazz as a metaphor for organizing is not new. With over 1300 citations (according to Google Scholar), the jazz metaphor has been used to understand several elements of management including: organizational analysis, improvisation and learning (Hatch, 1998, 1999; Weick, 1998). Researchers have extended the use of jazz as a mechanism to understand organizational innovation processes by suggesting that sub-genres of jazz may better represent the spirit of innovation (Zack, 2000). The relationship between jazz and innovation has been of continuous interest to researchers in product innovation (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001; Kamoche, Cunha, & Cunha, 2003), the management of organizational innovation (Bastien & Hostager, 1988), and the organizational structure and managerial control (Pasmore, 1998). Theorizing through the lens of a jazz band has aided in the understanding of complex concepts and frameworks, such as the process of innovation and its related constructs. This has shed light on the interplay of actors within the organization, the role that actors play between them, the connection to organizational systems, and in-leveraging knowledge and expertise for creativity and innovation (Kao, 1996). The jazz metaphor has enriched our understanding of strategic decision making (Eisenhardt, 2003) and in explaining cultural differences and leadership within organizations (Walzer & Salcher, 2003). Table 1 highlights how prevalent the metaphor of jazz has used to enlighten us within the management literature.

Though the jazz metaphor has enriched our understanding of conventional approaches to innovation, the adoption of jazz as a form of theorizing about organizing has received "considerable resistance" (Hatch & Weick, 1998, p. 600). This opposition has been due to "limits of its application" that has highlighted its historical roots as being potentially insular or exclusive (Hatch & Weick, 1998). This parochial approach is evident through its limiting sources of (limits on) diversity (Hatch & Weick, 1998, p. 600). In fact, this view may show limited understanding of music genres and music history, thus undermining how music genres have facilitated different approaches to improvisation, creativity and innovation and need to be understood within a 'collective, cultural context' (Nettl, 1974). Table 2 shows a comparative view of music genres. In acknowledging researchers' and scholars' interest in jazz and innovation, it is the new developments in the advancement of technology that potentially push the boundaries of the jazz genre in understanding emerging innovation practices-creating paradoxes and conflicts in understanding these new models. Emerging modes of innovation and the technology that supports them, give researchers the opportunity to use other genres in aiding the...
The paper explores how the contemporary music genre of a jamband enlightens our understanding of new and open models of innovation.

The paper is outlined as follows: first a review of the musical genre of a jamband and how it will help in the understanding of organizational innovation, then an introduction to the relationship of technology in shaping open models of innovation. Next, a historical perspective of innovation jams evolving from a concept, to a tool and to a service is presented. Lastly, the paper provides a discussion on the implications and conclusions from this study.

2. Contextualizing the musical genre

IBM has leveraged the musical genre of a jamband as a way of organizing innovation. The use of the jamband metaphor will serve two purposes: (1) act as a tool to understand new objects and situations and, (2) allow us to refer to these new objects consistently through analogies as we relate them to known objects (Lakoff, 1990). Moreover, the jamband metaphor will aid us in describing the emergent development and use of innovation jams as IBM at they learned to engage with a model of organizing innovation.

A jam band utilizes similar aspects found within the jazz genre such as improvisation, experimentation, and experience to “speed up the pace of innovation” (Pasmore, 1998, p. 562), but has the propensity to cross genre boundaries, drawing from a wide-spectrum of musical traditions. A jam band combines and recombines aspects of several genres in various forms to create a new genre that is not bound by the constraints of any single genre and allows for variation in the creation of music.

Beyond incorporating aspects of jazz, a jam band employs a toolbox of genres from blues, bluegrass, funk, rock, psychedelia, and even techno to make and change the harmonic structure, melody, and rhythm of a song as it is being created (Budnick, 2003). By using this toolbox of genres, the characteristics of a jam band would allow for song crafting with both individual and “group-minded” improvisation that may last for lengthy periods, far from the pre-defined notes, chords, and scales with little resemblance of the original song (Tuedio & Spector, 2010). Each genre offers its own history, tradition, and repertoire to manage the complexity of making music. Since organizations employ a variety of strategies to manage the complexity of the innovation process, using the jam-band genre metaphor potentially provides a vehicle to improve the way we talk about and understand new methods of organizing innovation. In addition, the jamband genre which is associated with influencing change emphasizes a sense of community, collaboration, and sharing among the participants may help to invoke understanding of the latent elements in contextualizing new emergent models of organizing innovation.

Using the themes of sense of community, collaborative feedback and knowledge sharing, and expertise integration, this research explores how IBM innovation jams evolve from a concept, tool and service. Through this process we suggest the changing definition of jams and posit jams in relation to ten dimensions.
3. Open innovation and technology

Research into the practices of open innovation at IBM has been widely cited. In fact, IBM is one of the keynote cases that the open innovation paradigm is founded upon (Chesbrough, 2003; Chesbrough, Vanhaverbeke, & West, 2006) and offers insight into IBM’s transformation from a closed system of innovation to an open form. The open innovation paradigm proposes inflows and outflows of knowledge to accelerate innovation for product innovation (Chesbrough et al., 2006) and service innovation (Chesbrough, 2011). Outlined in IBM’s CEO — Lou Gerstner’s book, Who Says Elephants Can’t Dance? Inside IBM’s Historic Turnaround, IBM needed to focus on bringing its customers closer to utilize what Gerstner believed was IBM’s unique and unequaled capability to “apply complex technologies to solve business challenges” (Gerstner, 2002, p. 125). The transition IBM made to bridge emerging technologies within IBM and knowledge flows within the organizational network contextualizes the changing innovation paradigm. By using this foundational case and the context of emerging innovation technology at IBM, it will help illuminate the limits of the conventional metaphor of jazz and the potential insight the jamband genre may provide.

Like a jam band that uses different genre tools to induce change within a song, organizations use technology to influence their practices. The open innovation research stream1 has led researchers to explore how technologies shape and support more open models of innovation practices (Christensen & Maskell, 2003; Dodgson, Gann, & Salter, 2006; Pavitt, 2003), even arguing these technologies have the potential to reshape the way firms organize their innovative activities across the organization (Dodgson, Gann, & Salter, 2005). This reshaping of the organizational innovation process impacts the structure of the internal innovation process and the cognitive modeling of innovation.

Focusing on practices of open innovation, researchers have offered understanding on the role technology can play (Dodgson & Gann, 2013; Kohler, Matzler, & Fuller, 2009). Much of this focus has been to understand the role of emerging technologies; however innovation jams have largely been overlooked. Given that these emerging technologies can be harnessed in a variety of capacities, individually or in combination, we consider these technologies as being arranged and embedded in a larger technological system, in which innovation jams can be observed at IBM.

4. Method

This research was based on a longitudinal study of the IBM innovation jam platform (Table 1) and emergent themes from the jamband music genre. IBM can be seen as a “rare or unique” case, in that it is a revelatory case that presents the opportunity for researchers to observe and analyze a phenomenon that is under-studied or novel, as well as to answer “how” and “why” questions (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1984). Since the constitutive relationship between innovation jams and jambands have not been adequately examined in studies of a large organizational innovation process, we used an embedded design for this study. Embedded case designs use multiple levels of analysis to create a rich and reliable account of organizational processes (Yin, 1984). This study focuses on IBM from three levels of analysis (1) the technology level (2) organizational level (3) processual level.

5. Data sources

To effectively triangulate important elements jambands represented in the organizational innovation process, we combined data collection methods such as archives, textual analysis, participant observation, and interviews (Eisenhardt, 1989). We used three primary and two secondary data sources (Table 3) that include: (1) internal and public reports about IBM innovation jam events, (2) published materials about IBM organizational change and its innovation jam platform, (3) participant observation in innovation jams, (4) interviews and correspondence with the Program Director and the founder of the Jam Program Office and Collaborative Innovation and the Chief Strategist, and (5) jam forum data from three innovation jams. From the collected data found below, reconstruction of past contexts, processes, and decisions were possible in order to discover patterns and find underlying mechanisms over time (Petitgrew, 1990) and provided varying distances between the researcher and the phenomenon understudy.

5.1. Innovation jam reports

As IBM was a focal company and pillar case study for a larger project, deep engagement with the company ensued from early 2009 to 2011, culminating with the sharing of internal and public reports about each of the IBM Innovation Jam events from 2001 to 2010. In each of the innovation jam reports collected, we paid close attention to the changes in description of each innovation jam, the technology use, and processes around the implementation, facilitation, and hosting of the innovation jam. Following Cheney and Christensen (2001), these communication reports of internal organizational processes bring to light ideologies about intended change.

5.2. Published materials

As a result of the novelty of innovation jams and large-scale collaboration, news reports in both daily and trade press publications have been widely circulated. Using archival databases, we collected articles about IBM innovation jams that were reported in daily local and international newspapers from February 2001 to February 2011, three months prior to the first innovation jam at IBM and up to the latest innovation jam held in 2011. Newspapers included all major national US newspapers from across the country and two major trade newspapers internationally. Articles contained either (1) public discourse about the company and the nature of the innovation jam being held, or (2) reflections on the innovation jam from participants after the innovation jam. In total, we collected nearly 145 news articles about innovation jams. Criteria for including an article were its timeframe of being published and it specifically mentioning the influence of innovation jams at IBM on its innovation process. Innovation jams have received a significant amount of attention outside of academia—particularly in practitioner journals (Bjelland & Chapman Wood, 2008) and books (Howe, 2008; Surowiecki, 2004), these provided further background knowledge that led to better understanding of innovation jams.

5.3. Participant observation

Next, invitations to participate in IBM hosted Innovation Jams were extended. The researchers participated in SmartWork Jam 2009, GlobalPulse Jam 2010, and SocialBusiness Jam 2011. From this, over 70 h of participant observation were recorded and provided real-time insight into the most recent developments of innovation jams. Observations were documented resulting in a

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1 See Dahlander and Gann (2010) for a review of openness in open innovation research.
total of 100+ pages of field notes. This provided experiential access to the local environment of participating in innovation jams using the technology, posts within the jam forums, and observing other participants. In addition, participation included pre and post innovation jam events.

5.4. Interviews and correspondence

Over the two year-project a lengthy dialogue with IBM was maintained. This dialogue, facilitated by the IBM Program Director and the founder of the Jam Program Office and Collaborative Innovation and Chief Strategist, was documented. Before interviewing, background information was gathered by the authors. This helped in identifying detailed questions to how innovation jams have aided IBM in its innovation strategy and how innovation jams have evolved over time. A semi-structured approach to interviewing allowed for opportunities to explore the technical and social aspects of innovation jams, particularly the history, present use, and vision of innovation jams at IBM. Transcripts were made and confirmed for authenticity.

5.5. Jam forum data

Forum data on three innovation jams from 2009 to 2011 including: posts, participant information (ex. location, age, gender, affiliation, job role, language) and content were collected.

6. Data analysis

Since our framework suggests innovation jams have changed as IBM engaged with the new model of innovation, we constructed a historical perspective. This helped to explain relationships between historical factors pertaining to innovation jams transitional periods of development and IBM’s move towards leveraging technology for more open forms of innovation that resonates with the jamband genre metaphor.

In the preliminary stage we organized our data chronologically based on the order in which each innovation jam was held. This was done by ordering each innovation jam event from the collected data- IBM innovation jam reports, news and trade publications, participant observation field notes, and interview and correspondence transcripts in order to corroborate each innovation jam account over multiple sources. This provided a historical perspective of innovation jams as well as exploring the social context within IBM that innovation jams operate in (Klein & Myers, 1999). For this study an iterative approach to coding and analysis was adopted. Thus, to identify the ways in which innovation jams influenced the innovation processes, we followed three stages of coding practices outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) within and across each innovation jam. We engaged in an open coding strategy within (and across) each innovation jam to categorize the data collected (innovation jam reports, observations field notes, interview transcriptions, and news & trade publications) in order to group like concepts that described what transpired and how it occurred. An inductive approach allowed for insights to emerge from each innovation jam independently.

Next, through our analysis, we grouped these first-order themes by constructing subcategories, and regrouped the data into clusters of similar activities allowing conceptual links to emerge. From this, we combined these provisional first-order categories into fewer, broader and theoretically relevant groupings (Fig. 1) that addressed more directly the overarching questions driving the investigation (Locke, 2001).

After all of the data had been analyzed in this fashion within each innovation jam, we applied a similar process across each innovation jam. Finally, we integrated our analyses from each category into a set of core findings, building on relationships between first order-second order categories and theoretical dimensions (Fig. 2). This iteration between data, concepts, and emerging patterns ended when we reached theoretical saturation. Definitions were developed at the different stages for the first and second order codes to help guide our analysis.

To add context to these findings, we constructed a chronological outline of the relationship between innovation jams and the organizational innovation process over the 10-year time frame. This allowed us to concentrate our attention on expounding the important similarities and differences in regards to changes in technology, process, and use across the innovation jams. No prior hypotheses were made as to what took place across the innovation jams. Relationship refinement was made through revisiting the data in an attempt to find patterns between the innovation jams that could indicate changes.

From this analysis naturally occurring phase changes began to emerge. To avoid arbitrary partitions and to develop a systematic way to identify phase changes, we included circumstances recognized as significant by the organizational actants, changes that differed in innovation jam practices, and the strategic organizational perspective to leverage innovation jams. Partitions signal the end of one phase and the start of another-what are later called critical phase change events. In this step, triangulation of sources (innovation jam reports, interviews, field notes, and news and trade publications) helped us refine and strengthen our analysis in demarcating the phase changes that occurred over time. In the following section we present the interpretative framework that has
emerged.

7. Innovation jam adoption and jam band themes

Through the analysis several themes emerged as a result of IBM’s continued experimentation with innovation jams. These themes, which were initiated in an effort to help implement successful innovation jams, provided a series of supporting themes in cultivating an open approach to organizational innovation. According to the Director of Innovation Jams:

“It [InnovationJams] really helped us. Jam served as a changing factor in IBMs culture and how we collaborate across our businesses.”

Each theme occurred over time as IBM continued to experiment with innovation jams and resonate with the characteristics of the jamband genre in that the underlying codes have similar attributes between them. These themes, illustrate how the emergent development of innovation jams have influenced IBM’s innovation practices by aligning its workforce behind IBM’s goal to build a communal sense of creating innovation. We explore these themes next.

8. Sense of community

Sense of community is an important part of the jam band culture and evidence suggest the same for innovation jams. The physicality of the jam band musical experience is ingrained into the jam band culture-through the connection between the band and the audience and the audience themselves. The growth of jam bands pushed the boundaries of musical venues and of communities as a result of the size of the audience that followed jam bands from venue to venue. In effort to accommodate the growing interest in live jam band performances-the live musical events were moved to giant stadiums and festivals. These giant venues provided a platform for the large audience to experience the jam band experience, before, during and after the event. Moving to a larger platform altered the sense of community from a small niche community to an accessible community for many to experience the jam band culture. The progression into large venues also pushed the limits of technology and community, which made sound boarding or tuning of the equipment more complex, in addition to the complexity of organizing crowds of over 600,000 and their communal sense towards each other across time and space.

Much like the constraints of one platform for jam bands, innovation jams development faced similar constraints with platforms for these innovative events. The success in participation in the form of idea generation and excitement for large-scale collaboration gave IBM incentives to develop independent platforms for specific audiences and purposes instead of relying on existing infrastructure that was less adaptable to the company’s changing innovation process. “It is important to say one size does not fit all, you have natural communities within an organization that are ready to embrace this and some communities that need to be shown the business value and then they themselves will come on board and be a signal showing they are supportive of it. So the fact you can garner top-down and bottom-up support for this is a very practical way on how to approach change.”

By arranging different platforms, IBM aligned the audience to the problem to be addressed. In effort to align their global workforce, IBM developed different platforms for large scale collaboration to occur for different segments of the organization. IBM
developed a Global Innovation Jam that provided support for a
global discussion across the organizational segments and was
typically sponsored from the CEO level. This resulted in a broad
focus approach to problem solving and the inclusion of a bigger
community of participants (also known as jammers) with up to
300,000 participants. For a more focused jam, IBM developed a
separate platform called a MiniJam that targeted a narrower audi-
ence for a more specific intent. The MiniJam was typically sup-
ported by heads of business units. For instance, the use of a MiniJam
provided IBM with the option to direct problems to a more focused
crowd across the functional levels of the organization, creating a
different user experience that helped to connect people into the
discussion more quickly. The MiniJam was tailored to target smaller
more specific audiences for faster solution providing and even
greater in-depth discussion.

9. Collaborative feedback

In exploring the theme collaborative feedback—a bidirectional
communication between an audience and originator, data suggests
this enabled an iterative approach of communication between the
innovation jam hosts and the audience. Much like in the jamband
genre and in response to spontaneous suggestions of band mem-
bers and/or feedback from audience members, jam bands alter
their songs and playlist as a way to respond to the jamband com-
munity. Jam bands audiences are known to have contributed to
naming and monitoring of songs by voting and record keeping of
the songs that have not been played as part of their followings and
commitment to the band. It is here the relationship between jam-
bands and their audience manifests, which is acted out before,
during and after live performances and across time being acted out
over the different tours from year to year.

Collaborative feedback evolved in the innovation jam commu-
nity through similar mechanisms. A Jam Scorecard—released quar-
terly, provided a monitoring mechanism to jam outcomes and
progress. The purpose of a Jams Scorecard linked ideas generated in
each jam and the outcomes from these ideas. “… we also report on
our Jams Scorecard where we are, the executive in charge of the idea,
idea number and a red, yellow, green status of the project. This Jams
scorecard accountability and visibility shows where the ideas are at.
This is important because it’s telling IBMers that we will do another
massive Jam and they should pay attention and participate because
they can see the ideas are being implemented and the accountability is
there.”

The Jams Scorecard, presented with IBM’s quarterly earnings
report was published internally and reflected important quantita-
tive and qualitative metrics on the project. Metrics included a broad
summary where the project stood, identified the executives in
charge of the idea, idea number, and the status of the project. This
showed accountability, visibility, control, and commitment to the
ideas and solutions that were derived from the innovation jams. By
providing this feedback, it provided a response to the ideas and
intellectual property that was shared during the innovation jam and
strengthened the notion that participant (i.e. employees, man-
gers, external stakeholders) contributions and ideas were being
implemented and valued by top management. The feedback
through the Jams Scorecard showed the depth of how this new
model of innovation had become and how ingrained innovation
jams evolved within IBM’s innovation strategy.

Feedback mechanisms continued to evolve as innovation jams
developed that allowed participants to rate, vote and review ideas
and comments until the innovation jam ended and often extended
outside of the innovation jam period. This allowed for further
refinement of ideas and gave executives and managers greater
focus on where promising ideas were and how to respond with
resources. These mechanism built support for contributed ideas
from the bottom-up, which gave greater transparency to this new
model of organizing innovation. Executives and managers support
through this feedback, gave clear indication to which ideas, prod-
ucts, services, and initiatives that would likely succeed, since they
were being supported from those who would be implementing them.

10. Knowledge sharing and expertise integration

Having established the context of open innovation and tech-
nology relationship we examined the data to understand the pro-
cesses through which innovation jams emerged using the jamband
metaphor to guide us. Characteristics of the jamband genre can be
viewed from several levels in facilitating new models of organizing
innovation. First we explored this on the organizational level and
the impact of knowledge sharing and expertise integration. The same
way a jamband would use multiple genres and the knowledge
within each of these genres in creating its music—for example rock
rhythm patterns with a country/folk progression, IBM leveraged
emerging technologies and platforms that had developed frag-
mentally in separate business units to help craft innovation jams.
Each business unit with its own processes, technology and exper-
tise provided aspects of their knowledge through their technology
and know-how to be integrated into the creation of innovation
jams. This could be seen in the adoption of innovation technology
(IvT) (Dodgson et al., 2005) that offered opportunities in bridging
IBM’s internal innovation process, internally developed technology,
and aspects of open innovation that were being implemented with
success in other parts of the organization. Instead of relying on the
knowledge of different musical genres in which jam band musi-
cians would need to know, IBM extracted its deep technological
knowledge from different parts of its organization each with their
own area of expertise. This transformation was to move beyond
independent implementing of new processes, technology, thinking
or models, but was focused on integrating expertise from each
areas developed technology to spread innovative activity outward
in the organization. This enabled its workforce regardless of busi-
ness unit or job boundaries to be involved in the organization of
innovation. By pushing the innovation process outward within IBM,
it was in turn bringing knowledge and expertise of its existing
workforce inward to be utilized. “From the technology perspective,
part of what we want to do with the jam, we look at emerging tech-
nology within IBM and research if it will be appropriate for a Jam. ...
we are exploring technology around visualization. So, when we start
typing, why not use the data mining tool to real time and crawl
through those feeds and identify themes or discussions where there is a
close match to what your suggestion is and either add to or start a new
discussion thread. It will recommend that to you and post that into the
discussion thread.”

Next, we discuss how IBM utilized technology and knowledge
across the organization, as IBM’s innovation jam platform emerged
and evolved overtime that situate the explored themes.

11. Evolution of innovation jams: concept, tool, and service

IBM learned to engage with innovation jams through a series of
phases that we focus on to illustrate the evolution of this new
model of organizing innovation. Each phase built from the previous
phase successes, which appear as a process, evolved in each
attempt, less from planned precisions and more out of continuously
challenging the limits from where innovation can come from and the
basic assumptions of innovation that IBM had previously held.
Herewith in these phases are the reshaping of the internal inno-
vation process and the changing locus of innovation at IBM. Each
phase represented the alignment of context appropriate innovation to IBM's innovation needs. These phases describe this context appropriate innovation and innovation jam evolution from 1) an early conceptual phase that had rudimentary resemblance to today's existing innovation jam platform, 2) to a tool phase that helped management facilitate IBM's innovation process, and 3) to a service phase, where harnessing innovative activity from the periphery and untapped workforces enabled innovation jams to be delivered as an innovation service to IBM's clients. Fig. 3 maps IBM's innovation jam evolution phases of concept, tool, and service to their degree of platform integration in IBM's innovation strategy, phase complexity, and source of knowledge. It emphasizes how innovation jams have been adopted and integrated into IBM's innovation strategy, while complexity has grown with technological advancements and the addition of new sources of knowledge.

While the different phases of evolution for innovation jams have overlapping attributes for innovation, they differ significantly in their enabling assumptions about innovation. Table 4 contrasts how the different phases in terms of the locus of innovation evolution, knowledge flows, acts, definition of, technological changes, and the enabling assumptions of the domain boundaries under which they occurred. Table 4 provides a context to understand the themes that have emerged as IBM engaged with innovation jams. This provides insight into how these attributes changed over time.

11.1. Concept phase

An early form of innovation jams at IBM commenced in 2001 as a result of a companywide self-reflection initiative to drive innovation internally. IBM believed by tapping into its extensive workforce and by bridging people and departments, greater cross-fertilization of ideas and solutions could accelerate R&D. World Jam 2001 was a new medium to connect people and ideas together through IBM's existing intranet, as an attempt to capture and explore internal knowledge and information exchanged that facilitated cross-functional dialogues throughout IBM. As an open space where participants can move from topic to topic and cross-pollinate ideas, individuals of all ranks could talk to each other and communicate through forum posts. This new medium primarily played the role as a knowledge repository of these posts. This early form of innovation jams was a first in providing a platform for communication across physical boundaries and hierarchy, while bridging time and space across (Redefining Manager Interaction at IBM Report, 2002) the company and world, while building a sense of community in the innovation process.

With almost 53,000 participants all IBM employees creating more than 268,000 posts, internal user support included a light technical cast maintaining a database for knowledge and information retention. Consequently, all intellectual property (IP) concerns were managed under standard business policies and maintained internally. Moreover, the concept phase of innovation jams played one component of a larger innovation strategy for IBM and considered an experimental top-down approach to innovation because of the pre-filtering of information determining what information and knowledge was made available before and after an event. IBM would later cede more control over the information that circulated around and who would interact with one another as a result of IBM's willingness to continue to experiment with larger-scale communication platforms and advancements in technology that were occurring internally.

The overwhelming response to World Jam 2001 provided a foundation for future innovation jams to be held. Though World Jam 2001 participation and evolvement was encouraging came at a cost. For innovation jams to move into the next process phase, several critical technological and phase changes were required. First, the existing technology and infrastructure was seen as an inhibitor to innovation jams use and a new independent platform was needed for scaling, enabling better computer-mediated support for different languages and technology to support synchronous and asynchronous use. Scaling allowed for future inclusion of external participants and subject matter experts. Lastly, to manage a large-scale conversation with more effectiveness, data analysis tools were needed in order to sift through the large number of ideas and information that participants contributed to create a more immersive user experience. Changes ensued with the adoption of companywide technologies such as; blogs, wikis, and other online tools, along with cross-functional collaboration, creating interaction with unprecedented levels of richness.

11.2. Tool phase

Innovation Jam 2006 marked a turn in innovation jams from a concept to a management tool at IBM. Within the tool phase, innovation jams became a key component of a larger management strategy for innovation at IBM. The tool phase for innovation jams invoked a new genre of corporate interaction that, by its very nature can only take place in computer-mediated virtual environments. This new computer-mediated environment provided greater structure for large-scale discussion through the extension of technology in the form of data analysis, metric tools and pre and post-jam user support that allowed for greater idea generation, evaluation and collaboration. The transition into the tool phase allowed external collaborators to participate with innovation jams. Though participation was limited to family members of IBM employees, it was a step to include external knowledge and collaborators so IBM could tap into a broader range of contributors for idea generation and evaluating. Subject matter experts were used as facilitators and moderators in supporting the flow of discussion to constructively develop issues raised within the innovation jam. Facilitators and moderators steered the dialogue, encouraged participation and deeper thinking, offering insight into the topic, or by identifying contributions that have the potential for immediate implementation.

The tool phase ushered in a more pragmatic outlook on open and collaborative work where innovation jams were seen as event and a catalyst for innovation that extended participation before and
after an innovation jam was held. The Global Innovation Jams 2006 evolved into a two stage jamming (action of participating and contributing in an innovation jam) process. Stage one was for idea generation and discussion of promising ideas. Stage two took place after, when executive and management reviewed the plethora of ideas by opening the innovation process further through focused sessions for idea refinement. This gave management areas to hone in on to connect top ideas with the needed financial commitment and key actants to produce these ideas into real outcomes. “A jam at its heart is a management tool, a strategic communication tool. Early team members were from the corporate communications department. Today, the team is separate and part of the Enterprise Transformation unit under the CIO enshrined to harness IBM’s culture for innovation.”

As the complexity of innovation jams increased, IBM commit greater resources to the implementation and hosting of this new model of innovation. The Innovation Jam 2006 required jammers to be familiarized with emerging technologies being integrated into innovation jams. Prior to the innovation jam beginning, facilitators, moderators and family members of IBM employees were expected to review the innovation jam objectives, on-line materials, innovation jam rules and sit for training on the new independent platform. The jam rules established a protocol to protect closely held IP to inhibit external collaborators from commercialized ideas elsewhere. Technological changes such as data analysis and metric tools where incorporated for measuring participation, contribution, and collaboration, while the use of virtual worlds provided an additional dimension and environment for interacting. The use of Second Life in Global Innovation Jam 2006 offered its 150,000 participants the unique 3D avatar experience of having a town hall meeting in Beijing’s Forbidden City. This virtual world experience was not limited to visualization, but also emphasized the importance and sense of “togetherness.” IBM took this virtual world experience to corral the sense of being together, standing virtually shoulder to shoulder in the innovation process with other valued colleagues from around the world. These early stage visualization techniques gave innovation jam participants’ access to a standardized level of representation of information at a more intuitive level.

Next, a second series of critical phase changes ensued that would help transition innovation jams from the tool phase to the service phase. First, changes how innovation jams were implemented and delivered were altered. The adoption of more extensive pre and post preparation planning allowed for webcasts, interests groups, and greater opportunities in connecting IBM employees and external stakeholders. IBM strategically expanded innovation jams offering to two separate platforms for large and more focused groups. The development of a scaled down platform called a Minijam was for a more focused discussion. Second, IBM became innovation jams a transformational intervention rather than a tool to be applied periodically. Innovation jams shifted to an integral part of IBM’s global management strategy, and provided a platform for engagement, where technology and organizational relationships internally and externally intertwined. Finally, the addition of jam rules and robust real-time data analysis helped facilitate the transition of innovation jams from an internal management tool to a service of innovation to its clients, by securing legal boundaries for large scale collaboration.

11.3. Service phase

The service phase marked a shift in technological integration and knowledge from a broader range of collaborators. Technological advancements within IBM gave way to powerful tools for the intensification of innovation by integrating advanced IvT into the innovation jam platform for accelerated decision-making and action. External knowledge sources flowed from a broader spectrum of stakeholders, trained facilitators and moderators outside IBM, academics, subject matter experts, suppliers, customers, governing bodies, politicians, and legal advisors each playing a role in the orchestration of innovation jams for greater dialogue. In turn, it helped delegate roles to an audience of people in search of innovation across this wide network and tapped into the collective wisdom and knowledge of these valued stakeholders. By tapping into the external collaborators, IBM pushed the search for innovation outward and to focus on segments within their network of innovation jam participants. IBM focused more attention on the audience it was targeting in order to direct specific topics and questions to those who may provide answers. Specific audiences could be targeted for accelerated decision-making and action with the Minijam platform. For example, this allowed IBM to
target managerial problems to its management workforce or engineering problems to its globally dispersed engineers. IVT played a critical role in supporting innovation jams in the service phase. IVT helped IBM bridge participants’ creativity and insight to the innovation process by using and manipulating data for visualization and understanding. IVT brought new ways for participants to organize innovation and in understanding the ongoing dialogue. Real-time analysis allowed the pulse of the different conversations to be monitored. Advancements in technology moved from collecting and storing to transforming and visualizing information in real-time and overtime, making information more dynamic than past phases. As information became more fluid as a result of IVT visualization and data analysis tools, dynamic themes to be followed in real-time—moving the innovation jam service stage into one iterative stage of insight. Topics were refined through theemclouds that visually represented emerging trends and frequent words use.

A fourth phase of innovation jams appear to be linked to other social networking tools and sites to continue the dialogue. Groups are forming on independent social networking sites that give individuals an opportunity to continue the dialogue in other virtual environments beyond the hosted innovation jam event. Connections that were made within the innovation jam appear to be spreading across the web, keeping collaborating intact regardless of geography, businesses, industry and time.

12. Implications and conclusions

Using a longitudinal framework, this study aimed to understand the relationship between the jamband music genre and innovation jams as a model for organizing and managing innovation. Jam bands by nature are interdisciplinary and offer a model appropriate for the dynamic organizational environment managers work in. By using the metaphorical approach, comparisons and connections can be made in a way similar to knowledge flows within open innovation (Chesbrough, 2003, 2011) and are complementary to the ambidextrous and pluralistic organization of today. The use of grounded theory in this study was particularly fitting, offering new concepts in relation to a metaphor that addresses important organizational elements in adopting emerging models of innovation.

This study has important implications for managers and innovation researchers. First, it suggests the conventional metaphor for innovation, which has dominated our way of conceptualizing models of innovation, limits our understanding of contemporary and emerging forms of innovation. Contrary to the management innovation literature (Hatch, 1998, 1999; Weick, 1998), which posits jazz as the standard lens to view and understand organizational innovation, new developments and technological advancements, push the boundaries and usefulness of the jazz metaphor to understand these new practices of innovation. Solving challenging business and societal problems may be possible, if there is a shift in language to how we describe and think about innovation. Next, the research suggests the use of the jamband metaphor may be constructive in the understanding of new models of innovation, particularly that relate to the opening of innovation processes within the open innovation paradigm. This is useful for those managing innovation when transitioning from a closed model to an open model of innovation by providing a context in which to guide organizational change. This has implications for open innovation researchers and offers opportunities to explore the latent elements that support or inhibit open innovation practices. This provides a broader context to examine the three types of open innovation (inward-outward, outward-in and coupled) in a relatable concept and phenomenon. The jamband metaphor is offered to understand these emerging practices.

The data suggests overlapping themes exist between the jambband music genre and innovation jams that help us understand this new model of innovation. Using the jambband metaphor, we describe the emergent development and use of innovation jams from a concept, to a management tool and service phase. Three emergent themes evolved from this study that provides insight into organizing emerging models of innovation that are evocative of the jamband music genre. These include: sense of community, collaborative feedback and knowledge sharing and expertise integration. Managers charged with implementing emerging models of innovation may benefit by building a sense of community with personal and tangible commitment—that is authentic and builds shared values and identities. The sense of community within the jamband culture created unique environments that allowed individuals to participate in a shared sense of values and identities regardless of the size in a communal way. Managers may provide feedback before, during and after innovation initiatives to bring meaningful dialogue to the forefront and tapping into passionate people who want to solve challenging problems. Feedback within the jamband genre was an ongoing iterative approach of communication the audience and band had, and provide a dialogue between the two. Lastly, in effort to support knowledge sharing and expertise integration, managers and organizations may consider providing an immersive experience of the innovation process that facilitated engagement across time, space, and culture. This places an innovation experience beyond simply utilizing IVT (Dodgson et al., 2006) but, expands how these tools can shape organizational innovation processes overtime in integrating different sources of knowledge and expertise through technology. This suggests that this model of innovation is not separate from the audience and participants, but instead is part of a broader environment—technological and social, where participants are facilitators in a multidirectional immersive experience of innovating. This new model of innovation may not be something one enacts but is embedded within others, facilitate through technology, and in an ongoing reciprocal relationship of giving and sharing in the innovation process.

References


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