

From Ideas to Enterprise Value Cultivating Business Leaders as Catalysts for Innovation



Nippon Yusen Kaisha

The Challenge

NYK Group operates in an industry undergoing profound transformation. Digital disruption, decarbonisation pressures, shifting customer expectations and increasingly complex global supply chains are redefining the rules of competition.

In such an environment, it calls for leaders who can navigate uncertainty, challenge conventional thinking and identify new opportunities for growth. To achieve this, NYK established the NYK Digital Academy, an in-house platform that goes beyond conventional leadership development, designed to cultivate entrepreneurial thinking and empower employees across the Group to become catalysts for innovation.

The Solution

Partnering with SMU Executive Development as a learning collaborator in the Academy's innovation journey, the custom programme immerses participants in the realities of innovation through—

- **Intensive design thinking bootcamp:** Bringing together participants from different business units, countries and professional backgrounds, the bootcamp creates a unique environment where diverse perspectives collide. Participants work in multicultural teams to tackle meaningful challenges, identify unmet needs and develop solutions that have the potential to create new value.
- **A learning experience that deliberately pushes participants out of their comfort zones:** The teams venture into the city to conduct interviews with strangers, uncover hidden customer insights and challenge their own assumptions. Guided by the principles of design thinking, participants empathise with users, define problems, generate ideas, build prototypes and test their concepts in rapid cycles.

Looking Ahead

By equipping employees with the confidence to experiment, the discipline to validate ideas and the courage to act amid uncertainty, the Academy continues to strengthen NYK Group's ability to create value beyond its traditional boundaries.

In an era defined by constant disruption, one of the most important competitive advantages may not be found in technology alone, but in people who are willing and equipped to imagine and build what comes next.

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The NYK Digital Academy was established as a practical programme that integrates talent development with new business creation, with the aim of enhancing employees' ability to create value for NYK Group.

— Mr. Kei Yuhara
General Manager of Innovation
Promotion Group of NYK



The Impact

Developing leaders who thrive in uncertainty:

Participants learn to embrace ambiguity, make decisions without the comfort of precedent and persevere through experimentation. They become more confident in navigating unfamiliar situations, collaborating across functions and taking ownership of new ideas.

Turning ideas into business opportunities:

Ideas generated through the Academy have progressed into internal innovation pipelines, informing new service offerings, operational improvements and adjacent business opportunities beyond NYK's traditional maritime operations.

Several initiatives have advanced towards implementation, demonstrating the Academy's ability to bridge the gap between learning and execution. By empowering employees to take ownership of ideas from concept to validation, NYK has strengthened its capacity to convert innovation into enterprise value.

Building an Innovation Ecosystem:

Beyond generating new ideas, the programme has helped embed a common language and approach to innovation across the organisation, reinforcing a culture where curiosity, collaboration and action are valued.

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