Future of Work Collective
Presented by Olga Kokshagina
The Future of Work Collective is an innovative self-managed boutique consultancy of senior corporate professionals who radically reinvented their own ways of working. As stated on the website: “Our purpose is to reinvent corporate culture and leadership to innovate brighter futures.” This organization constantly experiments with new styles and processes of lifelong learning in the corporate space. For example, they have an online leadership development program that uses new ways of connecting, ideating, sharing and working together. The impact of this project is “digital uplift and appreciation of leaders, cross-national-network connection, collective intelligence augmentation.” The Future of work Collective proposes lifelong learning labs that aim to grow capability and engagement through immersive experiences. In these experiences, the goal is “to cultivate micro-practices and principles that engage the whole self, build connection and harness the differences that make us all unique. Everything is built on trust, voluntary participation and collective intelligence.”

Creativity is one of the core guiding principles of this collective, alongside empathy, integrity, and systems thinking. In addition, special attention is given to creating ground for collaboration and learning by doing. In the words of Sandra Otto, one of its co-founders, “Key to this experiential learning is psychological safety. And we call that trust. And the key tool that we use is what we call the authentic check-in.” The latter means starting meetings with check-ins where each participant gets a turn to briefly share what is happening in “their world”— what they are thinking, feeling, and wanting at that moment. This helps to create a safe space where everyone can share their authentic feelings and thoughts. Even the space for learning is organized in a specific way to organize for collaboration, whereby instead of sitting in desks, like in a traditional workplace or university classroom, people sit in circles, resembling more “a kindergarten or indigenous environment of circles and talking sticks.”

For the Future Work Collective, learning is a journey, and the goal is to provide people with tools and resources so that students can “bring their learning home” or “making it home in yourself” (an inspirational framing of the word “homework”). But the emphasis on the self and personalized learning does not necessarily mean egocentrism. As the name itself implies, this initiative adopts an approach that emphasizes collectivism, recognizing that for a self-directed lifelong journey one needs both personal drive and support from peers.
Co-design

Reinvent corporate culture & leadership to innovate brighter futures

Connected by doing

Egos out

Circular space

Future of work collective

Learning journey
Growth Program, SEB Bank

Presented by Beata Lavrinoviča
The SEB Growth Program is a bank-lead business accelerator for ambitious small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow their business 10-fold, not 10%. SEB is one of the largest banks in the Baltics which attracts both local and international business experts, involves companies in the implementation of practical tasks and provides individual support. First launched in 2017, the focus of the program is on the development of business knowledge and skills, with an emphasis on innovation, as well as other important 21st-century attitudes and values, such as sustainability and growth thinking. The goal of this program is to help entrepreneurs better understand and apply lean start-up, human-centered approaches and rapid experimentation approaches in their business processes, as well as improve their communication and management skills.

The program is divided into three phases. First is the selection phase when SMEs with innovative development ideas and growth potential are invited to an intense one-day bootcamp, at the end of which 15 participant teams are selected to take part in the program. The intensive phase follows with a four-month long period of bi-weekly public lectures, ideation sessions to align teams’ plans and set the focus for the program, closed workshops and individual mentoring sessions with the experts to clarify uncertainties and focus on the specific needs of each company. The third phase is the 100-day project implementation, which starts with the focus on teams’ individual work and regular progress reviews. The program concludes with a demo day when all participants pitch their progress.

The SEB Growth Program allows participants to step out of their daily routine and develop their business ideas, innovative products or services, scale an existing business idea and find new business opportunities, adapt their businesses to the new norms of the business environment with a focus on innovation. It promotes active learning in collaborative teams, where the learners and their business interests are at the center of the experimental and exploratory learning process.

Since 2020, the program has included students to foster experience and idea exchange between businesses and young specialists. Students participate in the workshops and work on tasks together with the teams, bringing fresh insights to the table. While these activities are not attached to an academic environment, high-level professionals from different fields join to facilitate and provide mentoring to participants. Importantly, the program does not offer formal tests or other forms of examination, instead it produces interactive content and a flexible learning environment, where the culture of failure and iterative trials are a significant part of the learning process. Importantly, the program sees participants as lifelong learners and the most important criteria for being a participant of SEB growth program is motivation and the business idea with the potential to be further devel-
oped throughout the program phases and beyond them. Although only the compa-
nies themselves can fully evaluate to what extent new principles of working are
applied in their routines, it is possible to evaluate their change in turnover, new
product launches and revenue stream.
Connected Learning Program, Vodafone Foundation
Presented by Rajnish Tiwari
Vodafone Stiftung Deutschland (VFG) is a nonprofit corporate foundation in Berlin. It is a part of the international Vodafone Foundation Network. The foundation’s goal is to reimagine education for the digital society. A critical concern is the new skills needed to actively shape the digital world and how new technologies can be employed to develop creative solutions to 21st-century societal challenges.

A part of VFG’s work is dedicated to developing better understanding of how to create and exploit synergies between technologies and unique and irreplaceable human (cognitive) capabilities. Closely related to that is the question of how to explore new and promising ways for machines and humans to collaborate. It is, therefore, critical that learners and teachers not only dig deeper into the application part of a technology but also develop a thorough understanding of its fundamentals. In the words of Johanna Börsch-Supan, Director Strategy and Program at VFG “the ambition [is] to move that discourse from [merely] catching up to actually getting into a much more active role of enabling each and every one of us to be creators, and to be those who actually shape these technologies actively.”

One of the programs initiated by VFG aims to foster “connected learning.” Under this flagship program it launched a scheme called Digital Skills Europe (DSE), with an outlay of €20 million to support digital skills and education in 13 European countries. The program is expected to benefit 16 million learners between 2021 and 2025, limiting and reducing fear of technology through a human-centered approach that on the one hand considers the capabilities of humans and on the other hand also looks at where they feel uncomfortable with technologies.

More concretely, the foundation has a math game, or programming tool, for teachers with which they can tell stories. It also has little microcontrollers with which they can build instruments. This reduces fears and uncertainty around technology as well as helps the use of technology in fields where people already have expertise and comfort.

With the younger generations, the foundation focuses on trying to see how they can make videos for sharing on social media platforms. But VFG tries to make them reflect on the process of putting together a video while sensitizing them against fake news and preparing them to take care that the content is not harmful.
Digital Academy,
TÜV NORD GROUP

Presented by Irina Fiegenbaum & Dietmar C. Schlößer
TÜV NORD’s Digital Academy was initiated in 2017 to digitalize a 150-year-old traditional German-based company. The main feature of this digital enablement program is the digitalization from inside, acknowledging their employees as key success factors and the importance of upgrading their skills to be future proof for the new digital world. The initiative was created when TÜV NORD realized that the knowledge needed was company-specific and could not expect universities or external consultants to deliver this level of learning customization. Even TÜV NORD’s educational business unit, called TÜV NORD Akademie, which is specialized in adult education and training, had never developed such a tailor-made and comprehensive enablement program.

To master this unprecedented challenge, a cross-functional team supported by all business units was deployed. During the process of trying to create a learning program for its employees, TÜV NORD realized that while they could outsource the delivery of the identified education content, they wanted control of the curricula. In other words, they needed a curriculum that was tailored to TÜV NORD’s ever-changing business needs. The creation of the Digital Academy eventually allowed the company to formulate its own curricula, changing other elements of its learning landscape in the way.

For example, the company started in the training spaces used for other schooling on their campus and then moved first outside to the co-working spaces to distance the learners as much as possible from their daily routine. Subsequently, they created their own learning spaces based on the identified needs for the program, and eventually moved the entire program to 100% online due to the pandemic. The knowledge is delivered in a challenge-based format, asking the students to work on their own project, which takes 50% of their learning time. The projects resulting from the training can potentially become innovations that the company would bring to market or even new businesses, which is why the importance of the project element is extremely high.

It is important to note that the students in the program are employees, some very young, joining the company right after their graduation, while others have decades of experience. These are called digital experts (DE). Important outcomes from the training are the skills acquired, which can be applied directly during day-to-day work, as well as the innovative projects mentioned above, which are pitched at the end of the programme to a jury consisting of the company executive board in order to get support for further implementation. Moreover, an important outcome is a community that each digital expert can join. This community helps maintain the skills in the years to come and stay in touch with other “graduates.” Another important outcome is new career perspectives: many of the digital experts received
new tasks in their daily job, some of them got new positions more connected to digitalization and innovation; a few even gained an attractive promotion.

Originally, trainers were recruited from the consulting space to deliver the program, but the company later realized the need for deeper expert knowledge and therefore partnered with universities for theoretical content. For the online version of a program, in-company experts could contribute as well by creating and delivering the content.
The College of Extraordinary Experiences
Presented by Kyriaki Papageorgiou
The College of Extraordinary Experience (COEE) offers an intense learning experience once a year for five days in a very unusual setting: a 13th-century castle in Poland. The origin of this college is traced back to 1998, when two business consultants wrote a piece on the “Experience Economy” in the *Harvard Business Review*. They subsequently published a book with the same name the following year in which they further developed the core idea on which the College of Extraordinary Experience is built: that scripting and staging compelling experiences offers unique value, similar to commodities, goods and services. Approximately a decade later, additional publications on experience design institutionalized the field, as well as the art and science of designing unique learning experiences.

One of the key motivations of the COEE co-founders was to find new and better ways to connect people to learn from each other and innovate than in normal conferences. Having some experience with live action role-play events, they came up with the idea of bringing together professionals from different industries and backgrounds in a one-of-a-kind immersive setting: the Czocha Castle in Poland. There, participants put on capes and partake in several loosely structured activities that stimulate the circulation of ideas. As one participant has put it “it’s like Hogwarts meets Disneyland, thoroughly spiced with Burning Man ethos and costuming.”

The methodology used in COEE is based on three principles: (1) co-creation, (2) flexible focus and (3) rapid prototyping. Co-creation is encouraged through the lively interactions between participants and the sharing of ideas that stem from their different professional, cultural and educational backgrounds. Flexible focus is learned by zooming in and out between the big picture and the tiny details. Lastly, rapid prototyping is emphasized through constantly reiterating the initial ideas through testing and feedback.

Another COEE participant describes one concrete example of a challenge given to her team to tackle during her participation in COEE: their graduation performance. Once they took up the “hero’s journey” idea by one of her teammates, they employed the steps used in storytelling and mythology to design the different trials that would take place around the castle. They designed elements such as “goblins” and “magic potions.” Team members agreed to play the roles of certain mythical creatures that the heroes encountered along the way.

Additional testimonials attest to the singularity of the whole experience, the valuable lessons learned about innovation and the strong bonds built between participants. As one of the co-founders explained to us, the formula for creating memorable experiences involves first and foremost positive emotions and then artifacts, like a graduation hat or a prize, something material that can help people remember. The role of learning experience designers is one of stage designers, curators and guides.
EXTRAORDINARY

1. Role-play events
2. Co-creation
3. Professionals

FLEXIBLE FOCUS
4. 5 days (1 year)

RAPID PROTOTYPING

ECONOMY DESIGN

IMMERSIVE SETTING
- THE CROCA CASTLE

LIFE ACTION

WELCOME TO EXPERIENCE DESIGN ECONOMY