A JOURNEY FROM A TO WHAT CAN BE

THE FUTURE FACTORY PROGRAMME

SUBMISSION TO THE EFMD EXCELLENCE IN PRACTICE AWARDS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ireland is a small, open island economy on the periphery of Europe. Despite our size, our knowledge economy and infectious entrepreneurial spirit has earned us an outstanding reputation the world over.

Sometimes referred to as the “Singapore of Europe”, Ireland serves as a hub for over a thousand multinational organisations in the management of their European operations and has produced some of the world’s most successful enterprises.

As an island community intrinsically linked into the world economy, we see ourselves as a society which is ‘born global’. An integral component in the successful running of our economy is Dublin Airport, owned and operated by Dublin Airport Authority (daa).

Now the 5th busiest airport in Europe and one of the fastest growing in the world with passenger numbers going from 18.4 million in 2010 to a staggering 32.9 million in 2019, daa face daunting challenges ahead.

With passenger numbers predicted to double over the next 10 years, the organisation understands the need to put innovation at the centre of their development strategy in order to meet these challenges.

With this in mind daa established the dedicated innovation and business development function, The Future Factory as part of a new 5-year group strategy.

The Future Factory was born with a twofold mandate; Firstly; to stimulate and support innovation initiatives that clearly demonstrate commercial viability and add value by delivering projects that either decrease costs or increase revenue for daa and the wider airport eco-system.

Secondly, to foster a culture of innovation through the development of capabilities across the group - infusing and inspiring creativity and an entrepreneurial mindset throughout the organisation and the wider Dublin Airport eco-system.

With this significant task at hand, The Future Factory approached Trinity Business School (TBS) to discuss a collaboration and commitment to develop an innovation programme that combines academic learning with practical real-world projects that align with daa’s strategic goals.

These discussions lead to the establishment of The Future Factory Innovation Programme. Designed as a catalyst for people, organisational and eco-system transformation with the aim of embedding a culture of innovation into daa.

The programme seeks to identify potential leaders with the skills, knowledge and mindset to act as Innovation Ambassadors.

The impact of the programme has been astounding and widely recognised throughout daa. From a funnel of 23 ideas, 3 are now actively in development with a potential estimated value of €1.2 million.

The personal and professional development of the Innovators as a result of the programme have been outstanding, and it has impacted each and every participant in a unique and transformative way. Eight of the Innovators from the 2019 programme have achieved promotions or new roles. In addition, many of these Innovators are now coaches and mentors as part of the 2020 programme.

This is the story of how this partnership created a “from the ground up” innovation framework for the organisation, fostering and celebrating innovation while, in turn launching many leadership development journeys.

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PRESS PLAY TO WATCH OUR VIDEO
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A JOURNEY FROM A TO WHAT CAN BE
daa is a global airport management and travel retail group with businesses in 13 countries and is owned by the Irish State. The Group employs 3,500 people at its Irish airports and has a further 800 people working for its international businesses.

The organisation own and manage Dublin and Cork airports and have international airport operations and investments in Cyprus, Germany and Saudi Arabia. ARI, daa's travel retail subsidiary, has outlets in Europe, North America, the Middle East, India and Asia-Pacific. daa's core purpose is to connect Ireland with the world and its vision is to be an airport industry leader.

daa's turnover in 2018 was €897 million, up 5% on 2017, and the group profit after tax, excluding exceptional items, was €133 million.

Trinity Business School (TBS) is Ireland’s premier business school and a leading European institution with an extensive international reach in research and education.

The school is a leader in project based action learning across undergraduate, postgraduate and executive education where strong industry engagement is paramount. The focus on “live project” learning and development with organisational partners, together with a focus on sustainability, climate action and diversity, is at the heart of their DNA.

TBS has also been Europe’s top ranked university for entrepreneurship for over 5 years (Pitchbook index) where innovation, entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship are central to their approach in leading change and transformation.
THE CHALLENGE

A JOURNEY FROM A TO WHAT CAN BE
The view from up here

The worsting climate crisis, changes in aviation technology, increased pressure for high levels of customer service, escalating capital expenditure costs and increased competition in the travel retail sector are all contributing factors to any airport organisation looking to sustain growth.

Add to this the fact that all of these challenges are underpinned by the demands of a highly regulated airport environment and it’s clear that the need for passionate, creative thinkers and a culture of innovation is integral in developing the airport of the future.

daao have rightly recognised that the airport is not merely a ‘facility’. Dublin Airport is an ecosystem on a massive scale. It’s a place where 20,000 people come to work every day. It’s home to Ireland’s largest bus station and car park. It also boasts the country’s largest taxi rank and even has its own church.

The belief that innovation is core to daao is also true to the future success of the wider airport community - in essence, the ambition needs to go beyond the borders of the organisation in order to help ensure the success of the greater city, that is Dublin Airport.
The role of the team is to stimulate and support the growth of new cost saving or revenue generating value for daa and partners. The team is also charged with embedding a culture of innovation by developing capabilities across the organisation.

"A real win for us is in the culture space, in developing people ready for tomorrow."

Gráinne Morrison, Head of Brand Value & Innovation
THE CHALLENGE

Finding the right partner

Early in 2018 The Future Factory met with TBS with the ambition to develop a robust programme that could drive a culture of innovation across the organisation in a systematic way.

Over 12 months both teams collaborated closely in the development and launch of what has now become the centre of innovation leadership within daa. The key task was to copper-fasten a bespoke leadership programme that harmonised with the overall ambition and remit of The Future Factory which in turn would help to deliver the strategic objectives of daa.

The initiative is a co-created, bespoke and blended learning programme, with the purpose of developing Innovation Ambassadors and in turn, an innovation culture across daa and stakeholder organisations.

TBS and daa’s continued partnership facilitates incremental improvements of The Future Factory framework through continuous feedback and enhancements.
CHAPTER 2

TBS and daa believe that a good idea can come from anywhere and our aim is to nurture creative Innovation Ambassadors who can drive projects from ideation right through to business validation and execution.

THE CHALLENGE

Creating a culture of commercial creativity

The Innovators come from various functional roles across daa. These individuals are supported through the programme to develop the skills, knowledge and mindset of Innovation Ambassadors within their teams and business units.

Each Innovator is encouraged to develop transferrable leadership skills that are not only relevant in driving their innovation projects but are equally relevant in the roles they perform within daa.

Ultimately the focus is on delivering projects that either decrease costs or increase revenue for daa and the airport eco-system. These initiatives would result in commercially viable projects that serve as exemplars for innovation through their ideation, design, development and implementation.

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CHAPTER 3

THE COMMITMENT

A JOURNEY FROM A TO WHAT CAN BE
Shaping innovation ambassadors

The programme is a blended learning experience - combining a 13 day academic programme delivered in Trinity College to over 20 daa Innovators and “on-the-job” action learning projects within daa.

A key objective of the programme is to develop Innovation Ambassadors who have a passion for creative thinking and are actively seeking ‘big bet’ challenges to address in daa – challenges that, if met, will save the organisation money or drive revenue.

daan and TBS blended creative thinking with practical academic teaching in areas such as financial project analysis, high performing team development, stakeholder management, lean business modelling and presentation skills.

The combination of these skills has enabled the Innovators to develop the competency and confidence to comfortably present to a senior executive team.
CHAPTER 3

IDEAS
INITIALLY
PITCHED
7 IDEAS
SHORTLISTED
FOR
2019 PROGRAMME
3 IDEAS
IDENTIFIED
AS
‘BIG BET’ PROJECTS

THE COMMITMENT

Nailing the ‘Big Bet’ projects

In the first iteration of the programme, 23 ideas were initially pitched - 7 viable projects were identified with an EBITDA value of €3m.

3 of these projects are now part of The Future Factory pipeline valued at €1.2m.

A key indicator of the success is the continued investment from daa in running the programme with TBS for the next two years. In January 2020, 23 new Innovators joined The Future Factory programme to start their innovation journey.

To leverage the capability developed in 2019, the first cohort of Innovators are now mentoring the new participants and acting as coaches supporting them along their year long journey.

23 IDEAS
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‘BIG BET’ PROJECTS
THE L&D INITIATIVE
A JOURNEY FROM A TO WHAT CAN BE
THE L&D INITIATIVE

Mission possible

TBS follow a clearly defined mobilisation process for new programmes. In collaboration with daa they identified the following key programme objectives during this deployment phase.

These objectives serve as the benchmarks for success and a measure to which both teams can hold themselves to account.

"With the staff that have taken part in the programme we’ve seen a real growth and development in how they view the world and what challenges they can overcome."

Brian Drain, Chief People Officer, daa
CHAPTER 4

SHAPE INNOVATION AMBASSADORS
To develop ambassadors who have passion for innovation in the organisation, who will go on to share learnings and inspire their colleagues throughout daa.

BLENDED LEARNING
To deliver a blended learning programme that combines academic teaching with creativity and innovative real world projects.

INNOVATION FRAMEWORKS
Enabling The Future Factory team to develop and continually refine an innovation framework and strategy using best-in-class tools, techniques and processes.

INNOVATOR EMPOWERMENT
Enabling Innovators to become confident in their team interactions and helping them to understand that their contribution is both valid and valuable in their team and the organisation’s development.

TEACH A MAN* TO FISH
Giving Innovators the confidence to communicate and collaborate with others outside their teams in order to continuously influence the greater Dublin Airport community.

ALIGNING AMBITIONS
Supporting the alignment of people & culture with daa’s commercial needs outlined in the 5-year group strategy.

THINK LIKE ENTREPRENEURS
Empowering people to think like entrepreneurs. Encourage innovative approaches to solving business problems using design thinking principles.

DRIVE IT LIKE YOU OWN IT
Integrating business mentoring to enable participants to take ownership of their innovation projects and drive them forward to completion.

THE L&D INITIATIVE

Objectives

* OR WOMAN
THE L&D INITIATIVE

Innovator outputs

daa and Trinity Business School deliver a programme that is focused on achieving clear metrics of success. Every innovative project is assessed on its financial merits and the cultural shifts within the organisation are clearly visible.

The Innovators began their learning journey with TBS with a level of trepidation as they stepped into the unknown, but they leave as Innovators, armed with a new confidence and expertise that’s immediately recognised by their colleagues.

“A way of having your voice heard, it really drew me in.”

Lorraine Kearny, 2019 Innovator
Delivered outcomes

**FISH WHERE THE BIG FISH ARE**
Learn how to commercially assess big bet projects that deliver 1m+ EBITDA.

**OPPORTUNITY SEEKING**
Recognise and assess business challenges and identify opportunities that reduce costs or drive revenue for DAA.

**DO NOT FEAR FAILURE**
Develop the skills to be able to define a problem, ideate, prototype and test in a live airport environment.

**CREATIVITY IS 24/7**
Creativity and innovation are not 9 to 5. Innovators learn that ideas can come from anywhere and at any time. Adopting the entrepreneur mindset means you are always looking for opportunities.

**INNOVATION AMBASSADORS**
Develop the confidence and skills that enable them to form their own project teams across the organisation. Learning to recognise their core strengths and ability to drive positive change.

**IT’S YOURS TO RUN WITH**
Ensuring the Innovators take ownership of a project from start to finish and manage their time effectively.

**LEARN HOW TO PITCH**
Understand stakeholders and manage their specific requirements. Learn how to present with confidence to all levels of the business, from colleagues to senior executives.
CHAPTER 4

Another key tenet of the programme’s makeup is to ensure that the skills developed by the Innovators are both relevant to their existing roles and transferable in their day to day dealings within their daa teams.

**REAL LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

**SOLUTION FOCUSED**
Develop the skills to identify "big bet" challenges worth solving and to frame these challenges within a realistic commercial context for daa.

**TEAM LEADERSHIP**
Develop the confidence to reach out to colleagues and utilise collaboration skills to drive better team dynamics and results.

**TIME MANAGEMENT**
Develop their resilience and manage their time effectively to deliver across their various roles in the organisation.

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT**
Acquire project management skills and the methodologies to deliver projects within tight deadlines.

**LEAD FROM THE FRONT**
Grow in confidence and not be afraid to take the lead when necessary to drive projects forward.

**DEEPER COMMERCIAL UNDERSTANDING**
Gain deeper understanding of daa’s vision and business drivers and develop a clearer focus on business objectives.

**EMBRACE YOUR SUPERPOWER**
Identify their core strengths and weaknesses – areas of their professional skills that they can apply directly in their innovation projects.
Programme content

Embedded “live project” learning combining academic content with company-focused action-learning projects is a central tenet of the programme. A number of different methodologies were employed to deliver this:

**Case Studies** - Using real-life examples to help contextualise learning - this bridges the gap between theory and practice and increases participant engagement in the topic.

**Pre-Module Reading** - reading material distributed (where applicable) prior to each academic module.

**Action Learning Projects** - focused on the application of learning to real-world challenges that are relevant to the Innovator’s role and their organisation.

**Learning Logs** - essays and narratives assessing acquisition of learning are submitted by participants at defined stages in the learning journey.

**Classroom Activities** - putting the theory into practice in team-based exercises that encourage collaboration and cohesion.

**Collaboration Tools** - Tools such as Microsoft Teams and Sharepoint are used to engage directly with Innovators. Allowing them to engage with each other via a cloud-based collaboration tool.

**Sounding Board Days** - an opportunity for Innovators to showcase their action learning projects to senior management and executive teams and to get feedback from the Trinity academic team.

**Learning Clinics** - A two hour session every other month to deep dive into the material with help from subject matter experts in the business and apply it to the projects while in the airport environment.

**THE L&D INITIATIVE**

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CHAPTER 4

THE L&D INITIATIVE
PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Under the hood of the programme

The partnership is centred around TBS owning and delivering the academic elements of the programme with The Future Factory supporting and empowering the Innovators to put their learning into practice.

For the duration of the programme, The Future Factory have established a dedicated innovation hub to provide the Innovators with a space to work on their deliverables.

Innovators come from all corners of daa, bringing a diverse range of skills, experience and insights from 11 different functional areas of the business including facilities, security, advertising and IT.

Throughout the 12 month programme, Innovators spent 20% of their working time either in lectures with TBS, or at Dublin Airport, working on their innovation projects.

For the first 6 months, Innovators spend 2 days per month in lectures, and 2 days per month working on deliverables at Dublin Airport. Over the second half of the year, Innovators spend at least 20% of their time at the airport, designing, trialling and implementing their innovation project.
Supplementary sessions

To continually support the Innovators throughout the 12 month programme, *The Future Factory*, along with daa senior management and TBS provide a series of supplementary events throughout the year, focusing on key subject areas taught in TBS, such as finance, ideation and project planning.

Subject matter experts provide business insights, feedback and direction to the Innovators in a series of interactive and energetic sessions.

“Every day we learnt something new. Every hour, every session we went into you learnt that small bit more.”

Rob Smyth, 2019 Innovator
THE L&D INITIATIVE
PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Stage gate methodology

daa and TBS recognised from the start that any innovation projects developed as part of this programme would need to be managed through a clearly defined gating process – ensuring that the innovation would either drive revenue or reduce cost for daa.

This rigorous stage gating process introduced the Innovators to best in class processes to design, trial and implement projects in a live airport environment.

“The Future Factory GO ‘Growth Opportunity’ process

Brian Drain, Chief People Officer, daa
CHAPTER 4

The Innovators

DNA

Innovators were selected for the programme because they exuded a creative spirit and had a passion to learn. Their enthusiasm shone through from day one and it became very clear, very quickly how motivated they were to learn as much as they could from the academic team in TBS and from each other.

In the second iteration of the programme, Innovators were also selected from two stakeholder airline organisations in order to expand the reach of the innovation development journey to the wider airport eco-system. This participation will continue to expand each year thereby widening the impact of the programme.

The overarching aim of the programme is to bring out the best in these novice Innovators, immersing them in an academic environment where they are encouraged to be creative and not to fear failure.

Both daa and TBS recognised that a key tenet of developing a culture of innovation is that an idea can come from anywhere – these creative seeds just need to be nurtured.
THE L&D INITIATIVE
PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The butterfly effect of learning

To further galvanise support from and include the Innovator’s managers, the 2020 programme now includes a number of “Walk in my Shoes” where managers are invited and encouraged to join programme sessions in TBS.

2 DAYS PER MONTH IN LECTURES + 2 DAYS PER MONTH WORKING ON PROJECTS = 20% TIME DEDICATED TO INNOVATION PROGRAMME
CHAPTER 4

THE L&D INITIATIVE

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Seamless integration

TBS fully supported The Future Factory in developing their innovation process – with each of the Trinity academic team contributing enhancements and revisions to the process along the way.

TBS also ensured that The Future Factory process was interwoven into every academic module and any case studies or classroom projects were developed on a foundation of this framework. In this way TBS ensured that the programme content is directly relevant and practical for the Innovators and that the learnings could be directly applied back to the business.

The TBS team go onsite at daa at various points during the programme, meeting with key stakeholders, in order to ensure essential programme learning and development objectives are properly positioned in the corporate environment.

The programme has blended creativity with practical academic teaching in areas such as financial project analysis, high performing team development, stakeholder management, lean business modelling and presentation skills. It is these combination of skills that has enabled the Innovators to develop to a level where they can hold their own in front of an executive team.
CHAPTER 4

THE L&D INITIATIVE
PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Meeting international quality standards

Every TBS programme is subject to a tiered set of assurance of learning and quality processes, encompassing:

- Conformity with international standards for best practice through alignment with EQUIS international accreditation standards
- Participant feedback – TBS incorporates learner feedback and programme evaluation methodologies as a core element of our continuous process
- Adherence to protocols of the university’s Quality Assurance Office who monitor the delivery of education programmes, independently of the schools and departments delivering the programme
- Additional information on the Trinity Quality Assurance Office can be found here: https://www.tcd.ie/teaching-learning/quality/
Embedded in the programme is a hackathon that enables the Innovators to work directly with the Trinity student body at the ideation stage. Each module is designed to leverage the learning of the previous module – allowing the Innovators to work towards a final presentation where the fruits of their labour are showcased with senior executives from daa.
CHAPTER 5

THE IMPACT
A JOURNEY FROM A TO WHAT CAN BE
The outstanding impact of the programme has been recognised throughout the business. Culturally, daa are seeing changes throughout the organisation from increased willingness to trial and test new ideas, to exploring new ways to attribute financial value to innovation projects.

This shift has been acknowledged across the business, from the Chief Executive and his team through to front-line staff.

In the first iteration of the programme 23 ideas were pitched, 7 viable projects were identified as part of the 2019 programme with a value of over €3m. Three of these projects were then further identified as "big bet" projects for daa with a potential combined sum of €1.2m.

These big bet projects have been adopted into The Future Factory pipeline. They are currently being trialled and if successful will be developed and implemented at Dublin Airport.

**THE IMPACT**

**Measuring tangible results**

7 INNOVATION PROJECTS IDENTIFIED WITH A VALUE IN EXCESS OF €3M

3 BIG BET PROJECTS WORTH OVER €1.2M CURRENTLY IN PIPELINE
Shaping new leaders

The original participants have now become Innovators and expanded their personal and professional capacity, having shown considerable development from the beginning to the end of the programme.

They have grown in confidence, capability and knowledge which has led to many of our Innovators applying for and succeeding in gaining promotions or new roles within the airport and with daa internationally.

To leverage capability developed in 2019, the first cohort of Innovators are mentoring the new participants and acting as their coaches to support them along their year long journey.

They are also continually involved in numerous networking and developmental opportunities such as clinics and workshops as part of the 2020 programme.

100% OF INNOVATORS AGREED THAT THE PROGRAMME HAS HAD A POSITIVE EFFECT ON THE INNOVATION CULTURE WITHIN DAA

42% OF INNOVATORS TO DATE HAVE BEEN PROMOTED OR RECOGNISED AS TOP TALENT SINCE TAKING PART IN THE PROGRAMME
THE IMPACT

Innovation never stops

Having completed The Future Factory Programme, Innovators continue to develop and implement the identified ‘big bet’ projects.

They are managing this as part of their day to day role, which has provided further support to The Future Factory and generated further efficiencies for daa.

Through participation on the programme, one third of the last cohort have been identified as high potential talent by the daa talent team. In addition, the programme has opened to staff from stakeholder organisations in order to accelerate careers across the greater airport eco-system.

Accelerating career paths

Of the 23 Innovators, seven were highlighted as high potential talent through the daa talent management process. In fact, eight of the 2019 Innovators have changed or been promoted since finishing the programme in December 2019.
CHAPTER 5

Being match fit

Nine months into the programme, The Future Factory conducted an innovation readiness assessment with 25 key senior stakeholders across DAA. This assessment asked respondents their opinion of innovation within DAA, focusing on four key areas: leadership, people skills, culture and value.

The final score was 26 out of 39 - 66%, with an even score across all categories. This not only demonstrates the effectiveness of The Future Factory innovation programme in ramping up the culture within DAA but also highlights the need to continue working, developing and driving the programme to the next level.

THE IMPACT

Effecting positive change

To get first hand feedback on how the programme effected the Innovators we asked their opinion on the impact of the programme on the innovation culture within the organisation. 100% of the Innovators agreed the programme had a positive impact on the innovation culture within DAA. Not only that, their managers recognised the positive impact they were able to effect throughout their departments.
THE IMPACT

Finally

Impact from The Future Factory Programme in staff development, organisational & cultural change and in the design of actual business innovation has been extensive.

Testament to the success of the collaboration with TBS has been demonstrated by the commitment from daa to continue running the programme for a number of years into the future.

In January 2020, 23 new Innovators joined The Future Factory programme.

Evidence of the success and impact of the programme can also be seen in its extension to a number of stakeholder organisations within the airport ecosystem. This year, two international airlines have put forward novice Innovators to start their innovation journey, the Journey from A to what can Be.

“Seeing innovators move from being fearful to fearless, to lacking confidence to having an abundance of it, to being one thing and graduating as another has been a real highlight.”

Gráinne Morrison,
Head of Brand Value & Innovation
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THANK YOU