

Boundaryless Innovation

Imagine you are hungry and all you had to do was to press a large red button in your shoes to order your favorite pizza. Does that sound like a ridiculous idea? Well, that is exactly what Pizza Hut has pulled off with its Pie Top series of shoes.¹ Figure 5.1 shows how the shoe works as a pizza ordering system. Whether this will end up just being a marketing gimmick or turn into mainstream success remains to be seen, but if Amazon can introduce Amazon Dash, the button-based ordering system², who is to say that Pizza Hut cannot do the same?

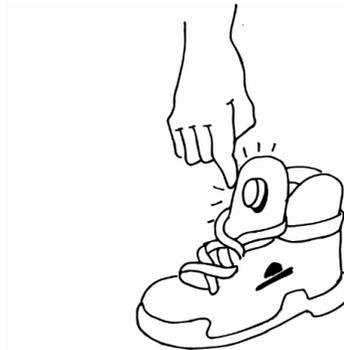


Figure 5.1 Pie Top series of shoes launched by Pizza Hut

Beam is a new-age dental insurance company that is built around a smart toothbrush. The company gets data based on the oral hygiene of the customer and brushing habits and can reward customers on good habits.³

Go-Jek, Indonesia's first billion-dollar tech start-up, offers various services to the people of Indonesia, including transportation, delivery, lifestyle, and payment services. Go-Jek's approach echoes what Travis Kalanick, ex-CEO of Uber, famously said in an interview: "If we can get a cab to you in 5 minutes, we can get anything to you in 5 minutes".⁴

What these examples tell us is that companies are going beyond conventional boundaries of their industries and producing breakthrough innovations in uncontested spaces with the objective of delighting the customer.

There are quite a few lines that are blurring away when we speak about unbounded innovation. Disruptive innovations such as automated cars or the blockchain are likely to erase the boundaries of many industries at the same time. These innovations are, in other words, truly unbounded. Another important aspect is that innovation is no longer just done in secret labs inside an organization. In many cases, customers, experts, freelancers, and value chain partners outside the organization are important co-creators of innovative solutions for the organization.

Open Sourcing and Open Innovation

Innovation knows no boundaries today. Companies use open source software, tools, methodology, and media to cut down on development time and focus on value added activities. They are also open sourcing their intellectual property. ExxonMobil, for instance, has released an open source developer toolkit to help oil and gas companies adopt standard data formats.⁵

R&D used to be a closed activity within an organization. But now, companies are embracing open innovation to bring innovation from their ecosystems into the organization. “We believe openness leads to inventiveness and usefulness”, says the GE Open Innovation Manifesto. One of GE’s projects is First Build, a collaboration platform, which connects designers, engineers, and thinkers to share ideas with other members.⁶ The ideas presented at First Build focus on solving problems and creating new home appliances.