

Inova DE GmbH CASE STUDY

Country
Germany

City / Region
Heidelberg, Baden-Württemberg

No. of Employees
3 in Germany and 3 internationally

Description of the organisation

Inova DE GmbH is a German software and project management company, founded in 2013.

Workplace Innovation practices implemented

We are a young SME. While our team and service offering grew quite substantially over the past years, our structures and processes remained the same – reflecting the time when a handful of people, meeting face to face were working together on a limited number of projects.

So, we found ourselves in a situation where with each new customer and project we gained experience and expertise, but it remained privileged to the individuals involved, as our information systems did not support knowledge sharing. As we did not have standardised processes each team member continuously re-developed their own ways of working a specific project, which was very time intense and particularly challenging for new hires who could not rely on their experience. Whenever information from past and current project were needed the CEO and team leaders were consulted, which distracted them from their work and created enormous redundancy. Moreover, the lack of transparency of our business activities and conditions for bottom-up innovation prevented our employees from engaging in strategic decision making. In the long run this led to inefficiency, delays, delivery problems, weak team involvement and team demotivation.

Hence, we decided that immediate action to:

Objective 1: ensure that the knowledge generated by the team is accessible and available to all in the team in a structured way any time.

Objective 2: Standardize our processes (non-technical and technical) from start to finish - that is, from the client engagement and acquisition to the execution of the development project and lessons learned at the end of the project.

To meet our Objective 1 we explored existing solutions in the market and performed small scale tests to support the decision process. We studied several platforms to automate parts of the workflow, and different tools to collect the information in an automatic manner without additional effort from the workers. The development team in collaboration with project managers selected MS Teams, with defined work processes that include a multitude of automatic tools for project management. We coupled the project management with GitLab for software development with issues list and source-code repository. The automatic links between the different tools and people facilitated the identification of key decision points and the flow of information among the participants. These two tools revealed the best balance of features and automatization possibilities for our company, are cost-effective and have a high usability.



To meet Objective 2 we first identified all our organisational processes on a macro level and then defined new standardised procedures that allow an effective and collaborative management and decision making of the company's daily activities in order to promote the autonomy of employees and create a cohesive structure that ensures the necessary tools to make the work more flexible.

As adopting new processes meant that our employees had to part from their habits and routines they developed over time, it was absolutely crucial to proactively engaged everyone in collaboratively identifying and defining the best approaches, so every individual can identify themselves with the choices and hence, support consequent changes.

These changes we implemented had a substantial effect on our organisation. We were able to correct our approach to work processes that were individually solved with excess of resources. The interviews with the employees at the end of the operationalization step revealed further improvement needs and we were able to improve further the involvement of our colleagues in different work processes and in their decisions.

Streamlining and standardising our processes and making all information accessible and always available to every individual made micromanagement unnecessary and instead enabled our employees to manage their projects themselves. The organisational hierarchy that was determined by the amount



of knowledge possessed has now become very flat and flexible as knowledge is not centralised anymore. At the same time, management well as employees' have now trust in the quality and timeliness of the results as the processes are clearly defined and easy to follow, experience from past projects forms the foundation for new activities and no mistakes or delays are caused by a lack of information.

Moreover, transparency and accessibility of information for all team members as well as clear processes provide employees with the insights to understand the details as well as the big picture of the business and identify new opportunities for improvement internally as well as regarding our business activities.

Finally, as our employees were the driving decision making force behind the changes implemented, they now know that they have a say, and that their input is highly valued. Hence, we are now observing how our company culture is changing towards being characterised by employee motivation, engagement, not only willingness for change but a desire to innovate and an extraordinary level of ownerships, where each individual understands his/her chance and responsibility to contribute to the sustainable success of our company.

From a business perspective, these changes, implemented before we were forced by the current pandemic to work remotely, have not only been beneficial but indispensable and the only reason we were able to continue working without interruption.



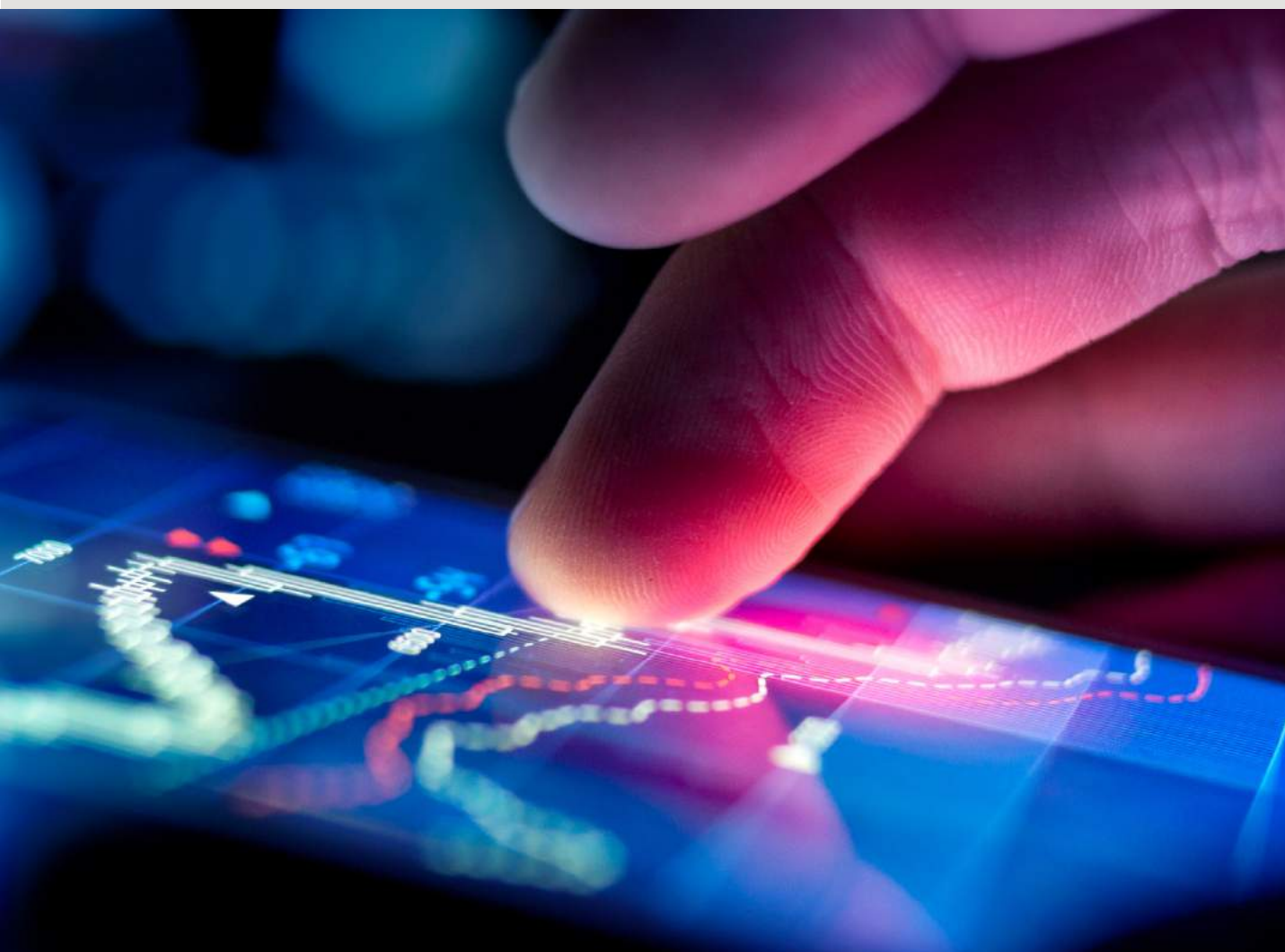
Main Achievements

● Achievement 1: Our first main achievement is ensuring knowledge availability and accessibility for all our employees at any time.

This achievement is based on our application of MS Teams and GitLab. With these tools all information, work-in-progress, outcomes and lessons learned for all our projects are online and can be accessed when needed by any individual. It has enabled self-management of our teams, contributed to higher quality of work, a more flexible organisation, a better understanding and overview of all business activities, higher motivation and engagement and finally, facilitates bottom-up innovation and participative leadership in our organisation.

● Achievement 2: Our second main achievement is streamlining, standardising and clearly defining our work processes and procedures.

This achievement has been the outcome of a collaborative effort of all our employees. Together we identified our main processes and then developed as well as visualised a map for each process outlining how to proceed. It has contributed to timely and high-quality results, allows to transfer and apply knowledge and insights from past projects, makes training new employees easier and enables our employees to identify potential for improvement and innovation. The results were also very positive in face of the challenges imposed by the corona-virus pandemic. We started this work when it was still possible to work together in an office, and by the time we were forced to work in home-office, the digital tools and processes that we defined were gold. They facilitated the transmission of knowledge and information without excessive overhead to the colleagues. We were able to continue working without interruption and used this as an opportunity to validate the workflow and tools that were selected.



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