



Best Practices in Research and Proposal Development- Zinnov's Way - A Case Study

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Abstract

The case is intended to be used as a basis for classroom discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a management situation. The case has been written on the basis of generalized experience. This case, based on Zinnov, specifically deals with Research domain. The information on actual research practices is scarcely available in business colleges. Similarly the development of research proposal is extremely important learning topic for future researchers. The case highlights these two aspects in research. The work ensures originality.

Keywords: Zinnov, Research practice, Research proposal, Scope of research

Headquartered in Bangalore, 'Zinnov Management Consulting Pvt. Ltd.,' is a leading management consulting company providing services in the area of offshore advisory, market expansion, data analytics and HR consulting. Over the last 10 years, Zinnov has delivered a gamut of consulting services to Fortune 1000 customers and reputed organizations. Zinnov stands for '*Zeal in Innovation*', Founded in 2002, Zinnov caters to research & development and

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market research based projects. It provides the consulting solutions to its clients. Zinnov believes that Globalization is not a process or activity, but is a tectonic¹ shift in the way organizations function; then whether it is about entering a new market or expanding into an existing one. It has implications on the culture of organizations, its people, and also various products and services delivered by the firms. This tectonic shift is irrevocable and is probably one of the most important transformation agents for the next generation of global economics.

The *Best Practices* of Zinnov service offerings, the 'Zinnovian Way' are,

1) Global Advisory Services

These are structured to help customers transform into efficient global organizations, ready for next decade of globalization. These transformation consulting engagements have impacted customers in

- R&D² Globalization Strategy Definition
- Product Portfolio Assessment
- Global centers maturity and Competency planning
- Peer Group Benchmarking
- Shared Services Globalization
- Partner Selection & Management

2) Market Expansion Advisory Services

Zinnov helps companies enter emerging markets as well as succeed in existing ones. The covered themes in this category are Cloud Computing, Small & Medium Businesses, Innovation and Emerging Markets. With fact-based methodologies and structured thinking Zinnov helps clients in following areas.

- Emerging Market Opportunity Assessment
- Emerging Market Customer Need Analysis
- Peer Group Benchmarking
- Business Planning & Go-To-Market Strategy Definition

¹ referring to the forces or conditions that cause movements

² Research and Development

3) People Practice

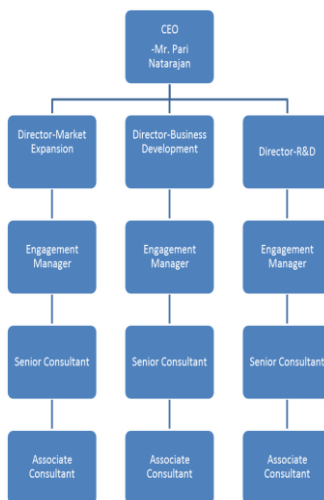
This helps in solving critical HR problems. Zinnov effectively manage their human capital; strategically develop short- and long-term workforce solutions; and identify and leverage global talent. Zinnov’s People Practice offering includes:

- Global Talent Pool Analysis and Research
- Emerging Countries Compensation Trends
- Workforce Planning and Analytics

Zinnov’s vision ‘to be a top-notch management consulting empowered by innovation’, highlights clearly the innovation driven culture in organization which is necessary for creating and capturing opportunities for customers and Zinnov itself. Vision is supported by five core values such as ‘Integrity, Wow customer experience, Inspire imagination and creativity, Trust and empowerment, Courage and passion’.

Zinnov’s Organization Structure

Zinnov’s organization structure is simple where division is activity based. There are three major activities like Market Expansion, Business Development and Research and Development. Each activity has its team of Engagement Manager, Senior Consultant and Associate consultant.



Source: Zinnov

Zinnov’s Research Proposal and Delivery Stages

The research proposal is prepared in response to the RFP³s by an organization which is looking forward to the research companies for producing information in relation to the decision making issues. When business organization does not contain sufficient information for decision making, they need research organization bring right information. Business organizations publish this need of research in the form of RFPs in accessible platform like newspaper, specific magazine, on their website or directly contact to the research organization. Selection of any research company may be based upon certain criteria defined by business organization such as a) Firm’s Research Experience and similar projects handled before, b) Strength of firm, c) Strategical Approach towards project, d) Timeline for project, etc. There are broadly eight stages in research process. Zinnov’s Research process can be cited in following stages:

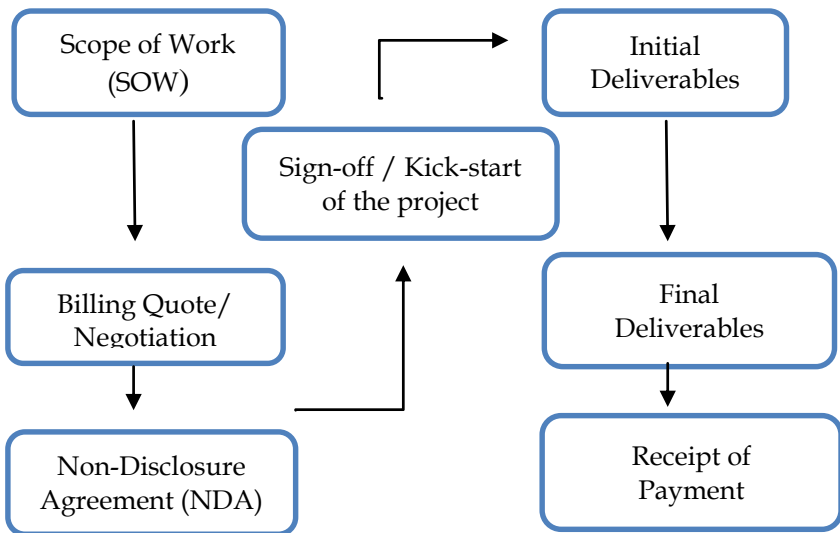


Fig: Research Delivery Stages, Source: Zinnov

Scope of Work

Scope of work consists of a highly tailored series of carefully worded statements that answer the following questions

³ Request For Proposal

- Billing Quote- How much will it cost?
- Non-Disclosure Agreement
- Sign-off/Kick-start- Who is going to do it?
- Initial Deliverables
- Final Deliverables
- Receipt of Payment-

Based on dimensions there are three varieties of memberships offered along with Scope of work in Zinnov:

Dimensions	Silver	Gold	Platinum
R&D Council Membership "GAP"1	√	√	√
Becoming a member of R&D Portal	x	√	√
Access to R&D Reports & Updates	√	√	√
Participation in the R&D Conferences	x	√	√
Subscriptions to R&D Publications	√	√	√

Source: Zinnov

- a) Zinnov’s R&D Council is known as “GAP-Globalization Accelerator Platform. GAP helps generate more value out of MNC⁴ IT/GIC⁵ centers in India. Through the “GAP”, Zinnov would provide members a broad range of service offerings to address challenges around productivity, escalating cost, talent acquisition, innovation and management stability.

In his views on R&D, Mr. Pari Natarajan, CEO, Zinnov Management Consulting, Pvt. Ltd, said, “As the cost pressures continue to exist, we foresee companies trying to execute more R&D work at the same or even lesser budgets as compared to last year. Companies would be forced to focus on new growth engines in the form of emerging markets (such as India and China) and newer technologies

⁴ Multi-National Companies

⁵ Global In-house Centre

(such as SaaS/ Cloud). And this will fundamentally push all R&D centers to deliver higher value & higher productivity at lower costs”.

Globalization Accelerator Platform provides a platform for MNC IT/ GIC companies to address key challenges, network, implement best practices, influence global decision makers and innovate through:

- Member participation in the GAP meetings and conferences
 - Benchmarking of key metrics and best practices across the member companies
 - Strategic and operational guidance to the members
 - Industry insights from the 870 GIC Centers in India
- b) As part of GAP initiative, Zinnov hosts Quarterly update meetings and annual thought leadership summit (Conferences) in Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai and NCR⁶ Region. Senior Management teams of the member companies are eligible to attend these council meetings. It provides a platform for them to identify and address common challenges, network among themselves at various levels, discuss on best practices and knowledge sharing. Collaboration is enabled through various structured and unstructured forums throughout the year, interaction between other ecosystem stakeholders and GAP members.
- c) Zinnov hosts annual thought leadership summit (Confluence series) in Silicon Valley⁷, Europe, Japan and India. Senior Management teams of the member companies are eligible to attend these thought leadership sessions. It provides a platform for them to identify and address common challenges, network among themselves at various levels, discuss on best practices and knowledge sharing.

⁶ National Capital region

⁷ nickname for the southern portion of the San Francisco Bay Area of Northern California in the United States

- Working sessions is hosted on a regular basis to brainstorm on each of the topics mentioned in every module. This helps to:
 - Define problem statement and initial hypothesis formation
 - Preliminary research findings and hypothesis validation
 - Final analysis and recommendations

Billing Quote/Negotiations

Is a rigorous exercise that includes dialogues between the parties concerned to reach an understanding about the volume, quality and speed of delivery information in an acceptable billing amount? The cue of billing amount can be taken from previous research and consulting work. Negotiators can use soft⁸, hard⁹ or principled¹⁰ approach.

Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA)

Also known as confidentiality agreement(CA), confidential disclosure agreement (CDA), proprietary information agreement (PIA) or secrecy agreement (SA), is legal contract between Zinnov and the affected party that outlines confidential material, knowledge, or information that the parties wish to share for certain purposes, but restrict access to or by any third parties. It covers confidential information on the technology and trade practices. A non-disclosure agreement unilateral or bilateral, that is, it may bind only one party or multiple parties.

Kick-start of the project

Based upon interim meetings the project moves ahead. Interim meetings can take place in on site office, consulting company office or any other comfortable place.

⁸ Gentle style of bargaining, relationship oriented

⁹ Contentious strategies to influence

¹⁰ Integrative solutions, focus on the problem

The GAP meet on a regular basis to brainstorm and discuss on a particular topic, define the problem statement and establish preliminary hypothesis through an open discussion between the primary stakeholders for the exercise.

Zinnov team focuses on research and data collection to validate the hypothesis formed. During subsequent discussion, Zinnov presents the initial findings to the stakeholders and get their valuable inputs/ feedback.

Initial Deliverables

Deliverables are the 'outputs' or the 'end products' of the contract and are evidence of a contractor's performance in meeting the contract requirements. Most deliverables take the form of a tangible product such as written report, hardware, software, data, etc. Deliverables are

- a) Specific
- b) Have clear instructions regarding their submission
- c) Clearly define the manner and standards by which company determine whether they are acceptable.

Initial deliverables may include matrix table, stage wise data report, pattern etc. which states that research is happening in right direction or not. Initial deliverables may include small sample of study/report which ensures validity of the research on larger scale. It gives scope to refine or define scope of proposal in midway.

Final Deliverables

Final deliverables also come in similar format. Final deliverables may be more varieties of documents or voluminous information.

Based on the feedback received, Zinnov carries out further research on the topic and reaches out to member companies individually for data collection and research validation

Receipt of Payment

The final framework/ benchmarking tool/ report deliverable is presented to GAP members during the Quarterly GAP meetings. The final step in this process is the settlement of all the dues once

all the satisfactory deliverables are shared with the company. Company reviews the quality of any volume of the information and subsequently payment is released. If deliverable are not sufficient (as highlighted in Research Proposal), Zinnov carries out the further study to close those gaps and produce the much desirable information. Zinnov worked on various research projects, SOW between Zinnov and Fidelity is available as an example in annexure.

Conclusion:

The best practices in research by Zinnov such as Global Advisory Services, Market Expansion Advisory Services and People Practices can prove valuable for any organization. These practices are supported by different activities at each level. The GAP (Globalization Accelerator Platform) is the key tool towards market research and development developed by Zinnov. Then leadership summits and seminars add further dimension to the best practices. Zinnov have tiered service product for variety of customers through Silver, Gold and Platinum membership where range of service varies. Not all customers have same requirement. Based upon long term or short term relationship value product (memberships) can be selected by the customers.

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Annexure

Scope of Work between Zinnov & Fidelity

Fidelity joins GAP membership and entitled to receive all the following services as part of the annual membership. The membership benefits spread across various modules

Module 1: Global leadership

Benchmarks- Global Roles Benchmarking: Most Indian MNC Centers are aspiring to play a strategic role and deliver higher value to their headquarters. One of key enablers of moving up the value chain is for these centers to play a global role from India. This exercise aims at benchmarking the roles and responsibilities of these key stakeholders and approaches to attract and sustain these global roles.

Final Deliverables

- Benchmarking report on the types of global roles from India, the number of roles, their span of control etc.
- Case studies of leaders who are assaying global roles from India

Module 1 (a): Business Impact

Benchmarks- Engineering Vitality: MNC IT/ GIC centers are looking to deliver higher value beyond cost & scale. Engineering vitality is a proprietary Zinnov framework that enables MNC IT/ GIC centers to assess themselves against peers across dimensions such as organizational charter, innovation capability, market impact being created, ecosystem collaboration etc.

The assessment will help organizations build significant capabilities, deliver high value, overcome key challenges and identify best practices

Final Deliverable: A detailed benchmark report that assesses the total value proposition being delivered by MNC centers in India, across several strategic levers and supported by best practices from the peer ecosystem.

Module 2: Innovation

Benchmarks-Innovation Excellence: Today, established business models continue to be threatened due to the onset of disruptive technologies and a paradigm shift in user consumption patterns. In this volatile business environment, organizations need to evaluate and revisit their plans and budgets towards innovation every year to ensure sustainable business growth. Moreover, Innovation often is not linked to an immediate revenue opportunity; therefore the success of innovation programs often goes unmeasured. This excellence benchmark will enable MNC's to evaluate their current innovation capability relative to peers and undertake structured initiatives to drive up the innovation quotient of an MNC IT/ GIC center.

Final Deliverables

- Invitation to working session meetings
- Benchmarking report on how to assess the current innovation capabilities of MNC IT/ GIC centers relative to peers and undertake structured initiatives to drive up the innovation quotient.

Module 3: Ecosystem Connect

Benchmarks- Global Service Provider Rating (GSPR): Zinnov's Annual Global Service Provider Rating survey is a comprehensive benchmarking report of the top Global MNC IT/ GIC Service Providers across geographies like India, China and Eastern Europe across multiple verticals. The overall rating is based on components like financial strength and capabilities like business models, innovation, expertise, people strength and operations. The rating also highlights that the impact of current economic trends on the MNC IT/ GIC Service Providers community.

Final Deliverable

- A detailed report, highlighting the ranking of Service Providers across verticals, key industry trends as well as the profile of the participating companies

Module 4: Talent

Benchmarks-Compensation & Benefits Report 2014: Zinnov's annual Compensation & Benefits (C&B) Survey is conducted exclusively for Software Product Development, Semiconductor, Embedded and Engineering MNC IT/ GIC companies. It provides an in-depth analysis of the prevailing C&B¹¹ trends in addition to value added services such as Attrition, Retention Strategies, and Talent pool analysis etc. The report apart from providing a retrospective viewpoint also predicts the outlook, based on the pulse of the industry, participant feedback and extrapolation of past data. It will help organizations understand their relative positioning in the market and develop an understanding of the compensation and benefits market trends going forward.

Final Deliverable:

- Invitation to working sessions
- Benchmarking exercise on the compensation and benefits across MNC IT/ GIC companies
- A detailed report on C&B 2014
- A bi-annual update of the data so that information is almost on a real-time basis

Module 5: Operational Efficiency

Benchmarks- Operational Cost Benchmarking 2014: Zinnov's annual 'Operations Cost Benchmarking Survey', benchmarks the operations costs on Indian MNC IT/ GIC Centers across a multitude of parameters such as people cost, infrastructure cost, travel costs etc. across locations and business verticals. The objective of this study is to help centers optimize their overall operations costs while in parallel delivering higher value to the HQ.

Final Deliverables

- Invitation to working sessions
- A Benchmarking exercise on the operation cost trends across companies

¹¹ Compensation and Benefits