Innovate Jardines is the Group’s exciting new initiative aiming to inspire and promote innovation, particularly the use of technologies, across the Group. Launched by Group Managing Director Ben Keswick in July 2016, it is set against a backdrop of the increasing impact technology is having on our businesses and the urgent need for our people to take on an innovative mindset in order to keep our businesses relevant.

Innovate Jardines is designed to challenge our business units to come up with fresh business proposals that address disruptive influences and create opportunities for business development. The best proposals are to receive seed funding from the Group. The first Innovate Challenge questions focusing on Customer Loyalty and Big Data were set by the leaders of the Group’s motor dealership operations. They produced a fantastic reaction, culminating in nine innovative ideas receiving initial

The nine ideas and their ‘Innovists’ were chosen after a three-month process of submission, review and assessment, which tested their innovativeness and relevance to the Challenge questions.

Innovate Jardines selected to receive initial ‘Proof of Concept’ funding from the Innovation Fund, pitches his idea to the Innovate Jardines Leadership Team at the Final Showdown.
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“In setting the questions, we debated the significant trends facing the automotive industry and their implications for our auto dealership and distribution businesses,” explained Zung Fu China Managing Director Elton Chan, who served as an Automotive Industry Expert to the Innovate Jardines Leadership Team for the Challenge. “We agreed that the two most significant areas were how to leverage data in a digital world and how we can continue to win the hearts and minds of digital-savvy customers.”

Within four weeks of the launch, more than 1,500 ideas had been submitted in response to the two Challenges on the Innovate Exchange, the web-based platform at the heart of Innovate Jardines. On one day alone, 200 ideas were posted. Additionally, over 8,000 people from across the Group registered on the platform, where information about new technologies and disruptive influences is posted, supported by discussion groups moderated by technology experts.

“The enthusiastic response to the Innovate Jardines programme shows that there are plenty of innovative ideas from our people who have great passion for their jobs,” said Mr Keswick. “They have come up with fresh ideas that prove that they are ready to change the way they work in order to create a better customer experience or to simply do things better. This reflects the depth of talent within our Group and is immensely encouraging.”

“We were delighted when we saw the ideas coming in and the platform becoming active,” added Innovate Jardines Manager Hugo Marland. “It certainly demonstrated the innovative spirit across Astra and J&C’s automotive businesses, and at Jardine Motors UK and Zung Fu, and is testament to the enthusiasm and creativity of the Group’s people. They have set a great example of fresh thinking which we hope will become a benchmark for the Challenges going forward.”

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A Robust and Thorough Review Process

As soon as the ideas submission period closed, a robust and thorough review process began to identify those suitable to proceed to the next stage. All 1,544 ideas received were reviewed by at least three moderators. Of these, 300 ideas were selected for a more detailed review by Subject Matter Experts, industry practitioners and the Innovate Jardines Team. Each idea was measured on its feasibility, desirability, relevance to the Challenge and its ‘X Factor’ – the exceptional quality that sets an idea apart from others.

From this list of 300, 42 ideas made it through to the Idea Review Session. This took place over two days, with each idea discussed individually by a select group of moderators.

“The Idea Review Session proved to be an incredibly difficult task, given the quality of the ideas and high standards of each submission,” said one of the moderators.

Ben Keswick
During the two-day Bootcamp, Innovists used various tools to help them sharpen their ideas.

The Motor Dealership Innovate Challenge Cycle

Challenge launched, and 1,500 ideas were submitted through the platform. The most promising 300 were identified from which the Top 40 were selected.

Motor dealership leaders met to consider and set the Challenge questions, which addressed real business issues.

Top 40 ideas discussed in detail at Idea Review Session, and the list was reduced to 23.
Bootcamp Takes Ideas Towards Reality

Of the 42 ideas considered, 23 were then selected to attend the ‘Bootcamp’, a two-day workshop held in Macau, which looked at how to take the ideas from a concept to reality. This began with a guest speaker from 500 Startups, a leading venture capital fund, and continued with the Innovists being introduced to tools to help them sharpen their ideas and develop them further.

Activities ranged from exploring the ideas with each other, to understanding design thinking and creating a business canvas. Individual coaching sessions were carried out by both external experts and the Innovate Jardines Team with the aim of refining proposals in preparation for pitching their ideas to a panel on the final day.

“The level of effort from the Innovists who made it to the Bootcamp was so impressive,” said Hugo Marland. “Some of them stayed up all night, and I was receiving email questions in the early hours of the morning as they worked towards putting their pitches together.”

Commenting on the programme, one of the Innovists, Jason Cranswick of Jardine Motors UK said, “It’s really unlocked the global scale of Jardines for all of our teams in the UK and it’s got people thinking differently. It is very exciting and very fast paced, which is good for us.”

In the end, 13 ideas were selected at the Bootcamp to move on to the next stage, with Innovists representing Group automotive operations in Hong Kong, Indonesia, mainland China, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and the UK.

Facing the Final Showdown

Those selected had just three weeks to hone their ideas and prepare their presentations for the Final Showdown, which was held at Mercedes Me in Hong Kong. Adopting a ‘Dragon’s Den’ format, each Innovist had to pitch their idea to the Innovate Jardines Leadership Team, which included Ben Keswick, and then face comments and a Q&A session from this experienced panel.

“At the Final Showdown we focused on the problem, the solution proposed to solve it, funding amount required and, most importantly, the people behind the 13 ideas,” explained Mandarin Oriental Vice President, Marketing and Business Development, and Innovate Jardines Leadership Team Member Celine Du. “Initially we thought we should not be too tough with our questioning, but the standard of ideas was so high and the Innovists reacted so well that we ended up throwing some very probing and difficult questions at them – and getting great answers in return!”

After intense deliberation by the panel, the nine most compelling ideas, which clearly reflected the entrepreneurial passion of their Innovists, were selected to receive funding from the Innovation Fund. They now move forward, each with the guidance of a Portfolio Manager, to the ten-week Proof of Concept stage.

Innovists behind these 23 ideas attended a leading Bootcamp for coaching, mentoring and evaluation.

13 ideas then made it to The Final Showdown to pitch in front of the Leadership Team.

Nine ideas were selected for ‘Proof of Concept’ funding and further development.
Outstanding Ideas

Of the successful ideas, five are from Astra and JC&C’s automotive businesses, two from Zung Fu and one each from Cycle & Carriage and Jardine Motors UK. The ideas range from process innovation related initiatives such as an aftersales resource management tool linked to dynamic pricing, to ‘hot topic’ technology solutions involving artificial intelligence and on board devices. Some ideas could become stand-alone businesses in their own right in the form of differentiated, intelligent car advisory platforms and a personalized second hand car buying experience for customers.

“Selecting these top nine ideas out of the 1,500 we received was an achievement in itself,” said Ben Keswick. “The Innovists are proactively trying to change for the better the way we do things, and thanks to their out-of-the-box thinking, I am sure that we will see exciting benefits for our auto businesses.”

Challenges Exceed All Expectations

The success of the first Challenges has exceeded expectations, both in terms of the magnitude of the response and the calibre of ideas. Backed by strong support from Group management, the Challenges have given people working in the Group’s automotive businesses the opportunity to express their creativity, think out of the box, and tackle head-on the challenges of disruptive technologies.

“The automotive industry is certainly seeing the impact of change, whether it’s through the emergence of companies like Tesla, the growth of electric and autonomous vehicles or the continued rise of shared mobility solutions,” said Group Finance Director...
and Innovate Jardines Leadership Team Member John Witt. “It was a great place to start the first Challenges as they also involved geographical locations across the Group, different languages and different cultures.”

Feedback from the auto businesses themselves has been hugely positive, with several managing directors remarking on how the whole Challenge process has accelerated the development of certain strategies or applications in their operations. Whether selected for funding or not, everyone who had participated had achieved a greater awareness of the disruptive forces in their sector. They had also tasted what it is like to be innovative, which they can take back to the way they operate their businesses.

“Many feel that they are now much clearer about how disruptive technologies can be applied to their businesses, but the overwhelming and most satisfactory impact has been in motivating their staff to create a culture of innovation,” said Mr Witt.

Looking Ahead

While the first Challenges have now moved into the Proof of Concept phase, the Innovate Jardines Team stress that this is just the beginning of a long journey to keep up to speed with disruptive technologies as a Group.

“We hope to maintain the momentum and continue to innovate as we move forward,” said Mr Marland. “We also need to continue to refine the process and make it more robust as we help our inaugural portfolio of nine ideas succeed, and prepare for our next Challenge, which will be launched in December 2016.”

One area which Ben Keswick is keen to address is the changing environment that is being faced by Jardines’ people and so the next Challenge will be themed ‘The Future of Work’.

“The way we all work is being affected by new technologies and the changing expectations and experiences of employees,” said Mr Keswick. “Equipping our employees with the right skills, and taking advantage of new technologies are all crucial if we are to remain relevant to customers and ahead of our competitors. This Challenge will be open to everyone in the Group as it impacts us all.

“Being innovative is not easy. We have to be prepared to try new ideas, and be willing to make mistakes – that is how we learn,” Mr Keswick added. “The Group has been at the forefront of its industries, and constantly seeking new opportunities, for almost 200 years, and I am very pleased to see that Innovate Jardines is proving that we can be just as innovative today as we have always been.”

The Challenge questions on ‘The Future of Work’ will be refined based on the input from senior executives across the Group, and in due course will be open to the entire Group, so all Business Units are urged to participate.

Innovate Jardines looks forward to welcoming the next group of exciting ideas into its portfolio.

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