INSIDE GOOGLE ZÜRICH: INNOVATION AND IDEAS FOR BUSINESS AND BRANDS

Do you think you know Google? If you think it is all about search, maps, Gmail, Android, and AdWords, you would be right, but **INSEAD Alumni** learned in October that Google has a greater mix of services that can be tapped by businesses and brands, some that are available for free and some for-a-fee.

The sold-out networking event in Zürich, organized by Matthias Frieden (MBA05), featured three speakers from Google's Zürich R&D Center: Patrick Warnking, Google Country Manager, Switzerland, along with two INSEAD MBA alumni, Raphael Leiteritz, Group Product Manager for Google Maps (MBA04) and Daniele Rizzetto (MBA02) Head of StreetView Operations. They presented some of Google's products, services, and its ideas to more than 80 members and special guests of the INSEAD Alumni Association Switzerland.

Do you know Google Zürich?

- 1,100 employees at the R&D center in Zürich.
- Google's largest engineering group outside of the US
- Engineers in Zürich work on Google Maps, Search Refresh, Gmail features, YouTube, Apps for enterprise, Emerging Markets, and Street View Operations
-

Do you know Google's Corporate Culture?

- Think Big: The main driver of product development is the desire to serve billions of Internet users. The Growth of the Internet has just begun. Engineers particularly like the "Think Big" idea because it is a challenge and it means driving fundamental changes with a huge impact due to the sheer number of people a new technology can touch.

- Thinking big means investing in projects and advanced technologies. Big is hard to do. But it means there is less competition. One of its largest ongoing projects is Google Books (formerly Book Search). Google has scanned, converted to text and stored in a digital database more 30 million books.
- There are few companies in the world today that have the will and the means to do such projects.
- Current examples are self-driving cars, Google Glass, and Loon, a new project (see photo) that aims to develop a lower cost broadband networking solution for the "next two to three billion" Internet users, the ones that don't yet have high-speed Internet access, neither through mobile or fixed lines.
- Thinking big means stepping past linear or incremental change, in favor of exponential change. Two examples of this kind of strategic thinking are to be found outside Google, in the types of projects undertaken by Singularity University, which has spawned more than 20 startups, each claiming to solve big problems; and the X-Prize, which aims to create a Star

Caption: A Loon Network Node (Image Source: Project Loon)

Trek-like Tricorder and land on the moon again. It has already developed a much improved oil spill cleanup agent, enabled a super energy-efficient car, and catalyzed a USD 1.5 billion space tourism industry.
- Another noteworthy example of exponential change is the dramatic drop in the cost of DNA sequencing. Even a de-facto standard like Moore's Law has proven inadequate for prediction in this case. Five years ago the cost of sequencing parts of the human genome was millions of dollars per dataset. Now experts

are predicting it will cost USD 100 in 2015 to process a comparable sized dataset.

- Google is transparent to employees, exhibiting a non-hierarchical management structure. It leaves room for employees to "dream", even disrupt.
- Clear goals for corporate development and innovation are communicated to employees.
- "Eat your own dog food" and measure everything, particularly at the prototype or beta phase: Employees are encouraged to use Google products. The core function of a product manager is to understand the measurement data; Launch early and often; don't be afraid to fail. Google offers highly motivating financial rewards for successful ideas.
-

Do you know Google for Brands and Business?

Google Docs: It offers fewer features than MS Word; for example, versioning is not supported. But it does support a revision history of any stored document. The advantage of Google's solutions is that there are no longer multiple versions of a document being emailed around an organization or a team. It enables better collaboration, meeting real user needs, says Google, and it is designed to support the way people really work: which is collaboratively.

Google Street View: businesses can create a 360-degree, interactive tour in Street View. The images are also accessible when users search for a business on Google Maps.

Google Trends: Determining trends from massive amounts of data to make business decisions and better products is a strength at Google, no doubt. But did you

know that Google shares its search data with its users and the research community? Trending search terms
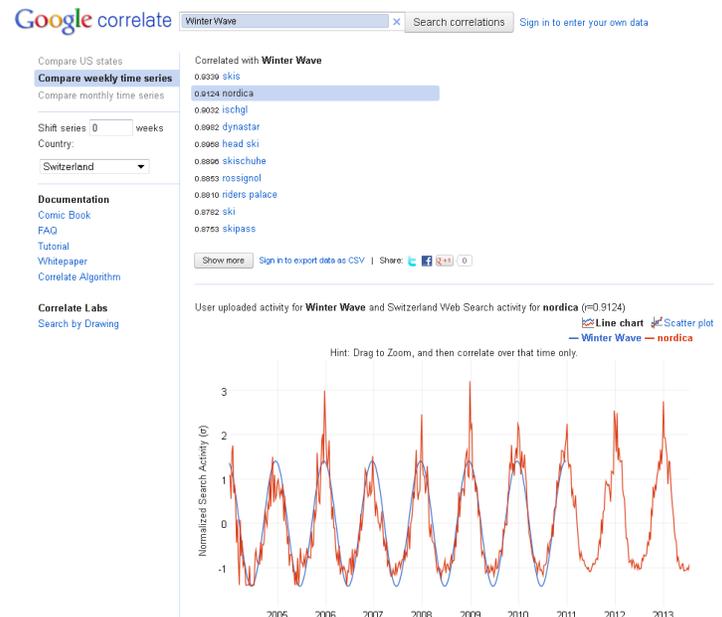
are graphically represented, reflecting the interests and concerns of Google users since 2004 - for free. The search term data is indexed, supporting the ability to sort data by region, by time, and by city. It is updated frequently, according to the Google Trends website.

Breakthrough trends (where growth is over 5,000%) are also indicated. Features include: "Hot Searches", "Correlate" (which corresponds with real world trends over time – see image) and "Cold Searches". The application is primarily used by search marketers and keyword optimizers. But it could be used as prediction tool, and it could be exploited by business and brands for things like competitive intelligence and consumer marketing.

Mobile Rising: A retailer would never have a shop that was messy and disorganized but that is exactly what smartphone users see when they land on a brand or business' website that has not been optimized for mobile. Google has a solution for that too.

Byline: Valerie Thompson, MSc