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### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am happy to provide feedback on the collaboration between Nestlé R&D and Professor Raphael H Cohen. I was part of the selection committee that had asked Raphael 10 years ago to design and run the “Innovation and Entrepreneurship” training program (originally called MicroMBA) to boost innovation and intrapreneurship at Nestlé R&D. As this program has been facilitated by both Nestlé executives and external top-notch professors selected by Raphael, it combines internal and external perspectives to open participants’ mind.

One of the characteristics of this program is that each group of about 5 participants must identify a real innovation opportunity that fits Nestlé strategy and objectives. The group must then develop a compelling opportunity case to convince management to give the green light. The next and most demanding step is to turn this idea into reality: engaging with all stakeholders to implement at least a pilot to demonstrate real feasibility. During the last 10 years this program has delivered close to 50 real bottom-up innovations that have either been implemented as originally intended or have planted the seeds for further opportunities. Purina’s Slimply-Fit (<https://www.proplan.com/cats/simply-fit>) is an example of an innovation initiated by this program. They include not only new products but also new services, new business models, new marketing strategies and new processes.

Besides the fact that, thanks to these projects, the program pays for itself, it represents an additional channel of bottom-up innovation for Nestlé R&D. With 10 cohorts representing about 230 people, we now have a community of agile and audacious change agents looking for opportunities, even after graduating from the program. As they have increased their business savvy and networking skills, our scientists also interact more effectively with the other functions in the company. Many of them have indeed been promoted to handle more complex responsibilities.

I have no hesitation to state that Raphael H Cohen has been instrumental in the success of the Nestlé Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program. In close cooperation with several of our executives, he has managed the program and coached all the project teams to achieve impressive results. As he has been truly committed to the participants’ success and personal development, he has encouraged them to go out of their comfort zone and reach new heights. Thanks to Raphael’s experience as a seasoned serial-entrepreneur, business angel

and expert in executive education, participants have been forced to think out-of-the-box and explore uncharted territories. He has been a true source of inspiration to boost their entrepreneurial potential and their professional agility. The program is certainly tough and demanding but all the participants say that they have really enjoyed the journey and all its learning opportunities.

The high success rate of the Nestlé Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program projects shows that we have had very talented people attending the program. They have enthusiastically embraced the IpOp Model developed and taught by Raphael H Cohen. As the backbone of the Nestlé Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program, this rigorous and demanding innovation toolbox has helped participants to efficiently cooperate in groups on their project while using a shared vocabulary. The IpOp Model terminology and perspective has now permeated our innovation culture with concepts such as Pain/Need/Desires, Benchmarking on Customer Decision Criteria or the relentless but crucial cataloguing of Unknowns.

Another key component of the Nestlé Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program is the emphasis on Fair and Caring Leadership that teaches participants how to manage a complex project in non-hierarchical teams with members located on different continents. As a very humanistic team management approach which has also been conceptualized by Raphael H Cohen, it allows participants to learn the keys to true engagement in the implementation phase. It helps them grow as leaders and team players, while fostering agility and intrapreneurship.

To improve the fit to Nestlé's needs and evolving environment, I have over the years asked Raphael to introduce several significant adjustments to the program. They have improved the program and his willingness to customize and implement changes in a very constructive manner is a testimonial of his level of dedication. Raphael has also volunteered several relevant business suggestions regarding what we do that go beyond his duties as executive education program manager. On several occasions and because of his subtle understanding of market and corporate dynamics, he has also acted as a sounding board. With his honest and straight-to-the-point analytical skills, he brings an external view as well as valuable best practices.

It has been a pleasure cooperating with Raphael and I look forward to continuing interacting with him. I have appreciated his deep commitment to our success as well as his down-to-earth and solution-oriented approach to maximize the outcome for both Nestlé and the participants.

Valerio Nannini



*Senior Vice President  
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