July 2009

creative**4**business

News

Our website has had a makeover, why not take a look?

Creativity To Go is our new **FREE** virtual Creativity and Innovation **clinic**. Send your questions via our website, email or twitter and we will reply as soon as possible.

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the sixth edition of Innovation Matters for 2009. In the UK we seem to be encountering some warm weather at last. To go with the feel of summer you might like to watch the video of 15 minutes, the recent single from **The Yeah You's** which is set to be the record of the summer.

Please look to your left and see what the latest news is. Don't forget that you can also revisit past editions of Innovation Matters in our newsletter archive including last month's popular articles.

This month we have two articles. The first takes a critical look at **Outcome Driven Innovation** and the second lists a few common **blocks to creativity**.

As is usual during the summer, Innovation Matters will be disappearing whilst our readers are taking their holidays so the next issue will be in September rather than August.

Happy reading and happy holidays,

Derek Cheshire

Outcome Driven Innovation - problem or not?

Outcome Driven Innovation (ODI) clearly works for a number of organisations (usually larger organisations) and not for others. Why could this be? Personally I also have a number of issues with the methodology but this is not an attempt to pull ODI apart, rather to simply point out some issues and let others make up their minds as to what is best for them.

Innovation is, or should be, a hugely flexible process that works within a comprehensive framework but which is not overly specified. It may be further complicated by the (necessary) requirement that all areas of a business (and hence all of the people) become involved. If this does not happen then all we have is a glorified R&D department.

The specification of ODI seems to me at first sight to be very prescriptive but that is just an opinion. There is however, a danger that any business embracing ODI which has not fully bought into the philosophy of Innovation, could still be governed by left brained groupthink and could embark on a process of specifying and documenting everything. This could result in a) no action at all and the incorrect conclusion that Innovation does not work b) a rigid process that is in fact more akin to something resulting from Business Process Reengineering (BPR).

Another possible issue is the fact that one of the initial steps if to formulate an Innovation strategy when in fact the process will normally help create the strategy. Also, capturing customer inputs and looking at the broader marketplace will also help

formulate the Innovation strategy.

From the outside, ODI looks like a tool driven methodology where you simply turn the handle on the sausage machine and things pop out. This is not Innovation, it is more like Taylor's scientific management. And another claim is that it has been developed over time, not a crime in itself but where is the (double loop) learning that means the methodology itself can be updated and grow as needs (and the market) change.

Finally, everything appears Marketing driven which is why many of us embraced Innovation in the first place. As they say, the devil is in the detail so readers should research ODI and then draw their own conclusions. After all, you should use the methodology/framework that is right for you, not just use something that is popular or recommended by a friend because it uses the word 'Innovation'.

Removing blocks to Creativity

As if dealing with emotional and perceptual blocks isn't enough, we also need to overcome our cultural conditioning. Cultural blocks are created by attitudes in society and among our peers which have the effect of inhibiting creative thinking. Sometimes these cultural blocks are so much a part of our upbringing that we're practically blind to them.

Here are some of the most common cultural blocks:

"We must be logical about this"
Why is this so? You might need to specify your desired outcome but not the journey. Once in a awhile you might like to ban logic altogether and see what happens. Remember these three things:

- Logic can solve problems, but creativity often requires a leap of the imagination
- Creative ideas often don't make any sense at first
- Just because an idea is illogical doesn't mean its 'bad'

Role stereotyping
Our inherently conservative culture sees to it that most of us grow up with the idea that creativity is not possible without advanced training, higher education, superior intelligence, etc. This is simply nonsense. Also creativity is often seen as the

preserve of a particular function within a business.

"Playing is for kids"
Being creative means being willing and able to play with ideas, materials, and even your most basic ideas about reality. Creative thinking is a form of mental play. Relax your grown-up inhibitions and let your mind out to play more often. Also, many of us already work with prototypes which is simply a slightly restricted form of play.

"Fantasy and daydreams are useless distractions"
Early in life, we're taught that fantasy and daydreaming are unproductive and even dangerous to our health. Creative thinking requires that you be able to daydream and fantasize without feeling guilty for doing so. Strive to recognize and get past your conditioning. Those daydreams can also be useful as part of a futures programme where we predict the future many years in advance.

"Though shalt try nothing new"
This is the great unspoken commandment that directs many of our thoughts and actions. While change for its own sake is rarely creative, creativity requires openness to challenging the status quo. Ideas such as the wheel and space travel must have been as a result of trying something new. Just think what you could do!

"Creativity is too abstract"
Well yes and no. The techniques that we use to help generate and explore ideas can be a little strange but we can calibrate creative processes so we know how much return we get for a particular amount of time and effort. Those who like to plan and budget have no excuse for not joining in.

"I don't like to ask questions or criticise"
In many cultures it is not natural to openly question or comment on the ideas of others or examine the status quo. This can prevent progress so you can try and gently nudge people and show that questioning is ok but also we can use techniques with the 'challenging' built in or which concentrate on building ideas. There is no excuse not to embrace creative thinking.

Constant Contact