

News on Creativity and Innovation related topics

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the September edition of **Innovation Matters**. Many readers will be returning to work refreshed after taking a vacation and businesses will be starting to plan for next year. It is looking as if trading conditions will be tough for all of us so why not get a little help with finding alternative solutions to your business issues? Get in touch to find out how Business Creativity can help get your business through the recession.

This month we have three articles. The first looks at **what motivates people to buy into Innovation** and how we might use this knowledge. The second article examines **possible obstacles to solving problems** within an organisation and how these can be managed or removed. Finally there is a brief introduction to using the **'Why' technique** for getting to the real issue in a multi layered problem.

After having a birthday recently I have decided to give away a present to all of my readers. Go to <http://www.creative4business.co.uk> and take a look in the eShop. Pick any one of the 4 volumes in the YES You Can! ebook series and email me with your choice. I will then email it directly to



Tip: Seeking inspiration in seemingly unrelated areas can help to move thinking beyond what's known into innovative ideas.

So, how does this impact innovation? The best answer is a famous Henry Ford quote: "If I had asked consumers what they wanted, they would have said a faster horse." To innovate, it's important to think of solutions that aren't based on what already exists.

at no cost.

If you have missed previous editions of Innovation Matters you can find them all at www.creative4business.co.uk/archives.html.

Happy reading,

Derek Cheshire



Innovation - What's In It For Me?

Employees love success so start talking about it - all of the time. Above all, people ask 'what's in it for me?' The answer does not have to be money, think of it in terms of value where value can be one or more of:

- recognition from the business or organisation
- recognition from management and peers
- monetary rewards
- the opportunity to help others (and feel good)
- creating a feeling of belonging
- the opportunity to use infrequently used skills
- the opportunity to collaborate and learn
- the opportunity to bring something completely new into the world

It is difficult to address all of the above but your Innovation initiative can be designed to meet more than one. The number and type of benefits you cover will depend on your organisation and possibly national cultural issues.

Innovation, particularly Open Innovation is a social activity so networking activities such as using Social Media can be used to provide benefits and also to spread news of your success. Others will then be more inclined to join in and contribute. The more minds you connect, the greater the value you can generate for your business whether you seek new products and services or just process improvement.

Apart from asking themselves the question 'what's in it for me?' people will also wonder 'how painful will it be?' or 'how much effort will it take?'. All interactions involve a degree of friction or tension so let us go with this engineering metaphor and consider how we might 'oil the wheels' of our Innovation project or programme to ensure things run as smoothly as possible.

All of your contributors will take value from the project in their own way so you will need to ensure that you generate and distribute value in as many ways as possible. It is also good practice to ensure that the personal values of individuals are aligned with the values of the business.



People can also be aligned with your aims (hence pulling in the same direction) if you create a clear and compelling story about your Innovation challenge that will resonate with all of your participants. Such a story can also be used to set out goals, definition of success and rules of engagement which will help you to manage expectations. Do the groundwork first and success will follow!



Remove The Blockages And Let The Solutions Flow

There are many ways in which you can be stopped from creating solutions and generating ideas. Some are physical but many are psychological. Here are five such blockages together with suggestions for removing them.

1. Copying is cheating

This may be the case for school examinations but not in the world of business. Really great ideas are often protected with patents and copyright so you cannot use them (not without fear of legal action anyway). If an idea is not protected then you can use it, I call it 'creative swiping'. Tell the doubters that this will get things

done quickly and that you can make your own mark by tailoring the idea for you own purposes. This is exactly the philosophy behind Open Source Software.

2. We Must Figure It Out Ourselves

There is great pleasure in doing this however why should you do this if someone else has already done so? Save time and create original ideas elsewhere. Avoid getting into this situation by rewarding people according to the generation of a solution rather than for the effort put in to generating a solution. They will soon get the message.

3. We Are Inferior If We Cannot Figure Things Out

This is a natural feeling and if bad if you are always taking in ideas from outside (some people do however make a good business out of this). At some point your problem solving team will generate ideas that other people will wish to use so the balance can be redressed. You should emphasise that customisation and adaptation are as important as original thought.

4. Problems Are Owned By Individuals

People have a great attachment to the problems that they work on, particularly engineers and scientists. They can be reluctant to share their problems so you can explain that the issue is critical (making them feel important) so it might be

necessary to involve others or look outside the organisation as a normal part of solving problems. Do not remove ownership from the original owner if at all possible and never force people to work on issues that they do not own or have no interest in if you wish them to remain motivated.

5. Fear Of Being Replaced

This is common when it is suggested that problem owners share their problems or look for outside help. Reinforce the idea that nobody is being replaced and that looking elsewhere for solutions is part of the problem solver's toolkit.

Address the above and you will notice an improvement immediately.

The Power Of 'Why?'

Sometimes it is 'obvious' what our problem is and so the answer is obvious too. This may very well be the case, but just in case it is not, or perhaps to uncover a better solution, we might need to uncover the real reason for something going wrong.

Problems and issues also tend to be multi layered and we have to scratch below the surface to work out what is really happening.

Be careful when using this technique as continuously asking someone else 'Why?' may make them defensive.

Imagine the simple scenario 'sales are falling'. One possible assumption might be that our sales people are no good at their job so we might replace them or retrain them. First, let us ask 'Why?'

Q. Why are sales falling?

A. Because customers don't like our products

Q. Why don't they like our products?

A. Because they are outdated, not as cool as this year's model

Q. Why are our products outdated?



A. Because we have not developed any new ones for 5 years

Q. Why have we not done this before?

A. Because the boss has not allowed us

Q. Why has the boss behaved in this way?

A. Because they have no spare time to spend

In this simple example our initial assumption of having a poor sales force is incorrect, the underlying issue is that the boss (possibly you!) has no time either because of high workload or poor time management. We can also see that the issue has multiple layers and unless the issues at lower layers are resolved then our initial problem is unlikely to be properly resolved.

You could thus use this for:

- Identifying the need for a new product or service
- Determining why your competitors are more attractive to customers
- Asking why your costs are higher than they should be

... and many more.

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