

News on Creativity and Innovation related topics

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creative4business

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News

Finally, after 18 months we have our trademark registered in Mexico!

Derek will be in **Mexico** this month from

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the eighth edition of Innovation Matters for 2009. Here in the UK we have enjoyed a bit of an Indian Summer but Autumn has just suddenly appeared.

October promises to be an interesting month with preparation for some facilitation work for a charity and an exciting trip to **Mexico**. In Mexico I shall be running a workshop or two, speaking to Chamber of Commerce members on **Innovation - source of competitive advantage in a crisis** as well as catching up with business contacts and old friends.

In this month's edition there are three articles. The first ponders on the **similarities** between highly **innovative** (business) organisations and **terrorist** organisations. What can we learn here? Next there is a brief foray into the organisational **politics** that is often used by gatekeepers and naysayers to **block Innovation**. Finally there is a swipe at **CEOs** who will **not** take a look at how **Innovation** can help them. As always these articles are intended to promote debate as well as be informative.

If you have missed previous editions of Innovation Matters you can find them in our [newsletter archive](#).

the 20th until 27th of October. Hear him speak at the Chamber of Commerce in Mexico City.

Are you on Twitter? If so you can [follow Derek Cheshire](#) (only if you want to of course!).

Workshop and programme details can be downloaded from our [downloads](#) page.

Still not taken our survey of barriers to organisational creativity? [Click here](#).

As always, your thoughts and feedback are welcome.

Happy reading,

Derek Cheshire

Innovation - what terrorists can teach us

Much has been made of the latest terrible development in suicide bombings where bombers now carry explosives inside themselves. This development could be called 'innovative' but what is more important are the thought processes involved. Consider the following two scenarios.

Scenario one - a terrorist thinks to himself "I will try experimenting with putting explosives in different places and see what happens". This is experimentation or play. The output is almost entirely random but in amongst those random thoughts are some ideas worth pursuing. The problem is undefined and the solutions will therefore be extremely random. The results may or may not work.

Scenario two - a terrorist thinks to himself "What sort of checks do the army and police have and where could I hide explosives to avoid these checks?". This is innovation in action. The problem is reasonably well defined thus leaving the terrorist with the simple task of generating and evaluating ideas. The results



are possibly devastating.

Now consider the other side of the equation. Lets try and outfox the terrorist. If we assume the terrorist is not very clever (a big mistake) then we think of a possible large number of methods of attack which we cannot possibly deal with (as in scenario one). If we assume that the terrorist is clever then he will try and find weak points, no matter how unlikely they are.

So which 'route to market' is the best for terrorist and which is best for the anti terrorist? For both, a degree of focus (scenario two) is important. The terrorist analogy does, however, go much deeper than this.

Let us consider high level enablers/barriers to Innovation such as vision, attitude to risk, empowerment of staff, knowing how to win, team working, culture, light touch management etc. Taking all of these into account, we can take a strategic snapshot of an innovative organisation such as 3M or Google and also of a known terrorist organisation. Comparing the two, we find that the 'make up' of a successful innovative organisation is very similar to that of a terrorist organisation. The major difference is of course ideology or vision.

So if you like your job, there is a strong vision, the culture suits you, you are stretched to your full potential, your organisation is fully aware of its competitive environment and is willing to take on a reasonable amount of risk - just exactly who are you working for?

Using such an analogy takes a bit of getting used to but try it, you might be amazed.



The politics of Innovation - wising up to the gatekeepers

Organisations are filled with politics and organisational games. Here are just a few that are common culprits for stifling innovation.

An interesting idea

In a mild form, resistance can be as simple as declaring that "I thought the ideas in your presentation were really interesting". "Interesting" is the key word here, because it is the word people frequently use when they want to appear supportive and positive about an idea when really they are indirectly resisting. We say "interesting" when asked for feedback and we do not want to reveal our concerns and doubts. "Interesting" can even be a euphemism for "your ideas are rubbish and I will not support them".

Another Time

This is the tactic of resisting an idea or suggestion by pretending that the timing just isn't right (and at the same time implying that at some future, unspecified date the timing may be better) "The only thing wrong with your idea is the timing, come back in the New Year and we will take another look" This usually means "no way is this idea going any further!" Of course, the timing may genuinely be bad but often this tactic is used for sabotaging ideas that someone does not want to see implemented (out of political self interest).

More Information

This is the tactic of deliberately stalling a valid suggestion by continuously demanding more information, hoping that the other party will eventually drop the idea, or forget it. It is entirely reasonable that before new ideas are acted upon, that they should be researched and tested. It is good practice for competent managers to ensure that bright new ideas do not propel organisations into oblivion but this can go too far. This is a convincing, 'professional' and deliberate viewpoint that hides genuine resistance.

The Wise One

They have seen it all and done it all before, and with their vast experience we would be foolish to ignore their protestations when they say it is a poor idea and won't work. We face an uphill struggle against arrogance and ego, it is them or us! Note the key to disarming such a person is that their wisdom is rooted in the past. Times change.

Techno-Babble

The idea is challenged on the scientific level and the resistance takes the form of long winded, confusing, jargon filled explanations which are presented as just being "helpful". They have seen it all before (and have a pile of facts to prove it) and see no new reason to go down a road which has already proved fruitless.

One recognised, these ploys can often be countered or you may just choose another course of action rather than waste your valuable energy.

Calling all CEOs - why do you avoid Creativity and Innovation?



The message from myself and many others banging the innovation drum is relatively simple. Embrace innovation and you have a unique competitive advantage. You will be able to fully exploit the skills of your workforce, develop new products, services or processes according to your type of business and most importantly of all you will create a business that is sustainable and which will survive not only the current economic crisis but any that may occur in the future. So why do you not take action, why do you think the risk is too high - or to put it another way, what are you scared of?

First of all, let us look at risk. What is it? In its simplest guise it is just circumstances or events about which we know nothing or very little. So the more we know about something, the smaller the risk. Actually the likelihood of something bad happening may not actually change as we acquire knowledge ,but the fear associated with the potential risk may decrease or vanish. So CEOs may in fact be suffering from a fear of failure or looking foolish rather than actually considering the actual risks or benefits to their organisation.

What can be done to help? If we could provide you with the following, would that help?

- An understanding of what is involved in leading an Innovative organisation - let's remove the surprises
- Support in providing awareness and education for managers and staff - everyone must know where they fit in
- A proven methodology/framework so that you know what you are doing
- A method of measuring innovation directly so you know where your money is being spent

- New techniques to help you predict and plan for the future
- Provision of some ongoing support

Would this help alleviate the risks so that you can harvest the benefits of Innovation? If not then Innovation may not be for you and sadly your long term future does not look too rosy.

Over and out!

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Creative Business Solutions | Brookside Cottage | Mill Lane | Corston | Malmesbury | SN16 0HH | United Kingdom

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