

EXPLORING CONTEMPORARY MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES: Fostering Effective Innovation

UCSD EPSE/LAMP Student
Research Assignment 2008-09;
Combined Findings

THE ASSIGNMENT

- Understand the challenge
 - *practices that foster innovation for the good of the company, and expectations for everyone involved*
- Literature search (EPSE only)
- Survey of individuals (EPSE only)
- Interviews with managers and professionals
- Document findings, give personal analysis
 - Specifics – behaviors, processes, tools, experiences
- Provide summative insights/recommendations

INFORMATION RECEIVED

- 67 students participating in research
- 19 companies
- Dozens of findings, difficult to synthesize into one common set; not all findings agree
- EPSE focused on organizational/managerial concerns, LAMP focused on individual/supervisory concerns

COMBINED FINDINGS

Contextual

- Not as many current companies examples of success as might be expected
- Difference of opinion regarding breadth of innovation; does
continuous improvement = innovation?
- Little discussion of the impact of the innovator on their co-workers, or their role

COMBINED FINDINGS

Theme

- Innovation is perceived as the life blood of technology companies, but in general there is more talk about innovation than practice
 - Gap between management and workers regarding innovative activity taking place
 - Short-term demands overwhelm longer-term opportunities; “practical” innovation usually subsumes “transformational” innovation
 - Innovation processes and tools are necessary but not sufficient

COMBINED FINDINGS

Best Practice

- Take a personal approach to an innovator
 - Not everyone can innovate*, pay special attention and foster those who can
 - Give the innovator a path around the bureaucracy as necessary and appropriate; mentor
 - Accountability, but not traditional; passion of the innovator is critical
 - Surround, but don't stifle, with a team
 - A person, not just a process*; "throwing money at innovation is a sure way to lose a lot of money"

* some disagreement on this

COMBINED FINDINGS

Best Practice

- Build a Culture to *Appreciate* Innovation
 - Reward innovative effort, and support for that culture (recognition and time, not \$)
 - Internal innovators as heroes and mentors
 - Goals and investment (time and attention, money for testing, even in bad times)
 - Recruitment of people with different perspectives and innovative track record
 - Encourage sharing and development of ideas, not who came up with them

Combined Findings

Best Practice

- Expectations of the Innovator
 - Share your ideas, build support
 - Stay focused on company needs
 - Don't sacrifice immediate assignments

- Expectations of the Supervisor
 - Encourage an innovative culture
 - Provide resources and overcome barriers for innovators
 - Expect accountability, but don't be impatient

- Expectations of Co-Workers
 - Share concerns, give support, focus the innovator
 - Ensure the innovation can be executed and integrated

COMBINED FINDINGS

Insights

- Perceived difference in commitment to innovation between commercial and contract-oriented companies
- “Probe and Learn” vs. “Phase Gate” vs. “Swim Lane” approaches to innovation depending on culture of the organization
- Not all innovators can carry an idea through to full success; execution is as much a part of innovation as is the innovative idea
- Pursuing innovation can be harmful to your career (dubious productivity)
- “Buying” innovation may be as effective as attempting to grow it internally