

Leading light

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We're a consumer products company who have grown very rapidly in the last few years, and we now have around one thousand employees. Our MD is concerned that we're losing our innovative edge and has asked the HR department to bring the spark back into the business. My initial investigations have highlighted a lack of diversity of mind and a reliance on established processes which seem to be restricting creativity and innovation. Can you give me some pointers as to where we go from here?

First of all you're not facing an uncommon situation. Many businesses which prospered on the back of a great idea or through innovative founders can feel as if the business processes they need as they grow are stifling their creative energies.

Usually innovation fails at one of three stages; at the first ideas generation stage, at the second securing buy-in phase or at the final implementation phase. It's important to identify where the issues in your business are. Are ideas being generated? Is there a problem getting buy-in for new ideas? Is the implementation going awry?

Once you understand at what stage innovation is failing, you can then go on to clarify what is causing that lack of innovation – are the causes structural or do they come from the leadership of the organisation? It will also be important for you to determine what type of innovation the business needs and then set some goals for that innovation. It's important to have these measures so you can gauge the success of the project.

Then move on to examining the issue in more detail. Successful innovation is built through a combination of the following factors:

- * Incisive understanding of the customer
- * Using different thinking techniques
- * Empowering people
- * Improving communications
- * Eliminating barriers
- * Clarifying goals

Take each of these areas in turn and look where the improvements need to be made in your business.

In summary, we would follow a four-step process:

Step one – Define

Agree what type of innovation is needed and the goal the organisation needs to or wants to achieve

Step two – Measure

Find out the key reason for the lack of innovation, for example, cultural aspects, skill and/or process

Step three – Evaluate

Determine the change in innovation against the initial goal

Step four – Address

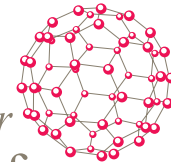
Build targeted solutions, for example, culture change, upskilling, structural/process change

One of the keys to developing an innovative culture is ensuring that people have the freedom to be innovative. While boundaries need to be set, it is important that there are not so many restrictions that innovation is stifled. You'll be familiar with loads of 'wacky' courses that could inspire the innovation in your people, but you must really get to grips with the cause of the lack of innovation. If

it's a structural issue then no amount of building railway bridges out of straws and paper clips will affect a significant business change. Understand the problem and then implement the right solution.

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News

The very best take talent seriously



The war for talent rages on as organisations re-prioritise talent acquisition as a highly important part of commercial success.

A new report from research company, Aberdeen Group, has highlighted some of the pressing issues major organisations face when searching for talent. The research, sponsored by First Advantage, reveals how companies are embracing talent acquisition strategies to overcome the skilled labour shortage and compete for the best talent.

The study reveals the differences in organisations' talent acquisition strategies, and how the successful companies are winning the war. Companies that implement, integrate and communicate a talent acquisition strategy are up to five times more likely to experience a decreased cost per hire. Top organisations are only 20% more likely to measure

the quality of hire than their peers, but twice as likely to have a talent acquisition strategy that is integrated with the company's overall strategic plan. In a modern twist on networking, 66% of these companies are more than twice as likely to use social networking technology to reach targeted candidates. In addition to proactively searching for the best candidates, the top companies are set apart from their peers by ensuring that they understand which skills and traits make up top performers, which greatly improves their recruiting efficiencies.