

Enabling Climate for Innovation in an Organization

The leadership in any organization does have a major concern - how innovative her company is – thus underlining its importance for the organization. It is imperative for any company to seek amends if the employees become indifferent to innovation. The inherent answer lies in the evolution & sustained performance of some of the 'innovative' companies/ products through history and leads us to seek answers to a few questions - How innovation is done? Can innovation be taught? Who will innovate? What is it to be innovative? What next after achieving an innovation? Why innovate at all? Let us try to explore these issues chasing the organizations & their leadership.

Organizational Climate signifies the attributes of work environment perceived by employees as influencing their motivation and behaviour at work. This is a measure of the extent to which people view their corporation as being open to change, and supportive of the innovation. A climate caring & rewarding for creativity and resilient enough (*no fear of undue retribution*) for the honest mistakes committed in the pursuit of excellence, engenders innovative outcomes at the workplace.

Three (3) sources of 'curiosity', a basic prerequisite for innovation:

- Pain (of self, client, society etc.): Perhaps, one of the strongest forces 'to do something'
- Wave: Technology, Regulatory, Demographic etc. shaping the funding/ trend
- Waste: Challenge ourselves- what are we wasting & what must we do to minimize it?

An innovation program has three (3) key processes associated with it:

- Idea Management: need to have a process which mentions- who submits ideas? How these are selected? Who funds them? How experimentation happens etc.
- Buzz Creation: can be an innovation day, a newsletter, where innovation stories get communicated to wider audience - appreciate both the successes & failures.
- Training & Development: 'Design Thinking' – diligently nurture a culture of innovation.

Three-hat approach by Leader as a 'process enabler' - David Packard (co-founder of HP):

- Enthusiasm hat: First interaction with the potential innovator to maintain enthusiasm.
- Inquisitor hat: Thorough probing of the idea
- Decision hat: Final meeting to decide whether to accept or reject the 'idea'

Organizations must facilitate 'systematic' innovation capability:

- Ensuring that ideas have a velocity/ momentum, not getting stuck in the entire process
- To be able to experiment at high speed but low cost (frugal/ budget-friendly).
- The 'Champions' take ideas and propel them forward by overcoming hurdles

Effective Innovation Review Process is a quintessential to rationalize the process & ensuring dynamic ambience for employees to come forward

- Decisions are made based on experiments and their results, not on gut feel or bias.
- Resource allocation to the top priority ideas, in coherence with organizations 'vision'
- Scope of the idea also gets evaluated for execution – may find application in an entirely different segment than originally envisaged

Innovation is understood as an act of introducing a new product/ process. To germinate a sustained innovative culture, proper milieu and adequate nourishment is a must. Starting is tough. Encourage participation of the divergent /disruptors, as all conformists group would be a white elephant in an organization. There must exist a mechanism/ forum to obtain external impetus such as inputs from experts of industry/ academia – may even include Nobel Laureates. However, once an individual/ organization finds the 'phallus' (*an imaginary signifier in Lacanian psychoanalysis*) or 'ikigai' (*a Japanese concept describing a reason for being*), the innovation movement operates on auto-pilot mode, since in such a scenario, the 'passion' meets the 'purpose' and need no external stimulus.

"Whatever you are interested in and get excited about, that is what you should do."

- Michael Kosterlitz, Nobel Prize in Physics 2016