

Change Management – Innovation

by Barry Tuckwood



Change is not possible without innovation, and yet trying new things seems to be eroded with time and experience.

Children are natural innovators: they continuously try to do things that are new to them until they find a way of succeeding or give up in disgust, possibly giving rise to temper tantrums and misery. You might even have seen that sort of behaviour in your colleagues - stamping of feet, slamming of doors, hurling of abuse, beating of head against the desk, anger as the product of frustration.

As children grow, so innovation is increasingly discouraged. Many readers may have experience of being confused by the variety of methods used at school to teach their children reading, writing and especially arithmetic. No longer do we have the three Rs; we have Literacy and Numeracy. "But we didn't do it like that when we were at school."

Later at work you hear, "But we don't do it like that round here," or "We've tried it and it didn't work," or "It's OK for Finance but not for Planning," or "That works in a small council but not in a large one like ours."

Have you ever decided against putting forward a proposal because of the many colleagues ready to pounce on it as unworkable, to lambast you for having such stupid ideas? Or perhaps you are surrounded by people who come up with mad schemes and you need to sift out the best. Regardless of the position, the key question is, "How open are you to innovation?"

Some years ago a client group put together a jocular document including the favourite sayings of all of the team members – client staff and consultants. Mine was reported as, "There must be a better way," always part of the team's role in aiding improvement.

In another situation a discussion focussed briefly on those people who say, "Come to me with solutions, not problems." A speaker suggested that this meant the person – the boss – was not open to new ideas and only wanted answers according to the existing processes. An alternative view is that the boss wanted answers and welcomed new ideas as a necessary part of it, that they were able to empower their staff, and was open to innovation. Certainly my experience is that people prefer to receive an

answer to a problem rather than a simple statement of a problem. Indeed, if you want to convert a furrowed brow into a happy smile what better way is there than to come up with a practical idea for solving a pressing problem?

If you do not innovate and change with the times the result is failure. In order to innovate you need:

- Openness to new ideas;
- A positive approach;
- Willingness to take risks.

How would you rate yourself, your colleagues and your organisation on this? How ready are you to say, "There must be a better way"? Try testing yourself.

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