

# Innovation in motion

## The art of innovation management



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Are you managing innovation in your organisation? Think about it for a second. Managing innovation does not refer to mentioning it at staff gatherings every now and again or having innovation listed as one of your organisation's focus areas in the strategy. You need to be active in innovation, fostering an environment that contributes to innovative solutions and supporting innovation enablement and implementation.

One of my favourite quotes, featured in the previous publication of Innovation in motion, is the words of the famous journalist and author, Will Rogers: "Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there..." Even if you are showing good innovation

output, proactive innovation management is imperative for success and growth. We can take note of the importance of innovation and fool ourselves by mentioning it in the right places; we can even name it differently and talk about organisational renewal or planning for economic growth. The fact remains the same. Innovation is a capability that needs to be created, supported and managed in order for it to become a core competency or competitive advantage. If the foundation for innovation has not been laid and the basics not addressed - an innovation capability and sadly, the intention of economic growth and resilience that accompanies it, will remain elusive.

Building the foundation for innovation implementation refers to the front end of innovation planning and before you have struggled with the complexities that this involves, taking innovation to the next level in the organisation will be difficult if not completely impossible. This is also the most difficult part of innovation management as it is a cumbersome process and a very lonely road. Well planned efforts will be greatly rewarded but in contrast to the short term pressures of the organisational environment and the goals stipulated in the balanced scorecard, payoffs and results will only be evident in the long run. Innovation is a long term investment and requires effort.

### **Innovation management the first three years**

In previous articles I have spoken about the "Mistakes innovation leaders make, 2007" and "Innovating despite red tape, 2006". Those sentiments will not be repeated here although it holds relevance in this context. Instead I want to share a basic model for managing innovation.

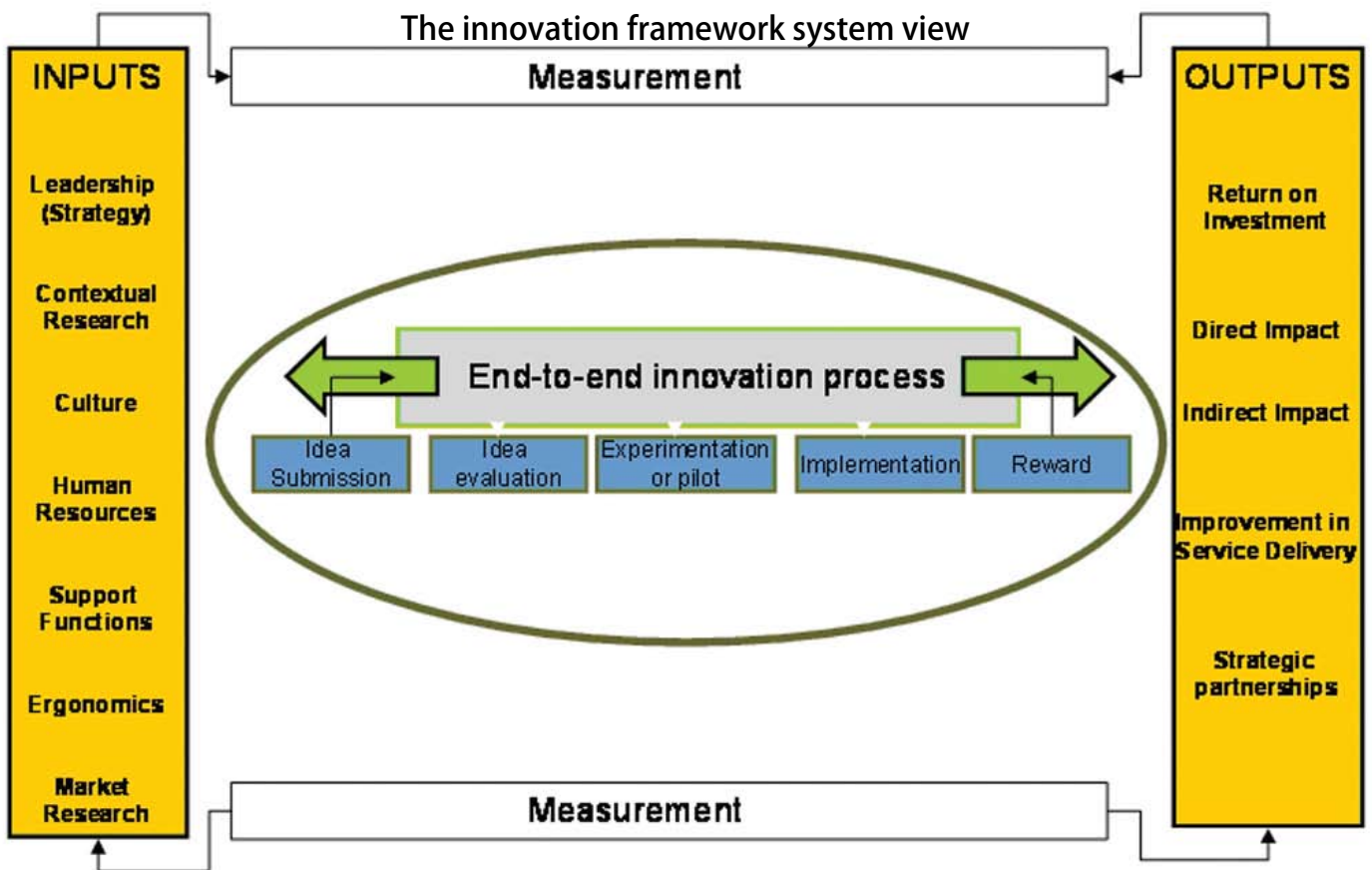
This model is by no means conclusive or even complete - but it is a valuable tool as it gives you a handle on a concept that is complex and non-linear. The management of innovation is a multifaceted undertaking. Addressing the elements as explained in this model is a good start.... and you have to start somewhere!

The Research Institute for Innovation and Sustainability (RIIS)'s Innovation Framework Model represents the front end of innovation management and it is recommended that you work on this front end for at least the first three years of your intervention as it is here that you will create the platform for success.

A lot of thinking, learning, planning and creation will happen here and you have to grapple with and understand the intricacies of innovation management, its interdependencies with other systems and structures in your organisation as well as the impact it will have on your environment. Only then will you be ready to take innovation management to the next level. This next level often involves for instance creating spinouts from innovation related ideas or capturing the value from rejected ideas that have progressed through your innovation process. The framework discussed next will help prepare you for this task. Figure 1 on the right represents a systems view of an innovation framework.

### **Deconstructing the Innovation Framework**

Containing the innovation management process into inputs, core and output processes, simplifies the approach and depicts your efforts as part of the larger system in which the organisation operates. Innovation management then becomes a cross-cutter and a destroyer of silo's as it will directly involve other systems and functions



within the immediate environment.

Table 1 explains the inputs into the innovation framework in more detail and presents some examples. The application thereof will differ from organisation to organisation and will depend on the context in which it is applied. Feel free to add to this list.

**Building the core of the framework**

Ideas must have a place to go. A home that will direct efforts, ensure participation and manage reward. The innovation end-to-end process

is designed to address this vital element of innovation management. Feedback on ideas received is of the utmost importance and needs to be managed rigorously and without exception or people will lose interest. This process should preferably be automated and technology enabled and should link up with existing knowledge management systems. Care should further be taken to include employees who do not have access to computers or who are illiterate. This should be addressed when

designing the end-to-end process so as to ensure participation from everyone. Table 2 elaborates on the vital elements of innovation process design.

**Outputs of the Innovation System**

The outputs as explained in Figure 1 are straight forward and speak for themselves. It can however be far more impactful and indirect results can include for instance a more motivated work force, stimulated and happy employees, economic growth and growing market share.

**Table 1: Addressing input**

Type of input	Area of impact
Leadership	1.The organisational/corporate strategy Alignment and goal setting 2.Risk containment and creating the profile for innovation 3.Visionary leadership and involvement from top structures 4.Funding for innovation related activities (incorporating reward and experimentation funding)
Contextual research	1.Understanding the environment in which the organisation operates: political, economic, social and technological impact. 2.Contextualising innovation in the above context having a look at capabilities and available resources
Culture	1.Awareness creation, training, creating a common understanding of innovation. 2.Building a competency and innovation capability 3.Communication
Human resources	1.Responsibility allocation 2.Accountability 3.Process administration 4.Staffing and structures 5.Innovation teams 6.Evaluation teams
Support functions	1.Administration 2.Allocation of funds 3.Communication 4.Marketing
Ergonomics	1.Attention to the environment for innovation 2.Office spaces and structuring 3.Spaces for innovation – rooms, white spaces and networking
Market research	1.Creating the external link into the innovation process, closing the loop 2.Involving external stakeholders and clients 3.Surveys to direct innovation efforts

**Table 2: Building the core**

High level elements of the process	High level components
Idea submission	1. How will submission take place? (Portal/intranet) 2. Who will administer it? 3. What information should be given upon submission? (templates to support idea submission) 4. Format of feedback to participants 5. Directed innovation (ideation around certain problems/focus areas) 6. Innovation networking to stimulate idea submission 7. Business case development
Idea evaluation	1. Idea categorisation and prioritisation (radical vs. incremental) 2. Evaluation criteria 3. Evaluation panels (internal/external) 4. Logistics and arrangement around evaluation procedures 5. Final approval 6. Innovation champions and leaders and their respective roles
Experimentation or piloting	1. Funding 2. Risks containment and risk profile 3. Scope and impact of pilots 4. Responsibilities 5. Feedback and report writing 6. Evaluation/measuring of successes 7. Capturing of lessons learnt
Implementation	1. Funding structures 2. Responsibility allocation 3. Accountability 4. Progress reporting
Reward	1. Funding structures 2. Administration and communication 3. Reward policy (monetary or non-monetary/ formal/informal)
Process Measurement and Statistics	1. Measurement procedures pertaining to the process as well as the capturing of general statistics pertaining to innovation management (participation, categorisation, impact and results)

Measurement on all levels of the system is imperative. This will give an indication of not only the progress that has been made but will identify strengths and weaknesses and inform future decisions and adaptations while directing innovation goals.

The above model depicts a very basic system for innovation management and needs to be elaborated upon over time, informed by organisational context. It is important however,

to obtain buy-in, create a common language for innovation within the organisation and to celebrate early successes. The ultimate goal is to make innovation effortless and to turn it into a core competency. However, to get to a stage of effortlessness as far as innovation is concerned will require some effort and time. Just ask successful and innovative organisations like 3M, BMW, Discovery and a multitude of others.

In the next edition of Innovation in Motion we

will ask a client that has used the above model to share some experiences. Like always, your inputs and comments are welcome.

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