

FOCUSING ON A FEW ASPECTS OF CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

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ABSTRACT

Post-industrialization organizations today are knowledge-based organizations and their success depends on their power to create and innovate. Creativity and innovation is growing rapidly with growing ideas, new knowledge and global diffusion. Creativity and innovation are the most important tools with the companies to bring to the market the new and improved products having great utility. The terms 'creativity' and 'innovation' are used interchangeably at most places. In order to facilitate creativity and innovation, the organization and management must be lenient and strict simultaneously. Only then creativity and innovation may produce desired and expected results for the organization.

KEYWORDS: *Creativity, Innovation, Global Diffusion, Positive Environment, Communication, Leadership.*

Introduction

Creativity and innovation may vary from group to group, organization to organization and from person to person. Creativity and innovation largely depends on the structure of the organization. There are certain organizations that provide a favorable and positive environment for creativity and innovation while there are other organizations; environment thereof hinders creativity and innovation. Besides structure of the organization there are various other factors that affect the level of creativity and innovation in an organization. These factors are strategy of the organization, support mechanism, behaviour that encourages innovation, communication, leadership, etc. There is a huge difference between the organizations that support creativity and innovation and the organizations that do not provide a healthy environment for the same. Innovative and creative organizations always have an additional edge and a competitive advantage over the less creative and innovative organisations. However the innovative organisations should take necessary steps from time to time to keep their innovation system up-to-date. This can be done by removing the fear from the employees to take up new challenges. The organization can also make innovation a part of performance appraisal system. On the other hand the organization should also remove all the stiffness when it comes to innovation and creativity. All these steps encourage employees to be more experimental, innovative and creative by removing fear from them.

The terms discovery, invention, innovation and creativity are often misused in business world. But at the same time, it has been widely accepted that they are among the most important ingredients for successful entrepreneurship, the future competitive advantage of your business, and the sustainable growth of both individuals and firms. Industries and businesses today are based on knowledge. Their survival also depends on creativity and innovation. Creativity and innovation have an important role to play in this change process for survival. An effective reaction to these demands leads to innovative changes in the organizations to ensure their existence. The challenge for the companies is to be innovative and creative to bring to the market a new, improved and value added products and services that enable the business to achieve higher profits to reinvest. Innovation can be defined as the successful exploitation of new ideas.

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Concept of Creativity and Innovation

Innovation is a natural tendency of the human mind to thrive on variety, regardless of the activity involved. All the man-made changes that the world has witnessed are a result of this tendency to look for something different. The urge to try something else is a prominent human characteristic. When properly directed, this urge can have results that enhance the quality of an activity. A positive outcome of this urge to be different is called innovation. There is no end to the new ideas in the world, but when these ideas create value, it becomes innovation. Often enough, it is the application of existing knowledge in a different manner that stands out as an innovative idea. Usually, one idea gives birth to the next and new technologies, processes and methods come into being. Being innovative involves a lot of risks. Only a person who is willing to go out on limb is capable of being innovative. Good ideas are of no use unless they are implemented, and implementation in a new way always attracts criticism. It is only by being optimistic in the face of odds that an individual stands a chance of achieving something unique.

At times, innovation is done by taking an existing idea, concept or product and improving upon it. However what is more remarkable is to be able to think beyond what already exists, and coming up with a brand new concept. Mankind has come this far by riding on the benefits of innovative ideas through the ages. It is the problems that people encounter that cause a solution to be sought. Of course there have always been the gifted few who can go beyond the mundane and come up with brilliant visions. Great scientific inventions that we now take for granted are products of the innovative ideas of great minds. The concept of creative and innovation are often used interchangeably. Some definitions of creativity focus on the nature of thought processes and intellectual activity used to generate new insights and solutions to problems. Other definitions focus on the personal characteristics and intellectual abilities of individuals, and still other definitions focus on the product with regard to the different qualities and outcome of creative attempts. Creativity can vary from one group to another, one organization to another and one culture to another and it can change over time. Evaluating creativity should be therefore considered at the level of a person, organization, industry, profession, etc. definitions of innovation vary according to the level of analysis, which is used. The more macro the approach (e.g. Social, cultural), the more varied the definitions seem to be. In an organizational environment, innovation on the implementation of ideas for restructuring, or saving of costs, improved communication, new technology for production processes, new organizational structures and new personnel plans or programmes.

Definition of Innovation

"The intentional introduction and application within a role, group or organization of ideas, processes, products or procedures, new to the relevant unit of adoption, designed to significantly benefit the individual, the group or wider society."

Innovation is often associated with change and regarded as something new, which leads to change. "However, change cannot be regarded as innovation as it always does not involve new ideas or improvement in an organization. E.g. change cannot be regarded as innovation as changing office hours in an exceptionally hot summer season is not innovation. Innovation is the engine of change and in today's competitive environment resisting change is dangerous. Change where brings uncertainty and risk also create opportunity.

Culture is a primary determinant of innovation. Possession of positive cultural characteristics provides the organization with necessary ingredients to innovate. Culture has multiple elements that can serve to enhance or hinder the tendency to innovate. However, to examine culture in isolation is a mistake.

Structures that Promote and Hinder Creativity and Innovation

Structures that promote creativity and innovation are:

- Freedom from rules
- Participative and informal
- Many views aired and considered
- Face to face communication, little red tape
- Breaking down departmental barriers
- Emphasis on creative interaction and aims
- Outward vision, willingness to take on external ideas
- Flexibility with respect to changing needs
- Non- hierarchical

- Decision- making responsibility at lower levels
- Information flow downwards as well as upwards
- Decentralized procedures
- Freedom to act
- Belief the individual can have an impact
- Delegation
- Quick and flexible decision making
- Minimized bureaucracy

Structures that hinder creativity and innovation are:

- Rigid departmental separation and functional specialization
- Hierarchical
- Bureaucratic
- Many rules and set procedures
- Long decision chains and slow decision making
- Little individual freedom of action
- Communication via written words
- Much information flows upwards, directive flows downwards

Factors Influencing Creativity and Innovation

Innovation frightens organizations because it is unavoidably linked to risk. Many companies pay lip service to the power and benefits of innovation. Some oppose the aggressive investment and the commitment that innovation demands.

The factors that influence creativity and innovation in an organization are discussed as follows:

- **Strategy:** An innovative strategy is a strategy that promotes the development and implementation of new products. It is important that employees should understand the vision and mission and the gap between the current situation to be able to act creatively and innovatively.
- **Structure:** It has been suggested that a flat structure, autonomy and teamwork will promote innovation. The influence of organizational culture on a structure which supports creativity and innovation are flexibility, freedom and cooperative teamwork.
- **Support Mechanism:** Support mechanism should be present in an organization to create an environment that promotes creativity and innovation. It is a support mechanism which is an important source for successful innovation. In organization where computer techniques are used to communicate and exchange ideas, there chances of creativity and innovation to take place are better.
- **Behaviour that Encourages Innovation:** Values and norms that encourage innovation display themselves in specific behavioral forms which promote or hinder creativity and innovation. Tolerance of mistakes is an essential element in development of an organizational culture. Taking risk and experimenting are behaviors which are associated with creativity and innovation.
- **Communication:** An open door communication policy, including open communication between individual, teams and departments to gain new perspectives is necessary to create a culture that supports creativity and innovation. An organizational culture that supports open and transparent communication based on trust will have a positive influence on creativity and innovation.

Practical steps to Keep Innovation System Alive

- Remove fear from an organization. If people fear failing then they cannot innovate.
- Make innovation an important part of the performance review system for everyone.
- Document an innovation process and make sure everyone understand it as well as work on it.
- Build in enough looseness into the system for people to explore new possibilities and collaborate with others.
- Make sure that everyone understands the corporate strategy and work towards it.
- Teach people to scan environment for new trends, techniques and changes in customer mind sets.
- Teach people with critical implementation of diversity of thinking, styles, experience, perspectives and expertise.

Characteristics of Innovative Organizations

In order to facilitate innovation, work environment must be simultaneously tight and loose. The key distinguishing factor between innovative and less innovative firms is the ability of management to create a sense of community in the workplace. Highly innovative companies behave as focused communities whereas less innovative companies behave more like traditional bureaucratic departments. A certain amount of balanced autonomy is also required.

Conclusion

For being a highly innovative firm the companies shall commit both financial and emotional support to innovations which may promote and develop champions and innovators. For being a top management a company shall ensure the realistic and accurate assessment of the markets which is a result of a planned innovation. Innovation shall also ensure projects which are a necessary support from all levels of the organization. The top management must ensure that structured methodology or system is set in place so that each innovation goes through a careful screening process prior to the actual implementation and for that the top management must capture ideas in a way to encourage development and create new possibilities.

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