

Want a Culture of Innovation?



Don't Start with Creativity Training

Want your company to “be more innovative and creative”?

Don't start with “creativity training”. Start with a project – a high-priority business issue that a passionate team can sink its teeth into and learn from. Organizations sometimes introduce broad-based “innovation and creativity training” to help employees think differently and hope that the investment pays off. It can be a long and disappointing road.



We've found that innovation efforts are far more successful if you start by delivering tangible business value as the priority, rather than focusing on creating an organizational “capacity for creativity and innovative thinking”. In our experience demonstrating bottom-line results gets management's attention – and the return on investment can be far more easily measured. After the project the team then reviews the innovation process – what worked and what could be improved. This learning can then be captured, evangelized and institutionalized.

Building an entrepreneurial, creative culture is critical for long-term growth – and education and training clearly play an important role. But don't start there. Reshaping culture and mindset could take a hopelessly long time before you see tangible business results – leaving your organization frustrated and disillusioned. In the absence of any clear ROI, management understandably resists pouring more money into something so amorphous. Demonstrating the ROI of “creativity training” is extremely difficult. It's somewhat easier to map the benefits of training on specific techniques or methodologies, such as managing focus groups, conducting consumer research that yields true “insights” (instead of just “data”), or facilitating a divergent thinking workshop.

But it's unrealistic to point to the number of in-market successes that resulted from “creativity training” since so many other factors are at play between the creative “fuzzy front end” and the post-launch cycle.

The more direct, “no nonsense” path to demonstrating tangible, measurable results is by committing an innovation team to a high-value business initiative from start to finish. Various kinds of training may play a supporting role in these types of initiatives.

Organizational culture thrives on success stories and experiences.

What better way to inspire a culture of “creativity and innovative thinking” than to point to a real story of a business breakthrough that was driven by an imaginative and motivated team? Increasingly, “situative learning” seems to be the preferred method for many blue chip organizations. Allowing employees to participate in the innovation process first-hand in a real situation (rather than primarily through classroom study) not only pays the bills, it also leads to “experiential learning” that is more authentic, relevant and deeply resonant for the organization.

Next step?

If you are going to start with a project, you'll need to take an innovative approach – since tackling a business issue in the same old way, using the same old tools will yield the same old results. But that's another topic.

About Innovation Point

InnovationPoint is a boutique innovation consulting firm focused on the practice of Strategic Innovation. We blend non-traditional and conventional consulting methodologies to deliver business breakthroughs that grow the topline – through opportunity identification, new business creation, strategy development and new product, service and category innovation. Our clients include Visa, Disney, Cisco, NBCUniversal, Colgate-Palmolive, Ascension Health, Hershey's, Red Bull, Frito-Lay, PepsiCo, Philips, Medtronic and other market leaders.