



## Dispelling the Myths about Innovation

We are all creative. Individually and collectively we have an interest in making things better. Admittedly some of us are more creative than others, but it is difficult to argue that, as a species, we are not innovative. After all it is that basic desire to innovate that has got us to where we are today.

Likewise, organisations – which are essentially made up of individuals – generally have a desire to innovate, to try new things and improve the way things are done. But some organisations are better at innovating than others; why is that? What is it that makes one organisation try out new ideas while another is content with how things are? Is it what's happening in their industry that drives innovation? Or is it the style of leadership or culture that determines the capacity to innovate?

It is also worth noting that innovation is a relative term and not the same as invention. The generally accepted definition of innovation is the first attempt to carry out (an idea) in practice. So what might appear to be highly innovative in one industry or organisation might be the norm in another.

For example, in the UK we see the Public Sector 'wanting to do more with substantially reduced resources'. There is much discussion about sharing 'back-office' functions and establishing shared service centres between adjacent local government authorities. While the creation of shared services might seem highly innovative to this sector, a global chemicals or paper manufacturing company that moved to shared service operating models some two decades ago, after recognising then that it needed to do more with substantially less, might think differently.

So is being innovative simply copying what other industries or companies have done before? To some extent yes: as in the words of Oscar Wilde "never forget that your best thoughts come from others". But attempting to simply transplant ideas can be dangerous as the 'DNA' of each organisation is unique and what works for GE or Shell cannot simply be transported or copied in P&G or BP.

## Three Questions that will Kill Innovation

In a recent HBR [article](#) Tony Golsby-Smith puts forward three toxic questions that boards and executive committees often ask that are guaranteed to kill innovation.

While not bad questions in themselves they illustrate a lack of understanding as to what governing questions need to be asked when an organisation is trying to be innovative, compared to questions needed when managing a conventional change portfolio.

To read Tony's article, click [here](#).

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## The Spirit of Innovation and Entrepreneurialism is Recession Proof

In a recent article Brian Solis, author of *Engage!* a new book on social media and business, argues that while growth markets and recessions force the expansion and contraction of economies, innovation is constant and it is the very essence of the ideas that push thinking and markets forward. "Innovation is the proverbial yo-yo on an escalator and while economies may ascend and descend, they are always going up."

To read Brian's article entitled *The Dilemma's Innovator: Innovation and Change as the New Pillars of Business*, click [here](#).

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## IT's Role as a Centre for Business Innovation

Formicio's Peter Boggis argues that IT has a unique role to play in innovation. Not only is it the custodian of the IT installed base – changes to which often determine the feasibility of an innovative idea – but it can take a cross-enterprise, rather than a business-unit, perspective. This unique role gives it an obligation to act as facilitator, enabler and guardian.

To read Peter's article, click [here](#).

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## Innovation through Collaboration

Our [Collaborative Explorations](#) are an excellent way of triggering innovation as they give

If some organisations are genuinely more innovative than others, can innovation be developed as a sustained capability? In our view, yes. Like other organisational capabilities, innovation can be developed and 'embedded' so that it becomes systemic and then "just happens". A good example is Whirlpool, the global white goods manufacturer. They have been working on developing innovation as an organisational capability for over a decade and can demonstrate that some 25% of their revenue and profits come from innovative products and services that did not exist two to three years ago.

And yet there is a paradox. Why is it that even after some 20 years' experience of innovation, companies and other organisations find it so difficult to design and implement a sustainable innovation capability? We believe the common myths surrounding innovation need to be dispelled in order to clear the decks and get some shared understanding of what innovation is, how it creates value and how it can be developed as an organisational capability.

To read my full article, where I describe six of the most common myths about being innovative, click [here](#).

I welcome your thoughts.

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executives the opportunity to learn from peers in other organisations and capture innovative ideas. Each exploration is shaped by the participating organisations. We tap into our extensive network to form a consortium of member organisations, facilitate the process and provide subject-matter experts as needed.

If you have a need for innovation that you feel is best addressed through collaboration with other organisations across the globe, we'd love to hear from you. To find out more, click [here](#).

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## Parting Thought

"Wealth in the new regime flows directly from innovation, not optimisation; that is, wealth is not gained by perfecting the known, but by imperfectly seizing the unknown."

Kevin Kelly  
Author