



Innovation Management Do's and Don'ts

Innovation Management – Top 5 Do's and Don'ts

Top 5 Do's:

- 1. Do make sure management are “in”!**
Want innovation to really take root as a cultural value in your organization? In that case, it must be supported by the company's C-level management. This support is not trivial to obtain nor to maintain. Communicate it to the employees and back it up by internal VC funding for innovation management and future incubation.
- 2. Do appoint a full-time professional innovation manager!**
Innovation management is a profession. You wouldn't appoint an inexperienced manager to head HR, Finance, Legal or Operations, right? Hopefully you wouldn't ask your Head of QA to manage operations “when s/he has some spare time”. The same applies to innovation management. It requires a dedicated manager with a lean team to be the driving force and catalyst for value creating innovation.

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3. **Do work with a professional innovation management system!**

Do you remember how back in the 70s and 80s, we were asked at school and by employers to suggest ideas by writing them on a piece of paper and placing them into a Suggestion Box? In many organizations, this has simply been replaced by an email address. Today, there is no excuse for using email and Excel to manage ideation campaigns or innovation in general; enough professional tools exist that provide these crucial capabilities:
<https://www.softwareadvice.com/idea-management/>

4. **Do think of the Day After ideation!**

"We worked really hard on our idea, pitched it, and came first. But then nothing happened. I'm never taking part in these innovation competitions again!" You want to avoid employees developing a cynical and negative view of innovation management programs and activities. Make sure to follow through with ideation campaign winners and give them a chance to take the idea into incubation, verification and implementation.

5. **Do make innovation a cross-company effort open to all!**

Surprise, we no longer look for creative geniuses. The democratization of organizational innovation means that all employees, irrespective of position, rank, seniority or title, are invited to contribute to innovation according to their abilities. Not everyone will have a multi-million-dollar idea, but there will be plenty of who could provide feedback, advice, improvement suggestions and additional help to move the idea forward.

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Top 5 Don'ts:

1. **Don't Brainstorm!**

Guess what? Brainstorming almost never works. Unless it is structured and expertly facilitated, it leads to “more of the same” type of ideas that follow the line laid the down by management, instead of challenging and disrupting the status quo. Want to brainstorm anyway? Make sure that the team is heterogenous, participants’ managers are not invited, and that an expert facilitator leads the process.

2. **Don't assume that the challenges are known!**

Yes, we know that your company has been the leader in the industry for the last 30 years, but when was the last time you've gone out and listened to your customers/users, employees, suppliers, and partners. Instead of assuming that you are aware of the challenges, seek out the pain-points. Design Thinking is a great toolbox to do this with and progress from pain-points to innovative solutions and their prototypes.

3. **Don't get married to a tool!**

You may really dig Design Thinking, swear by SCAMPER, or are a stickler for SIT. You may think that hackathons are the best way to quickly discover and create multiple innovative solutions to pressing problems. But remember this, each tool has its own unique advantages and disadvantages. Like any professional, you want to use the right tool at the right phase of the process and for the right reason. Don't place all your eggs in the one innovation basket.

4. **Don't underestimate the power of recognition!**

You've been selected “Innovator of the Year”. Given the choice, which would you rather have:
A. \$1,000 reward and a framed certificate
B. A framed certificate handed to you on stage at the company's Innovation Day Awards by the firm's CEO, and the ability to lead a small team to prototype your new idea?

5. **Be democratic, but not too democratic!**

Clearly you want “Buy-in” for your innovation programs and activities from all your employees. However, giving employees too much influence, in stages such as ideation campaign short-listing, for example, will lead to politics and popularity contests driving the process, instead of merit. A good rule of thumb is to give employees 20-30% of the decision-making power, and retain the rest for SMEs and the more senior managers.

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