



Time to blaze your own trail

If you've been following this column you should have a brief insight into the seven chapters from my latest book, *The Road to Innovation*.

If you want to understand how to innovate, how to be exceptional and how to thrive in a post recession economy, I hope it has helped you to stop worrying about the end product or 'doing something innovative'.

You don't need to look for innovation. Look instead to change and improve everything you do.

Look to inspire those around you and create the right environment in which the quality and frequency of ideas and insights can increase. Look to get the right balance between risk and reward.

Because when you do all that, and the time is right, innovation will come looking for you.

I was recently asked out of the blue by a client; "When should we start innovating?" My answer? "You need to start innovating before you need to start innovating".

Many companies only realise they need to be more innovative when their competitors have launched better products or services, when the needs of their

customers have changed and they are losing sales and market share, or when external and/or internal pressures mean that they need to quickly cut costs and boost profitability.

In those instances, it might be already too late to start.

The good news is that starting to innovate before you need to doesn't have to cost vast sums of money.

You need to treat innovation as you would any other business discipline. The seven steps I have identified on *The Road to Innovation* are very much interconnected. Taking those first steps only involves small, incremental changes that do not require you to invest thousands of pounds or hundreds of man hours.

But mine is not an exclusive approach – you may feel that your own organisation and people need to focus on just some of the key steps I have identified.

Similarly, you may want to broaden my approach to include other steps specific to your own situation.

The important thing is to remember that the journey needs to be all encompassing and consistent, so that it delivers the sustainable and organic benefits to you, your people and your business.

Such an holistic, incremental approach to innovation should also mean you never get to that point where you suddenly find yourself

surprised by competitors, by the marketplace, by your customers or by external events.

You should never get to that dreadful realisation that you need to start innovating now because without expensive, sudden and radical change you're likely to be out of business in the very near future.

On *The Road to Innovation* it's the journey that generates the change and the added value, not the destination.

In leisure travel they say that getting there is half the fun. In business, any organisation that sets off on the road to innovation with a clear strategy and an engaged and inspired workforce isn't just going to have half the fun, it's going to get all the huge benefits that travelling the right road brings.

If you haven't done so already, why not visit my site at www.letsthinkbeyond.com, click on the link on the 'MY BOOK' page to go through to Amazon, get yourself a copy of *The Road to Innovation* and blaze your own trail!



Cris Beswick is an innovation consultant, author and speaker. To find out more visit www.crisbeswick.com