

Innovative HR...


In the current climate HR are more likely to be seen handing out P45's than helping push businesses and organisations forward. But that's exactly what HR practitioners do want! They want a seat at the top table and innovation could just be the catalyst to get them there.

If innovation is a company/organisation goal, the strategic engagement of its people is vital and who best to take on that challenge. HR leaders should now be concentrating not solely on legislative compliance and policy but on how to build, engage and reward the organisational attributes that are vital to sustainable competitive advantage.

Because companies, brands and organisations no longer operate and compete in local markets but are challenged by global ones innovation is quite rightly seen as the strategic priority for survival and success. However, despite 'innovation' being the buzz word *de jour* for SME's, multinationals and governments alike there is still a worrying lack of understanding about just what it takes to make innovation part of an organisations DNA. It's true to say that there are very few public or private sector organisations that would even know where to start.

If you're going to embrace innovation and make it a companywide, cultural trait you have to look beyond boffins in white coats and R&D departments and start to engage your people and that means all your people. Thinking differently has to become part of what you do, part of 'what it means to work here'. You have to engage, inspire and lead people in a creative way, rewarding them for their efforts, making them feel like an integral and valuable part of your company journey. That's when people do amazing things!

If that's what is required then the cultural change and the creation of a strong community that needs to take place within an organisation is nothing short of significant and it's up to HR leaders to take on the challenge. When I talk to companies/organisations about innovation I outline my seven key points for embedding innovation but first I make something absolutely clear;



“Innovation is not about learning how to brainstorm or playing creative thinking games.”



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The truth is this...

Innovation is a process, a journey. The reality is that to stand a chance of innovating you have to connect with people, seek diverse perspectives, relevant insight and involve your people in the entire process. You have to make it part of your company vision.

The truth is that the road to innovation is more important than the destination. It's a journey that creates significant change. Value added change that increases your point of difference, engages and inspires your people and strengthens your customer's relationship with your brand.

Strategy...

Understand why you want to innovate and how best to implement it into your organisation. Do you want quick, risky but radical innovation or continuous, sustainable improvement and added value? Create a strategic vision for what you want your business to become. The vision should show your people where you want them to fit in and what you want them to help you achieve.

People...

Understand the value and talent of the people within your organisation and make sure they know where they fit in and what part you want them to play on your innovation journey. Then find the right way to reward them for their efforts.

Community...

Adopt a culture where everyone is able to contribute, where nothing is seen as the status quo. Choose an innovation champion to encourage creativity & entrepreneurship in order for it to become commonplace, part of your DNA.

Environment...

Create an environment that stimulates your people and promotes creativity. Allow people the space and freedom to think whether on site or off. Use spaces that suit different stages of the creative process. Use environments that are stimulating for idea generation and are practical for evaluation and implementation.



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Creativity...

Push people away from well trodden paths and expose them to different perspectives and points of view. Use insight and thorough understanding of what your problem is to eradicate assumption. Show your people that they can be creative and give them the tools to be so. Teach them to embrace change, and then make that a part of what they do every day. To constantly want to improve everything you do.

Risk...

Innovation requires risk but the biggest gamble is to do nothing. So, address your exposure to risk and justify every step of the journey. Change your people's attitude towards risk and empower them to consider it rather than fear it. Use insight to enable "smart risk taking" and eradicate the fear of failing.

Leadership...

Leadership is key to innovation. People need a clear vision; they need to know what direction the company is going in, what the destination is and whether the journey will be worth the pain. So, a leader must make the future seem bright, achievable, desirable, and possible. Explain the long term perspective, the journey and don't judge performance on industry benchmarks or quarterly financial targets as this stifles creativity.

So, come on HR practitioners, demonstrate to your leaders how you can contribute to the strategic development of these seven areas and claim your seat at the top table!

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Let's Think...
Beyond?

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