Innovation: We all know we need it. It helps our companies compete, helps our countries thrive and helps mankind forge a brighter future. Yet the pathway to innovation remains a mystery. Innovation at larger companies is declining globally, and no one seems to have an answer. As a serial innovator, I’d like to share some new insights on the problems and solutions, all backed up by the latest research.

SELF-IMPOSED BARRIERS

Having spent much of my career inside large corporations like BASF and Electrolux/Frigidaire, I have firsthand experience of the frustration that one encounters when trying to deliver innovation from within a corporate behemoth. It turns out that when you check the scientific studies, many of the practices favored today simply do not work. Six Sigma can make companies uncompetitive. Open plan offices are proven to reduce effectiveness. Electrolux/Frigidaire, I have firsthand experience of the frustration that one encounters when trying to deliver innovation from within a corporate behemoth. It turns out that when you check the scientific studies, many of the practices favored today simply do not work. Six Sigma can make companies uncompetitive. Open plan offices are proven to reduce effectiveness.

So, how can we break the innovation pipeline? We need to know if we’re following the right tools and processes. Just as Six Sigma makes it difficult to release a new product, abandoning any tool that has been proven ineffective makes it difficult to develop new ones. In fact, every process and tool is designed to fail. Open plan offices are proven to reduce effectiveness. Six Sigma can make companies uncompetitive. So, how can we break the innovation pipeline? We need to know if we’re following the right tools and processes.

STEP ONE – REMOVE BARRIERS

As we discover that our favorite tools are broken, we need to ditch them. Let’s abandon any tool that has been proven ineffective. In fact, every process and rule that we implement are like a tax on our innovation efforts. They sap our energy, steal our resources and slow us down, until we become uncompetitive. That is what has happened to almost every large company.

STEP TWO – NURTURE INNOVATION

There are plenty of articles about encouraging a culture of innovation. It sounds nice, but no one seems to know how to actually do it. I was asked to give my views, so here they are.

My advice is to implement this simple change, in which the people are in the right positions, and make sure to maintain it. You will see an upward spiral in your success, which will feed on itself. People see success and are energized to repeat it. Furthermore, creating a stable environment means that the teams formed are able to continue operating effectively. Most organizations today suffer from the reverse. Turnover is so high that projects are continually disrupted and delayed, as members come and go.

I can imagine that some of you are wondering how to identify creative and consistent people. How can we be sure that we’re putting people into their ideal roles? Luckily experts have spent decades measuring people’s personalities, so they can tell you how smart, hardworking, honest and, yes, creative they are. One test that many Americans have heard of is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) assessment, but psychologists prefer to use the Big Five personality test or the HEXACO Personality Inventory – Revised, which adds the measurement of integrity. These tests are tremendously useful in making sure you hire the best employees.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) assessment has been shown to have a strong correlation with innovation success. The “NT” type personality has created 6M in profit, versus only 0.1M for all other types combined (INF, ISF, INFP). When you consider that only about 12% of the population has an NT personality type, it starts to become clear why innovation struggles and why companies need to have the right people in the right roles for individual and corporate success.

As a reframer, “NT” stands for Vitality (What could be, What if, Patterns, Looking ahead) and Thinking (Objective analysis, Logical).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Chris DeArmitt is considered one of the top plastic materials experts and problem solvers in the world, which reveals the true reasons for innovation failure and the proven path to success.

INNOVATION ENLIGHTENMENT