

Accelerating rural growth by empowering women through innovation and technology

LEADERSHIP THROUGH INNOVATION

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Abstract

This paper explores the important role of leadership through innovation. "Leadership makes the difference when it comes to innovation." What makes some people effective leaders? What makes some effective leaders? What characteristics make for good leadership? Effective leaders share certain characteristics and possess certain behavioral skills which help them for leading effectively in specific situation. Effective leader's behavior is determined by the nature of his/her personality and the way he/she interacts with others. According to me Leadership is the ability to bring people in to a desired state. The desired state means stability. This stability must be achieved through change that is innovation and this state is achieved through leaders. Innovation cannot be a random change it has to be intentional change. It is adding value to something existing. This change doesn't take place for the name sake but it takes place to achieve the desired goal. This can be achieved with the quality of leadership and the path is set through innovation.

Leadership

"A good leader walks the talk". By definition this phrase implies that simply your actions matching your words and expectations you have of others. You can't just speak the words; you need to follow them with actions. It means practicing what one preaches. In essence, successful leaders live by their word and their actions. They strive to be honest and clearly state the facts to their employees and make every effort to live by the expectation and standards they expect of others. In other words, "If you're going to talk the talk, you've got to walk the walk." Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King are two prime examples of great communicators. Great leaders do more than just communicate. They **teach what they preach**. When you **walk the talk**, people are more inclined to **believe you** and follow your example.

According to Dwight D Eisenhower "leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."¹

The word leadership can bring to mind variety of images such as political leader, an explorer, an executive etc.....Leadership is about mapping out where you need to go to "win" as a team or an organization; and it is dynamic, exciting, and inspiring. Leadership development begins with the simple realization that you want to be a leader. A leader is a person who guides or inspires others within an organization or community to achieve a goal. A leader is someone who stands not only for his cause but takes responsibility and motivates other individuals also. A leader is a motivation for others and inspires individuals to aim high and attain that aim.

According to Keith Davis, "Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it towards goals."²

¹Dwight D Eisenhower

Leadership is a process by which an executive can direct, guide and influence the behavior and work of others towards accomplishment of specific goals in a given situation. Leadership is the ability of a manager to induce the subordinates to work with confidence and zeal. Leadership is the potential to influence behavior of others. It is also defined as the capacity to influence a group towards the realization of a goal. Leaders are required to develop future visions, and to motivate the organizational members to want to achieve the visions.

Leadership is *an* ability that means a leader has a capacity to do something through talent and skill. Talent is natural. Leadership is *adaptive* which means that the leader makes adjustments. A leader who fails to adjust to the territory will lose their way. Only fools willingly follow someone who is lost. Leadership acts on a setting, meaning a leader adjusts the state of the surroundings and people. A leader carefully observes those states and discerns significance looking for how to adapt the setting most effectively.

Leadership empowers it means a leader inspires confidence and self-esteem. And that inspiration comes in many flavors. Some leaders inspire by bold talk; others by soft talk; and others by their example. There are many ways to empower rather than a single way.

Leadership fosters creativity, meaning imaginative use of limited resources. A leader that enables people to use their imagination is a step closer to solving problems faster, better and cheaper.



1. Innovation

Innovation means coming up with new ways of doing things. Naylor says 'innovations are ideas that are developed into new products or processes. They result in changes that customers recognize as new. Put in even simpler terms, innovation is 'the process of making improvements by introducing something new'. Therefore, the two words that sum innovation up are 'process' and 'new'.

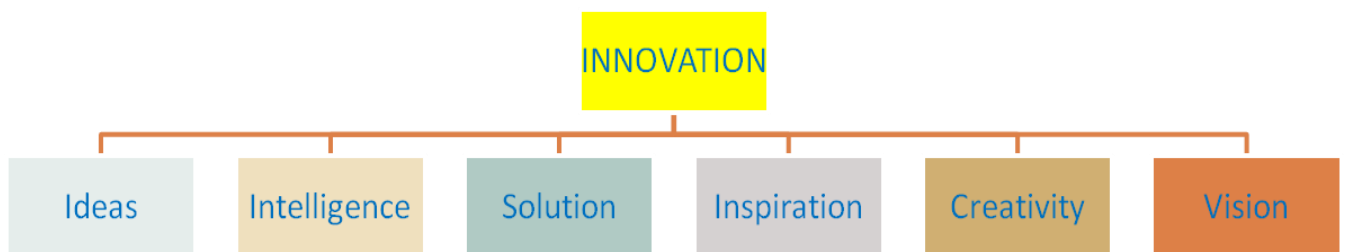
²Keith Davis

The biggest secret of innovation is that anyone can do it. The reason is simple: It's just not that hard. To innovate is "to introduce something new." That's it. It doesn't say you need to be a creative genius, a workaholic. It's just three little words: introduce something new. The key word in the definition is "new." The common trap about newness is the assumption that new means something the universe has never seen before. "Innovation doesn't come from braking free the past, it comes from harnessing the past in powerful new ways. When we put our heads up and look around all that we see is an Innovation."³

Innovation is inextricably linked with creativity. Innovation and creativity processes are interrelated, because finding a solution to the problems in the process of innovation requires creativity. Creativity goes hand in hand with innovation. And there is no innovation without creativity. While creativity is the ability to produce new and unique ideas, innovation is the implementation of that creativity - that's the introduction of a new idea, solution, process, or product. Creativity is the driving force behind innovation and the incorporation of looking at things from a different perspective and freedom of restrictions by rules and written or unwritten norms.

"Without change there is no innovation, creativity, or incentive for improvement. Those who initiate change will have a better opportunity to manage the change that is inevitable"⁴.

One of the key concepts to developing innovation is change. Innovative thinking can be discouraged by those who do not embrace change. Status-quo behavior can no longer be the driver to developing strategy. "This is how we always did this" can no longer be the mantra. Change is not easy. It pushes us outside of our comfort zone. Being pushed outside of comfort is a stimulus for change and that helps to develop innovative thinking. Innovative leaders embrace change. They view it as a way to stay competitive, stay viable and lead others to do the same. This is done through developing an innovative culture where those within it feel safe to challenge, debate and discuss new ideas and concepts.



2. Type of Leadership that Encourages Innovation

The leadership structure of organizations help produce results that can encourage creativity and innovation. However, not every kind of leadership model is effective in creating this opportunity. Investments in certain kinds of styles and models can produce results that generate creativity.

The heroic approach to leadership has little chance of bringing innovation and renewal because leaders do not single-handedly lead organizations to greatness. Rather, leadership involves many individuals with various tools and skills who together transform the organization.

³ Joe Murtagh, The dream speaker business journal.

⁴ William Pollard

The alternative form of leadership is that it is not the ability of one person to take charge, but the ability to inspire, empower, and exert broad influence in the organization. Contemporary leaders know that no individual has all the ideas, the skills, and time to carry out the complex tasks of contemporary leadership. They know that organizations will not survive if their leadership is limited to the top leaders because leadership opportunities exist at every level of the organization. Therefore, for an organization to become innovative and successful, it must benefit from the creativity of all its members. Organizations can achieve this by harnessing all its leadership abilities. Everyone in the organization in some way needs to be involved in its leadership. Creative and successful organizations today depend on multiple sources of effective leadership at all levels rather than maintaining a command-and-control leadership structure that often stifles creativity. Therefore, the best way to build an innovative, vibrant, and effective organization is to diffuse leadership and empower everyone through training and coaching so that they become creative and effective leaders themselves.

3. How Leaders Encourage Innovation

For the spirit of innovation to develop in any organization, it must recognize the role of the leaders in encouraging creativity. Leaders can successfully encourage organizational creativity and innovation by designing the organization to foster an environment that is conducive for creativity to flourish. Leaders can do this by building friendly and inclusive working conditions for the members of the organization. Furthermore, leaders can be more effective in encouraging creativity by treating organizations as living systems filled with the innovative dynamics and potential that exists in all of the people. In essence, leaders must stop treating the people in the organization as machines, but rather as living beings who work in organizations that are living systems. This worldview helps leaders create organizations filled with followers who are capable of adapting, alert to changes in their environment, and able to innovate purposefully. However, the only way leaders can harness this innovative spirit is when they invite everyone to participate in solutions and in the creation of the organizational processes. This means that the leaders must engage the whole system in order to harness the intelligence and creativity that exists throughout the organization. In essence, organizational leadership is the most important aspect of the organizational creativity and innovation dynamics. No organization can transform or renew itself unless the leaders put the process in motion and sustain it. Therefore, organizations need creative leaders to manage the innovation process. Hence, the creativity of an organization depends on how the leader designs the organization and creates the environment that allows creativity to develop. It can also depend on how they encourage and manage diversity in the organization. Finally, it depends on how the leader inspires everyone to bring out his or her best creative self and use that to help lead and transform the organization.

4. Role of an effective leadership

Effective leadership is important because it creates confidence among the participants in an organization and encourages a professional and positive environment. In an enterprise setting, leadership acts as the catalyst that makes all other business aspects work in tandem. In the absence of proper leadership, business resources lie dormant.

Leadership can be described as the process or art of influencing people's behaviors, thoughts and attitude. Effective leadership makes people feel like they have a say in how things are done. Leadership entails inspiring people to effectively, efficiently and willingly complete any tasks assigned to them, often inadvertently leading to higher levels of productivity and job satisfaction.

Proper leadership sets a clear vision and effectively communicates it to employees, providing them with a clear understanding of the organizational direction. Good leadership also fosters effective planning which is important when it comes to meeting organizational goals. Quality business leadership is also important during times of crisis and when dealing with relationships between coworkers. Effective leadership

improves employee relations and more closely aligns the team and individual objectives. In the absence of strong leadership, an organization may record slow growth, or stall completely, and eventually lose its competitiveness and direction. There are 12 leadership roles i.e listed below....

- Create an inspiring vision and shared values
- Lead change
- Lead by example
- Demonstrate confidence
- Inspire and energize people
- Empower people
- Communicate openly
- Listen, support and help
- Involve everyone, use team approach
- Coach, bring out the best in your people
- Encourage group decision
- Monitor progress, but don't micromanage.

5. Innovative leadership

“Innovative leadership is the ability to both think and influence others to create “new and better” ideas to move towards positive results”.

"Innovative leaders are creative visionaries who have big ideas and, most importantly, can motivate people around them to turn those ideas into reality". Innovative leadership inspires others to think outside the box, and then creates an environment where new ideas can be tested and evaluated. These leaders tend to be visionaries and motivate their followers through leading by example and fostering collaboration. Innovation and leadership are closely related. Leadership always has some focus on bringing about a better future. In this sense, leaders are necessarily innovators.

Key Characteristics of Innovation Leadership

Innovation leadership doesn't happen by accident. Leaders at every level have to choose to be innovative, and they have to choose to develop the characteristics of innovation leadership in their daily work systems. The key characteristics are:

- **Idea Creation.** Idea creation is the cornerstone of all innovation. As you focus on innovation leadership, your first job is to encourage participation. This can mean everything from scheduling specific “fun times” to encourage creative thinking, to having specific innovation days where your team is encouraged to brainstorm creative solutions to problems. Ideation is an ongoing process where you make room for those moments.
- **Idea Evaluation.** Not every idea is gold, and that's OK. As an innovation leader, you should be able to evaluate ideas for feasibility and even offer tweaks to make them more workable. As the leader, you're most aware of the business environment you're in and what makes sense.
- **Implementation.** As you develop your innovation leadership, be sure to implement the ideas as quickly as possible. Keep your team and the upper level posted on progress. It may encourage faster engagement.
- **Evaluation of Results.** Innovation leaders should be able to assess performance as they go, be prepared to take action, and course correct when the implementation isn't going as planned.

6. Conclusion

SET DIRECTION

- Face reality
- Focus on the future
- See changes as an opportunity

DEMONSTRATE PERSONAL CHARACTER

- ⚙ Live values, lead by example
- ⚙ Hope and create a positive self image
- ⚙ Display integrity and learning ability

According to Mahatma Gandhi “they may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.”

When people speak of innovators, what they really mean are creative thinkers. In other words, people who are able to generate creative ideas that become the basis of innovations. An innovative leader does not even need to be the person who creates the idea behind an innovation. Innovative leaders are creative visionaries who have big ideas and most importantly, can motivate people around them to turn those ideas in to reality. Classic examples of innovative leaders include people like SteveJobs [CEO of Apple] and Thomas AlwaEdison [who commercialized electric lighting and many related things].

Conclusion

According to me innovative leadership needs not only think different, but they need to act different. Successful innovation leadership requires a leader with certain characteristics. These include creativity, vision,empowerment,encouragement and values. So let me conclude with a quote of George Bernard Shaw “There are only two rules for being successful. One, figure out exactly what you want to do, and two, do it.”

