

Leadership through Innovation requires Vision and needs Action

Dr. Shraddha Verma

Assistant Professor

St. Vincent Pallotti College

ABSTRACT

Organizations align their leadership teams to create value, galvanize their teams, and build action plans for the future to be more innovative. To do so, leaders need to embrace the concepts of innovative leadership which allows building on ideas, creating value and helping transform ourselves, our teams and the organization itself. Today's products and current strategy will be outdated tomorrow. How do we keep pace? Embrace innovative leadership. What are the traits of a successful leader that strives to be more innovative? In this article we will review what innovative leadership is and learn what we can do to build on transformational leadership concepts to develop innovative leaders in our organizations. We need to take action on our creativity and innovative thinking. Vision is required, but a foundation is needed.

Leadership through Innovation requires Vision and needs Action

Innovation itself is defined as a process where we take an idea and further translate it into a valuable good, service or concept. Because of the changing landscapes in business and information technology alike, the need to continue to build on past ideas and learn from mistakes is crucial to achieve competitive advantage. For a business to stay solvent, it needs to continue to meet the demands of their customers and find new ways to evolve the business and strategy as well as products and services. For something to be called innovative, it also needs to be repeatable, cost effective if possible and satisfy a need. Innovation is deliberate. Innovation is not only working harder, but also working smarter. Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower. To be sustainable, innovative thinking must be adaptable and developed into the overall organizational culture where the strategy is based on not relying on current successes to define an organization. To do this, this way of thinking must be infused with organizational culture, practiced and developed. Everyone needs to be on board. Continued success of an organization relies on the understanding that to remain successful, the organization needs to stay competitive. When organizational leaders embrace the need to stay competitive, adapt to change, overcome challenges by being creative and 'thinking outside of the box' you step through the doorway of innovative leadership. 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. -William Pollard 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. For good ideas and true innovation, you need human interaction, conflict, argument, debate. Innovation also takes time to infuse into the thinking of an entire organization. For some, it requires a radical shift in how business is done and consistency in approach. When this happens, over time small innovations become larger ones. The culture changes and adapts and innovative leadership takes root. Innovative systems, tools, and thinking are essential for organizational health and future viability. Innovation Leadership has two Components -

An innovative approach to leadership which means to bring new thinking and different actions to how you lead, manage, and go about your work. And Leadership for innovation Leaders must learn how to create an organizational climate where others apply innovative thinking to solve problems and develop new products and services. It is about growing a culture of innovation, not just hiring a few creative outliers. This two-tiered approach generates the kind of innovation that can produce the next new product or design, but it goes well beyond. Applying innovative thinking to your challenges as a leader is one step in creating an innovative, organizational response to change and challenge. But developing a culture of innovation, where others throughout the organization apply innovative thinking to solve problems and develop new products and services, requires additional work. Studies have shown that 20 percent to 67 percent of the variance on measures of the climate for creativity in organizations is directly attributable to leadership behavior. What this means is that leaders must act in ways that promote and support organizational innovation. the three tasks of leadership as setting direction, creating alignment, and building commitment. When direction, alignment, and commitment are created around innovation, organizations emerge as more productive and more innovative.

Leadership for Organizational Innovation requires:-

Organizational encouragement- An innovative organizational culture has a shared vision for innovation; demonstrates fair, constructive judgment of ideas; rewards and recognizes innovative work; and has mechanisms for encouraging and developing an active flow of ideas.

Lack of organizational impediments.-A culture that encourages innovation is one whose leaders actively remove organizational barriers to innovation. Internal political problems, harsh criticism of new ideas, and destructive internal competition are minimized or eliminated. Other impediments to innovation include an avoidance of risk, a fear of failure, an overemphasis on the status quo and existing processes that crush new ideas.

Leadership encouragement- Innovative leaders show support and confidence in the work and value individual contributions. They nurture and promote creative people. Leaders encourage innovation when they protect and participate in the innovation process by neutralizing negative people, watching out for corporate systems and responses that quash innovation, and by using innovative thinking in their own work

Sufficient resources-Innovation becomes a priority only when people are given access to appropriate resources, including funds, materials, facilities, and information.

Realistic workload-Expectations for productivity should be realistic and free from extreme time pressures or distractions.

Freedom-Innovation expands as people feel a sense of freedom in deciding what work to do or how to do it. It's OK (even necessary) to impose some constraints, such as time frame or cost, but don't constrain the approach.

Challenging work- A sense of being challenged by work on important projects is conducive to both innovation and productivity. Set big outrageous goals and assign difficult work but be sure the systems and structures that support innovation surround the work too.

Teamwork and collaboration-People in innovative organizations communicate well, are open to each other's ideas, and support each other in shared work. Set up space and processes that encourage interaction, easy exchange of ideas, fun, and serious play.

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. Innovative leadership uses several different leadership styles, depending upon what is required to meet the needs of organization and individuals.

