

# GENERAL MANAGEMENT

## STRENGTHEN YOUR INNOVATION SKILLS

Innovation is a valuable skill. It positions you as a leader. It creates a larger inventory of opportunities to pursue on your career path. It's exhilarating for you and motivational for others. And, it is a skill you can improve.

But the obstacles to improving your innovation skills are numerous. The biggest is your pre-existing habits. You may have the habit of not seeing yourself as an innovator. You may have the habit of feeling comfort in doing things the same way as they have been done in the past. You may have the habit of avoiding innovation because past efforts have been met with failure or severe resistance. A common habit is holding back due to the fear of being judged harshly for an innovative idea that is not well received.

One key to strengthening your innovation skills is to realize that you will only implement innovation when you are excited about an idea. Feeling lukewarm means you will have to rely on willpower to implement, and willpower does not have staying power.

To increase the likelihood of getting excited, you need to increase the inventory of innovative ideas. If you only have a few new ideas, the likelihood of getting excited about one of them is less than if you have many innovative ideas.

One way to increase your inventory of ideas is to accept the assignment to look for ways to improve everything you do. A great tip is to put a "post-it" note on your computer screen with the words, "Is there a better way?" Seeing that simple note all day long may have a dramatic impact. Seeing the note may remind you to take a moment and consider some other options. It may remind you to ask a colleague or do some research. Sometimes you will think of a better way right away. Other times, it may take some long-term consideration. But in any case, you will learn to challenge the status quo. And when you do you will create an attitude that will invite innovation.

Another way to increase your inventory of innovative ideas is to accept the assignment of noticing the innovations that surround you. Observe the way other businesses are behaving. Observe the innovations of the people that interact with you. Then, make it a practice to write down any observations. The act of writing down the innovations you observe trains you to notice more. As

you notice the specifics of how the world around you is improving, it is an easy step to consider how an improvement in one area might transfer to your life. For example, you might notice that one of your competitors has developed a software application to promote their business. If you let that be a trigger for you, you might realize how your firm could develop a software application to promote your business.

As you develop your ability to increase your innovative ideas, some might reveal significant benefit to you. When that happens, the next step is to learn how to think through some key issues that will help you decide if the idea is worth pursuit.

### *Here is the process of analyzing a potential innovation:*

- List all the potential benefits. The key to the success of any innovation is that the benefits outweigh the costs. So an active effort to document the benefits will provide you with the ability to make an intelligent analysis.
- List all the obstacles to implementation. This will give you the ability to address each obstacle systematically.
- List your initial options for action. The best way to get clarity about taking action is to document every option you can think of before acting. This step will stop you from some knee-jerk response that may be a discouraging waste of time.
- Write down your next step. Once you start moving in the direction of implementing your innovation, you increase the likelihood of maintaining the momentum and making it happen.

The ability to become more innovative is a remarkably beneficial asset. Innovation produces new ways to solve problems. It increases the likelihood of your getting what you want. And one thing for sure... it is really fun. It's fun to feel creative. It's fun to think about how your innovations will improve your life. It's fun to be seen as an innovator and it's particularly fun to enjoy the benefits of your innovative successes. 🇺🇸



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