

Ideas

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Most organizations talk about using ideas to innovate and improve performance. In fact, I would be surprised to find an organization (except a very small one?) that does not have employees, suppliers, and customers who have lots of great ideas. Some of their ideas could significantly increase revenues, profits, and productivity. So why are so many organizations struggling to turn ideas into strategies and tactics that will make them more competitive?

In fact, according to an Accenture study "... 93% of executives hitch their company's long-term success to their ability to innovate, but at the same time, less than 18% believe their own innovation strategy is delivering a competitive advantage." Could there be a disconnect in the process of capturing, selecting, and implementing good ideas?

With so many ideas available, the first step of your innovation strategy is to gather and categorize ideas in a manner that supports your organization's selection criteria. Simple tools like suggestion boxes or more sophisticated tools such as surveys and focus groups can support idea generation. More importantly, organizational leaders have to create a culture that allows ideas to be "heard". An important part of the "hearing process" is the feedback provided for the ideas submitted. For instance, do the ideas submitted support your organization's strategic plan, values, and vision? Are the ideas workable based on the criteria that has been created and shared?

The second step in this process is idea selection. Sorting through ideas from employees, customers, suppliers, and others is time consuming and frustrating. This is especially true if these stakeholders do not understand your strategic direction. The selection of ideas can be streamlined by creating criteria for submission along with establishing senior leader responsibility for the idea selection process. Criteria should include the categorization of ideas including problem-solving, improved customer service, and employee satisfaction. This process can increase the number of strategically appropriate ideas submitted and help to create a better understanding of your organization's strategic needs. At the same time your employees may also gain a better understanding of decisions already being made.

Finally, the ideas selected have to be properly implemented in order to be meaningful. The most impactful ideas may be the most difficult to implement due to the significance of the changes required. Sound change management practices and plans are imperative in order to insure this final step is successful.

Ideas can be found just about everywhere. Choosing the right ones and implementing them requires good leadership and planning. Is your organization selecting and implementing ideas generated by employees and other stakeholders? Start taking action now if you want to take advantage of ideas that will make your organization more competitive.

Questions?

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