

Deepening my views on ways to stimulate
and define the Business Case for the
Leadership of Organizations to increase
their involvement in Innovation

Approaching this through an integrated
innovation framework concept we call the
Executive Innovation work Mat approach



Paul Hobcraft



Content Included in this additional short booklet

1. Leaders need to engage and drive innovation
2. Seeking engagement for innovation change
3. Lining up the fundamentals in leadership and innovation
4. Overarching Proposition for the Executive Innovation Work Mat
5. The essential innovation vision – a VISUAL of engagement
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These short articles have been taken from the blog www.paul4innovating.com and offer a personal view of innovation and areas that need much deeper thinking through at all levels, especially the leadership level within organizations.

17th September 2012

(revised July 2013)



Leaders need to engage and drive innovation

It continues to amaze me; actually it is depressing that although our business leaders constantly confirm that innovation is in their top three priorities yet they stay stubbornly disengaged in facilitating this across their organizations, especially the larger ones. Of course I am not suggesting this is all our business leaders but I would argue innovation and its 'make up' remains a mystery to nearly all our leaders. They are more than willing to allocate responsibility down the organization, failing to recognize their pivotal role in managing or orchestrating innovation engagement themselves, or even ensuring the mechanisms are fully in place. Why is this?

Time and time again you read one report after another, about the leadership gap in innovation or issues relating to innovation disconnecting from the top of the organization. You can read reports from Booz, Allen Hamilton, Boston Consulting, the Conference Board, Harvard Business Review, IBM, A T Kearney, A D Little and many others all reporting issues and gaps in connecting innovation at the top of our organizations. Can they all be wrong, if not then why aren't our CEO's listening? Why are we not resolving this and only just keep reporting it?

In March of this year Capgemini Consulting and IESE issued their report called the "Innovation leadership study" and this went deeper than most into the problems.

The study revealed that *"the absence of a well-articulated innovation strategy is by far the most important constraint for companies to reach their innovation targets."*

In the report they mentioned not just the lack of many formal mechanisms were missing but the total environment for innovation was missing this explicit innovation strategy. That is a serious failure at the top of organizations in my opinion. How can leaders expect innovation if they remain unclear of their role and function in facilitating and encouraging it? Can this change?

A collaborative effort

Jeffrey Phillips of [Ovo Innovation](#) and I have collaborated on a number of different innovation frameworks over the last twenty-four months or so. These have been to offer concepts or frameworks that we felt were missing or needed explaining. We have set about the offering up of possible solutions to reduce much of this 'mystery' that seems to still surround innovation.

As we shared and exchanged views, we have mutually recognized our personal frustrations on this continued leadership gap towards innovation. This has been triggered even more by this Capgemini report and so we decided on a way forward as our 'tipping point' to set about studying this and seeing if we could find a solution to this innovation leadership issue. Or at the very least, advance this recognition,

beyond debates from this constant recognition of a problem, into offering an emerging framing on the ways to begin to resolve this.

A soft launch will happen offering our integrated innovation ‘framing’ as a solution.

We think we have now arrived at a further tipping point and will ‘soft’ launch the **integrated innovation framework** this coming weekend, starting Sunday 9th September 2012. We will build within a series of seven articles, one per day over a week, which we believe make up the component parts. We will attempt to explain what we see as an integrated executive innovation framework that will be delivered through a work mat methodology approach. These articles will be published initially through www.innovationexcellence.com to gain an audience of innovators and then will be taken out further by our two respective organizations in further field work, validation and consultation.

I recently wrote a series of articles in August and one is perhaps worth reading again, this is “[From a buzzword to the imperative](#).” In this I discuss this need for a framework and then go on and explore different components within a series of subsequent articles, that I felt needed leadership attention.

The present argument needs moving on and resolving

There is no argument surely that we need to break into this leadership gap around innovation? We need to offer suggestions towards their role, to address this lack of engagement or awareness? We need to provide an organizing framework that achieves alignment into the organizations goals and provides the structure across innovation that can ‘cascade’ down and across an organization. The end aim is that so all those involved within the organization, or closely associated with it, can relate too and ‘gather’ around an overarching framework, articulated and constructed from the top, that guides innovation.

We want to narrow this leadership gap and organization understanding so as to achieve a specific connection between leaders and their role in how they can facilitate and bridge this clear divide and present seen ‘impediment’ for innovation. The leaders of organizations are no different from all the employees working within the company, they are all looking to secure a sustaining future and participate in a vibrant one that primarily comes from the innovation engine needed for all businesses and economic growth. The contribution of the leaders within organizations falls mainly on defining their role, laying out its parts in a coherent way for all to relate too. We believe this framework approach can be one of the primary organizing ways for that engagement and identification so much needed.

Tune in please and we certainly hope you can relate to what we are offering

We believe this integrated framework will require some real leadership engagement but we believe the outcome can offer four significant benefits:

1. The framework can create cohesion and consistency of innovation purpose that will reduce many existing barriers and uncertainties around innovation
2. As the leadership does become engaged this will demonstrate a significant commitment and promise that will certainly increase the visibility of innovation, lowers risks, encourages more involvement and generation of better ideas.
3. The framework itself will generate work flows that connect, become more dynamic to explore and promote the innovation skills, capabilities and competencies needed. They become more cohesive, coordinated and focused
4. As the framework connects, in its understanding and as its impact grows, we certainly believe confidence builds. Both formal and informal areas are addressed in parallel, growing all-round identification and alignment.

A challenging road to travel

To get to this tantalizing promise needs a lot of recognition, engagement, investment and commitment. You don't suddenly arrive at enacting such a change without some 'hard yards' to cover and tough issues to resolve.

We are only at the starting point by offering this integrated innovation framework. We have confidence it will help, what we need is the right audience to listen and simply say "I get it." For the leaders, to hopefully see its organizing value and fit and their critical role to play in supporting innovation through this organizing and integrated framework so the organization initiates and delivers what is expected, better than today.

Do we see bumps on the way, *of course*, do we feel they can be navigated, *again of course*; otherwise you don't start the journey. We are equipping ourselves for some demanding challenges.

We continue to invest in this framework as we see it does offer real potential

We feel this period of research, investment and consistently exchanging between us both has certainly increased in intensity over the last six months. We have built a structure; a methodology and a guiding set of approaches that help facilitate and provide the CEO and his leadership team with a way to radically reduce that innovation leadership gap.

We can offer a clear 'way forward' for engagement and alignment that can help, *perhaps radically*, the organization to establish innovation firmly into the minds of the boardroom and their vital role to play within this real need for all to engage in.

We seek to bridge the innovation leadership gap

All I can do at this stage is ask you to please explore this series of articles, don't rush to judge and dismiss, take the more explore and reflect, approach. We simply want you to have a similar identification and equally 'I get it, maybe we need it' at this stage. We hopefully begin to bridge the innovation leadership gap and the role they need to play

and we feel we offer a way to address the lack of innovation leadership that is clearly 'out there missing' in nearly all organizations.

In organizations this needs internal discussions to recognize this 'gap' and then gain the leadership's attention to how this can be addressed. The proposed integrated innovation framework might be the place to start and our arguments might be the catalyst.

We launch our "emerging thoughts" in this series of articles on the different innovation domains needed to be explored at the leadership level, this coming weekend 9th September 2012, and each day, during that week. We outline these through the frameworks different domains themselves. Do take a look and I hope you agree, we offer a way forward and want to engage and deploy this framework to the leadership of innovation.

Seeking engagement for innovation change

I'm right in the middle of a launch of the Executive Innovation Work Mat approach, a series of seven blogs outlining a framework and structured approach to this. During the seven days these will document seven important "domains" that determine innovation success or failure.

Each domain creates innovation potential, but sustained, successful innovation requires a unified "framework" in which all of these domains are appropriately engaged and aligned. The development of this framework, which we call the **Executive Innovation Work Mat**, is the responsibility of the CEO or senior executive. They can deliver alignment by engaging and providing this leadership required in innovation.



Introduction to the Series of the Executive Innovation Work Mat with image credit: opening curtain image from bigstock

If you have the opportunity, do go over to the www.innovationexcellence.com site to see the first two blogs, the foundation document and whose role it is to design this and why.

The first document is called [The Seven Essential Domains for Innovation Leadership – the Work Mat Approach](#) and the second [The Critical Role that Senior Leaders must fill for Innovation Success](#)

As this is a collaborative effort between [Jeffrey Phillips](#) and me, we see this opening series as the engagement to the innovation community. We are looking for feedback and thoughts to take this forward as we clearly believe it is an important problem within innovation to break down

Seeking reactions, searching for the barriers and issues is critical.

On my previous blog on this site [Leaders need to engage and drive innovation](#) I receive a really encouraging set of comments around many of the issues and barriers we seem to have when we want to engage our leaders in business on innovation. Go

and take a look, add more comments if you would like- I'm open to listening on this as I believe it vital to 'crack'. I have 'pulled out' three that strike at some of our issues in getting the concept understood and adopted. Three comments I want to highlight here

Comment 1- the risk-adverse top executive

One comment was from [Joachim von Heimbürg](#) who is certainly a very experienced practitioner of innovation. He commented: *"Top executives are risk-averse. But innovation is scary. Most senior business leaders made it to the top of big companies because they were successful as (current) problem solvers, not as innovators. They are not that interested in considering a new business model or going after an amazing yet high-risk breakthrough when that may undermine their current profitable business. And who wants to risk having a major innovation effort fail on their watch?"*

My reply was partly: You strike at the heart of the problem. Getting the senior business leader looking more towards innovation, it will happen as you say if one targets the wider community (investor and Shareholder) even the end customer voting with their feet. Thankfully survival is changing as tenure reduces and something will eventually 'give' to alter their risk appetite. In some ways we do not want to change their behaviour, more change their engagement and alignment to innovation that goes on.

The link between strategy and innovation, if we can reduce this gap then it begins to 'appeal' to the leader as one less problem for greater utilization and tighter performance -which does play into their short-term performance mindset. If they can set the frameworks more, still stand back and make the necessary judgement calls then we have shifted the ground. If they engage even more and become more comfortable with increasing risk by increasing their understanding, again there is a real gain.

Comment 2- the fear of disruption

For my second comment was offered by [Drew Marshall](#) who runs his own practice Primed Associates, LLC and one of the founders of the weekly innovation chat under the hashtag of [innachat](#). He offered the view *"Too many leaders are distracted by the simple solution and frustrated by the fact that their complex problems are not resolved. For many the notion of inviting disruption into the systems and processes that they have often spent careers building and protecting is anathema, and the risk acceptance and resilience capacity necessary to embrace it is too often missing in action. There is much work to be done"*

My reply to Drew was: Drew, it is such a persistent problem, as we say, it has become a boil on the back of our neck, and it needs to be 'lanced'. Of course there is so much to distract leaders, they are pulled in so many different directions but you don't delegate growth, new wealth creation, your future to others. Presently many of our

leaders simply do that! There is much work to be done, I call this the new work of this decade and this only comes through innovation. Leaders need to get it!

Comment 3- the lack of industry participation in discussions about innovation

The third comment was from [Jack Hipple](#), who is without doubt very well-respected in TRIZ and its practice and who has written continuously for years on the subject of innovation. His comment that I picked up upon was: *“all the participants in these discussions are by consultants and no one from industry ever participates. Why?”*

In many ways this is the most disturbing, because Jack is right that across so many suggestions on innovation (good and bad alike) there does seem to be this absence of the industry practitioner themselves engaging and participating with their insights, knowledge or counter observation.

I replied to Jack: “It is frustrating that the actual community that is working innovation stays silent on so many forums or discussions on innovation. Notable exceptions are where leaders of innovation initiatives have their own blogs or deliver ‘thinking’ pieces into some of the established innovation knowledge sites. I know many read the articles but feel often ‘constrained’ by who they work for and not feeling they can participate, even if the views expressed are theirs, or feel sometimes a little daunted entering into areas they feel they lack that broader experience, both constraints are a great pity.

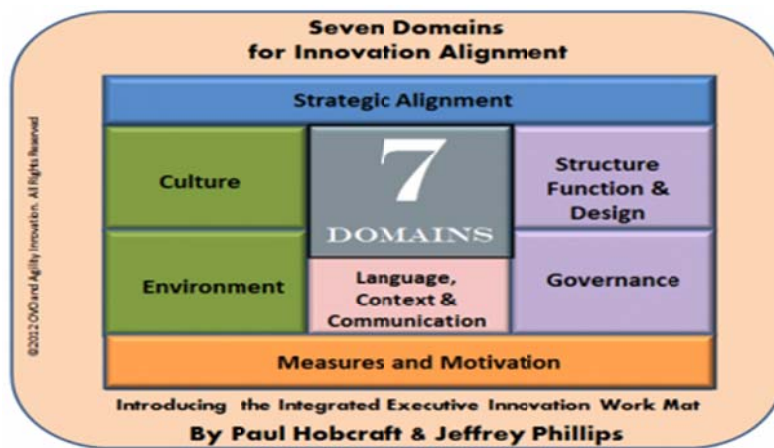
Perhaps the number of consultants or ‘experts’ drown out the voices from industries and often provide conflicting advice that can leave many simply confused, it is better to just get on with what you are doing. Equally they feel they don’t have the time or intellectual curiosity and simply just get (stay) within the bounds of what they can influence to apply their energies. Not an easy one to resolve”.

Making it happen depends on you wanting it too

The engagement that is required to make innovation happen is demanding. Deloitte's [Centre for the Edge](#) has looked previously at the connections between passion and engagement and found that only 20% of the sample regarded themselves as “passionate” about their work. That begins to point to a lack of real engagement and just passive interest that seems to occur within many knowledge communities. Secondly there were marked differences in employees in large firms and those self-employed with higher scores of disengaged and passive for firm employees.

Unless the environments change in large organizations where the feeling of having a “safe place”, not always needing “permission” and one where people can “think out loud” and have “ownership”, not precise goals underwritten by tight measures but by suggesting “broader parameters” we might see a re-engagement, a reactivation and “sense of pride” but it lies in the hands of the leaders to construct this. Where those within the innovation community they need to push back up the organization a different view, one that offers a different “construct” to manage innovation.

We are trying to offer that thinking through this present series and in the final framework we are suggesting. Why Jeffrey and I feel you need an integrated innovation framework approach as we are outlining this week, is critical to innovations long term sustaining future, let alone the immediate term of boosting quarterly results so often the judge of organization effectiveness and management.



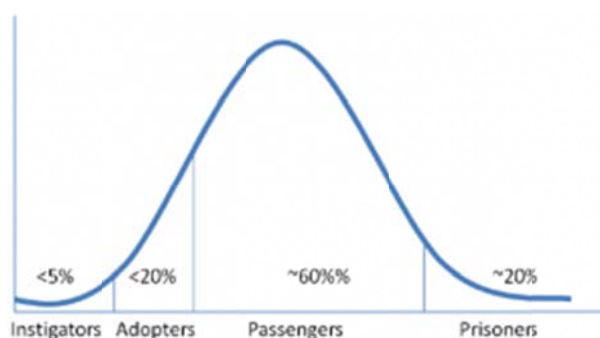
The Seven Domains for Innovation Alignment within the Integrated Executive Innovation Work Mat

The need of collaborators and champions

Turning prisoners from being captive within organizations into “partners, collaborators and champions” that grow in their identity with what innovation provides to the cause and mission of the organization, is powerful. It unleashes much.

Why do I call them prisoners?

Well today I was reading a short paper from Richard Merrick, the CEO of [Inspiration Engineering](#) on [Engagement and Innovation](#) they suggest from studies on engagement the average workforce is divided on something of an 80/20 basis between the —Instigators (the passionate and enthusiastic), —Willing passengers (who turn up and do as asked) and —prisoners (who would rather be somewhere else, but are afraid of leaving). It could be described in a similar way to Rogers adoption curve: (% for illustration, based on Centre for the Edge)



The challenge it is suggested, in rather same way as Malcolm Gladwell discusses in —Tipping Point, is to enable the

—instigators, enthuse the —Adopters and convert a good number of the —Passengers to —Adopters. Prisoners may be more problematic and longer term issues.

So will we get the adopters to “push” the Executive Innovation Work Mat and gain conversions, not just in colleagues who would like to get more engaged but find the way to place this series of blogs under the noses of the leaders, that all crave for improving innovation performance but perhaps did not recognize the essential role they should play?

We hope we can say “welcome on board” and “sit back, buckle up and enjoy the ride” to many within the innovation community and we can achieve a better all-round service performance because the leaders of our organizations finally do get to understand their role to play in the innovation sphere, as outlined in the Executive Innovation Work Mat series.

A role that can help unlock all those prisoners that are currently residing within organizations, who can offer so much more, if they are given the encouragement and the organizing framework to guide them back into being engaged employees seeing innovation for what it is, a place for identification and pride.

We see the CEO has the ability to:

- link innovation to strategy, and
- create focus, engagement and passion for innovation, and
- direct funds and resources to good innovation programs, and
- speed good ideas to market as new business models, products and services, and
- ensure defined innovation processes and metrics exist so innovation is sustainable.

Lining up the fundamentals in leadership and innovation

A week can feel like a long time, actually this present week has got condensed from six months of investigating, exploring and debating but even now it is only the beginning, that public 'coming out' of a new framework for innovation. It is what happens after this first exposure, that we will find its value and contribution and that depends on a lot of factors, mostly in other people's hands. Those that will recognize a clear value to help them and their organizations should welcome this, we hope.

So what am I talking about?

The development of an emerging framework, which we call the [Executive Innovation Work Mat](#), is where we are suggesting, lays the responsibility of the CEO or senior executive, to construct and enact. Executives need to fill a leadership gap found in innovation, and define a robust innovation framework. They can deliver the missing innovation alignment part by engaging and providing this leadership required in innovation that is often missing. What these contain are outlined in our framework that we have exposed this week in a series of seven blogs. Just click on the link above for the foundation article.

There is a movement detected in the innovation air!

We are seeing that innovation is becoming a more vital part of organizations ability to manage their future. There is an emerging formalized need for innovation within organizations but its whole structure, the innovation ecosystem or whatever name you want to call it, is today being simply left to chance. Its construct is not pieced together in the best coherent way to build a culture for sustaining innovation. Innovation lacks people who are specifically accountable, it gets built-in often ad-hoc, piecemeal fashion. It leaves many involved in the process frustrated with the amount of effort innovation needs and the lack of results that have not delivered that necessary impact and performance-effect often promised and so desired, to break from the competitive pack.

We are failing to build and nurture this 'innovation ecosystem'; we are not formulating and communicating where innovation links into strategy, it stays inarticulate and poorly communicated, it is left to others to interpret with a hope it fits somehow. Because there is often lack of internal clarity, there is also a poor connection to the external environment where opportunities are never recognized for their value. Equally where the customer remains dissatisfied with the present offering as one not meeting their explicit needs and where they often have to continue to compromise waiting.

While we continue to lack this explicit innovation structure or only recognize parts of it, it does have both short and long-term implications to the business. Businesses gets

locked into set pathways; they tread the simple incremental path, for fear of stepping off it, is stepping into the unknown, just a foreign, really alien place where fear and failure lurk behind every tree. Each sound carries warning and cries out danger. We believe clearing a [new pathway](#) leads to better innovation

Closing the disconnect on innovation

There is such a disconnect going on. The organization 'demands' innovation, the leadership presents innovation at every opportunity, often more as a fig leaf for the embarrassment that eventually arrives, as innovation into the market place. We need to set up a real connection between rhetoric and having in place real innovation infrastructures that work and are fully supported from the top. The leader is the source or energy point to make that happen, no one else. It cannot be simply delegated away. Whoever wants a leader that simply delegates growth, new wealth creation and your future to others?

There are certain correlations between leaders who are immersed in innovation and their organizations superior performance. This has been spoken off as one of the principle reasons why certain organizations have an innovation premium in the minds of customers, shareholders, investors and the community at large.

This week we offer a framework, **the Executive Innovation Work Mat**, which offers a real way to bring innovation as a topic to the highest level of the organization through its organizing mechanism of the seven essential domains for their engagement.

These efforts rely on mutual recognition that this leadership gap does exist and that it needs narrowing. It is for the leaders to construct the alignment points of the innovation efforts that deliver on the strategy and vision the leadership seeks.

We ask, [Jeffrey Phillips](#) and I, that you share our thinking and deliver this [White Paper](#) into the boardrooms of your organizations. Be those champions and advocates to place innovation in the spotlight, demanding it has to be changed. Within this spotlight the aim is one that seeks to improve the organizations ability to achieve more than it offers today from its innovation activity, because its leadership is engaged and inextricably connected. If we can accomplish that growing recognition, we can then go deeper into a specific set of dialogues that 'fits' with your organizations innovation aspirations. We stand ready for that set of challenges.

We start by talking about the issues and this is what this week has been all about. Talking and explaining this need for leadership engagement within this [framework](#), first to the innovation community and equally across Jeffrey's and my own networks, so as to gain a recognition and we trust a certain traction from this that we believe is valuable to achieve.

Will you become engaged in this?

The Overarching Proposition for the Executive Innovation Work Mat

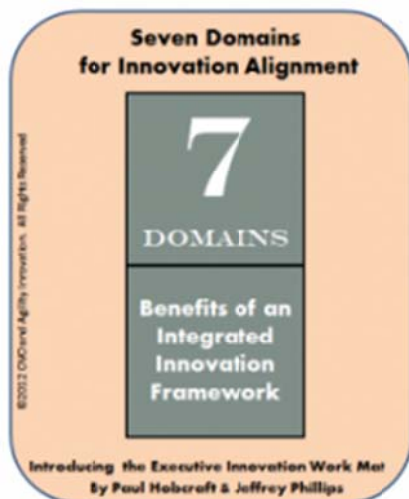
Posted on [September 16, 2012](#)

When you begin to think through something that might change the present dynamics within innovation and its management and you feel you have the emerging answer , by recognizing one really critical gap that needs filling, it becomes exciting. It becomes hugely exciting actually, in researching it, in debating it and eventually in constructing a potential framework that does bring this work together into a realization.

For Jeffrey Phillips and me, we believe we are offering something that makes sense through our framework, which we call the Executive Innovation Work Mat. In our [White Paper](#) that outlines this, we want to deliver the message into the boardrooms of as many business organizations as we can which can simply be summed up as “we believe we have a framework that will help the leadership of organizations to identify with, understand their role in this and so advance the contribution of innovation.”

Let me lay out the overarching proposition for this.

We believe there is an essential gap within the way we set about innovation today. There is a need for a well-articulated and well-communicated innovation strategy that can be delivered in an organizing framework that we have called [the Executive Innovation Work Mat](#).



Seven Essential Innovation Domains in the Executive Innovation Work Mat

The work mats aim is to engage the top of our organizations to lay out the conditions and result impact they expected from innovation.

This framework provides the guidance through its seven innovation domains that combine to move towards an explicit innovation strategy, that is looking to align far more to the organizations growth goals and strategic intent than most organizations deem to achieve today.

In obtaining the right innovation engagement at the top of our organizations, well communicated, we reduce distance and bridge many current disconnects surrounding innovation.

The end result is we gain identification and we believe improve organizational responsiveness through this involvement. It can deliver the essential alignment that innovation requires to support an organizations strategy and goals.

The framework provides both formal and informal mechanisms, it combine the intrinsic with the extrinsic, so as to make up a more effective way for decision-making and creating innovation to take place. This combination effect provides the necessary support to the efforts involved in discovering, exploring and executing innovation and a significant contributor to the strategic and tactical linkage needed within the organization.

In summary let me articulate the potential this work mat can offer:

Key implications

Innovation is not an isolated event; it is not made up of islands of knowledge. Innovation requires a “pulling together” and needs this overarching organizing framework, that provides the deep, enduring commitment to its constituent parts from the top of organizations in the support and the understanding required to make this happen. The framework provides the innovation leadership, it lays out the “conditions” for innovation through the work mat methodology.

The leadership have the underlying responsibility to establish it, leverage it and effectively work it fully through, using this framework as the mechanism for sustaining the innovation focus in a well-structured way. This gains a real organizational value as it provides the top-level understanding of the seven essential domains needed to support innovation that covers the structure, design and process, governance, motivation and metrics and the conditions to strengthen the climate and environment to bring this to life.

Points of emphasis

This framework provides a uniforming and growing cohesion required for innovation to be focused, it seeks greater alignment in activities and engagement around innovation; it actively works at reducing barriers and many of today’s uncertainties through its constant engagement, communication and dialogues prompted by its construct.

The framework becomes the document of the leaderships commitment and engagement, it raises innovations visibility in a structured thoughtful way, it seeks to encourage and draw in the organization for them to gather around.

Eventually we can see this framework becoming a sort of innovation mechanism for the “collecting house in meaningful exchange on innovation” where the essential strategic activities are captured and where the actions can be recognized, measured and valued. It triggers engagement and provides the motivations to delve even deeper into generating greater innovation outcomes as the end result around its framing ability.

The essential Common Language

Eventually it forms a significant part of the required innovation ecosystem. A place where common language forms, a clear explicit place where context connects with the work going on and the value of this is how the people involved in innovation work, connect and engage.

A dream, no, it can be a reality. We need to provide increasing clarity and purpose to each person’s daily work, to their innovation activities, so all draw meaning and value from the connections across the framework; they recognize the boundaries and push beyond in confidence, not fear. They need the appropriate “signal” and guidance from the top to gain encouragement to push the boundaries of potential but set within this overarching frame.

Risk is identified through dialogue and governance on what any actions mean and the understanding of these for any impact, negative or positive, on our innovation ecology can be evaluated. This pushes innovation beyond the normal incremental approach often found today, as leaders become more aware and can “frame” issues and understand opportunities better through their strategic lens.

Achievement Goals

The leader’s role is to provide guidance, strategic and sometimes tactical guidance, as well as to offer inspiration and clarity of purpose. They need to “draw out” the essence of an organization’s desire to innovation. By both articulating and nurturing innovation through this framework then innovation is driven and directed, then surely we are headed in the right direction.

An organizational framework for innovation draws people in, it achieves connection and engagement. If innovation can “resonate” throughout the organization it gains the “required attention”. It becomes embedded as the “force” essential for growth and over time part of our “natural” daily occurrence.

Motivation to innovate

We need to cultivate innovation. It is the primary source of new wealth creation, of sustaining a healthy future, of securing that future. Each of us needs to personally

understand how innovation happens, what are the ‘multiple’ connecting points, all the intersections and cross-over points needed to make it work, and work well repeatedly. Innovation cannot be delegated, it needs to be mastered, it needs to be shared. We all need to become “innovating conscious”. Everyone needs to “get it” not just a few selected people today.

Shared understanding and consistent follow up

What the executive team does, in what it communicates in its actions and behaviours, in its participation and its resource funding of innovation, becomes vital. Innovation runs counter to many of the existing (accepted) processes and faces stronger “head winds” and resistance because it challenges many of the existing practices and processes honed and established over many years. It needs executive leadership to manage these tensions and dynamics. There is a need to show innovation leadership.

This framework becomes the “glue” that connects across the seven domains essential to innovation and re-enforce a consistent need to challenge, overcome yet equally maintain performance.

Changing Behaviours

People make or break innovation. Innovation is an inherent social activity that needs relationships, networks, structures and supporting systems. People need to belong, belong in an environment that nurtures and encourages innovation, in a community that balances risk and learning, a place to generate and execute. A place to experiment and learn.

From the top to the bottom of the organization requires active engagement, growing identification and understanding and knowing that the skills, exposure to competencies and building capabilities is an on-going process that feeds off a climate of trust, mutual respect and ever evolving partnerships to achieve the work that is needed can be done.

Real Value Points

For engagement in the **Executive Innovation Framework**, the work invested in this work mat exercise offers as benefits

1. The framework can create cohesion and consistency of innovation purpose that will reduce many existing barriers and uncertainties around innovation
2. As the leadership does become engaged this will demonstrate a significant commitment and promise that will certainly increase the visibility of innovation, lowers risks, encourages more involvement and generation of better ideas.
3. The framework itself will generate work flows that link, become more dynamic to explore and promote the innovation skills, capabilities and competencies needed. They become more cohesive, coordinated and focused. It seeks to reduce tension and increase the dynamics within innovation.

4. As the framework connects, in its understanding and as its impact grows, we certainly believe, confidence builds. Both formal and informal areas are addressed in parallel, growing all-round identification and alignment.
5. You begin to align compensation and incentives into your abilities to generate the innovation activities that provide the impact the organization is looking for.

While CEOs or other senior leaders responsible for innovation they don't need to dominate innovation activities but they do need to fill this critical role to ensure:

- linking of innovation activities to corporate strategies,
- communicating the importance of innovation consistently and demonstrating their personal engagement,
- aligning the corporate culture and compensation programs to innovation goals and activities
- creating innovation governance frameworks and provide the environment to allow innovation to function and thrive.

The essential role that leadership plays in innovation

While few executives will conceive the ideas that become best-selling products and services, executives must orchestrate and lead the rest of the organization, in building a culture that embraces innovation and provide the leadership and guidance innovation demands.

Leadership is certainly seeking more innovation in their business models, more distinctiveness in their innovation offerings, a wish to explore different options. To meet this, they need to become more involved in all aspects of innovation to achieve this innovation improvement and reduce uncertainties that lies often within their own minds. I would suggest it is through this framework that it becomes the focal point and offers the mechanism to provide these necessary conditions and can set the “pulse” that enables the innovation juices to flow.

The competitive pace today and for a sustaining future requires innovation engagement from the top. Executives who understand their role in shaping innovation frameworks and activities, and, more importantly, increasing opportunities and engagement for the entire organization, that can be “driven” through this framework, will deliver better and more sustained innovation outcomes by its engagement effect.

We need to reduce this present gap of poor innovation leadership; we believe **the Executive innovation work Mat** approach can definitely help towards this goal, it has real value to investigate, construct and implement as an overarching framework for innovation alignment within organizations.

The essential innovation vision VISUAL

The real pressing need is for the leadership within our organizations to over a compelling explicit innovation strategy that needs to show the critical parts to an integrated innovation design to deliver and align innovation to strategic need and goals.

One great visual paints a thousand words

This visual I came across some years back, and for me, it is outstanding in providing the feedback loops that go into developing the right innovation vision.

To get to a definitive end point of having an innovation vision you are faced with some complex challenges. These are well shown here.

Each influences the other and constantly loop back, making hopefully an improving vision success.

The critical need for Innovation to be correctly embedded



Leaders need to plan and manage this effectively

The critical feedback needs for constructing an innovation vision

The different challenges seen in this terrific depiction provide the sort of dialogue and efforts that needs to go into 'crafting' the innovation vision. It is hard, thoughtful work. Let's look at each of these a little more.

The Time Challenge

We get caught in annual planning cycles that often leave little time for 'considered' opinion and debate. The annual plans all come in a deluge and this is plainly wrong. Creating a vision needs a lot of time to consider all the aspects. The 'time gap' seriously impacts the visions success and clarity of purpose

The Diversity Challenge

Not only within the same board room do you have a diversity of opinion, you have that up and down any organization. Getting the views first out in the open, then managing the conflicting aspects and dealing with the 'polarization effects' all is difficult. This is where a dedicated focus, a Chief Innovation Officer, can really make a difference. To get people to talk about the vision, what it should stand for, what needs to happen leads eventually to a greater clarity.

The Relationship Challenge

Managing the relationships both within and outside the organization when it comes to the right thinking on innovation is hard, converting doubters, drawing out differences, improving the quality of any conversations around innovation (ideally with facts not conjecture) and raising the enthusiasm to engage is crucial to moving towards the right vision

The Vision Cap Challenge

There is a reality to what and where you are and the perceived gap that need addressing honestly. This is something we tend to be very poor at, is, holding a 'creative' tension that can stimulate and create a vibrant and exciting innovation vision. We try to dampen the divergence in opinions far too early so we can (quickly) got to convergence. This 'keenness' to take away the 'creative' tension tends to replace it with potential set of 'destructive' ones and this often creates much of the beginnings of the barriers to innovation. People resent not being well listened too or allowed time to develop their arguments.

The Vision and its Success

If you get people to 'freely' talk about innovation, its importance, its impact and can 'paint' the future in broad brush strokes, they achieve a growing clarity and enthusiasm and that often missing critical component a sense of shared identity.

Innovation is complex; it deals with formal and informal mechanisms. There is an awful lot to constructing a solid innovation vision but believe me, it is even harder to understand the right components that make up the innovation strategy, so it does eventually become a well-articulated innovation strategy.

About Paul Hobcraft



I simply enjoy innovation. I got 'hooked' ten years ago and have increasingly focused upon it until it is 100% of my business thinking and activities. I research across innovation, look to develop novel innovation solutions and frameworks that have real potential value to apply to different problems we all face in managing innovation. I provide these through a range of solutions that underpin my advisory, coaching and consulting work at www.agilityinnovation.com on supporting innovation for individuals, teams and organizations.

For me, innovation needs to enter the DNA of our organizations and our own individual make-ups. Here on this site, I try to work across different aspects to offer thoughts, ideas, advice and concepts to help each of us to understand innovation that little bit more.

My areas of focus

Through my business, **Agility Innovation Specialists**, we deliberately set out to help grow your body of knowledge on innovation. Having this 100% focus we believe does provide the necessary *additional* intensity of focus needed for innovation success that someone who specialises can provide.

We research topics that relate to innovation for the future, applying what we learn to further develop organizations core innovation activity, offer appropriate advice on tools, techniques and frameworks so clients can achieve positive and sustaining results from their innovating activities. Web site: www.agilityinnovation.com

Recently a dedicated site for exploring the components of our 'fitness' make-up for innovation, is outlining my working towards an approach that can model what is dynamic or not, that improves innovation performance. There are clearly dependencies and this evolving model attempts to provide answers to current performance gaps, to improve the innovation performance engine in capability and capacity building, to raise the game and align it more into the strategic needs. This dedicated site can be found at www.innovationfitnessdynamics.com

Finally, www.hocaconsulting.com HOCA consulting contributes to those emerging areas of Corporate need to link the new approaches we need to have in place to meet the different challenges we are faced with today.

The personal journey makes up a set of unique experiences and understanding

As for my personal journey of how I got to this point I can only say it has been varied, challenging but full of fun and learning. This has taken me to live and work in Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Malaysia, Switzerland, the Netherlands, USA, Australia, and recently eleven years in Singapore, starting up businesses, turning them around or simply accelerating them and achieving their footprint within the world.

In mid 2008 I moved back to Switzerland from Singapore and presently focus my time between Asia and Europe for this innovation practice and its **related sister company** (www.hocaconsulting.com) that focuses upon related subjects important to growing organisations capability in today's world. I work and move between my preferred bases of Switzerland and Singapore.

Innovation as a source for our growth fascinates me. I hope I can share some of this passion with you here on this site as I search for the DNA makeup of innovation.

Paul Hobcraft was voted into the top three innovation bloggers for 2011 and also for 2012 on a leading Global Innovation Community- Innovation Excellence- , go to



<http://bit.ly/tWEioX>

Also in 2012 Paul was voted as one of the top 50 tweeters on the subject of innovation su.pr/4U9EBB .

“These accolades are highly appreciated and valued- they inspire me to keep innovating in my own unique way and style. These recognitions help me believe I can contribute to the wider innovation community we are all part of”

Paul Hobcraft runs Agility Innovation Specialists: <http://agilityinnovation.com>

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The organization is based in Switzerland for Europe & Singapore for Asia.