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From Problems To Ideas through to Innovation Capturing ideas and creating the right culture to maximise the value of intellectual property

By: Quocirca**Published:** November 2008

Capturing ideas and creating the right culture to maximise the value of intellectual property. Unsurprisingly, research shows that the majority of organisations see their future predicated on how well they can innovate. However, just throwing IT technology at issues in the hope that innovation will happen is not viable. Ideas are ephemeral and are easily crushed within the wrong environment. Creating a suitable culture, allied with a well implemented ideas management approach combined with strong leadership, is required.

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"The books that everybody admires are those nobody reads." - *Anatole France*

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- **Innovation does not come from more effective management of existing data and electronic information assets** Organisations have problems - people have ideas. Bringing problems and ideas together in an effective manner is key to how effectively innovative a company will be - not how good their search engines and business intelligence tools are.
- **Business processes are dependent on individual tasks - and here is where innovation can really matter** Users understand the tasks that they work on, not the end-to-end process that the task is part of. The majority of individual ideas will be task-focused and capturing and managing these will provide a platform for innovation re-use across the organisation's value chains.
- **While technology can be an enabler, it is getting people to participate through the provision of suitable ideas that is the real challenge: the human aspect really is the key** Technology cannot create innovative ideas - this is where humans come in. Any innovation management system has to be able to integrate with the human aspects, such as participants' personal motivations, the underlying ethos and corporate approach, to engage with people and encourage interaction.
- **Initial ideas are often lost due to the lack of appropriate approaches - it is vital to be clear what the problem you are trying to solve REALLY is** Using problem definitions that are either too direct or too woolly will not encourage participation from others. The key is to frame the problem correctly, and to iterate if necessary.
- **Many ideas that are unsuitable for a problem at the time become useful later - and yet few organisations have libraries of ideas** Ideas should not be regarded as throw-away commodities. An idea that is unsuitable for one problem may well suit a different problem at a later date. Unless the idea has been suitably captured and managed, this opportunity will be lost.
- **Innovation is a journey, not something that happens in a single meeting; can you create an environment/culture that has innovation in its DNA?** Attempts to drive innovative thinking through high-pressure lock-down meetings will not provide continuous innovation. An organisation has to encourage its constituents to capture their own ideas as they happen and to place these within an open environment for further discussion and usage.
- **Innovation is not the be all and end all - renovation and optimisation can be just as important** Big "I" innovation is a rare thing - the little "i"s of optimisation and renovation can provide massive efficiency gains and better effectiveness for organisations. Big "I" and little "i" approaches both need ideas; the initial approach is still the same.

Conclusions Innovation in itself is of little practical value to an organisation. Existing approaches tend only to scratch the surface of the possible ways of optimising an organisation's approach to its issues. Through the use of dynamic team events and "crowd surfing", backed up with the capability for individuals and groups to continue working on how business process issues can be effectively addressed, a balanced approach combining process renovation, optimisation and innovation can be created.

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