

The Innovation Toolkit – detailed information

Before reading this information it is useful to have read the product data sheet.

This document gives further details about what is contained in the toolkit and how the surveys are administered.

1 Survey 1 – Overall Innovation Climate

This survey contains 30 multiple choice questions and is designed for use in gauging the overall Innovation climate within an organisation. It should be noted that there is no absolute measure of Innovation and any scores measured over a period of time are relative to your particular organisation. This survey is designed to produce a graphical output together with accompanying notes that allow trends or areas of concern to be easily identified. Any such areas should be investigated further. The main output from this survey is a 'radar' plot which should be interpreted as a target. The nearer the centre the points are, the more effective the overall innovation climate is.

The areas under examination are described outlined below. Some of the conditions for innovation may seem 'idealistic' and it is extremely unlikely that the perfect organisation exists. All of the key areas are important and it is useful to identify how effective organisations are and whether any aspects of the organisation are being neglected.

1.1 *Team Work*

Within this area of focus we are interested in whether people work as individuals or in teams, how effective they are, and whether or not they are multi/single function. Another important factor is the degree of autonomy and whether bottom up communication is effective.

1.2 *Hands-on Management*

Here we look at how much interference there is by managers in every-day working and how prescriptive managers are. Also we are looking for what actions are taken when problems occur. Do managers take immediate control or do they trust the people working for them to resolve problems?

1.3 *Desire To Win*

Within this area of focus we look for evidence of a desire to win, to beat the competition. Even though there may be insufficient resources to carry out a project or implement a plan there should be a 'yes and ..' culture rather than 'yes but...'. Good ideas can be kept for future use, not dismissed out of hand for lack of finances, time etc. There should also

be evidence of doing everything that can be done to secure even the smallest advantage such as protecting Intellectual Property and seeking external help. Ideas should be welcomed from all sources and winning organisations are likely to be less risk averse.

1.4 *Knowing How To Win*

Organisations that know how to win will have a thorough understanding of their marketplace and all of the factors that affect it such as the economy and relevant legislation. They are willing to exploit these factors and be first movers or early adopters.

1.5 *Environmental Scanning*

To be successful, organisations must be able to scan their environments and be aware of new competition, changes and spot trends and patterns. This information will then be used to determine key success factors within the marketplace and drive the building of strategic capabilities.

1.6 *External Relationships*

In order to maximise potential, it is necessary to nurture external relationships with both customers and suppliers. Is this being carried out regularly and effectively? Do organisations rely on single points of contact or do they interact at multiple levels, cementing ties? How well is information disseminated and vision, branding etc communicated to stakeholders?

1.7 *Growing The Right Culture*

A truly innovative culture relies heavily on intrinsic motivation. Employees must have a clear idea of what they are expected to achieve and of the amount of support that they have. Transparency on the part of senior management and 'leading by example' will build trust and encourage buy-in to strategic objectives. Motivation and morale should generally be high with little or no evidence of stress present.

1.8 *Stretching To Achieve*

When stretching individuals we must ensure that the right culture exists. Such a culture includes, but is not necessarily restricted to such things as opportunities to develop skills, freedom to act on own initiative, work environment, acknowledgement of input, learning environment. This component is more concerned with the **right environment** for growth rather than what is actually **done to/for** employees (see next section).

1.9 Getting The Best From People

When maximising potential it is often necessary to take employees out of their 'comfort zone'. To do this successfully there must be an effective framework for delivering the necessary training and development. Individuals should be encouraged to use their own initiative (subject to any safety or legal constraints), be responsible for their actions and learn from their mistakes. There also needs to be appropriate reward systems.

2 Survey 2 – The Creative Climate

This survey consists of 45 statements that respondents are asked to agree/disagree with. It is designed for use in gauging the Creativity within an organisation. It should be noted that there is no absolute measure of creativity and any scores measured over a period of time are relative to your particular organisation. There may be scope for comparison within and industry sector but results should not be compared between sectors. Note also that results may vary according to seniority and role within the organisation. If an organisation is truly creative then the desired characteristics should be widespread throughout.

Creativity cannot itself be managed, the best we can do within our organisations is to 'unmanage' it i.e. release the brakes and create the right conditions for creativity to flourish. Note that this survey is concerned with organisational creativity, not personal creativity which can be measured more directly using such methods as KAI (Kirton Adapter/Innovator) and the Inquiry Process Grid.

The areas being examined are Strategic Barriers, Organisational Culture, Corporate Culture, Learning, Process and Structure, Leadership and Management. These topics are discussed in greater detail below.

2.1 Strategic Barriers

The questions within this section are intended to address four kinds of strategic barriers. Organisations often have their preferred ways of doing things, thus restricting choices when solving problems. Conversely too much choice can result in decisions not being made at all. One of the precepts of creative problem solving is to 'cycle often and close late' i.e. convergence on a way forward is necessary but all available options should be considered.

Often our emotions can get in the way, representing deeply embedded values and beliefs. This happens often with individuals but can happen with organisations too, especially those whose membership is voluntary such as religious organisations and charities. At an organisational level such mindsets are similar to strategic barriers.

Organisations often erect perceptual barriers that are designed to filter out the large amounts of information with which they are continually bombarded. Too much filtering and we become insensitive, too little and we explode!

Self-image barriers affect our self-confidence at a personal level whilst at an organisational level they correspond to sensitivity towards risk. We don't wish to expose our organisations towards risk and so our attitudes towards decision making should be reflected in the way that we allow knowledge to flow into, around and out of our organisations.

These four characteristics should be balanced, any significant variations may indicate serious problems in the way strategic decisions are made and that creativity is being stifled at the top of the organisation.

2.2 Organisational Culture

Organisational culture cannot be directly manipulated, it must grow according to the conditions that exist within an organisation. A culture that is conducive to creativity is likely to be characterised by individuals feeling empowered, constructive personal relationships and a sense of time and space to 'play' and learn. There should also be a feeling that the organisation acts as a whole, with no single person or department responsible for generating ideas. People should be well motivated intrinsically and feel that the work they undertake is stimulating and worthwhile. A low satisfaction rating in the survey indicates that the culture is not likely to foster creativity. If creativity is a desirable within the workplace then a large-scale intervention may be required.

2.3 Corporate Culture

This is the culture that is espoused by those in senior positions within the organisation. If the organisation is in balance then organisational and corporate culture will mirror each other to some extent. The corporate culture is the strategic framework within which senior management are allowing organisational culture (and hence creativity) to flourish or wither away. Ideally the espoused values should centre on trust and freedom, open communications with tacit and explicit knowledge being valued equally.

If an organisation is to be creative at all then corporate culture ranks number one alongside leadership as the most important aspect for survey and analysis.

2.4 Learning

As children we learned most effectively i.e. when we had freedom to play. Within organisations we play when we are all involved or have the opportunity to be. When we were children we had time to build, learn through our mistakes and not be scolded by our parents. It is the same in the workplace. We must allow time to prototype, to learn not to repeat our failures and to capture these experiences for reuse later. Most

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importantly, all of these processes must be systematic. Quite often knowledge is seen as a source of power and the ability to learn and share might need a shift in HR policies within and organisation, particularly in the area of reward.

If a survey indicates that an organisation could do better at learning then it is likely to be fairly mechanistic with many procedures, processes and archives with no effective methods of retrieval. It is also likely to be risk averse and unlikely to encourage creative behaviours amongst its staff.

2.5 Process and Structure

As previously mentioned, creativity must be un managed but the processes put in place must allow for systematic creativity i.e. it must be part of the organisational fabric. We may allow our staff to find their own way of climbing the mountain but we must at least point them at the right mountain! An enlightened organisation will have processes in place for sharing knowledge and capturing ideas as well as monitoring creative processes. Reward systems should also reflect this by rewarding teams not individuals and employees should feel that their contributions are recognised by the organisation that they work for. Linked to this is an appraisal system that actively assesses strengths and weaknesses on a regular basis. This should result in employees being well matched to their roles but with some degree of stretch. There should ideally be no symptoms of stress within the organisation.

Organisations that have begun the climb up the creative ladder will already be employing some creative techniques such as creative problem solving, Six Thinking Hats etc and will have some tolerance of ambiguity.

Organisations scoring low here will experience creativity only on an adhoc basis. Those 'light bulb' moments will happen very rarely with stressed or unmotivated staff unable or unwilling to share their ideas and know how.

2.6 Leadership and Management

The strategic direction of the organisation is set by those at the top, or should be. Very often there are no concrete objectives and a strategy emerges quite by accident. A creative organisation must know where it is supposed to be going and what resources it has to do the job required. It does not help to frequently change objectives or to under resource projects. Research has shown that significantly over-resourcing a project has no effect and neither does under-resourcing. The latter does not inspire the workforce and they spend their time seeking extra resources.

Organisational leaders should act as role models and demonstrate their inspiration and persuasion. Experience and an ability to see the bigger picture may well see creative leaders using intuition a great deal more than their non-creative colleagues.

Organisations scoring low in this area have very little chance of becoming creative without significant changes in senior personnel. It should be noted here that in many

organisations there will be significant differences between the survey results of say shop floor workers and the inhabitants of the boardroom.

3 Survey 3 – The Knowledge Climate

This survey is designed for use in gauging how knowledge is managed within an organisation. It consists of 38 statements that respondents are asked to agree/disagree with. It should be noted that there is no absolute measure of knowledge and any scores measured over a period of time are relative to your particular organisation. This survey can be used to determine a 'Knowledge Level' on a scale of 1 to 5. This is a crude scale but can be used to examine relationships with external stakeholders. If an organisation regularly shares knowledge with other organisations which are at a higher level then there may be some danger or increased risk associated with that relationship e.g. theft of Intellectual Property, financial risk (customers or suppliers). Note also that results may vary according to seniority and role within the organisation. In an ideal organisation there should be little variation between roles and function or between employees of varying seniority.

The areas under examination are described below.

3.1 Knowledge Communities

Often called Communities or Communities of Practice, these groups exist within most organisations. Individuals form groups depending on function (i.e. Finance or Marketing), project team or some other common theme. They often cause problems when they develop their own language and processes and do not share knowledge. However, these communities can also overlap with key individuals acting as boundary spanners and forming bridges. When such conditions occur knowledge can flow around the organisation more easily.

As communities become more developed, they become responsible for developing ideas of their own (often called thought leadership) and are an important component of innovation when aligned with strategic business objectives.

3.2 Knowledge Base

Here we refer to the total knowledge collected, stored and re-used by the organisation. At one extreme there exists only tacit knowledge, not written down and entirely unfocused. A knowledge base can be refined so that knowledge is codified (written down or stored on a computer), actively managed and accessible for all for retrieval and update. The latter is obviously the most desirable as far as innovation is concerned.

3.3 Infrastructure

What infrastructure has been constructed to help in the gathering and distribution of knowledge? There is no need to rely on technology at all, however any system must assist communication, minimise misunderstandings, maximise feedback and learning opportunities. Another important factor is integration with overall business functions. A knowledge infrastructure should not be seen as a 'bolt on' component or extension of current IT provision.

3.4 Knowledge Processes

In order to maximise the value obtained from knowledge it is important that there are guidelines as to what to do with it and that these guidelines are published and accessible to everyone within an organisation. Ideally these processes should cover reflection and learning, experimentation, updating knowledge bases, spotting trends and key staff leaving the organisation.

4 Survey 4 – Company Networks

This survey is a simple set of questions that are designed to help look beyond the conventional organisation chart. Typically an organisation chart shows control or seniority, it does not show how the organisation actually works. On a daily basis people communicate with each other, give advice and provide support for each other. These factors are mirrors for the organisational culture that exists and hence a determining factor in the ability of an organisation to innovate. We therefore need a measure of the extent of the advice, trust and communications networks. For a simple case each individual can be given a diagram of their whole organisation or team and asked to draw on the links for each of the three networks mentioned. This proves cumbersome for larger groups and so it is sufficient to determine a) the number of colleagues that an individual communicates with regularly and b) the number of other individuals that they have in each of their networks. All 3 types of network have a part to play, however if they are not well aligned or differ significantly from the organisation chart then major problems are likely to exist. Further problems may occur if they are not evenly distributed or there are significant bottlenecks.

4.1 Communications Network

For the purposes of this survey we consider the largest group of people that an individual communicates with on a daily basis. Such communications can be written, verbal or electronic. It is also useful to identify if individuals communicate with people outside of their normal working groups and whether they have any formal responsibility for doing so. A network such as this carries significant amounts of traffic, some of it idle chat. However, it is often the case that random events within this network stimulate significant innovation events.

4.2 Trust Network

Within any organisation there are networks of people with whom others are willing to share political information, company secrets or provide support in a crisis. A trust network is thus a very important part of an organisation, particularly in the areas of motivation and morale. Problems here are indicative of trouble ahead if it has not already surfaced. Symptoms may occur during times of great change e.g. merger, takeover and redundancy or as a result of years of neglect. In all cases, innovation (which relies on intrinsic motivation) will suffer.

4.3 Advice Network

An individual's advice network consists of those whom they give advice to and receive advice from. This is restricted to technical advice or advice on solving problems and is not concerned with personal problems. It is this network that carries the knowledge that is concerned with solving crucial business dilemmas.

5 Gathering Data

The most important part of the process is the gathering of data. It is possible to gather and sample the workforce in a number of ways. If it is too costly in terms of time to give every employee all of the surveys it is possible to distribute them across the workforce. It is important that the distribution is even across departments, seniority etc. The toolkit can also be used to survey a department or team in isolation.

The surveys can be administered in several ways:

- Using Microsoft Word templates on a computer
- Using a printed questionnaire
- By interviewing employees
- By carrying out workshops
- On line

6 The Report

Once all of the data is analysed a report is compiled. The component parts have already been described in the documents referenced at the start of this document. The actual form of the analysis will depend on whether demographic information has been collected and how clients have requested this to be used. We will analyse the data using the criteria outlined in the preceding sections and make recommendations where necessary. Unless requested by the client, copies of the data and the report produced will not be retained by Creative Business Solutions after all monies have been paid in respect of the survey.

A sample report is available on request.

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