



The Need for Structured Innovation

BY DAVID SILVERSTEIN

As the innovation “buzz” continues to grow in industry, innovation-focused business models are becoming the rule rather than the exception. And with that mainstream shift in focus comes the need for more structure.

Now that might sound oxymoronic, using “structure” and “innovation” in the same sentence, but the reality is that not all businesses are high-flying start-ups and not all businesses are run by reckless risk-taking mavericks. Think about it. If you ran a successful Fortune 500 company that’s been around for five decades, where the average tenure of the workforce is 20+ years, and is producing consistent growth and profits, what is your approach going forward? Are you likely to say, “The world is changing fast—we need to throw away everything we’ve done in the past and bet the farm on some new ideas?” Or are you more likely to say, “We need to start figuring out where in our business we need to innovate and where we need to maintain the status quo?”

The bottom line is that most companies need to start breeding a culture

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How to Engage Key Players of Both Genders

BY CINDY MARSH, Ph.D.

A study of 1,500 male and female managers found that there is no magic bullet for keeping key managers. Still, we found insights that organizations need to keep in mind to motivate and retain top performers.



seen as an “expert,” but in other cases such specialization is undertaken as a way to stand out as a high achiever suitable for promotion.

Financial and career prospects are just one of many potential motivators. Smart busi-

The study found:

Males and females value different forms of recognition. For instance, men place greater importance on “financial and career prospects” than females, regardless of leadership level. For their part, women were much more likely than men to place higher importance on being recognized at work and gaining a reputation for expertise.

It’s unwise to assume you know what motivates people professionally. You need to ask them. Ask your high performers, both men and women, to share their work aspirations, and fully explore what they mean.

Promotions should be based on an individual’s current performance as well as their potential to fill a new role. Don’t make judgments just on how obvious they are being about their desire to advance.

Employees need help to make the right choices for their own particular goals and aspirations. Our study found that women will often develop deep expertise in a certain niche area valuable to their employer. In some cases, these individuals cultivate such expertise solely because they get fulfillment from being

nesses will proactively seek input from these players on what else might make their careers more fulfilling. Examples of alternative motivators include opportunities for new learning, work on cross-functional teams, flexible scheduling, and autonomy in accomplishing a desired corporate outcome.

Programs that will help you identify high-potential employees should be considered: that is, individuals who would excel at a job two levels above their current position. Offer these future key players targeted development opportunities to help them prepare for the next level.

Retention efforts should start early The fight to attract and retain star talent is fierce, and losing the fight could have catastrophic impact on your bottom line. Put a people strategy in place to keep consistent flow in your “leadership pipeline”—all the way from front-line leaders to the C-suite.

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Of interest to you may be “Employee Retention Strategies”: www.amanet.org/8516

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that is a bit less risk averse. Yet they have a responsibility to their shareholders to manage risk and make change responsibly and incrementally.

That's the real world of innovation.

In order for innovation to become a successful mainstream effort, we need to address how managers and executives can use structured innovation processes to encourage innovation across their company while minimizing risk, and how these problem-solving processes can speed up the cycle moving from idea to product.

You see structure can be both enabling and limiting at the same time. We call that a paradox—and mastering that paradox is the key to success. Structure can be enabling in that it provides predictability; it establishes a set of rules by which all can play; and, perhaps most importantly, it gives us the ability to steer things in a certain direction and allows us to manage progress along a path in that direction. Structure can also be limiting because it can create boundaries and might hold us back from totally blue-sky, wide-eyed ideas.

But structure, combined with creativity, can change the world—or at least the course of a business. Structured innovation is innovation at its most powerful. You need first to define and design the structure, then put the creativity in the structure and the structure in the creativity.

There are a multitude of structured innovation processes that your company can adopt, but there is no single, universal approach. Beware of the guru that tells you one way is the only way, or even the best way. Beware of anything that looks too simple, because it probably is. But structured innovation will always beat the free-form kind over the long term. Finding the right balance is problem solving at its best.

David Silverstein is CEO of Breakthrough Management Group and author of *Insourcing Innovation*.

To develop your innovations, also check out AMA's seminar: "Creativity and Innovation" www.amanet.org/2208

Help Your Employees Feel Engaged

BY JAMES A. HAUDAN

An old fable goes like this: Three bricklayers work side by side. Each picks up a brick and sets it in place.

The first bricklayer says, "I'm putting one brick on top of another. Isn't that obvious?"

The second says, "I'm building a wall for a church."

The third says, "I'm creating a cathedral. It will stand for centuries and inspire people to do great deeds."

■ Which bricklayer was just looking forward to quitting time?

■ Which was focused only on his part of the job?

■ Which was truly engaged in what he was doing and understood the link between his work and its impact on other people?

In most companies, workers identify with the first two bricklayers. They have no sense of the big picture. Leaders try to help people do a better job, assuming this will improve the business. Unfortunately, we fail to bring the business to life, so people can move from being bricklayers to builders of cathedrals.

The secret is in engaging them in the business in the same way that they are engaged in sports, hobbies, and other activities. True engagement does exist, and it can be effortless, natural, sustained, and magnetic. When people are really engaged, they feel captivated, drawn in, and connected. So if we are to engage people in work, we need to respect the common things that we all want. In a nutshell, there are four:

1. People want to be part of something big. Watch how concert-goers act as one, connecting with hundreds of people they never met, exuding a force far bigger than they can achieve alone. When this happens, you get a sense that you are as big as the effort. That leads to a sense of substance, importance, pride, and direction.

2. People want to feel a sense of belonging. When people are *not* engaged, they believe that they don't belong. Those

people seek the group that most easily accepts them—usually the one where others are acting out. At least they're part of something! When you feel that you truly belong, you feel what it's like to *be* the others. You can go forward together because you have something in common.

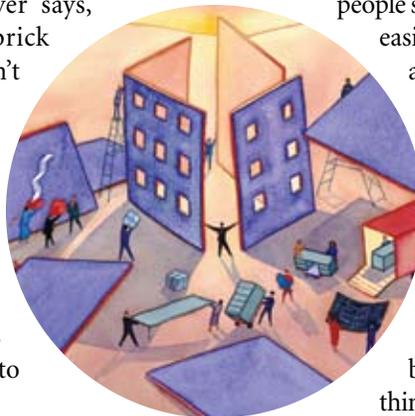
3. People want to go on a meaningful journey. We all want to be on some kind of mission that matters. It's the part of the human spirit that suggests we can *be* more, that we *are* more. Robert Redford once explained why he continued to support the Sundance Institute for fledgling filmmakers. He said, "I've always operated from a belief that if we could do more, we should." Our journey compels us to take risks and makes overcoming the barriers worth the effort.

4. People want to know that they play an important role or make a difference. People want to be written into the story. If I'm there, I'm part of the story. I can connect to the journey of belonging and to that "something bigger." Engaged people feel that whatever they're doing is unquestionably connected to the ultimate result.

There's a monumental difference between just telling people what they should think and feel and meaningfully engaging them in the business. The key is to keep in mind what people want, and you'll find that they don't have to be forced, coerced, or convinced to be engaged.

James Haudan is CEO of Root Learning, a strategic learning company that engages and connects people to create results. For more information: www.rootlearning.com

To develop employee commitment, attend AMA's seminar: "Successfully Managing People" www.amanet.org/2295



Embracing Technology to Attract, Grow, and Retain Generation Y Talent

BY MARK GAMBILL

They have been called bright and ambitious yet spoiled and narcissistic; a generation that grew up on technology, believes in instant gratification, and challenges what Gen Xers and Boomers have long considered the norm.

Gen Ys demand many forms of technology at work and believe that anyone who doesn't embrace the latest technology is antiquated. But with 64 million workers set to retire by 2010, Gen Y is the future fabric of the workforce. They are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. workforce today and by far the largest trendsetters since the Boomers.

All of this begs the question: how do we deal with them?

Supervising Gen Ys

Raised on electronic media and platforms such as Google, instant messaging and texting, it is clear that Gen Ys' hard wiring is different. They are clearly at the forefront of modern times and cutting-edge technology. This generation of workers is entering the workforce with networking and multiprocessing skills that their elders could never have imagined. They are able to identify solutions to problems almost immediately, but are limited when effectively handling interpersonal or face-to-face situations. This means that we need to sensitize our work culture and help them through these kinds of situations.

Gen Y views senior executives with years of experience as archaic thinkers and in many cases, rightly so. It is imperative, now more than ever, for senior leadership to understand and use the language of Gen Y to effectively manage this talent pool without alienating veteran employees.

With the onset of the late '90s tech boom, our country went from a stodgy, inflexible workplace to an open environment. It is now critical for us to seek out some semblance of a middle ground.

The Leadership Challenge

So how can senior leadership manage this group without feeling threatened?

First, recognize a need for change. Ask

yourself the following questions: How can we engage these energetic workers? How can we give them a work environment similar to online environments they are familiar with at home?



Second, embrace technology as a necessary tool to reach them. There are many ways Web 2.0 can enable businesses to have a conversation with their employees, including podcasts, social networking, blogging, vlogging, RSS, etc. Strike the right balance between these and traditional forms of communication.

Third, acknowledge the changing media model without losing core values. Executives must consider new communication vehicles as an opportunity to engage in a dialogue with their employees—not a method for throwing a message and hoping it sticks. It is pushed and pulled—delivered and received.

One Corporate Approach

With nearly half of our workforce Gen Ys, CDW has worked hard to engage employees via an evolving corporate culture.

We developed interactive solutions for attracting and growing our talent pool, from online recruitment videos to online mentoring programs, recognizing technology as a critical tool to help achieve cultural and generational equilibrium. But simultaneously we introduced several initiatives that provide this burgeoning generation the opportunity to maintain certain traditional communication skills.

It is also necessary to provide tools that promote mobility and convergence (telework, web, blackberry, and video conferencing). Consider another example: Skadden Arps, a New York law firm, armed its employees with necessary tools such as laptops to work outside the office, reimbursing new employees up to \$3,000 for home equipment and \$1,000 every year thereafter. Such initiatives foster creativity and enhance productivity. Only then will Generation Ys nod their heads—and listen to your message. The more a company can remain current with the evolving technology landscape, the more new age coworkers will trust that the executive leadership is in touch and growing with the times. They will not only be more compliant workers, it will enable them to more fully realize their potential and contribute to your company's bottom-line.

Mark Gambill is vice president of marketing and executive committee member of CDW, a FORTUNE 500 company and a leading provider of technology products and services for business, government, and education. Gambill is responsible for the strategy and development of CDW's advertising, marketing intelligence and research, catalogs and collateral materials, creative services, relationship marketing, and corporate communications.

What Is Generation Y Like?

A review of a variety of surveys over the last few years suggest that Gen Ys vary as much as Baby Boomers and Gen Xers. On the plus side, most surveys suggest that Gen Ys want to work faster and better than other workers.

Some Gen Ys, when surveyed, said they want assignments with manageable deadlines and clear-set goals.

On the not-so-positive side, many assume that they are ready for responsibility from the first day on a new job. They aren't likely

to respond to the control/compete leadership style. When they don't get it, they will get restless and move on. In *U.S.A Today.com*, Bruce Tulgan, author of *Managing Generation Y* (with co-author Carolyn Martin), said, "They're like Generation X on steroids. They walk in with high expectations for themselves, their employer, their boss. If you thought you saw a clash when Generation X came into the workplace, that was the fake punch. The hay-maker is coming now."



Here's what you'll find on the
AMA Members-only Website www.amamember.org

HR/TRAINING

Ten Interview Questions That Could Get You into Hot Water. When you're interviewing a prospective employee, the most innocent question—such as "Where were you born?"—can be misinterpreted as an act of discrimination. Here are 10 questions to avoid, from *The Hiring and Firing Question and Answer Book*.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Perfecting Your Elevator Pitch. If you think elevator pitches are just for salespeople, think again. Your elevator pitch can either raise your career straight to the penthouse... or drop it to the basement. Create your perfect pitch in just four simple steps.

MANAGEMENT

Three's Company: How to Dramatically Increase Productivity with Small Teams. The director of technical services at PrintingForLess.com explains how the company acquired a stronger work ethic, lighter-hearted atmosphere, and unprecedented customer satisfaction by restructuring into small teams.

SMALL BUSINESS

Operation Employee Loyalty. Small business owners don't have to break the bank to show their valued employees how much they care. Here are seven sure-fire ways to make your best people want to stick around.

Book of the Month:

Truth: The New Rules for Marketing in a Skeptical World, by Lynn B. Upshaw. (AMACOM, 2007). Even though the Internet has provided marketers with more options than ever, inundated consumers have become more and more skeptical. Perhaps it's time marketers tried a really radical method to win over customers: telling the truth.



For more information about this book, visit www.amanet.org/books

AMA Conferences/Special Events Calendar

OCT. 10, FREE WEBCAST • Search Marketing: What Every Marketer Should Know. The art, craft, and science of driving web traffic to your website changes constantly. This webcast explores how search engine marketing works and what you need to know to increase web traffic. You'll discover how to integrate search marketing into your strategy; which techniques work best; ways to maximize search engine visibility; and much more.

OCT. 10, PHILADELPHIA, PA • From Reluctance to Excitement: Boosting Employee Engagement. This complimentary briefing explores a number of different ways to boost employee engagement within an organization. Lior Arussy will discuss the latest research findings and provide you with a blueprint for performance innovation and guidelines for re-establishing relationships with your employees

OCT. 10-11, NEW YORK, NY • World Business Forum. The World Business Forum combines a learning experience with outstanding opportunities for networking with top executives, thinkers, and business decision makers from all sectors of industry. Over 77% of attendees are senior executives defined as CEOs, presidents, business owners, and general managers. This year's gathering includes presentations by Alan Greenspan, Jack Welch, Herb Kelleher, Carl Icahn, Patricia A. Woertz, Michael Eisner, Scott McNealy, and Kofi Annan, among others. Special discounts are available for AMA members.

OCT. 17, NEW YORK, NY • Coolhunting—What is cool? That's one of today's most pervasive and elusive questions. No matter who we are, we all have an innate desire

to be cool, cultivate cool, and find cool. The art of Coolhunting involves zeroing in on the fresh idea that will be the genesis of a hot new trend. Join Peter Gloor and Scott Cooper as they explore the fascinating world of Coolhunting and lead you through what Coolhunting is, how it originated and how to explore the power of cool for yourself.

OCT. 24, WEBCAST • One Foot Out the Door. Years of layoffs, increasing workloads handled by fewer people and a take-it-or-leave-it management attitude have left your employees feeling alienated and ready to jump ship at a moment's notice. This Webcast offers solutions for combating high turnover, low productivity and lackluster performance. It is a wake up call for restoring your employees' passion and enhancing the bottom line.

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