



Creating an Innovation Organisation

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Alisdair Wiseman - The Innovation Zone



Creating an Innovation Organisation

Not so long ago, I did some impromptu research into the five key challenges faced by a number of business leaders I know. Indeed, you may have participated in the process yourself. There was a wide variety of responses, including questions such as:

- How can I develop new and profitable revenue streams, quickly?
- How can I create a culture where everyone participates?
- How can I do more with less?
- How can I create real points of distinction in our products and services?
- How can I get our teams to work more productively?
- How can I gain greater predictability in what we do?

You probably recognise these questions – in fact, you have probably been working on some of them in the last day or two. And you will also recognise some of the common denominators in the respondents:

- They're all smart people who are already addressing these questions.
- Resources are stretched and finite.
- They all realise that working harder, faster or longer won't deliver.

What's needed is a different approach. One where everyone starts from a different place, works in a different way and develops and delivers different solutions – solutions that ensure we stand out in a crowded marketplace.



Wouldn't it be great if there were an instant and robust solution to this challenge? Well, yes, but you would rightly suspect anyone offering such a solution – indeed, it's unlikely that such a thing exists. However, there is some light at the end of the proverbial tunnel and this lies in creating **an Innovation Organisation**.

This is a situation where innovation permeates the entire organisation. It is not one of anarchy or change for change's sake. It is one where innovation is a way of life for everyone – so much so that people do not realise they are innovating. They thrive on change and address every challenge with energy, enthusiasm and confidence. They find and implement new and exciting solutions to the challenges they face. In short, an Innovation Organisation is a robust organisation. One that is ready for anything that comes along, one that succeeds while others struggle, one that remains at least one step ahead while others follow. There are six distinct routes into such an organisation:

1. **STRATEGY** is the first route in – this is about getting innovation into the heart of the longer-term strategy as well as ensuring it is on-agenda on a day-to-day basis.
2. **CULTURE** is the second route in – this is about creating an environment where people can experiment and take sensible risks.
3. **THINKING** is the third route in – this is about helping people to break free from the constraints of conventional wisdom and think in a more flexible manner.
4. **INFRASTRUCTURE** is the fourth route in – this is about creating a framework, and the necessary resources, to support innovation.
5. **CAPABILITY** is the fifth route in – this is about liberating that enormous, latent, creative ability that lies inside everyone.
6. **MOMENTUM** is the sixth route in – this is about getting loads of energy behind innovation activity so that it becomes self-sustaining.

The Innovation Zone can help you address any or all of these areas.

There is no one 'right' way to make innovation a way of life in an organisation. What works in one set of circumstances might well get into difficulty in another. The secret is finding the right mix of activities for your organisation. So, read on and gain a deeper understanding of the extraordinary variety of options that you have.

My mission is to help you create, and then sustain, an Innovation Organisation.

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1 STRATEGY as a route in

Strategy provides overall direction to an organisation. It describes the:

- **Vision** – what we want the future to look and feel like.
- **Purpose** – our overall intent.
- **Mission** – how we are going to achieve our vision and our purpose.
- **Key indicators of success** – how we know we are moving in the right direction.
- **Overall result** that we are all striving for.

In short, strategy indicates what is relevant and important... and what is not! It is therefore imperative that innovation be one of the central parts of the strategy in an Innovation Organisation.

I can help you:

- **Create a strategy for the organisation from scratch**, one that clarifies the major imperatives and has innovation at its heart.
- **Remodel an existing strategy** to bring into sharp focus the important contribution that innovation can make.
- **Create a strategy for innovation** within the overall strategy for the organisation.
- **Convert strategy into actionable plans** so that everyone in the organisation knows what needs to be done.



- **Help to create a projects environment** that will support the successful implementation of these action plans.
- **Communicate the strategy** to the rest of the organisation and get everyone engaged.

As a result, you will place innovation on a strategic footing, get innovation onto everyone's agenda, and create a situation where people understand the importance of innovation and feel engaged and committed.

2 CULTURE as a route in

Culture is often defined as 'the way we do things round here'. Behaviour therefore provides a window on the culture of an organisation. And where current behaviours indicate that innovation may not flourish, we need to modify the culture to one that is:

- **Tolerant:** people value different perspectives and understand that failure is an inevitable part of pushing the boundaries.
- **Open:** people share information willingly - there are few secrets.
- **Honest:** people seek and value the truth, even when it is unpalatable.
- **Learning:** people value, acquire, and share knowledge, for its own sake and for its application.
- **Supportive:** people provide help, guidance and feedback in everything that gets done.
- **Nurturing:** people protect and develop ideas and individuals.
- **Empowering:** people give and accept the authority to act.
- **Exploring:** people are always on the lookout for new ideas that can improve performance.
- **Challenging:** people question the way things are done.
- **Enterprising:** people take sensible risks and learn from their mistakes.

Culture is about creating an environment that is right for a particular organisation at a particular stage in its development. It is therefore something that needs to be addressed constantly.



I can help you:

- **Understand your current culture**, using the ICQ™ (Innovation Culture Quotient™) psychometric. This measures perceptions around 10 key dimensions of an innovative culture.
- **Improve your ability to lead an Innovation Organisation**, using the ILQ™ (Innovation Leadership Quotient™) psychometric. This uses 360-degree feedback around 14 key innovation leadership behaviours. Check out www.innovation-zone.com for more information.
- **Create and implement a strategy for changing the culture.**

As a result, you will be able to create an environment where innovation can flourish. One that will be seen as a model for other organisations to follow. One that will help you attract and retain the best people and establish a virtuous circle.

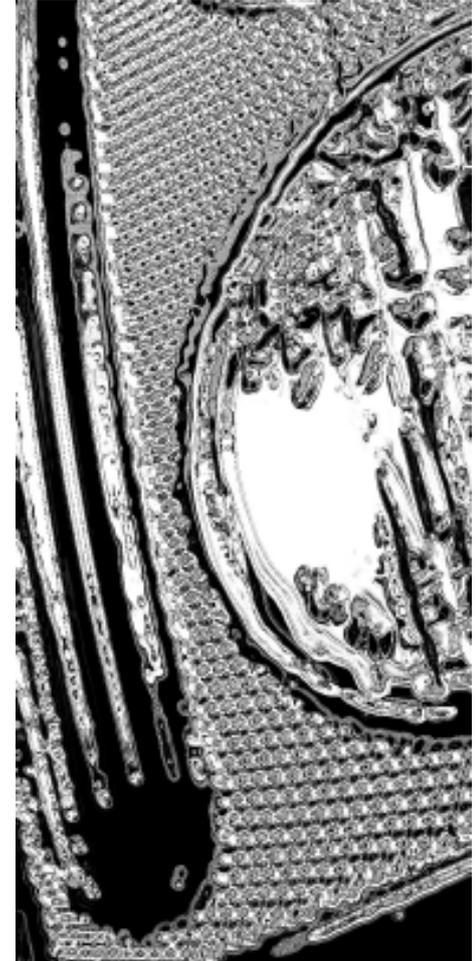
3 THINKING as a route in

The way that people think in an organisation is governed by a set of rules that become established over a period of time. These rules indicate what thinking is appropriate and supportive of the organisation, and what is not. They are rarely explicit but nonetheless very powerful. Initially, these rules protect the organisation. Latterly, however, some can become outmoded, encouraging behaviour that is no longer constructive or desirable. In addition, as these rules tend to embody conventional wisdom and protect the status quo, they can stand in the way of change, innovation and progress. We must therefore adopt different ways of thinking if we are going to create an Innovation Organisation.

I can help you:

- **Expose the current set of rules** in the organisation.
- **Challenge and modify the rule set** to support the direction you intend to take.
- **Enable the entire organisation to think in more flexible ways.**

As a result, your organisation will be able to embrace changes in the outside world more readily and more rapidly. You can gain a position of competitive advantage by leading the change process rather than following it.



4 INFRASTRUCTURE as a route in

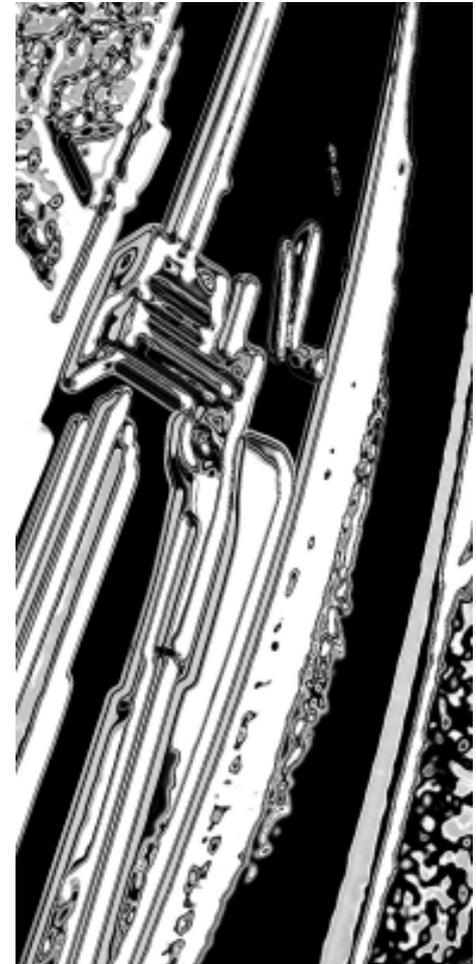
The infrastructure represents all those things that exist, not for themselves, but as a means to an end – the creation and maintenance of an Innovation Organisation. They are the foundations for sustainable, long-term success. Clearly, they don't just happen – they need to be established and then supported.

Infrastructure can cover many elements. For example, you might feel that you need a mechanism for collecting, managing and implementing the ideas that are generated within the organisation. As much innovation activity is project-based, you might want to introduce a single project management approach. Similarly, much innovation activity involves groups of people working together – you might therefore decide to develop better teamworking. Teams generally work better and deliver more when they are well facilitated – so you might want to develop your own pool of Facilitators.

The key is to establish a position of self-sufficiency. It's fine to get external assistance to get started and to provide ad hoc support in the future. You should never, however, find yourself depending on external resource.

I can help you:

- **Design and implement a mechanism for managing ideas.**
- **Introduce a standard project management approach.**
- **Train a pool of internal Facilitators.**



- **Help teams to realise their full potential using the 3-6 Team Model™.**
- **Design and create a variety of innovation resources.**
- **Build physical innovation zones.**
- **Create effective communication mechanisms.**
- **Establish appropriate measurement and recognition systems.**

As a result, you will quickly establish a position of complete self-sufficiency, eliminate the need for external support, and be able to develop your infrastructure as your needs evolve.

5 CAPABILITY as a route in

Individuals' ability to innovate is critical to long-term success in creating and maintaining an Innovation Organisation. This is generally much less to do with developing capability and far more to do with liberating it. There is an enormous latent talent for innovation and creativity inside every one of us. We just need to let it out and develop the courage and confidence to use it. Then, anything is possible. The limits lie only in our imagination.

I can help you:

- **Encourage your people to behave more innovatively**, using the I2Q™ (Individual Innovation Quotient™) psychometric as a means of highlighting specific attributes.
- **Introduce Rapid Innovation™** so that everyone can develop great new perspectives on any challenge or problem, with anybody, any place, any time, with no preparation... and all this in less than 30 minutes.
- **Apply Accelerated Learning techniques** to ensure that skills and knowledge are applied effectively.
- **Create an environment where people constantly lift their capability** and share what they have learnt as they do this.

As a result, you will find that your organisation is positively full to overflowing with great new ideas and, more importantly, that the best ones are being implemented.



6 MOMENTUM as a route in

Momentum is crucially important in the process of establishing an Innovation Organisation. Beginnings are important. This is a time when we are making judgements about what is to follow. If we are favourably disposed in the first instance, we will generally stick with it. So, there is a pressing need to get lots of momentum behind innovation in the early days.

I can help you:

- **Mobilise innovation teams** to ensure they deliver early success and business benefit.
- **Facilitate teams** to achieve specific outcomes.
- **Makeover some of your key meetings** to signal that you truly intend to change.
- **Find new ways to celebrate success** (and failure) so that people are recognised for their contribution.
- **Facilitate large-scale events** to communicate activity, focus effort and celebrate results.
- **Determine the best way forward** once you have accomplished your initial goals.

As a result, you will find yourselves in the best possible shape to take the whole process forward and get the maximum return on your initial investment. You will then be on your way to establishing an Innovation Organisation.



Resources to facilitate innovation

The Innovation Zone has developed a whole series of resources to help you on your quest to become an Innovation Organisation:

- **Training programmes:** the list is too long to go through here – suffice to say that I have developed training programmes for all the aspects of an Innovation Organisation and I am developing new ones all the time. The important thing to stress here is that I always tailor to fit your precise requirements. Download the Training Brochure through the website.
- **Psychometrics:** I have already mentioned powerful tools. The ICQ™ (Innovation Culture Quotient™) measures the extent to which your current culture will permit innovation to flourish. The ILQ™ (Innovation Leadership Quotient™) measures the extent to which the behaviours of senior figures in the organisation promote innovation. And the I2Q™ (Individual Innovation Quotient™) measures the extent to which individuals behave in an innovative manner. Each psychometric provides invaluable insights, many of which are not self-evident, and some initial guidance on response.
- **Publications:** I have written a series of publications and there are more in the pipeline. “Welcome to the innovation zone!” is a whistle-stop tour of the entire innovation process and is full of information, tips, tools, and anecdotes. “Rapid Innovation™” is a how-to handbook that helps you find new solutions to any challenge or problem, with anyone, any place, any time, and all in less than 30 minutes. “Innovation Trade Secrets” is



a collection of tips that will help you behave more innovatively, turning skills into habits. “Team-based Project Management” offers a flexible and yet robust approach to mobilising and delivering innovation projects. “The Universal Checklist” offers an insight into the effective use of influence as a means of getting great results from any interaction, whether it be pitching an idea, dealing with a difficult person, or introducing new ways of doing things. Other publication projects that are in production include: “Facilitating Innovation”, “Leading an Innovation Organisation” and “Becoming an Innovative Person”.

- **Workbooks:** I have developed a multitude of workbooks to help people, step-by-step, through different elements of the innovation process. The primary aim here is to demonstrate that people already ‘get’ innovation – they just need to liberate the talent that lies inside and develop the confidence to use it.
- **The i-zone e-mag** is a free-of-charge, near-monthly e-mail publication designed to help you make the most of your innovation capabilities. It collects together tools, tips and anecdotes about innovation that I pick up on my travels. It is designed to be a ‘good read’ as well as informative. The feedback I get indicates that people really look forward to reading it.
- **Innovatins™** are handy little lateral thinking tools that make the process of innovation great fun as well as immensely productive.

These are the primary innovation resources that I have created over the past few years. I am developing new ones all the time. Often, the only stimulus I need is to be asked for something that I don’t currently have in the cupboard! Check out The Innovation Zone website on www.innovation-zone.com for more information on all these resources.

Innovation Zone services

I could describe what I do in The Innovation Zone in many different ways. However, I am first and foremost a facilitator. I understand that it is you who must establish your Innovation Organisation – I can't, and shouldn't, do it for you. My role is to listen, help, guide, encourage, enthuse, stimulate and challenge. I can provide training, offer potential solutions, and coach people to realise their full potential. I can run large events, create specific innovation resources and spread the word on innovation. And I would be delighted to remain on call, provide ad hoc support and perhaps return some time later to see how things are progressing. However, all these activities serve a larger goal: to help you create an Innovation Organisation. I am a facilitator – not a consultant. My aim is to help you establish a position of self-sufficiency, and thereby do myself out of a job!

Creating an Innovation Organisation – the approach

We begin by agreeing together the most appropriate route for you to follow. You can approach the Innovation Organisation through any one, or any combination, of the six routes. The important issue is to ensure that you are taking a broad view, that you know how the different elements will fit together, and that the approach works for your organisation. I can then provide enough support to establish momentum. I will develop your pool of internal resource so that you can take things forward yourself. We can then determine the most appropriate time for me to step back and leave you to it.



What makes The Innovation Zone special

There is one thing that makes The Innovation Zone special:

- **I make everything we do together a real experience!**

Whatever the intervention, it will be informal, interactive, energetic, invigorating, enervating – and great fun! Talk to the people that I have worked with and they will tell you, “It was a real experience!” Check out the website for some of the feedback that I have received over the years – it speaks more loudly than I would ever dare.

You now know what creating an Innovation Organisation is all about. So, get in touch and let’s change the world together!

Alisdair Wiseman – The Innovation Zone.



Some of the Innovation Zone clients

Aberdeen Journals Limited

Ace Europe

Autotrader

BBC

Boots Contract Manufacturing

British Petroleum

British Gypsum Isover

BroadSystem

Building Societies Association

Circle Anglia

Confederation of British Industries

Crookes Healthcare

D C Thomson

Ernst & Young Belgium

Greenhead Sixth Form College

Hoffman-LaRoche

Impact Plus Management Consultancy

International Timber

iSKY Europe plc

John Lewis Partnership

London Business School

Markel International

Masterlease

Northcliffe Newspaper Group

Northern Foods

Oriflame Global Technical Centre

RAC Motoring Services

Roche Consumer Health

Saint-Gobain plc

Saint-Gobain Abrasives

Saint-Gobain Pipelines

Scarborough & Whitby Primary Care Trust

Sheffield University

South Yorkshire Strategic Health Authority

Swiss Pharma Licencing Group

Tabletop Group

Thomas Miller

Trinity Mirror Regionals Newspaper Group

Virgin Money

Vodafone Ireland

Vodafone live!

Warburtons

Wurtembergische gmbh

York Hospitals NHS Trust

Yorkshire Museums

Zollverein School of Management & Design