

## **Improvement, Innovation & Ingenuity: Jump-Starting Spectacular Performance**

Improvement is change at the margins. It does not require a long-term commitment or specialized skills. Innovation is change at the core. It requires higher level competencies, commitment, vision and passion. Ingenuity is change that rocks an entire industry or market segment. It is typically characterized by radical advancements in technology and demands the highest level of skills and competencies.

Capabilities required for sustained competitive advantage:

- **Commitment**
- **Coordination**
- **Communication**
- **Creativity**

Adapted from "Cracking the Code of Change," by Michel Beer and Nifin Nohria, Harvard Business Review, May-June 2000

4 Characteristics of Innovators...

1. **Self-Knowledge**
2. **Constant Learning**
3. **Risk Taking**
4. **Guided by Core Values**

Adapted from "Profile of an Innovator," by Eleanor Glor

Smart Innovators build support with 3 key constituencies:

*Senior Management  
Colleagues  
Customers & Clients*

These constituencies must comprehend and commitment to the principle tenets of the innovation. Their support enables an Innovator to build a critical mass.

### **Creativity Quiz**

*Let's see how much innovation is floating around your organization...*

**Rank each statement on a scale of 1 to 4.**

**1 never      2 sometimes      3 almost always      4 always**

<b>The Individual</b>		<b>The Organization</b>	
Once I learn a new skill, I find ways to integrate that knowledge into many different areas of my life		Our team asks customers, clients and colleagues for ideas to improve our work	
I make it a habit to get fresh input on projects, even ones that seem routine		Our organization emphasizes lifelong learning by providing on-going training, education and development	
I make it a habit to learn new skills and competencies at least twice a year		Our organization integrates new approaches regularly	
I allow adequate time for relaxation		Our organization rewards innovation	
Total		Total	

**Scoring:**

- 4-8 below average...probably in an unconscious rut**
- 9-11 average creativity with lots of room for improvement**
- 12-16 above average...an Innovator**

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## Obstacles to Innovation

- Backwards thinking
- Lack of strategic intent
- Strategy to performance gap
- Isolation
- Limited access to information
- Unconscious incompetence
- Politics
- Myopia
- Fear

## Principles of Innovation

*Peter Drucker*

1. Purposeful, systematic innovation begins with the analysis of the sources of new opportunities.
2. Successful innovators use both the right and left sides of their brains. They look at facts, figures and people. They work out analytically what the innovation has to be to satisfy an opportunity. Then they go out and look at potential users to study their expectations, values and needs.
3. To be effective, an innovation has to be simple and focused. It should only do one thing, otherwise it confuses people.

*Innovation begins with the conscious search for opportunities. Managers may believe that industry structures are ordained by God, but these structures can and do change, often overnight. This change creates opportunities for innovation.*

*Peter Drucker*

## Cases in Point

### ***I'd like to be innovative, but...***

It's impossible here! My boss says 'no' to every idea I bring him. I had a great idea last week for recruiting from local senior citizens---we have a lot of open positions that we can't fill. He said it'll never work. But, we haven't even tried!



### ***Nothing sticks...***

We are open to new ideas and often try new approaches to our work. We are always doing something different to keep customers happy. And, we are always trying all sorts of neat contests to keep employees excited and committed. The problem is that every program fizzles after a short time and we're back to the drawing board. At least we try!

**Joanne L. Smikle** is a respected consultant, author and speaker. She devises practical strategies that promote sustained change in corporate culture while enhancing performance and productivity. Joanne's systematic approaches effectively address long-term business needs. An expert in leadership development, Joanne has spent the past several years helping public and private sector organizations reach their maximum potential. She has provided consulting and educational services to many, including: *American Honda Motor Company, Environmental Protection Agency, American Psychiatric Association, Fannie Mae and Sioux Falls Health System.*

An accomplished author, Joanne's books are used by companies all over the country. Her focus is on providing practical approaches for sustainable organizational renewal through collaboration, skillful leadership and superior customer service. Joanne is the author of *Coaching: The Lost Leadership Art* and *Calamity-Free Collaboration: Making Teamwork WORK!* Her articles are featured in magazines, journals and trade publications, including: *At Your Service; HR Now; Recharger Magazine; Office Technology Magazine; Forum; Source; Florida HR Review; and Support World.* Joanne uses the market intelligence gained through research-based consulting to create captivating keynotes for corporations and associations. She facilitates retreats, workshops and educational experiences. Joanne's clients include: *Florida Health Care Association, Maryland Aviation Administration, American Psychological Association, American College of Healthcare Administrators, Opis Management Resources, American Psychiatric Association,* and many other notable organizations.

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