



InnoFuture 2009 Momentum

Connecting the Innovation Community in Australia



FEBRUARY 19, 2009

CAPTURED THOUGHTS: “Counterintuitive Innovation Tactics That Kick Butt”

Fiona Ingram, User Experience Manager, Sensis

Often in business we rely on data and dismiss or mistrust intuition. What roles does Intuition play in business? And how do you incorporate the benefit of intuitive thinking into business?

When it's 'Business as usual', doing things faster, cheaper and better (improvement) gives you competitive advantage. But when it's 'business as unusual', i.e. disruptive, it's not enough to do things faster, cheaper and better – you Must do things DIFFERENTLY to keep ahead. In this situation deductive/analytical thinking does not work effectively. You need different thinking, more creative, 'generative' thinking.

Intuition: to be able to understand new situations very quickly, without stockpiling information. However, it doesn't occur from nowhere. It is a result of significant experience and thinking. In his book 'Blink' Malcolm Gladwell quotes many examples of good decisions made with deep gut feel, rather than by accumulating data., when the 'experts' 'just knew' . They made decision without being able to put their finger on exactly why something didn't seem right, but their decision invariably ended up being correct. Later analysis confirmed that their first thought was actually based on deep understanding and knowledge of the subject. But making the decision was not based on a conscious analytical process.

What is the difference between “intuition’ and ‘opinion’? It's the breadth of experience that supports intuition and the ability to connect diverse pieces of information as well as how well the person is able to sidestep political agendas and conventional wisdom.

Corporate Amnesia: this is an emerging corporate disease; corporations don't seem to learn from past experiences. Remember what didn't work for you last time!

David Bryan, Head of Innovation, NAB Technology Strategy:

Ruts, carrots and sticks within the organisational greenhouse: working in larger organisations brings many challenges but also the opportunity to have significant impact. As corporations and people experience data overload, there are some concepts emerging that help connect the separate dots. Harvard Business Review is a rich source of such concepts companies tap into to make data more useful and meaningful (refer especially to the latest HBR February 2009)

Here are some of these concepts for you to explore:

- Three degrees of removal (think of it in terms of your Supply Chain and the End User of your services or products)
- Biomimicry (learning from nature to solve technical and business problems)
- Social networks – example of bees finding new home (use of feedback)
- Institutional memory goes digital
- Laundering a better brain
- Neuro-leadership: ‘Neurology of Leadership’ refer to David Rock’s leading work in this space
- How do you re-route thinking in organisations to tap into and connect thinking better
- The biggest challenge for innovation program is analysing ideas to capture the good ones fast and discard unsuitable in a non-destructive manner
- How to get ‘sponsorship’ of ideas/innovation programs – focus on important things
- How to reward
 - ‘*innovation leave*’: allowing people time to go away to learn, spend some time with the customer or vendor
 - Focus on important things

How do you ‘kick butt’ in business today? You use your Head!

Additional concepts: *Performance Thinking* or *Practice Thinking* – a program designed to enable good practices and examples of good solutions to be repeated. The team actually ‘practices’ those behaviours as repetitive tasks, using Mechano-like building blocks. (Telstra)

Richard Paynting, Return on Innovation:

Here are some thoughts and concepts from the real master of innovation:

Superior Value – know what your competition doesn’t know

Lead with a combination of Thinking + Execution;

Corporate ‘Rainmakers’ – make the best use of intuition

Intuition - Unconscious Competence (Virtuosity):

Knowledge and experience

Fast learning

Having a good tool for translating data (outbound marketing) into action and manage change

Informed intuition: objective clarity – when you really know where you are going, when the goal is clear

Jeremy Stone, Corporate Manager - Innovation, GHD:

There’s a lot of talk, particularly with the economy the way that it is, about the merit of investment in innovation. An increasingly regular question amongst professional services companies is ‘Should we be innovative?’

What they’re really asking is does investment in developing an innovative culture and delivering ideas create value for our business? This in itself poses some tough questions:

- Do clients really value an innovative supplier? At GHD, our clients’ perceptions are very important and can often be a big influencer when winning work;
- Does an innovative approach differentiate us? We’ve found that it has been a very salient differentiator. For example, having a concrete case study of how we’ve addressed sustainability objectives has led to interest not only in this particular innovation – but our sustainability services as a whole;
- Can innovation improve the bottom line? Yes, if delivered in the right way, supported by a strong approach and processes, it can contribute to the company’s revenue.

Here are some concepts that GHD has utilised in building a global network of innovative staff that actually has helped the company 'differentiate' and be seen as a specialist sought after to solve specific and also wider challenges:

- Commit to an end to end, structured innovation program with clear objectives, timelines, budgets, just like for any other business;
 - Establish the appropriate infrastructure of people, tools etc. Infrastructure includes:
 - Innovation Zone – a technology platform that has a flat structure, open/trusting environment and effectively engages with all our people;
 - People team throughout the organisation to generate interest and to focus on specific issues/challenges;
 - Non line management people who provide governance and objectively select the ideas to go be progressed, whilst providing timely feedback to the idea generator;
 - Tools to provide support for the elements of successful innovation - opportunity identification, idea generation, idea evaluation and selection, solution development and implementation;
 - Effective communication and engagement (be relevant to the business).
 - Have an underlying philosophy of: *End user or market user innovation* – focus on the needs of the clients and the community;
 - Find the right people (internal and external) to come together to share their knowledge and experiences (technical, market, commercial etc.) to generate solutions;
 - Have a burning desire to implement (“a slice of a cooked pie tastes better than a whole pie not cooked”) and to maximise the value generation (not just commercialisation).
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Discussion:

How to get 'funding' or sponsorship for innovation?

- Engage in a conversation
- Explain the idea (why) and put into context (what are the risks of not doing it)
- Get the support of a champion for your idea, at least someone with good persuasive skills or access to the decision makers (you don't need to do it alone)
- Establish 'Greenhouse' for ideas with its own 'seed funding' and a community of practice to co-develop idea
- Collaborate – 'Partner Model' – use knowledge and resources of your chain partners/vendors

How to keep Innovation momentum going?

1. Find Relevance to Now – Value to the Customers
2. Find Relevance and innovate in Downturn to be immediately ready to go and succeed on the upswing
3. Have more conversations

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