

Growing to the next level (using innovation)

Bob 'Idea Man' Hooey

Is your organization (club, District, etc) stagnating? Are you finding it a challenge just to keep up with the regular demands made on your team? How do you keep growing?

Growing your people will result in growing your organization. Now there is a novel approach to success in business or any operation.☺ Making innovation an integral embedded process may just be the answer. After all, you have a process for almost everything else don't you? **Prepare Yourself to WIN!** by investing your time and resources in equipping your team to creatively grow and succeed.

I came across a book by **Robert B. Tucker** a while back that shed some additional light and offers us some solid advice on how to do this.

In '***Driving growth through innovation***,' Robert outlines a synthesis of options based on what leading companies like Proctor & Gamble, Colgate-Palmolive, EDS, Royal Dutch/Shell and Citigroup are doing to encourage growth and earning rates thru applied innovation. In his book he describes how they have been able to bring new ideas to life for "greater speed, payback and more consistent momentum."

What sets these corporate role models apart is their ability to include everyone throughout the organization in the innovation process. They are able to uncover *unmet* client needs or desires, create and produce prototype ideas in a short time frame, and assess feasibility quickly.

Organic or inward growth will become more critical in the years to come. It will come from applied innovation, not cost cutting bottom-line oriented activities. These are always important, but they don't drive top line growth or sustain profitability. They will be counter productive, if not handled correctly.

Investing in innovation and teaching everyone on your team these principles of applied innovation, as shared by Robert B. Tucker, will bring you the desired ROI you seek, and perhaps the '*real*' top-line growth as well. *I include a few of his ideas along with my own thoughts.*

Tucker's Principles of Applied Innovation (and my insights)

Approach innovation as a discipline. Teach your team to think '*through*' their ideas and how to understand which ones are in alignment with your organization's visions, goals, mission statements or principles. Remember, you get better at something with practice, so encouragement works, even if the initial ideas need work. Show your team how to champion and sell their ideas, and where they can go (*hopefully to you*) for coaching and encouragement, and how to build creative coalitions of support.

Approach innovation comprehensively. If you want innovation to become an ingrained mindset in your organization, don't let it be confined to one department or an *'elite'* group of high performers. Work

with your HR department to insure that innovation performance is a part of every job description, and every manager or supervisor's evaluation.

Hire for this skill - beef up your innovation muscles and bench strength.

Promote from this perspective to send a consistent and positive message. Innovation must encompass new product development, services, training and development, processes, customer service, strategies, finance and business models, markets and distribution channels.

Innovation must incorporate a systematic, organized and continued search for new opportunities and vistas to explore.

Promote a deeper understanding of social, demographic and technological changes in your search for the possibilities in your future.

Why not challenge your team to become *'trend spotters'* who search for disruptive technologies, new innovations and inventions, and perhaps even wacky ideas that might contain the seeds of innovation you need? Mining the future from the minds of today!

Everyone in the organization must be involved in innovation. Ensure your team builds an *'idea management'* system to capture ideas from the rank and file, not just your management personnel.

Good innovative ideas often come from the fringe of your team, the ones you normally wouldn't ask, who see areas of improvement or new services but are too shy to share. Make it a point to draw out their input, insight and experience. They may have encountered something with a client that could provide the genesis of a new line or profitable service addition. (*My 'idea catchers' might be a start in this direction.*)

Innovation must be customer centered to be profitable. You can't always depend on the insights provided from your clients. Sometimes they don't know or recognize what they need or want until you show it to them. **A focus of innovation** to make their lives better, in service, in selection, in making it easier for them to do business with you, in how you handle their concerns, problems, and complaints will do wonders.



Creating value for the client is the only sure route to continued success. Client focused innovation is more profitable as it deals with the ‘top-line’ of your business. Innovation to shore up your bottom line also enables you to grow and put those ‘liberated’ resources into growth, promotion and performance enhancement.

We cover more on that in ‘***Make ME Feel Special! Idea-rich customer service strategies***’ available from www.SuccessPublications.ca

Listen to your clients, you might learn something that could provide a new or unconventional way of doing business and continuing to earn theirs. Use client feedback, focus groups and on-line forums to provide a venue for sharing of ideas, concerns, and feedback on performance issues.

Taking time to understand these principles of applied innovation will help your team develop a strategy for innovation to guide your organization thru good and bad times. A strategy that will help in surviving normal and eventual leadership changes.

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Bob ‘Idea Man’ Hooey, DTM, PRA, CKD-Emeritus, Accredited Speaker, 2011 Spirit of CAPS recipient is an inspirational leader, speaker, and a prolific author whose works include **‘Legacy of Leadership’**, , **‘Why Didn’t I THINK of That’**, **‘Speaking for Success’** and **‘The Courage to Lead!’** His articles have been featured in a multitude of North American trade and global consumer publications. He is a respected leader who has been honored by CAPS, NSA, Toastmasters, and the United Nations for his leadership contributions. His creative Ideas At Work have allowed him to travel the globe sharing insights, encouragement in 61 countries, so far. With Covid-19 he has been zooming around the globe to share his ideas. His **innovative Ideas At Work!** have been successfully applied by global leaders as well as Canada’s 50 Best Managed Companies.