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How ideas management can help innovation flourish

13 November, 2014 | By Andy Theedom

We have all had that lightbulb moment; a sudden flash of inspiration and realisation as to how to solve a problem that has been troubling you for some time.

For some of us these moments are few and far between, while for others there seem to be ready sources of inspiration and creativity, always on hand to offer insight and a fresh way of thinking.

We can see that across local government there is a sustained trend of ideas being generated from within authorities, which is helping to drive innovation that prompts efficiency savings: about 90% according to a survey we did earlier in the year.

This is great news for councils but, if these opportunities are to be maximised, there is a whole new set of questions to be answered. For example, what is the best way to gather ideas efficiently? How can councils evaluate ideas against others?

Also, how can those ideas be exposed to the right decision-makers and experts? Finally, how do time-poor councils manage progression of ideas through to activities, without creating a disproportionate management overhead that kills spontaneity or a willingness to pursue?

Idea management is becoming an ever more important ability, helping organisations to capture, evaluate and progress proposals in a structured and transparent manner.

Furthermore, a single system provides a democratic environment which not only allows you to determine the best ideas but also to show a willingness to consider the thoughts of all, not just those who shout the loudest. It's a way of saying: "We trust you; we're going to let you have your say."

The other great benefit of a management system of this type is that it helps to increase genuine cross-organisation transformation; something which, in our experience, not enough councils are encouraging.

Many authorities are able to deliver savings at a departmental or directorate level, but we believe that having a programmatic and corporately held view of all the key activity is an essential conditioning feature of success. Structured ideas management is a great way of starting this process.

If you need more convincing as to the benefits, you only need to look at the reduced cost of ideas capture and evaluation, as well as the decreased overheads associated with sharing best practice and lessons learned.

Plus not only are you showing faith in your people to innovate, you are providing a channel for increased engagement and reducing the barriers to participation. What more motivation could you have for making ideas management the bedrock of success in your authority?

Andy Theedom, local government market director, Capita Consulting

Rosemarie Diegnan, chief strategy and product officer, Wazoku

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