

The Moment

Innovation Toolkit

Innovation Project Team

INTRODUCTION

There are many different ways you may structure and cast an innovation team. One key aspect of successful innovation projects is a collaborative team that connects departments across and up and down the organization.

Many organizations are creating dedicated innovation labs staffed with specialists separate from the general lines of business. These labs are very popular in corporate innovation right now, but they also carry the risk of becoming expensive show-cases that don't create business impact.

Innovating in a black box or a bubble creates the risk that the outputs cannot be implemented or supported by the organization. With a change in leadership, that expensive showcase may be quickly cut as "fluff", setting back the innovation agenda in the organization by years. It is also true that back in the organization there is a lot of very useful information, intelligence and wisdom that needs to be engaged to bring diverse perspectives into the creation of solutions. If you use the innovation lab model, its connection to the rest of the business is a critical design consideration.

The model we like best comes from Dr. Munib Karavdic and Jon Campbell from their work on "The Implementation Dilemma". In order to create an innovative solution that can integrate with the organization in a way that sticks, scales, and realizes its value potential, you need a team structure that both creates a safe space for experimentation and exploration, and taps into and engages the collective intelligence of the organization.

Business Lead and Design Lead

In this model, two key roles drive the project. The Business Lead deeply understands the business, industry and internal context and holds accountability for ensuring that innovations are viable from a business perspective. The Design Lead has deep expertise in design process and tools, ensures that the team is well-equipped for the work, and is particularly focused on the desirability of the solution from a customer perspective. In some cases, and for project requirements and focus, the Design Lead may come from a technology background. There might be a time where a Design Lead would collaborate with a Technology Lead to meet specific project challenges and needs.

Cross-functional Team

Surrounding these leads (who are either fully or partially dedicated) are an enabled and crossfunctional core team drawn from the operating business lines and functions relevant to the project challenge. These people ensure that knowledge is moving in and out of the project team with respect to their functional areas, and are collectively responsible to ensure that the resulting solution is feasible with the available resources in and around the organization.

A fundamental role on this team is the Innovation Designer. There are many ways to define this role; at The Moment we consider an array of skills that the Innovation Designer could bring to the mix. The level of proficiency may vary depending on the Innovation Designer's educational background and working experience, but a rounded practical knowledge is appreciated. These skills include:

- Business and Strategy
- Service Design (incl. systems design, product development)
- Design Research (incl. strategic foresight)
- Communication Design
- Organizational and Culture Change
- Facilitation and Collaboration Design (incl. coaching, engagement, leading training)
- Learning Design (incl. process and tool design)
- Agile Project Management

What makes this cross-functional team an enabled one is the relationship with senior leaders. These are not committee members who have to go back to their bosses for insight, approval and permission at every step. They are selected for their knowledge and access, and are given the authority to make decisions as part of the team to ensure high cadence of work. They are trusted high performers.

Subject-matter Experts

You will not have all the necessary expertise all the time on your core team, so you will need to identify and recruit subject-matter experts, both internal and external. Fresh perspectives from different points of view are critical to good innovation work, so find the smartest and most talented people you can to be part of the extended team.

A note here on engaging consultants:

There are different kinds of consultants, who bring different kinds of expertise. Some can become an integrated extension of your team, bringing their expertise and skills in service to the team and the challenge in an agile and adaptive way. Others remain on the outside, doing their work in a black box, creating deliverables like slide decks with-out the internal commitment to deliver. At today's pace of change, the latter approach cannot adapt or integrate to the conditions of the organization in ways that will stick.

Senior Leaders

Senior leaders will need to be engaged and prepared, involved and consulted, at regular intervals throughout the work. They often need to be educated about innovation design practices in order to prepare them to support the process, and their primary roles are to connect the team to resources and to remove barriers. It is not the job of senior leaders to have the answer, or to jump the process to a solution based on their particular points of view. Business, Design and Technology Leads need to manage these relationships very thoughtfully

Team styles

In casting your team, it is useful to assess individual styles and readiness for doing innovation work, in addition to knowledge and skills. We often use the Basadur Creative Problem Solving Profile tool to assess individual problem solving styles in order to ensure that the team is relatively balanced between the styles of Generators, Conceptualizers, Optimizers and Implementers.

We also prepare team members who are new to the innovation practice around how the process unfolds, and help them to get very comfortable with ambiguity. Ambiguity walks hand-in-hand with innovation. Letting go of old mental models and stepping into an ambiguous space is difficult for most people. Your Leads will need to have experience in helping the team to unlearn old habits and move through the process.

INNOVATION PROJECT TEAM

CORE TEAM



Business Lead



Design Lead



Technology Lead



Function Leads



Customer



Function Leads



SUPPORT TEAM



Subject-matter Experts



Senior Leaders



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