

Forward

The purpose of this guide is to provide a framework that anyone can use to create an act of innovation. Anyone in business, education, health care, or governments, can take the first step to becoming innovative. It is the innovation that drives our economy and can affect positive change in our society.

Make the decision to sit down and 18 minutes from now start on the process of creating an act of innovation.

Who is One Million Acts of Innovation?

One Million Acts of Innovation is a non-profit organization working to stimulate Canadian innovation by connecting people and sharing inspiring ideas to transform the nation. Their focus is on causing acts of innovation on priorities, we as human beings care about by working with 'existing' and new innovation groups. Our job is to empower and work with individuals, teams, companies and groups who are interested in producing acts of innovation.

The movement started in 2010 when a group of passionate senior technology professionals gathered to discuss an important problem - Canada's innovation capacity. Inspired by a joint conviction that Canada deserves better, the original group (Taimour Zaman – The Access Group and Ted Maulucci – Tridel Corp.) - supported by several key partners in business and education - crafted a program that leverages collective knowledge and the willingness to collaborate for the sake of building productivity, economic prosperity and global capacity for Canadians. Board members include John King, CEO of Cultural Architecture, Inc. and Con Georgiou who is spinning up the movement in Australia.

"We're looking for... any type of change, any type of action that comes forward," said Ted Maulucci.

One Million Acts of Innovation Goals

- Change the way we perceive failure in the pursuit of innovation.
- Connect businesses with students from various colleges/universities to create pilot projects that will stimulate creative thinking, collaboration and ultimately acts of innovation.
- Create a global Knowledgebase for hunches, ideas and experiences that ignite acts of Innovation around the world.
- Provide value added resources to immigrants to help assimilate more efficiently and harness the new talent within the country.
- Inspire Academia and students that have fresh perspectives (not constrained by opinions, judgments, past experiences) to take acts of innovation and create viral movements.
- Invite and inspire other communities and government departments to participate and enhance existing innovation activities and help infuse new thinking.
- Report success stories to cause further acts of innovation and help inspire ALL innovation groups.
- Accelerate knowledge transfer – including steps on how to adopt and implement acts of innovation by writing white papers, creating case studies and sharing the knowledge with all communities involved.
- Grass roots program to inspire start-ups in under-privileged communities

You can participate by registering at www.onemillionsactsofinnovation.org

Introduction

There has been a lot of discussion the past few years about innovation and how many organizations differentiate themselves from each other and in how innovative they are. The likes of Tridel, Canada Goose, Roots, Lululemon, Blackberry, and Pebble have all had reasons to celebrate Canadian innovation. Innovation is what drives business forward but it also can extend itself to other themes. Innovation also means exploiting new technology and employing creative thinking to generate new value and to bring about significant changes in society. Innovation is the ability to turn knowledge into new and improved products and services.

Studies and research has confirmed that all organizations want to be more innovative. One survey identified that almost 90 per cent of businesses believe that innovation is a priority for them. According to an Angus Reid survey, innovation is a priority for 74% of the Canadian entrepreneurs. If “innovation is the key to business success” then it makes plenty of sense to put in the time and effort to pursue this theme. But why do so many Canadian businesses have such a difficult time with innovation? The primary reason is that they do not have a roadmap or a commitment to execute.

The conclusion is that the importance of innovation is increasing, and increasing significantly. Having a priority does not necessarily mean that there is execution against that priority. Execution on an idea or invention is what truly causes innovation to occur. Canadian businesses need to take action and commit to an innovation mindset.

In Canada, The Conference Board reports on innovation performance for Canada and 17 peer countries. The indicators used measure each country’s capacity to innovate, based on data that reflect the stages of knowledge production, the transformation of knowledge, and market shares of knowledge-based industries. In February 2010, Canada received a “D” grade on its report card and ranks 14th out of 127 countries. The Canadian economy is a below-average performer on its capacity to innovate. The good news is that innovation is easier to achieve than one might think. Countries with the highest overall scores have successfully developed national strategies around innovation, giving them a substantial lead over their peers in one or more areas. The U.S. fosters a combination of top science and engineering faculties, broad and deep capital markets, and an entrepreneurial culture. Japan is committed to efficient manufacturing and new product development. Switzerland, the top-ranked country this year, is a leader in the pharmaceuticals industry.

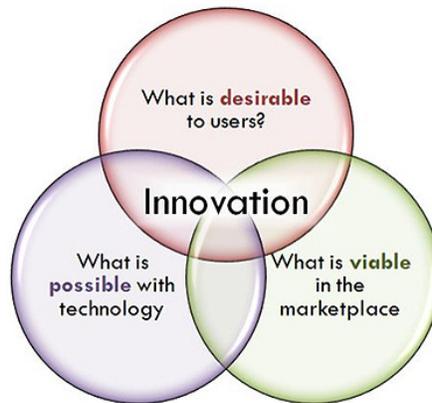
Canada is well supplied with excellent universities, engineering schools, teaching hospitals, and technical institutes. It produces science that is well respected around the world. But, with some exceptions, Canada does not take the steps that other countries take to ensure science can be successfully commercialized and used as a source of advantage for innovative companies seeking global market share. Canadian companies are thus rarely at the leading edge of new technology and too often find themselves a generation or more behind the productivity growth achieved by global industry leaders.

Today, we need innovators more than ever before. Every organization and business is feeling the impact of globalization, migration, technological and knowledge revolutions, and climate change issues. Innovation will bring added value and widen the employment base. Innovation is imperative if the quality of life in these trying circumstances is to improve. Our children’s future and Canada’s future depends on innovation to sustain our growth and to provide a competitive edge in the global marketplace.

Innovation

Innovation becomes truly successful when it's taken from the invention stage and delivered to the market or made visible to society. It is the act of putting into proactive the innovation and demonstrating and exploiting its value. The Innovation stool has three legs and that answers the following questions

1. What is desirable to the end users?
2. What is possible with Technology? and
3. What is viable and sustainable in the marketplace?



But what is innovation? What does it mean?

Innovation comes from the Latin *innovationem*, noun of action from *innovare*. "to renew or change," from in- "into" + novus "new".

Innovation can therefore be seen as the process that renews something that exists and not, as is commonly assumed, the introduction of something new. Innovation is not always directly tied to a physical product as innovation is the implementation of a new or significantly improved product, a service, a process, marketing, organizational or personal ideas and initiatives.

The Five Themes of Innovation

Innovation can be explored into 5 main themes as follows:

Theme 1: Product innovation is the introduction of a good or service that is new or significantly improved product. The product innovation can utilize new knowledge or technologies, or can be based on current combinations of existing knowledge or technologies.

Theme 2: Process innovation pertains to the implementation of a new or significantly improved production or delivery method. It can be used to lower a unit cost or to deliver improved quality or products.

Theme 3: Marketing innovation is the focused on better addressing customer needs, creating new markets, product positioning in existing markets, with the goal of always increasing and originations sales.

Theme 4: Organizational Innovation is the implementation of methods into the organizations business practices, workplace, or external relations. These innovations typically reduce internal costs, improve workplace satisfaction or improve on supplier processes.

Theme 5: Personal Innovation is about rethinking the ways you do things on a daily basis and to improve your own personal knowledge or relationships. Applying the innovations is what makes you a better person and those around you.

Ideas can be very powerful and provoking. Without the creativity of ideas, then the ability to create innovation cannot occur.

It is also important to understand as to what innovation is not. Innovation is NOT invention; even if these words get used together they are not interchangeable. Even though an invention is the creation of a new, product or device or process, it still is not an innovation. An innovation is the extension of an invention, where the actual act of innovation occurs when it is delivered to a market or to an audience.

8 Easy Steps to Innovation

In order for innovation to be successful a process is required. This answers the question of what are we innovating but also captures the need to measure the success of an idea.

If we use design thinking as the process, then it often begins by simply identifying a problem and seeing an opportunity. The thinking will allow you to develop opportunities that are specific to your users, your market and your organization. The design thinking process enables more successful innovation. This is a simple approach to innovation creation and more complex inventions will require a more detailed approach.

1. Create a Need for Innovation

Many times the greatest innovation comes from an area one is passionate about or most familiar with. Choose and identify an area or item that requires innovation. Many times the innovative result is in asking a question. Also innovation can take place incrementally using existing technology to solve new problems with new design ideas. It could be the simple question of “Can we make it better?”

2. Create a Vision of your Goal and Criteria for Success

Define what the corporate vision, goal, objectives and strategy are of the innovation exercise and do your investigative research. A summary of how to tackle the innovation opportunity including any specific product, target audience, market research or strategic considerations are required. Remember, small innovations are just as important as trying to invent or create a large item.

3. Create a Foundation of Support

Choose your management champion and enlist support from peers and seek feedback. It is important to have support to implement the concepts during the innovation process. Sometimes the process can be time consuming and may require resources to be allocated and that will need commitment from management. It may be important to gain support as high up the management chain as possible.

4. Create a Small Team

A small team of individuals will allow creative and cross-functional ideas to be generated. A small group of four to six individuals will allow brainstorming and the ability to build on ideas in an easier to manage fashion. Choose a diverse team that will allow more diverse ideas to be generated. Innovation can occur in all areas of operations: in the business model, supply chain, operational processes, service delivery, Information technology, or even marketing. A diversified team will bring ideas from all parts of the organization in rapid fashion.

5. Create an Innovation Document

Document your journey in a workbook or internal blog. It is important to keep track of the innovation meetings and the ideas generated (good or bad). The document also allows the champion supporter to see that the team is creating value in the process and allows the measurement of success. A sample innovation worksheet is a good framework to start managing the process.

6. Create a Culture of Sharing of Ideas and an Innovation Mindset

In many cases, creativity processes will trigger discoveries that require further investigation. It is appropriate to challenge assumptions and to ask questions like Why? Or What if? Or even So What? Inspiration can occur during scheduled innovation work sessions but can occur anytime. Encouraging ideas from different perspectives is a healthy process to develop winning and innovative solutions. The Innovation workbook also allows the ability to share ideas with the team members and measure its success.

7. Create Persistence and Accept Failure

Sometimes, it can take many ideas before an idea becomes innovative and can be put forth to practice. Any small improvement is a valuable improvement but may not necessarily have a profound impact. However, sometimes many small improvements add up to a bigger improvement. Failure provides a great learning opportunity because it allows the discussion to understand what worked and what didn't. A good idea for one process may be a bad idea for another process, but failure should always be viewed as a success. Patience and a commitment to a longer timeline have been proven to show success and deliver meaningful results.

If your organization is struggling to develop or manage these innovation steps then by all means engage coaches, consultants and innovator animators to help create a blueprint for success.

Conclusion

Successful innovation starts with a commitment to the process and a desire to create or improve on something. Regardless of the environment where the innovation journey takes place, the benefits are tangible and that can help Canada become more competitive.

It is now your turn to take the next step and create your own act of innovation.

John Leonardelli
Innovation Officer

Innovation Worksheet

Innovation is an outcome of the creative process, and involves identifying and implementing a new idea. This worksheet is a tool to assist in the innovation process among the team members.

Idea:

Innovation Objective:

Team Leader:

Champion:

Team Members

Department

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Resources Required:

Goal

Completion Date

1.

2.

3.

Action

Completion Date

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Measure of Success

Completion Date

1.

2.

