

## Book Review

Beyond The Idea, by Vijay Govindarajan and Chris Trimble, St Martin's Press, 2013, 178pp.

The book, *Beyond the Idea*, examines three important models for organisations to induce innovation and reap benefits. This book is divided into three chapters. Chapter one discusses two main innovation challenges specifically idea generation and execution of innovation. This chapter identifies one common folly's that organisations make: spending most of their energies and focus solely on idea generation than execution of innovation. In fact, organisations, stress the authors, must shift to execution to achieve the goals of innovation. The strength of this chapter is the emphasis on practical issues that should be given consideration i.e. getting started with new ideas and make innovation work for organisations. Simple practical hands on suggestions are provided. The authors 'argue that organisations are not built to execute innovation but for ongoing operations. They stress that organisations should excel at serving current customers and fighting rivals. In fact, innovation requires experimentation and guaranteed short-term pain for long-term gains. However, innovation and ongoing operations are always and inevitably in conflict.

There are three important models for executing innovation initiatives namely the Small (S), Repeatable (R) and Custom (C) models. For example, squeezing innovation into the slack in the system and delivering a very large number of small initiatives is a Small model strategy. Making innovation look like day-to-day operations as much as possible and delivering a series of similar initiatives is a Repeatable model strategy. The Custom model is a process of separating incompatible innovation tasks from day to day operations in order to attain one unique initiative at a time. Also, it is essential to ensure resources are available to realise innovation such as requesting everyone, especially workers, to be an innovator during their leisure or break time or encouraging a small group of people to dedicate all their time to innovations. However, to match each initiative to the right model, it is essential to understand that S and R models have brick-wall limitations. This is because each model has its own strategy for enhancing the organisation's performance engine.

The chapter also analyses the fundamental limitation of each model as well as the approaches to overcome its respective constraints. For instance, the

fundamental limitation to model S is 'project size'. Therefore, several steps should be taken in order to make model S a success such as reinforcing pride in individual achievement, reinforce collective pride in small improvements, create internal competition as well as introduce a system for acknowledging and evaluating big ideas.

For model R, 'process' is the key limitation. Thus, breaking innovation into small, discrete and repeatable tasks is the most appropriate solution. In model R, part-timers are typically in commercial roles while full timers create innovations by developing tight-working relationship with specialists who work on related components of new offerings. The more efficient the process is the less flexible it becomes. However, the limits can be addressed by recognising the trade-off inherent in this model.

Model C has two components such as a special team and a special plan. Each of the model C initiative requires its own custom-designed special team and special plan. The special team is a partnership between two groups of people involving a dedicated team and a shared staff. The full timers are dedicated to just one initiative. The shared staff on the other hand has simultaneous responsibilities for both the innovation initiative and ongoing operations. However, the shared staff may usually take on familiar tasks or tasks that it can learn quickly and readily incorporate into day-to-day operations. In addition, the shared staff can only take on tasks that fit into existing roles, responsibilities and work-flow. At the end, the dedicated team must work on all other innovations tasks.

Chapter two discusses six common which stand in the way of creating a special team. Among them are failures to create a dedicated team, inability to isolate innovation and break the performance engine, assigning too many tasks to the shared staff, building a small performance engine and a poorly managed partnership. Therefore, it is essential to build a dedicated team like building a new organisation from the ground up. This typically involves hiring outsiders, creating new roles, shaping a new hierarchy and even creating a distinct culture. Three steps are crucial to building a dedicated team in an organization: listing the skills dedicated team needs have to achieve its goals, hiring the best people you can possibly get from any source and developing an organisational model in terms of roles, hierarchy and culture.

The importance of learning first and profit second concept to realise innovation is discussed in Chapter three. In general, learning is defined as improvement in the accuracy of prediction. With better predictions, innovators make better decisions and when innovators make better decisions, they are likely to attain better results.

The dos and don'ts are also examined pertaining to innovation leaders. For example, innovation leaders will spend no time questioning the validity of their

assumptions and are reluctant to pull the plug on a failing initiative. Moreover, innovation leaders should avoid engaging in open learning conversations with their superiors. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate innovation leaders based primarily on how well they run a disciplined experiment and ongoing operations.

There is also a vibrant discussion on how to build a team with a very particular structure, one that makes it possible to simultaneously build something new and sustain what exists, manage any innovation initiative as a disciplined experiment and implement three distinct models for making innovation happen.

This book is recommended for all employees and managers because it sheds lights to the long-held secrets of simple and powerful rules to attain successful innovation goals.

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