



Management and Performance Associates - Newsletter – February 2007

Innovation: Crystal Ball or Common Sense?

Innovation has been a hot topic for quite a long time. Most of us think of innovation as an unreachable science or as a skill mastered only by an intellectual elite. We think of it in terms of seeing beyond, of imagining unreachable scenarios, of having futuristic visions and in a few minutes we are navigating through unknown galaxies. What we seldom do is to approach innovation by examining three key factors: the company's strategy, its clients' needs and the current situation. Let's examine each of these three concepts:

The Company's strategy is the result of its vision being translated to concrete steps. This will allow us to arrive to our destination, within a determined time lapse, with the proper resources. Careful: the strategy inside the mind of the company's chief strategist is like a car without fuel – it does not go anywhere. The necessary movement will occur only when the strategy is communicated/ comprehended effectively, and is articulated in tactical plans.

Clients define our destination. In addition to consuming our products they are also constantly demanding new solutions as well as presenting new needs that must be attended to. This is happening in a world which is more and more sophisticated, complex and most of all, fast. The challenge is to listen to our clients, probe their needs, establish a partnership, understand their vision, strategy, short and long term needs and then help them (therefore helping ourselves) to fulfill the gaps. This generates the needed movement.

The current situation is nothing more than the current state of things. It has taken a lot of time to get there, and we feel proud of

our methods, processes and solutions. It can also be a trap if we are sitting and enjoying it from our comfort zone – Innovation's number one enemy. The world is changing much faster than we can understand and the necessary movements will be produced anywhere but in the comfort zone.

Instead of consulting a crystal ball we invite you to consider these ideas:

1. Innovation is a must

The first step is to recognize that something needs to change. And even before that, question the status quo. Do not assume that what works today will work tomorrow. Do not assume your customers will continue to be attracted to your current products. Do not underestimate the changes in the micro and macro economic scenarios. Ask yourself (and create an environment where the whole team is doing the same) how can we do things differently? If nothing comes to mind you could ask internal and external clients, suppliers and your team. Keep an eye on what the competition is doing. The answers are always there.

2. Build a bridge

A bridge always connects two points. In this situation, our bridge will connect the situation "as is" today and the desired one. These are not unconnected, they are closely related. Caution: When analyzing the current situation do not fall in the trap of examining how it should be. The idea is to be inspired by how things are done today. If you cannot visualize the future situation ask for help in order to embrace the unknown. Someone



will always have tools and wishes to help.
The challenge is to ask.

3. Communicate enthusiastically

This is not about “my idea”. It is about a team sharing information to build the innovation bridge. If you think you know it all, or that you should know it all, just look at any of the fantastic next generation airplanes, or to any of the companies that have had a steady growth in the last 20 years and which started as a small company in the backyard or a small garage. Do you really believe that this kind of success can be accomplished without effective communication?

See you next time. We welcome your feedback.

To know more of our training programs, please send us an e-mail to:

sergio.pereira@mapa-way.com or

sonia.dondice@mapa-way.com

Visit our website:

[**www.mapa-way.com**](http://www.mapa-way.com)