

THE UNMET CHALLENGE OF INNOVATION TRAINING

Despite spending more than \$130 billion on corporate training worldwide in 2014⁷, U.S. companies are struggling to build innovation capacity. In The Conference Board's 2015 CEO Challenge—a survey of 943 corporate leaders worldwide—innovation ranked #2 among the top business challenges globally, and #4 in the United States⁸. Human Resource professionals agree: 90% of respondents in the 2012 Workforce Innovation Survey reported that innovation would become increasingly important for organizations in the coming years⁹.

Yet 40% of organizations in the same Workforce survey said they are failing to foster innovation, and only 16% have a mechanism to measure innovation's business impact¹⁰. The problem lies in the failure to treat innovation as a discipline that can be trained, learned, and systematically implemented.

40%



of companies are **failing** to foster innovation.

Only

16%



of companies are measuring innovation's **business impact**.

Source: 2012 Workforce Innovation Survey

TOP BUSINESS CHALLENGES IN 2015*

*According to The Conference Board's 2015 CEO Challenge, a global survey of 943 corporate leaders.



IN THE UNITED STATES

- 1| Human Capital
- 2| Customer Relationships
- 3| Operational Excellence
- 4| **Innovation**
- 5| Government Regulation

GLOBALLY

- 1| Human Capital
- 2| **Innovation**
- 3| Customer Relationships
- 4| Operational Excellence
- 5| Sustainability

⁷ Bersin by Deloitte, The Corporate Learning Factbook 2014: Benchmarks, Trends, and Analysis of the U.S. Training Market. January 2014.

⁸ The Conference Board, CEO Challenge 2015. <https://www.conference-board.org/ceo-challenge/index.cfm?id=28618>

⁹ Ed Frauenheim: "Survey Shows Lack of Innovation Motivation." Workforce, January 17, 2013. <http://www.workforce.com/articles/survey-shows-lack-of-innovation-motivation>

¹⁰ Ibid.

DISCIPLINED CREATIVITY: AN ENTERPRISE-WIDE BUSINESS FUNCTION

Innovation rarely arises as a “light bulb moment” in the mind of a single inventor.¹¹ Rather, it is the result of purposeful, collaborative processes that unfold over time in a semi-structured way. These processes can be taught and managed as part of the “business function” of building innovation capital. This function need not be relegated to a specific business unit responsible for “breakthrough” ideas.

Rather, it can be most effective when dispersed throughout the enterprise and carried out by innovation-capable employees at any level, who apply targeted ways of thinking to generate incremental improvements in products, services, or operations. Honing and coordinating the talents of employees throughout the organization is critical to implementing a sustainable innovation strategy.

Building an Innovation-Capable Organization

Companies with successful innovation outcomes often demonstrate the following practices.¹²

1. Execute innovation like a business process

Approaching innovation like a business discipline requires a defined strategy and tools, along with the management processes to link employee training and performance to business results.

2. Cultivate an innovation culture

To achieve the ongoing, incremental innovations that improve products, services, and processes, organizations must not relegate innovation solely to an “R&D” function, but foster an innovation mindset among all employees.

3. Train employees on innovation skills

Debunking the stereotype of the “creative genius,” innovation is a method of developing new ideas that can be learned by virtually anyone. To be most effective, innovation training should exemplify—through its content and delivery methods—the same multi-dimensional creativity and problem solving that learners are encouraged to develop.

4. Create collaborative alliances

In addition to cross-pollination of ideas among functions within the organization, external collaborations with vendors, partners, and even customers can accelerate the innovation process.

5. Measure innovation’s impact

As with any business process, innovation efforts must be evaluated to monitor outcomes against business goals. Individual contributions to innovation must be mapped to team and organizational results to facilitate strategic alignment, recognition, and ongoing capacity-building.

LEARN MORE

A global leader in adult learning and professional development since 1973, Apollo Education Group offers full-service talent development solutions to help companies build and sustain innovation capabilities. Partnering with world-renowned innovation experts and utilizing the most advanced and expansive learning technologies, we take a research-driven, customer-focused approach to designing and delivering innovation strategies, training programs, and measurement tools to fit our clients’ needs.

For more information, visit apollo.edu/APD.

¹¹ Kate Vitasek, “Innovation and Collaboration: It’s Not An Either-Or Proposition.” *Forbes*, January 13, 2015. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/katevitasek/2015/01/13/innovation-and-collaboration-its-not-an-either-or-proposition/>

¹² Synthesized from PwC, Breakthrough Innovation and Growth; Alessandro DiFiori, “A Chief Innovation Officer’s Actual Responsibilities,” *Harvard Business Review*, November 2014; and Rashik Parmar, Ian Mackenzie, David Cohn, and David Gann. “The New Patterns of Innovation.” *Harvard Business Review*, January 2014.