Innovation — Something New or Different Introduced

Innovation is typically thought of as a breakthrough technology, product, service or a health-related cure. However, when you really stop and think about the definition of innovation as something new or different introduced, you begin to realize that innovation is all around us and happening on an on-going basis in varying degrees. Any time you improve what you are doing by doing something new or different, you are innovating. Someone might say, “I have been doing that for a long time and I don’t consider it anything new,” but to you, it might be highly innovative and unique. The more we have individuals introducing new and different ideas, the larger the innovative impact. It’s a matter of consistently looking to solve a problem in new and different ways.

My dad was not a scientist or a highly degree individual. He was just a good problem-solving thinker. Approximately 50 years ago, he didn’t like the way the end of his cigars looked after being chewed on, so he took a cigar and dipped it into a jar of glue and let it harden. It solved the problem. Has anyone heard of tipped cigars? The same can be said for dragging around a suitcase. It would be a lot easier, it was said in a team meeting, if we could roll suitcases. Wheels on a suitcase — bingo. So the objective is to have everyone consistently thinking of something new or different to introduce.

So how do you create an innovative culture in an organization?

1. **Empowerment**: Individuals need to have a comfortable feeling of empowerment. They need to know and trust that their opinions will be heard, appreciated and seriously evaluated. They will not contribute new ideas unless they feel that they have ownership in what they do.
2. **Cooperation**: Individuals need to function in a highly communicative teamwork fashion with respect for one another’s opinions and ideas. You cannot have an organization of individualism or silos and expect to cultivate creativity that benefits the organization.

3. **Process**: Once you have individuals working together, they need a structured process time to allow them to develop and look for insights to develop new ideas. Innovative thinking cannot be one while you are preoccupied with daily responsibilities.

4. **Support**: Once new ideas are forthcoming, they need to be supported by addressing and removing roadblocks that challenge their implementation and providing policies that invite change.

5. **Recognition**: Celebrate success. Let everyone know the impact of this new innovative idea; that will stimulate others to get more involved in generating a culture of innovation.

Our international conference and regional events provide a great opportunity to stimulate new ideas and/or methodologies. The entire collection of these activities is based on showing how organizations have introduced something new or different that has had a positive impact in their organizations. Many companies send a group of individuals to these events and then they hold their own discussion sessions immediately after to outline how their newfound ideas can affect and be applied to their particular organizations.

The art of introducing new things or methods is not difficult when you have a fertile environment and structure for creativity. Be sure not to eat the elephant all at once. Let the small ideas build into something big. Cultivate and recognize success and watch the breakthroughs unfold.