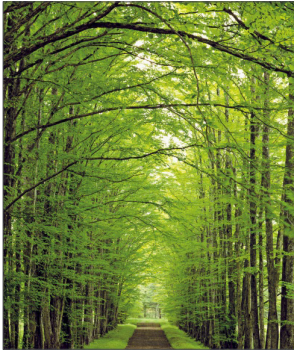# HYPE

White Paper

Building Sustainable
Enterprise Innovation Programs

Building Sustainable Enterprise Innovation Programs

For most organizations, growth continues to be their biggest challenge. This desire for greater commercial success has an impact on innovation professionals. There's an increasing need for new products and services to address new and existing markets.

Over the last 10 years, many companies have established corporate innovation programs, pulling in a much wider group of employees and third parties to help develop new products and services. Engaging the entire enterprise and beyond requires processes and software to support the program at scale, yet new processes and software do not ensure sustainable engagement.

Is your program sustainable?

A simple way to judge the sustainability would be to consider engagement over time.

Most companies look to run innovation campaigns, short, focused bursts of activity, where a diverse and perhaps a large group are invited to respond to a specific question. Each campaign will have a different set of metrics that indicate its success, considering participation over a small number of campaigns alone can be misleading. In addition, often companies run on-going idea or knowledge capture processes for ad-hoc insights that occur on the fly. These typically drive lower levels of engagement and lower levels of innovation.

We should consider the following: *Is participation increasing? Is the quality of products and services within our funnel improving?* And ultimately, *is value generated from that program increasing over time?*

What do failing programs look like?

The two most common engagement models for programs that struggle are:
- Lack of engagement – Participants show little or no interest in the program, no matter the subject or focus.
- Big peak, followed by a drop off – Initially it seems like there's significant interest in participating, but after a few months, participation drops dramatically to very low levels.

In order for us to avoid these situations, we must consider what makes a program sustainable and remember that each company is in effect, a moving target, where culture and behaviors change all the time and goals move in line with company circumstances.

Understanding the current position and how to react is also crucial. The four key foundations for sustainable enterprise programs are:
1. **Communications**
2. **Building an innovation community**
3. **Broaden the focus**
4. **Using the data available**

Communications

There are three main areas to consider:

1. **Marketing –** ensuring that the widest possible group are aware and continue to be aware of the program, its purpose and how to get involved
2. **Feedback –** keeping participants aware of progress and next steps to ensure belief in the program is maintained
3. **Share success –** making the company aware of the value the program brings, helping to ensure that those with business challenges come forward for support from the innovation team, in addition to building confidence in the program for those yet to engage.

The balance of each and the communication channels you select to use will depend on the maturity of your program. A newly establish corporate innovation program will require far more marketing and may take some time to develop success stories.

Feedback is an on-going program, yet offers little value for a completed campaign; however, if not addressed can stifle belief in future activities. Sharing success stories means maintaining contact with those owning innovation portfolios to track and monitor progress.

Building an innovation community

Every program has a small group of key supporters, those that participate regularly irrespective of the innovation topic. They're your advocates and can be a vital part of expanding the effectiveness of your program.

Look to involve them in the program more widely, encouraging others to share their content and get involved. They have day jobs and are rooted in normal business, so they're helpful in spotting opportunities for innovation, identifying future campaign sponsors and helping to address any pockets of non-participation.

Ask them to be your eyes and ears on the ground and to share key success stories, a great network of advocates can help reach all corners of your enterprise.

Broaden the focus

In many organizations, innovation is defined in fairly narrow terms, often focused almost entirely on the development of new products and services. The purpose of innovation activities is to deliver value to the business over various time horizons; it's worth considering if there are other areas of the company to which the tools and processes of enterprise innovation could be applied.

Increasingly organizations are asking their employees to share ideas on cost saving, process improvements, risk, sharing best practices, customer insights and many other subjects as they seek to offer more near term value to the company. This helps engage a wider group in enterprise collaboration, helping to boost core innovation activities over time.

Use the data

As soon as software is introduced to an innovation program, useful data becomes available. Not only can we consider portfolio size and track how it's improving, but we can also look at behavioral data such as who's participating, from which areas of the company and consider how we can boost performance further.

We can identify which areas of innovation need more focus and which parts of the company may require more marketing, support from middle management or volunteers to help people engage. Reviewing this data helps us to adapt the program; by understanding metrics such as the pockets of high and low engagement, we can make it more inclusive and adapt to changing culture and goals.

Summary

In order to deliver on-going value, enterprise innovation programs must consider sustainability to help grow engagement and ROI. There are four key foundations to delivering a sustainable program, each considered in relation to the program maturity. New initiatives will require a different approach to those in place for a year and those that are mature; use the data available to judge progress and how far the program has penetrated into the companies' consciousness.

Be aware of how the culture is changing by considering how behaviors are changing. This will increase the types of opportunity for innovation professionals, as the organization accepts the principles of large scale online collaboration. Programs that require quick returns should ensure a broad focus, beyond traditional product or service innovation that may take time to realize. In order to maintain and grow engagement, communications is crucial to maintain and increase belief in the program.

Invest time in those most passionate about enterprise collaboration to share success stories, encourage participation and help identify new opportunities for innovation processes and skills.