

Cris Beswick

# Embedding Innovation Culture



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“Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it and I shall move the world.” So said Archimedes, as he attempted to show that nothing is impossible providing the approach and the method is correct.

Several centuries later, Newton both counterbalanced and reinforced Archimedes’ theory when he developed his first law of motion, otherwise known as the law of inertia. In this, he proposed that an object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless it is acted upon by an unbalanced force.

Taken together, these two theories are ones which organisational leaders would do well to assimilate into their planning. With the right levers it is possible to transform any organisation. However, the status quo of any organisational culture has mass and moving that mass can take an enormous amount of energy and effort. In the first article in this series, [Rethinking Innovation Strategy](#), we examined the importance of directing business focus towards strategic innovation. In the second article,

**Enabling Innovation Leadership**, we moved the story on, looking at the important role which innovation leaders play in transforming organisations. Now we are moving on, seeking to embed innovation culture in an organisation in order to create game-changing results.

But for any leader who is looking to move their organisation towards innovation, it is vital that they first determine whether their organisation is in rest or in motion and if the latter, whether it is even going in the right direction and velocity. Only by understanding the starting point can leaders develop an understanding of the levers and fulcrum which will be required for transformation. It’s a vitally important lesson to learn. Unless you know where you are and then give due consideration to the factors which will influence any attempt at change you will have no hope of creating the desired future.

Let’s just pause to refresh our understanding of innovation and culture:

Culture is;

*“The combination of leadership style, values, behaviours and attitudes of an organisation’s people together with the views and opinions of its customers, partners and suppliers.”* Innovation is;

*“The process of implementing something new or different in order to solve a genuine problem, add value to the customer and drive growth for the creator.”*

So how do we combine culture and innovation to create truly game-changing differentiation? There are in fact eight crucial components of an innovation led organisation. At the top, defining the future, is innovation strategy.

This is supported and delivered into the organisation through innovation leadership, management and people. When successfully embedded, this results in the creation of an innovation community working in an innovation environment to deliver creativity whilst being fully mindful of risk factors. But all of this is irrelevant unless the organisation’s leaders are fully aware of the current state of the organisation and in particular of its level of innovation maturity.

Choose any two organisations and it's a fair bet that they will have different levels of innovation maturity. In fact, choose two departments within an organisation and they may well have differing maturity levels. From innovation novices which are likely to operate within a risk averse, highly controlled, climate through apprentice and professional stages and on to a full innovation leadership scenario in which innovation is seen as part of the day-to-day business operation, the level of innovation experienced will affect not only the pathway which the organisation's leaders will need to follow but also the triggers and levers which they will need to use in order to change the existing culture.

It's not a pathway which can be rushed. If you attempt to move straight into embedding innovation into an organisation's culture without first establishing the strategy and enabling innovation leaders then you will not have developed the level of understanding which will enable you to shift the organisation's momentum onto a new pathway. Similarly, if you try to overlay an existing culture with elements of innovation then the chances are that you will never generate the momentum required to move away from the comfort zone and into a world of possibilities.

If you are a CEO or a senior leader and innovation is a current strategic challenge then are you ready to develop that understanding which will enable you to find the fulcrum and levers required to transform your organisation's cultural inertia into active, innovation focused, forward momentum? If you are sincere about shaping the future of your organisation then **get in touch** to discuss how The Future Shapers team can help you to take the steps towards building a culture of innovation and being considered a true innovation leader.

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### About the Author

As one of the UK's foremost thinkers on strategic Innovation, Cris is also an author and keynote speaker. He specialises in advising CEOs and senior teams on the strategic advice, workshops & executive learning, keynote speaking, performance, drive growth and more importantly, change the game through consultancy & strategic advice, workshops & executive learning, keynote speaking.

After starting his career as a product and industrial designer, Cris spent over a decade as a successful entrepreneur & CEO building a group of companies including a multi award-winning design consultancy.

As well as contributing to articles for The Financial Times, The Sunday Telegraph and The Independent (to name but a few) he is also the author of 'The Road to Innovation' a back-to-basics guide to building a culture of innovation.

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