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FEATURES

The Eye of the Beholder: How to Bring Innovation to Clients



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THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

HOW TO BRING INNOVATION TO CLIENTS

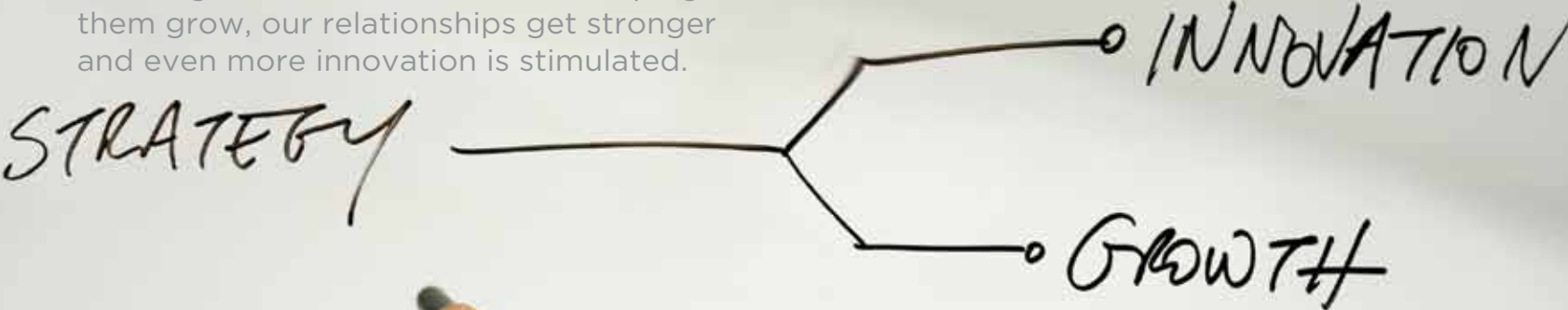
by Ann-Marie Johnson

The spirit of innovation has been a cornerstone of our company since its founding. We strive to bring value to our clients by pushing the boundaries of what's possible in technology and implementing that creativity in a practical business solution.

Innovation keeps us afloat and helps our clients be successful. When we deliver a creative solution to a client that brings meaningful business value, we're helping them grow, our relationships get stronger and even more innovation is stimulated.

But it isn't easy. Throughout CSC, there's a conversation happening. It's about finding your innovation style, measuring it and maximizing the tremendous range over which innovations can be developed.

Recently, leading executives representing different geographies, industries and accounts discussed how they bring innovation to their clients. Here's a snapshot of their approaches:



MANAGING DIVERSITY TO MAXIMIZE PROBLEM SOLVING

DAN HIMMERICH, consultant, solution guide and innovation leader for CSC's Financial Services Group.

Research tells us that different people perceive novelty differently and relate to innovation and change differently. These differences are at least partially "hard wired" into our personalities. The core work we do involves solving customer problems – problems that come in a variety of shapes and sizes. In order to ensure that we bring the best solution to our clients, we must pay attention to the most critical problem-solving tool in our arsenal – our minds – and we ought to understand a bit how our cognitive problem-solving processes work.

People are oriented to prefer certain styles of problem solving. Style preference for an individual is consistent over time, and can be observed, measured and classified. The likely outcomes of problem-solving teams can similarly be generally predicted – if you understand the style preferences of team members. By understanding the mix of problem-solving styles in a team, and orienting to the likely style preferences of the customer, a team leader can better align a solution approach.

For example, what if I had a client whose definition of innovation equated to creating minor improvements to existing structures (incremental change), but my definition of innovation equated to doing things entirely differently (radical change)? Then, innovation in my context would likely be perceived as too risky, and probably too "off the wall" to work (from the customer's perspective).

"IT BECOMES THE CHALLENGE OF LEADERSHIP TO ESTABLISH AND PRESERVE BROAD STYLE DIVERSITY WITHIN A TEAM, AND THEN TUNE THE TEAM TO PROBLEM SOLVE IN A WAY THAT IS MOST APPROPRIATE FOR THE CUSTOMER, AND FOR THE PROBLEM."

— Dan Himmerich

One typical challenge with problem solving teams involves the natural migration from broad diversity (in style) to less diversity in style. Team members whose styles are similar find it easier to communicate, work together and trust each other – thus, there's a natural tendency to recruit "people who are like me." However, "style-alike" teams also suffer from a reduced ability to solve problems that require solutions that fall outside their preferred approach. Problem-solving teams with an affinity for radical change can be very effective when "doing things differently" is the objective, but not so effective if "doing things better" is the goal.

It becomes the challenge of leadership to establish and preserve broad style diversity within a team, and then tune the team to problem solve in a way that is most appropriate for the customer, and for the problem.

IDENTIFY A DESTINATION AND TIMEFRAME

VINCENT POWELL, sales director for CSC in EMEA.

Everyone can have great ideas, but not all great ideas and innovations are worth keeping. Early on, you must identify how you will separate the ideas worth promoting from those you can filter out. You can do this by understanding how ideas satisfy accepted goals within a defined timeframe.

"INNOVATION IS NOT A RANDOM ACTIVITY, NOR IS IT AN ACTIVITY PERFORMED ALONE. SUCCESSFUL INNOVATION REQUIRES A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH DIRECTED BY SOME CLEAR GOALS AND TIMELINES."

— Vincent Powell

For example, getting a man on the moon was an incredible feat. But it began with John F. Kennedy, who said "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth." This goal provided a clear framework for directing and accessing innovation efforts over a specific timeframe.

This "directed innovation" is innovating for a purpose, to achieve a goal where all parties understand the value and timeframe. Our business and our clients' business are tied by the value we create from the innovation we deliver. If we can share goals it's more likely we will be able to provide greater value to clients and greater value for our company from the innovation we identify.

Using timeframes can help with managing "off-track" innovation. This type of innovation involves experiences where you start out on a journey but end up somewhere unplanned. For example, the work surrounding the moon landing missions spawned thousands of spin-off innovations. Many technologies and everyday products that exist today are a result of that program, including computer processors, engineering software and powder drinks. While these may have contributed to the original goal, the value has been delivered through a different set of goals and timeframes. If we understand the goal (which may be different than the original goal) and timeframe, we can understand when best to pursue such innovation to maximize value.

A typical innovation cycle would be: Establish goals and timeframe for value; generate and identify ideas; filter and synthesize (combine ideas together); identify themes and expected value; incubate and test innovation themes; launch new innovation; obtain feedback (positive and failure); recognize and realize the return and; finally reward those involved.

Innovation is not a random activity, nor is it an activity performed alone. Successful innovation requires a systematic approach directed by some clear goals and timelines.

TAILOR THE RIGHT SOLUTION

BARRY FREEDMAN, CTO for the DuPont account and former chief technology officer for CSC's Aerospace & Defense group.

Innovation is important to our commercial A&D clients. IT is increasingly being used to promote innovation across their businesses, including reducing costs and waste, producing greater business speed and agility, and creating competitive differentiations in their end products.

Everyone should have an account innovation program where you identify stakeholders and get them involved. It takes creativity to make innovation a part of your account's DNA, so it's important to develop a repeatable innovation process. Every account has different complexities and needs to be approached differently. Pick and tailor something that works for you and your account.

We align our group's innovation efforts to meet our clients' needs. For example, we roll up account-based innovation activities into our A&D strategy and client plan, connect innovation with organic growth and new business initiatives, and host a monthly thought leadership series for our account management and clients, which showcases the kind of innovation that is important to our clients.

“EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE AN ACCOUNT INNOVATION PROGRAM WHERE YOU IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS AND GET THEM INVOLVED.”

— Barry Freedman

Internally, a working group of A&D peers regularly share innovation best practices from all accounts, present solutions that can be leveraged, and foster an innovation network among A&D CTOs and architects.

We try to include all our stakeholders in our innovation programs including our partners who actively support our A&D accounts. Understanding where they are driving innovation has helped us shape new service offerings that have delivered tangible value to our client base.

REVEAL THE VALUE

CHUCK MCCARTHY, CSC's program director for the innovation arm of the U.S. Department of Transportation at the Volpe Center.

We have a very complex operation, with more than 225 job orders, delivering software solutions with over 30 releases each weekend to our customer. Our approach to running an innovation program is to present it to our customers as part of a strategic plan.

“WE AUTOMATE THE WAY WE INTERFACE WITH OUR CUSTOMER, WHICH ALLOWS US TO MEASURE OURSELVES AND FURTHER IMPACT THE PROGRAM THROUGH INNOVATION.”

— Chuck McCarthy

Since what we see as innovative and what our customer finds innovative may be different, we build innovation directly into our process improvement programs and the customer eventually sees the benefits of that value.

An example of this approach is our enterprise program management system (EPMS) which is our project management system. The customer didn't initially see a value and was not inclined to invest in this approach, but in the end of implementation they couldn't live without the management reports it generated.

Our partners also play an important role in planning technical leadership and consulting. We have approximately 50 specialized partners on the program and we leverage their innovative organizations so our customer can have the best of all worlds.

Additionally, we automate the way we interface with our customer, which allows us to measure ourselves and further impact the program through innovation. ■

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About CSC

The mission of CSC is to be a global leader in providing technology-enabled business solutions and services.

With the broadest range of capabilities, CSC offers clients the solutions they need to manage complexity, focus on core businesses, collaborate with partners and clients, and improve operations.

CSC makes a special point of understanding its clients and provides experts with real-world experience to work with them. CSC is vendor-independent, delivering solutions that best meet each client's unique requirements.

For more than 50 years, clients in industries and governments worldwide have trusted CSC with their business process and information systems outsourcing, systems integration and consulting needs.

The company trades on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol "CSC."