

A PURPLE PAPER

Jumpstarting Innovation in Your Company

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Organizations often speak to innovation as a strategic imperative for growth and set up teams to focus on “innovation-based” growth initiatives. Many of these organizations are also frustrated by their lack of progress. Why the gap? Innovation may be the least “organic” attribute an organization can develop. It rarely comes naturally and can be uniquely challenging in the B2B world. Speak to some CFO’s about an innovation focus and you may hear, “That’s great, I’m all for it...just don’t miss your numbers.” OK...got it. Thanks for the support. How can an organization make the shift to being innovative?

Start with the Fundamentals

Establishing solid momentum and strong potential for success requires that some fundamental actions and issues be addressed from the start:

- **Rationalize The Intent.** There needs to be a clear connection to innovation-based initiatives and intended business impact. Evidence shows that businesses that are strong innovators are also top performers. Use the data...provide tangible examples.
- **Ensure Top Down Alignment.** Is innovation a true priority for company senior leadership? Are organizational resources clearly defined? You may not have all parties agreeing on everything but commitment is critical.
- **Establish The Scope.** Is the focus on the entire business model or product development? Is it incremental or disruptive? Innovation requires change and many are simply resistant to change. Establishing the scope of your efforts allows the organization to clearly understand the strategic intent.

Organizational Alignment

The most important aspect of driving innovation is “the people part”...and also one of the most challenging. Why? Emotions.

It is vital to communicate the strategic intent of the work and address potential doubts or concerns. A well organized innovation effort may in fact reinvigorate an organization and inject new excitement.

- **Cross Functional Teams.** Development teams should include representatives from all of the primary organizational functions. Yes, even Finance. Cross functional team harness the power of multiple points of view, necessary for innovative collaboration.
- **People.** Ultimately, company culture can make or break how innovative a company can be. In leading his organization through enormous change Kodak CEO Antonio Perez found that his organization was divided into thirds: those who would readily support change, those who could be convinced and those who were highly skeptical about it. In moving forward he engaged the skeptics by having them meet with the others to share their concerns...and in doing so was able to significantly shift attitudes and get buy in. Most organizations will likely have similar divisions in their thinking.

Process

Most organizations have existing product/service development models. However, there is a significant difference between developing a new product and creating an innovative new approach to accomplishing an age-old task. So how do we come up with this stuff?

- **Immersion.** Be your own customer and a customer of others in your category. Test the system, test the product. Call your Customer Service group with issues.
- **Insight.** Seek insight from all of your customers, including distributors and end users. Identify the pain points; ask them about what they wish your product would do.
- **Watch Trends.** What are key shifts in attitudes or behaviors that may impact your product or service? How can you effectively harness or respond to these shifts?
- **Watch Sales.** Have categories gone stale....what are the substitutes customers are using?

Culture

Ultimately the culture of the organization has a major impact on innovative success. Highly innovative companies recognize that failure is indeed a part of the process and build it into expectations. Additionally, they seek to attract individuals who have a higher degree of intellectual curiosity. They call them “innovators.”

ABOUT THE PERT GROUP

Our goal is simple: to help our clients grow their businesses and their brands. How? By establishing business decision clarity.

We are The Pert Group, a top research-based consulting firm for business leaders who require straightforward, meaningful results that lead to clear, significant decision making.

We begin with fact-based evidence integrating attitudinal and behavioral research, which allows us to create clear strategies for business growth based on fact-based insights, and our team of **market-focused experts** works closely with our clients to consistently relate our work back to their goals and strategies.

Using a balance of creativity, forward thinking and pragmatism, we **completely immerse** ourselves in our clients' businesses and apply strategic methods to help them increase business and brand performance, differentiate their companies from the competition and take advantage of all opportunities in the market space.

The result? Clarity established.