

# Innovation and creativity – the same thing?

## The difference between innovation and creativity

We frequently hear the words creativity and innovation and rightly so, as both are invaluable in ensuring the future success of just about every organisation yet there are instances when the two are often confused or when people's definitions are at best woolly. The difference is really quite simple and understanding this will greatly assist in ensuring that the right emphasis is placed on both.

Ideally any new product or service (or an improvement to either) will satisfy some need or want in the market or solve a real problem and therefore deliver tangible benefits, without this it would have little value. Both creativity and innovation contribute towards making this realisation of benefits a reality and whilst they rely on one another in order to deliver this, they are distinctly different.

Realising the benefits of a new product or service requires two things to happen. Firstly, the idea for the new product, service or an improvement has to be developed in the first place and secondly, the idea has to be implemented and in simplistic terms this the difference between creativity and innovation.

Creativity is all about the generation of ideas and innovation is all about turning the ideas into reality, making them happen.

In our experience, once a good idea has been struck upon that offers significant benefits and obvious financial gains for the originating individual or company, most organisations are pretty good at ensuring that they are implemented, perhaps with varying degrees of efficiency but they are typically implemented none the less.

Where organisations seem to fail most, is in their ability to create great ideas that offer significant benefits or solve really tough problems and to be able to do this with ease and on demand and yet innovation (which organisations appear to be constantly crying out for) for its success relies entirely upon this.

Hence, the two go hand in hand. However, is there sufficient emphasis upon idea generation and the systematic thinking tools and processes that make creativity and problem solving a breeze and available on demand.

We are convinced that there is not, and we were recently working with a client that highlights this rather well.

The client had found themselves in the rather difficult situation of winning a project to which they had no existing solution. They realised that their existing patented technology could not be applied in this instance. Working in the

highly regulated nuclear industry, finding a new solution would be difficult and with the regulatory hoops that they would have to jump through, a totally new approach was not an option. When we were initially approached by the client, they had been working on a solution to the problem for over six months and were no further forward.

We ran a two-day workshop with the aim of facilitating a group thinking and problem solving session. Having introduced some proven systematic thinking tools and processes, the group arrived at four solutions within the first three hours of the workshop, a staggering result given their failure to date! Their feedback from the workshop reinforced two main factors. Firstly, the ability to think differently and more creatively in a systematic way was the key to arriving at their solutions and secondly, effective facilitation and group control made a huge difference.

Needless to say, their selected solution was successfully developed and implemented. Not only did this create a happy client but also created a lucrative new, multi-million dollar market for their patented technology. Not bad for a few hours work.

We hope most people would agree that to create one new innovative new product, service or improvement you would first need to generate the idea(s). Similarly, the opportunity to gain the best innovative solution would be greatly enhanced by the ability to generate high volumes of useful ideas on demand.

Therefore, in summary, creativity and innovation are really two phases of the same thing. Innovation is all about delivering solutions that deliver tangible benefits and creativity is the about generating the ideas from which these solutions can be drawn. It is clear therefore, that the quality of innovation is dependent upon the quality of thinking and creativity that it relies upon. We believe that there is insufficient emphasis placed upon this and a lack of understanding of the systematic thinking tools and processes that are guaranteed to significantly increase our ability to generate ideas and be creative.

## About us

### **Passionate about thinking efficiency and productivity**

We help people do their best thinking. Evolving from a 25 year background in Management Consultancy, we have developed and refined a powerful set of systematic thinking tools and processes and combine these with a unique understanding of individual and group behaviours that when 'managed' enable others to achieve outstanding results.

We work globally and across a wide spectrum of industries supporting endeavours such as innovation, creativity and problem solving (including those of a ridiculously technical nature).

## Contact

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