

Its 6 pm. Do You Know Where Your High Potential Innovators Are?



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Innovation is hot. Everyone wants to create the next iPhone. But the sad fact is that the vast majority of companies fail to be innovative despite their best efforts.

This has recently been proved once again by Booz Allen's annual survey on R&D spending and innovation. As it has in years past, its survey shows that R&D spending has nothing to do with innovation and that the companies that spend the least are often the most innovative.

So what's going wrong? Why is all that money spent on R&D, consultants and creativity offsite not working?

There's a little secret that most people forget. It's a really important one.

You don't get innovation without innovators.

Yep, it's that simple. It doesn't matter how much money you spend on R&D, PhDs, innovation experts, innovation departments and yes, consultants like us. You won't get any innovation unless you have innovators.

Do you know where your innovators are? Do you know who they are?

Do you know the names, identities and motivations of the youngest people in your organization who are highly innovative?

Do you know where your young Steve Jobs lookalikes are?

If you are like most organizations you don't.

That is because most really innovative young people are misfits. Most hate being in an organization which is focused on stability and the status quo. So they either leave, or give up by resigning themselves to go with the program and not to rock the boat.

And many – maybe most – innovators are introverts. They don't push themselves socially and often don't communicate well. So they usually don't stand out and it's easy to miss them especially if they have already been turned off by the organization.

And most innovators despise the idea that you can order up innovation like you order a MacDonald's burger and fries. That there is a formula to it and all you have to do is follow it to make world-beating breakthroughs. That there are rules that, if followed correctly, mean that anyone can be innovative.

People who are innovative are usually explorers, skeptical of the status quo and particularly skeptical that the organization knows what it is doing. Often they are unreasonable, sometimes domineering and usually undiplomatic even curt. They will often call out their superiors – which usually doesn't endear them to the latter.

Often these young innovators have lousy educational credentials. They have often dropped out of school early

or not done well at school, so often they don't get any respect from the successfully educated professionals around them.

In other words they are just like people such as Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates. Maybe sometimes not socially attractive people, but that demeanor often goes with the territory.

So where are they in your organization? Have they already left or are about to leave? Have they given up on you to start their own company, just like Jobs, Gates and Zuckerberg? Is there a way you can find and retain them, maybe even convert them to your cause?

Because if you want your company to be truly innovative you need them really badly. And after that you've got to show them that you really care for them and love the fact of their mis-fittedness.

Yes, there is a way you can identify your young innovators. We call them HIPIs, high potential innovators. You can do this using our assessments. Maybe there are other ways too, in which case we highly recommend you use either ours or these other ways.

But remember, there is no innovation without innovators.

Your job is to find where they are in your organization at 6 pm.

Recommendations

- Find a formal way to identify your young innovators, possibly using our [assessments](#).
- Get them into a formal [program](#) designed to retain and develop them.
- Be prepared to treat them very differently.

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