



## *Ridiculously Innovative: Ten key elements to prosper in turbulent times*

One of my key focus points with leaders has been helping them discover (or re-discover) habits to be ridiculously productive. Innovation is such a critical aspect of leader productivity that I wanted to put some thoughts together on the subject and you will find those below. My intention is to help leaders to not only be ridiculously productive, but ridiculously innovative.

**Paradigms shifted are as valuable as paradigms broken.**

Not every improvement in the organization needs to be some big dramatic event. While technology grabs headlines for cool new products or services like foldable phones, or using proton accelerators to smash cancer cells, more prosaic improvements count too.

**Innovation on the inside requires competition on the outside.**

Raising the bar can threaten existing processes, existing technology, and even existing business models. And anything that is existing has managers, leaders, and teams that take care of these things. Senior leaders need to take care that smaller interests do not supplant the larger future gains that can come from new innovation.

**In many organizations, innovation from the front line is 4X more valuable than innovation from the mother ship.**

For the many organizations that are less dependent on centralized R&D, the front line is a rich and often over-looked source of innovation. Plus, ideas from the front line can be 100% more practical, have 100% more buy-in, tend to be 100% less disruptive, and come with 100% less risk. Coherently surfacing these ideas and getting them implemented efficiently can be an exceedingly beneficial approach.

**Innovation is in everyone's job description and something you ask of the organization, not impose.**

Every part of the organization can reset and improve standards of performance. Just like every leader is expected to deliver results in their department or develop their people, we can and should expect people at every level to raise the bar and not just fix problems.

**The fastest way to grow your business is dumping the bottom 10% of ideas and elevating the top 10%. Smart leaders go neutron on the worst and nurture the best.**

Jack Welch former CEO of GE was once known as "Neutron Jack." He was known to go neutron on people or business units he felt were not performing. Leaders today need to be equally rigorous about supporting good ideas and dumping bad ideas. The degree to which

leaders can accelerate the success of great ideas and minimize the impact of bad ideas is the real predictor of sustainable success.

**Great innovators (like rainmakers) tend to like their own weather. The leader's prime job is to make sure that the organization is not handing out umbrellas and showing them the door.**

Be on guard that layers of management are not snuffing out great ideas or inducing people to express their creativity elsewhere.

**Innovation is not a straight ascent, it is a switchback.**

Innovation is not always a straight, predictable path to the top. Be prepared for a consistent climb, sometimes out of sight of the summit, when all that can be seen is the hard work of the next task.

**Complexity is the enemy of innovation. Killing two birds with one stone does not require a rock quarry.**

Change for the better does not require grandiose plans or elaborate approaches. Keeping things simple and focused can create enormous value quickly.

**The number one cause of poor innovation is self-amputation of creativity. The second cause is poor implementation which is to say, shooting ourselves in the foot.**

People do themselves and others no service by denying their ability or rejecting a role in developing ideas to improve the organization. Once surfaced, organizations must work diligently to apply the ideas and actually derive the benefit.

**Organizations saying they will innovate when they have the money or the time is the same as saying I'll breathe after I catch my breath.**

Businesses don't DO innovation, innovation IS business. Innovation is not some activity for a distant, ideal future. Raising the bar and finding ways to do things faster, better, or cheaper is the essence of business and an activity for the here and now.

*I hope you find these thoughts useful. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or perspectives to share. Innovation is vital for healthy organizations, but ironically it is one of the most enjoyable aspects of business. Raising the bar benefits the organization, but it is also enormously gratifying to those that do it well and see their fruits of their labor.*

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