

Innovation Leadership – Stimulus for Individual Creativity

Florinel Cîmpeanu

“Valahia” University of Targoviste, Romania

florinel.cimpeanu84@gmail.com

Abstract

This article aims to demonstrate that innovation, which encompasses creativity, value creation, as well as a company's ability to find new solutions, requires innovation-oriented leaders who are demanding of subordinates and ready to support them.

In order to succeed in stimulating their creativity, these innovation leaders must carry out a series of actions that are related to the material and immaterial aspects of the work environment, such as allowing a certain autonomy to creative people, recognizing creative capabilities, bringing sufficient pecuniary, human, and physical resources.

New ideas can lead to programs that are superior to those already running or planned in the organization that would have been abandoned or never started if a better program or idea had come along. The mission of every leader should be to constantly pursue ideas and programs superior to those the organization is committed to pursuing.

Key words: creativity, innovation, organization, leadership

J.E.L. classification: O30

1. Introduction

In recent years, the discourse around innovation has intensified, as it must enable companies to persist and grow. It is the key to differentiation and staying ahead of competitors; it is also the means of creating tomorrow's markets, as well as the future jobs and wealth of countries.

Innovation as an objective represents a challenge for business leaders, especially in relation to the means and conditions necessary to achieve it; Indeed, experts agree that workplace innovation is based on several material and immaterial conditions. It needs a very open physical and cultural environment, highly motivated and creative teams, but above all, innovation is a matter of leadership. Innovation leaders are tasked with leading their teams well towards continuous production of innovative ideas, so they need to create the right and conducive work environment, build and stimulate their teams, make them coexist and work together even accepting conflicting ideas. In addition, the role of true coach to their subordinates remains a key to catalyzing creative endeavors among creative individuals.

This communication is based on three essential ideas: - The first is that innovation is now an essential choice for company survival and growth - The second is that leadership is a necessity to effectively drive the innovation process - The third is that innovation leaders represent support for individual creativity. In this context, this article will try to provide an answer to the following question: What actions must be taken by the innovation leadership in the company to stimulate individual creativity? This article is important from the theme itself, the latter of which assumes that skilled leadership is the answer to the problem of coaching and stimulating innovation and creativity at the business level. In fact, increasing individual creativity as a goal for a company operating in a competitive climate cannot materialize without the support of well-innovated leaders.

“Change must be understood as a continuous goal, which, by fulfilling it, any organization can adapt to internal and external fluctuations, and leadership, team and team synergy are just means to achieve this.” (Stegăroiu et al, 2020, p. 241).

2. Literature review

At the beginning of the 21st century, innovation is displayed in official discourses as a source of growth and progress, the preferred means both of sustainable development in the so-called developed countries and of improving the standard of living in developing countries.

Innovation is a polysemic term that is used with different meanings depending on the point of view adopted. We retain in our work several definitions of this term. First of all, it is important to note that the term innovation comes from the Latin *Novus*, which means new. The concept would have appeared in 1927 and denotes the fact of introducing something new into an established thing. Some authors consider innovation to be an important ongoing process for the survival and development of companies, which now need to be able to innovate in all aspects of their organization. The OECD defines innovation as the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service) or process, a new marketing method or a new organizational method in company practices, workplace organization or external relations. From another angle, innovation is seen as a concrete process that is planned, that is feasible and that must adapt to business needs. Innovation is a means of achieving strategic objectives, improving competitiveness, differentiation and value creation. For us, innovation is the set of activities that lead to the launch of new products and/or the implementation of new methods and ways of business management.

"Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations represents a major breakthrough in our understanding of who these leaders are, how they get results, and why their leadership often exceeds all expectable limits." (Bass, 1985, p. 1).

Innovation is invested more than ever with new roles and functions. It would be a driving force for the survival of companies in a highly competitive environment and it is in this framework that these companies manage to achieve their predetermined goals. Innovation is an important driving force in improving the living conditions of poor countries, and various innovations in the medical field are an excellent example of this, so innovation can be a lever to put countries on the paths of development and prosperity. On the other hand, innovation is designated as being at the origin of the renewal of industrial strategies and the development of new sectors of economic activity. An American study showed that the most successful companies would generate almost 50% of their turnover with products with a lifespan of less than five years.

Leadership plays a major role in the good governance of business and business practices and, consequently, in the implementation and realization of the strategies put in place, especially that of innovation. Depending on their specialties and/or the nature of their functions, researchers and practitioners have tried to define leadership. The behavior-based approach, which is based on the charismatic leadership model, believes that the charismatic leader has a strong enough personality to exert a significant influence on his subordinates. Charismatic leadership has an innovative spirit, self-confidence, an optimal vision of the future, an ability to change the situation and finally moral and ethical. On the other hand, leadership is seen as a way of influencing people to come together to achieve a common goal with a lot of courage, charisma and talent, while people-centered approaches situations, sees that the most effective leadership it depends on the situation and the people of the place; Therefore, the leader creates an enabling environment to facilitate performance and satisfy the group.

"The existing competition between organizations has greatly increased, and they are subject to changes. Corporate success depends on identifying and focusing on those factors leading to competitive advantage." (Croitoru et al, 2012, p. 237).

Driving Innovation: A Driver of Individual Creativity

For us, leadership is how a person exerts influence on others to achieve a common goal by giving them a good vision of the future to take effective action.

Transactional leadership The transactional approach is based on transactional exchanges that intertwine between the leader and the subordinate on the "yes/yes" principle. A transactional leader provides assistance to others in exchange for their efforts to improve the level and quality of the performance of his subordinates. This means that the leader gives a reward in exchange for appropriate behavior

Transformational Leadership The transformational approach was based on transformational exchanges between leader and follower. Transformational leadership is a process that determines the mutual commitment of the leader and the placed subordinate. under its hierarchical dependence based on common membership. This type of leader is also attentive to the interests of followers. For this, the desire to succeed by stimulating them to work under new perspectives with a high level of motivation and satisfaction increases in subordinates. He considers that his main role is to facilitate the task of subordinates by providing information and acting as a link between the group and the external environment.

Innovation Leadership The need for innovation for companies has given rise to a new vision of the role of leaders in the success of creative endeavors, because without innovation leadership, companies lose a lot of face to the competition. Several researchers have defined the concept of innovation leadership according to their fields of activity and specialties. In his PhD thesis, Gliddon David Gregory defined innovation leadership as a philosophy and technique that combines different leadership styles to influence employees to produce creative ideas, products and services. Innovation leadership is about creating an environment where workers can first and foremost be themselves; and if they are allowed to be themselves, they feel free to express themselves, be creative and contribute to innovation. For us, innovation leadership is a way to manage subordinates, we stimulate them, guide them and create a quality work environment for them. to encourage them to present innovative ideas. These definitions allow us to say that an innovation leader is not necessarily a creative genius, he is above all the one who knows how to create a climate that allows his team to dare to propose new ideas.

Indeed, an innovation leader does not necessarily have to be the one who proposes innovative ideas, but he is the one who supports his staff and pushes them to advance their ideas. Companies can have innovators at the top, but even more important is having innovation leaders. Steve Jobs was both: a formidable innovator and a true leader in innovation.

3. Research methodology

Our research is theoretical in nature, that is, its purpose is to conceptualize a model through a documentary analysis. Indeed, theoretical research aims at the conceptualization of models of a complex object, through the analysis and synthesis of a plurality of conceptual or empirical data or other models. The investigation of a starting set consists of the grouping of data, publications and various previous communications dealing with the object of study. This stage allows the constitution of the corpus that is used for documentary analysis up to the proposal of the model. For this, it was first important to identify the elements of the notional field of research, i.e. the set of terms, more or less related, that make it possible to describe the object of study. These terms are used to inventory writings and review writings from the various catalogs and databases available. In order to conduct a rigorous literature review, establishing a list of selection criteria is essential and makes it possible to retain only literature relevant to the object of study.

Querying several databases made it possible to select texts according to predetermined criteria. Paper selection criteria are stored to keep only texts relevant to the subject of study. For the writing of this article, the following were used:

- Books (French or English) dealing with the definition of creativity and leadership.
- Reviews of scientific writings or statements of the creativity question included in certain texts, documents, papers, dissertations or theses.
- Texts from journals, textbooks, manuals, theses or dissertations.
- Papers dealing with creativity and leadership.

4. Findings

“Getting closer, using models of analysis, and dividing them into groups with different characteristics, requirements, and behaviors, the organizations will have the opportunity to obtain success.” (Radu, 2020, p.395).

At what level can we find innovative leaders? The concrete case studies of the companies reveal one constant: innovative companies, regardless of their field of activity, have many innovation leaders, and they are found at all levels. These companies typically have innovation leaders at various hierarchical levels in their organization; in small companies, these innovation leaders are usually found at the top of the hierarchy. In larger companies, they may hold senior positions, especially on the management committee, as heads of operational entities or important functions. In addition, innovation leaders may operate at the middle level, where they play a conduit role between the top, operations, and the bottom. In general, innovation leaders fall into three distinct categories of "champions." Very often we find: Leadership in innovation: a driver for individual creativity - technical champions in design offices or research and development departments; they are the ones who come up with new technologies or product concepts. - business champions, able to turn new products or services into revenue streams. - executive champions, those high-level leaders able to take risks, even relative to their management peers, to achieve these innovations.

Individual creativity. According to the dictionary of concepts, creativity is defined as the ability to quickly imagine different original solutions if someone is faced with a problem situation. A creative individual is a person who conceives a conceptual discussion and then exploits it with existing ideas and/or explores it by imagining new ideas. The literature teaches us that creativity is the result of a four-step process, which we are trying to present.

The first step is to become aware of the existence of a problem. the individual can achieve this for himself; he may receive complaints from a third party (a colleague, a client, a supplier, etc.), or his manager attributes it to a problem identified by the hierarchy.

The second stage: the individual collects the available information, analyzes it, "adjusts" it in creative ways to find an idea

Third stage: response generation stage

Fourth stage: The individual tests their idea before communicating it and that it is recognized as "THE" best solution to the problem.

Various studies show us that certain qualities of creative individuals are a priori innate or acquired through education, while others can be influenced by external factors such as innovation management or organizational culture.

Relative autonomy Autonomy is a major criterion in the creativity process. It involves the ability of the individual to create his own laws. For example, individual creativity held in exploratory mode requires self-design - even a reasoning model. However, this autonomy is "relative"; it can only be done from the individual, it must take into account its context.

Special abilities to think creatively Divergent thinking, an exceptional definition of a situation or heterogeneous connections between fields are some of the approaches of these creative people. Of course, there are tools for developing these capabilities, but they have their limits.

Social Abilities A final ability to grade places the individual in front of his entourage. his social skills lead him to open his mind to the ideas of others, to listen to them, and to develop and maintain good interpersonal skills. -Motivation The characteristics mentioned above depend in part on one major factor: motivation. by definition, it involves conscious or unconscious forces that determine a person's behavior. In the case of individual creativity, authors in psychology recognize two types: so-called intrinsic motivation because it comes from the individual and extrinsic motivation because it is induced by factors outside the individual. Driving Innovation: An Engine for Individual Creativity. The characteristics already mentioned are a sample of traits of a creative individual.

The characteristics of a creative individual are:

- to be resilient
- curious, enthusiastic
- have great energy and intellectual honesty
- being capable of relative autonomy
- having a taste for a challenge
- to have the ability to think creatively
- being attracted to risk

- maintaining and developing expertise.

Everyone agrees that innovation in human resources is based on several tangible and intangible conditions. It needs a very open physical and cultural environment, highly motivated and creative teams, but above all, creativity is a matter of leadership.

We present in this last part of the research the characteristics of innovation leadership and the actions that must be taken by this leader to stimulate individual creativity.

Characteristics of innovation leadership. Researchers have tried to create a profile of innovation leaders, they believe that these leaders have the following major behavioral traits:

Creativity Creativity has become the essential leadership skills for any organization. Creativity is the most important leadership skill for organizations of all types. The climate of uncertainty would be better managed by creative leaders, and the latter would use new business models more often than others

A mix of "excitement and realism" Some companies, like Logitech, try to promote leaders who combine these two interests, but not all companies do. It is sometimes easier to select certain leaders who are creativity-oriented and others who are more focused on the discipline of execution.

Acceptance of risks and failures The second characteristic of innovation leaders is the acceptance of risks and failures. But beyond that, their main quality is undoubtedly their ability to ensure that their teams learn as much as possible from their failures. Failure is part of the innovation game, even if analytical tools can prevent it. A good leader must know how to learn from failure and, when the time comes, teach his team to bounce back without getting demoralized.

The right questions The quality of the questions asked by the leader gives subordinates the opportunity to produce new ideas, or even to create a creative climate. For example, questions like: When we have successfully innovated, what does the new product look like? What problems do they solve for our customers? How does this bring new value to the market? it can inspire workers to generate new ideas.

The ability to attract innovators but also to train and lead multi-skilled teams to success. Successful innovation teams usually bring together people of strong character – innovation does not come from soft consensus. Leaders must know how to form these teams, make them coexist and work together by accepting conflicts of ideas (and not people) because only confrontation makes it possible to move forward and find innovative solutions.

Openness to ideas This quality of innovation leaders is openness to outside ideas and technologies and the ability to convince their teams to look outside for these ideas, instead of trying to reinvent the wheel internally.

5. Conclusions

“In a world of powerful computers, personal software applications, and easy-to-use analytical end-user software tools, managers and implicitly organizations have the power to segment and directly address marketing opportunities through well-managed processes and marketing strategies.” (Swift, 2001, p. 18).

In economic life, creativity is a factor of growth, dynamism, brand image, both at the level of companies and at the level of nations. The economic vitality of cities depends on the number of people who are part of the "creative class", such as engineers, university professors, novelists, artists, actors, designers, in short creative professionals in artistic, scientific and intellectual fields. Being creative today becomes an essential challenge. Creativity is at the origin of innovation processes and the design of new products and services. Also, creativity seems to have a decisive impact on differentiation strategies and therefore on competitive analysis. Creativity can have an impact on business strategy formulation. Our imagination is a living resource that only asks to be put at the service of the company for its competitiveness. We can generate ideas if we know how to stimulate our imagination. Creativity depends on personality traits, particular skills and the environment in which the act of creation takes place.

The company, in its context, is dependent on its environment. The more uncertain this environment is, the more organizational behavior changes. To remain competitive and develop in this climate, we must admit that the success of an innovation process, a differentiation strategy or a

problem-solving process depends in part on the company's ability to exploit organizational creative potential.

Creativity is thus a strategic asset that is not sustainable unless a barrier has been established to protect it. We can manage creativity, we can set up tools to manage, implement and lead creativity in organizations. It can be seen here that the role of general management is fundamental. Creativity must be organized into the process because top management is first concerned with a commitment to a creative approach likely to gain or maintain a competitive advantage.

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