An Innovative Manager's Check-List

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Innovativeness is becoming increasingly interesting to both the public and private sectors. This check-list has been designed to be of use to supervisors, managers, and project leaders contemplating or implementing innovation or wishing to manage a project in a way which will enhance innovation. The check-list allows you to think about innovation and assess organizational receptivity and progress with innovation. Its purpose is to alert you and to guide you in confronting issues which are key to successful innovation. By offering an opportunity to examine innovation in your organization, it helps you to assess your organization's receptivity to innovation, and reminds you about good project management processes.

Choose an innovation/project in your organization to assess

1. Describe the innovation:
   _____

2. My innovation is:

   Contemplated [ ] Underway [ ] Completed [ ]

3. What is innovative about it/ the opportunity for innovation?
   _____

4. Why do/ did you want to do it?
   _____

5. Which definition of "innovation" are you using (choose one)?
   (a) Inventing something new
   (b) Generating new ideas only
   (c) Improving something that already exists
   (d) Spreading new ideas
   (e) Performing an existing task in a new way
   (f) Following the market leader
   (g) Adopting something that has been successfully tried elsewhere
   (h) Introducing changes
   (i) Attracting innovative people
   (j) Seeing something from a different perspective

Source: Table IV, Lee Zhuang, "Bridging the gap between technology and business strategy." Management Decision. 33(8) 1995, 13-21.

6. At which stage is the innovation chosen:

(a) Ready
(b) Developing Support
(c) Pilot
(d) Implementation
(e) Evaluation
(f) Learning
(g) Complete

A. Readiness

15. Does your organization have sufficient skill and capacity to:

Recognize problems? Yes [ ] No [ ]
Define problems? Yes [ ] No [ ]
Identify solutions? Yes [ ] No [ ]
Develop effective strategic plans? Yes [ ] No [ ]
Recruit competent staff Yes [ ] No [ ]

16. Why has your organization decided that change is needed?
Yes [ ] No [ ] Explain:

_____

17. How important is this change to your unit? (Circle your estimate.)

Not Very Important 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very Important

18. To your government? (Circle your estimate.)

Not Very Important 1 2 3 4 5 6 Very Important

B. Identifying the Problem

19. What is the problem? (Do not answer this question quickly - it is probably the most important question in this survey)
_____

20.
(a) Has the objective of the innovation been clearly defined? Yes [ ] No [ ] What is it?

_____

(b) Have you left room for individual initiative and/or a non-linear approach to this issue? Yes [ ] No [ ] How?

_____

C. Developing Solutions

21. Have you explored broadly for ideas? Yes [ ] No [ ]

22. How?

    Library research [ ]
    Asked other public servants [ ]
    Talked to my friends and acquaintances [ ]
    Searched internationally [ ]
    Checked Internet [ ]
    Other: _____

23. Do you have enough of the right kinds of ideas? Yes [ ] No [ ]

24. Have you encouraged creativity? Yes [ ] No [ ]

25. Used creativity enhancement techniques? Yes [ ] No [ ] (Please indicate the tool used and how many times used):

    Edward de Bono's Thinking Hats [ ]
    Mihaly Czikszentmihalyils Flow Concept [ ]
    Min Basadur's Creativity Process [ ]
    Michael Kirton's Adaptor-Innovator (KAI) distinction [ ]
    John Kao's Creativity Audit [ ]
    Other: _____

26. Have you benchmarked (compared your ideas with the best known practices world-wide)? Yes [ ] No [ ]

27. Relevant benchmarks:
_____

Developing Support and Gaining Approval Stage

Strategic Planning

28. How will your organization judge that the innovation is worth doing?
_____

29. Have you taken into account the government's platform? Yes [ ] No [ ]
Linkage:

_____

30. How does the innovation proposed link to your organization business plan, strategic plan, and government priorities?
_____

31. Have you prepared a business case to justify investment and payback or benefits?
    Yes [ ] No [ ]

32. What benefits does/will the innovation offer:

    Improving the bottom line (financial) Yes [ ] No [ ]
    Greater effectiveness Yes [ ] No [ ]
    Process improvement Yes [ ] No [ ]
    Policy improvement Yes [ ] No [ ]
    Better service to clients Yes [ ] No [ ]
    Greater responsiveness Yes [ ] No [ ]
    Better quality product Yes [ ] No [ ]
    Employees develop skills, knowledge, ability to work together Yes [ ] No [ ]

Other: _____

33. What risks are inherent in the innovation?
    _____

34. Have you identified, characterized, assessed, and measured the risks?
    Yes [ ] No [ ]

35. How will you reduce the likelihood or impact of those risks?
    _____

Communications

36. Have you involved the areas and people who will be directly affected? Yes [ ] No [ ]

37. Indirectly affected? Yes [ ] No [ ]

38. Have you communicated your ideas to others? Yes [ ] No [ ]

39. To whom? Laterally [ ] Immediate supervisor [ ] Head of organization [ ]

Other: _____

40. How?
Word of mouth [ ] Minister [ ] Press release [ ] Presentations at conferences [ ]

Written articles for newspapers [ ] Professional journals [ ] Other:

_____

41. Does your innovation have momentum? Yes [ ] No [ ] Why?

_____

42. Public support? Yes [ ] No [ ] Describe:

_____

43. Interest group support? Yes [ ] No [ ] Describe:

_____

44. Public service support? Yes [ ] No [ ] Describe:

_____

45. Political support? Yes [ ] No [ ] Describe:

_____

46. What was/is the key to securing support in your organization?

_____

D. Pilot Testing

47. Have you decided to pilot the innovation? Yes [ ] No [ ]
If no, proceed to Implementation Stage

48. Do you have what you need to pilot it appropriately?
    Ideas Yes [ ] No [ ]
    The right people Yes [ ] No [ ]
    Support Yes [ ] No [ ]
    Resources Yes [ ] No [ ]
    Other: _____

49. How and through whom will you pilot it?

_____

50. Do you have a plan for learning from and building upon an unsuccessful/ successful
    pilot? Yes [ ] No [ ] How?

_____

51. Do you have monitoring and evaluation systems? Yes [ ] No [ ]

52. Do you have a communication plan for an (un) successful pilot? Yes [ ] No [ ]

53. Are you going to publish the results? Yes [ ] No [ ]

E. Implementation Stage

54. Do elected and/or appointed officials have the will to implement it? Yes [ ] No [ ]

55. Has adequate time been allocated for planning, implementation and evaluation? Yes [ ] No [ ]

56. Can it be implemented in a timely manner? Yes [ ] No [ ]

57. Does it require a change in legislation? Yes [ ] No [ ]

58. Do you have a strategic plan? Yes [ ] No [ ]

59. Do you have a project implementation plan? Yes [ ] No [ ]

60. Do you have a comprehensive communication plan and human resource plan? Yes [ ] No [ ]

61. Have adequate resources been assigned to the innovation:

   The right people Yes [ ] No [ ]
   Sufficient budget Yes [ ] No [ ]
   Appropriate techniques Yes [ ] No [ ]
   Necessary technology Yes [ ] No [ ]

F. Building a Team

62. Do you have the leadership required to see the innovation through to the point where it can be appropriately assessed? Yes [ ] No [ ]

63. Is management generally:
Unwilling [ ] Uninterested [ ] Narrow [ ] Rigid [ ] Positive [ ]

Describe: _____

64. Is staff generally:
Unwilling [ ] Uninterested [ ] Narrow [ ] Rigid [ ] Positive [ ]

Describe: _____

65. How will you bring them along? _____

66. It is easier to have faith in a person than a plan or idea. Who is your leader/ champion?
_____

67. Do you have a change agent? Yes [ ] No [ ]

68. A promoter? Yes [ ] No [ ]

69. A champion? Yes [ ] No [ ]

70. How many people are on the project team?
_____

84. Is the infrastructure in place that is required? Yes [ ] No [ ]

What is it? _____

85. Is there a structure to encourage cross-fertilization among disciplines, professions, functions, topic areas, departments, with outside organizations, groups? Yes [ ] No [ ]

What is it? _____

86. Have you created an accountability system which encourages innovation? Yes [ ] No [ ]

87. How is it different from your operational accountability system?
_____

88. Have you a project culture which facilitates creativity and innovation? Yes [ ] No [ ]

89. Does your organization suffer from any of the following syndromes?
a. "If not invented in my branch, I'm not interested" Yes [ ] No [ ]
b. Blinkers about what government can/should do, how it should/can do them Yes [ ] No [ ]

Define: _____

c. Ideologically driven Yes [ ] No [ ]
d. Financentric (culture of scarcity) Yes [ ] No [ ]
e. Implementing(ed) reforms which discourage innovation, e.g., re-engineering (eliminating slack) Yes [ ] No [ ] Other:
_____

90. How will you deal with these anti-innovation characteristics?
_____

91. Do you have a plan to publicize your innovation? Yes [ ] No [ ]

92. Do you take every opportunity to communicate it? Yes [ ] No [ ]

93. What would you say are the main differences between implementing a regular project/program and an innovative one?
_____

Evaluation Stage

94. What are the results (Outputs and Outcomes)?
   _____

95. Did you have a good experience with the innovation?
Yes [ ] No [ ] So-so [ ]

Elaborate: _____

96. Were you successful in:

   Implementing the planned change Yes [ ] No [ ]
   Implementing your implementation strategy Yes [ ] No [ ]
   Following your human resource strategy Yes [ ] No [ ]
   Keeping the focus on results Yes [ ] No [ ]

97. Have you established appropriate markers of success? Yes [ ] No [ ]
What are they? _____

98. How will you collect and recognize positive or negative evaluations from political parties, the public, the target group for the innovation, the public service? Will you use:

Consultation Yes [ ] No [ ]
Polls Yes [ ] No [ ]
Media scanning Yes [ ] No [ ]
Election results Yes [ ] No [ ]
Other: _____

Learning Stage

99. Did you assess your learning as an organization? Yes [ ] No [ ]

100. What did you learn?
   _____

101. What went well? _____

102. Do you need to change current practices? Yes [ ] No [ ]

103. What should you do differently in implementing another innovation?
   _____

104. How will you build a positive climate for innovation out of this experience?
   _____

105. Are you treating the risk and possible failure from innovation as an opportunity for learning? Yes [ ] No [ ] How? _____

106. Are you celebrating success? Yes [ ] No [ ] How?
_____

107. Are you communicating it? Yes [ ] No [ ] How?
_____

108. Are you celebrating failure and the opportunity to learn? Yes [ ] No [ ] How?
_____

109. How will you create and retain an organizational memory of it?
_____

Tombstone Data:
Your Name:
Current Organization:
Telephone Number:
Fax Number:
E-mail Address:

Assessment of Checklist

Did we miss anything? Please specify questions/issues you have addressed but which were not here and questions which were here but were not important for your innovation. Place an X beside questions you think could be removed from this checklist. Thanks!

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