

## **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:

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2. My innovation is:

Contemplated [ ] Underway [ ] Completed [ ]

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

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

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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:

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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)

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20.

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

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

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### 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 Csikszentmihalyi's 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?

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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?

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

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

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## **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:

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

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42. Public support? Yes  No  Describe:

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43. Interest group support? Yes  No  Describe:

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44. Public service support? Yes  No  Describe:

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45. Political support? Yes  No  Describe:

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

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#### **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?

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

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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!

Please return questionnaire to:

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