

## Organization Assessment: Gauging your Firm's Innovation Progress

Take a moment right now to gauge your company's current practices and attitudes with respect to innovation. As you respond to the following ten questions, if you believe "a" represents your firm, give yourself 3 points; if "b," give yourself 2 points; if "c" give yourself one point.

1.  **My company's approach to innovation is:**
  - a) systematic, all-enterprise (3 points)
  - b) we have made improvements but still have a ways to go (2 points)
  - c) we have not even begun to tackle this (1 point)
  
2.  **My firm takes steps frequently to cultivate a culture of risk-taking and constant experimentation.**
  - a) agree completely (3 points)
  - b) we do this but on rare occasion (2 points)
  - c) we don't support experimentation and risk-taking is punished (1 point)
  
3.  **Innovation at our company is supported by the leader and the top team.**
  - a) agree completely (3 points)
  - b) our leadership sends mixed signals when it comes to innovation (2 points)
  - c) our leadership does not support innovative activity (1 point)
  
4.  **Our organization has come forth with a number of breakthroughs in the past, and we have ideas in our pipeline now that could well become breakthroughs.**
  - a) agree completely (3 points)
  - b) we haven't launched a breakthrough idea in recent memory (2 points)
  - c) there are no really big ideas being discussed presently that might become tomorrow's breakthroughs (1 point)
  
5.  **In our company, there is a key person driving our overall innovation effort.**
  - a) agree completely (3 points)
  - b) there are people who are perhaps more responsible than others but not a single individual (2 points)
  - c) disagree completely (1 point)
  
6.  **In our company, we have systems in place that get us out in the market listening to customers on a regular basis.**
  - a) we listen regularly and are good at this (3 points)
  - b) we did this once but it was awhile ago (2 points)
  - c) We know we need to do this but somehow never find the time (1 point)

7.  **We have an organized system in place that goes beyond focus groups and surveys to help us understand the unarticulated needs of customers.**
- a) We are doing some interesting things in this area *(3 points)*
  - b) We only occasionally survey customers and do focus groups *(2 points)*
  - c) These methods were news to me (my company has never tried to identify unarticulated needs) *(1 point)*
8.  **We constantly look at ways to strengthen the process by which we come up with ideas and bring them to life.**
- a) Our idea factory is humming and we continuously look at our processes in this regard *(3 points)*
  - b) We still look at the idea factory as traditional R&D but have taken steps to enlarge our vision *(2 points)*
  - c) Our idea factory only seems to churn out incremental ideas and is badly in need of retooling *(1 point)*
9.  **In my company, we have enough people who have the ability to champion ideas to fruition.**
- a) We have lots of these people *(3 points)*
  - b) We have a few but not nearly enough who really have what it takes *(2 points)*
  - c) Frankly, I am one of the few people in our organization who understands what it takes to lead innovation and we need many more. *(1 point)*
10.  **Our organization recognizes and rewards entrepreneurial behavior and doesn't punish people when they fail.**
- a) I agree with this statement *(3 points)*
  - b) I can't think of very many ways we truly recognize and encourage people who stick their necks out on an innovation project *(2 points)*
  - c) Unfortunately, I can think of someone in our company who was indeed punished for being associated with a failed project *(1 point)*

**MY TOTAL SCORE:**

### **26 to 30 points**

Congratulations! Your company is a stellar standout when it comes to innovation. Keep up the good work.

Consider these next steps:

- Promote your company's innovation activities by publishing success stories in trade and consumer publications. Spreading the news that your company is an innovation standout will enhance your reputation and ability to recruit talented employees.
- Contact Robert Tucker at [rtucker@innovationresource.com](mailto:rtucker@innovationresource.com). He is always looking for new case examples and success practices.
- Even though you scored in the Elite category, consider retaking the quiz and look at those questions where you rated your firm less than outstanding.

### **11 to 25 points**

While your organization has obviously taken steps to improve innovation capability, your score shows that so far, your efforts have not yet paid off. If you do nothing, you may even be in danger of falling back into old patterns. Use this executive online briefing as a springboard to discussion, and to build consensus for moving forward.

Consider these next steps:

- Go back through the questions, and evaluate which best practices your firm has not mastered. Create a plan to address those issues.
- Ask your management team to review "Inside the Innovation Elite." This will help reinforce your commitment to innovation and get your executive team on board with the initiative.
- Compare your colleagues' overall score in this Assessment with your own. In what best practice areas – Drive From the Top, Develop a Systematic Process for Innovation, Mine the Future, Fortify Your Idea Factory, Cultivate a Risk-taking Culture – did you and your colleagues find agreement? In which did you find disparity of response?
- Identify areas where everyone agreed that your firm has not taken steps to address. Consider launching an all-enterprise initiative to build innovation capability.

### **1 to 10 points**

Your organization needs a great deal of work to make innovation a core competence. What can you do to help? Start by sharing this online executive briefing with at least one of your closest colleagues to gauge their reaction.

Consider these next steps:

- Speak informally with your colleagues. Try to get a better feel for why innovation has not been on the radar in your organization. Consider how emphasis on building innovation capability might drive growth, differentiation and competitive advantage.
- Become the point person for innovation in your firm. The fact that you reviewed Inside the Innovation Elite demonstrates that you see the need to improve in this arena. Ask yourself, who else in your firm might you share this executive briefing with, to begin the awareness-building process?

- Invite additional key colleagues to review Inside the Innovation Elite and take this Assessment. Compare your colleagues' overall scores with your own. In what best practice areas – Drive From the Top, Develop a Systematic Process for Innovation, Mine the Future, Fortify Your Idea Factory, Cultivate a Risk-taking Culture – did you and your colleagues find agreement? In which did you find disparity?
- Consider contacting an innovation consulting firm or advisor to meet with your management team and discuss the subject of innovation.