Innovation Academy

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Welcome to the Innovation Academy

While research shows that 90% of executives believe the long-term success of their organization relies on innovation, we all know that 90% of companies aren’t innovating at full potential\(^1\). That’s why we decided to create the Innovation Academy.

Our goal is to encourage program managers and leaders to understand and advocate for innovation within their company. When you understand the steps and processes that are part of innovation, you can begin to build these into your projects and teams.

This workbook is designed as a supplement to the Innovation Academy. Be sure to write your responses in this workbook as you complete each week. There are four total weeks in the academy:

1. **Week 1: Get Creative. Ideate!** Go beyond brainstorming and learn to encourage your team to come with new ideas every day – not just during a special meeting. Week one will give you the tools and incentives you need to foster innovative ideas at every level of your organization.

2. **Week 2: Build Your Team.** No innovation happens without teamwork. Week two will teach you how to build an effective team and handle the common issues that arise on teams. You’ll learn how to get everyone to not only work at a high level but enjoy doing it!

3. **Week 3: Refine Your Idea into a Robust Proposal.** Once you’ve got a great idea and a good team, it’s time to refine your idea into a specific proposal. In week three, you’ll learn the steps you need to take to create a strong proposal and help it speed through the approval process.

4. **Week 4: Assess and Implement.** Once you’ve refined your innovative idea and it’s approved, you can begin implementation. Week four will help you understand why implementation is vital to an ongoing innovation process and avoid common pitfalls that stall the execution of new ideas.
Innovation Academy Pre-Work

As you begin the Innovation Academy take some time to plan and prepare. Think about the project goal, the success measures and problem definition. You’ll want to set up key systems that will help you as you move through the innovation process. It’s important to document those too.

Next, think through what recognition or rewards you want to give to the person or group that comes up with the winning innovation. A financial bonus is great, but think beyond money as well. What kind of recognition or special reward means a lot in your organization?

Finally, consider what kind of budget you might have to work with, and start thinking of what team members might be ideal. It’s never too early to start planting seeds with ideal team members! Let them know that you’re considering an innovation project and think they’d be a good fit. Advance notice is always appreciated!

The following pages are designed to help you map out the key elements of your innovation project and are the perfect place to keep a record of your ideas.

“If you have a goal, write it down. If you do not write it down, you do not have a goal - you have a wish.”
— Steve Maraboli
Project Definition

Project Goal:

Program Success Measures:

Problem Definition:

Key Systems

Rewards and Recognition

Promotion Plan for Winning Idea:

Operating Budget for the Innovation Program and Idea Implementation

Key Milestones
Ideal Team Members

Innovation Administrator: 

Moderators

Subject Matter Expert/Review Team

Communications:

Legal:

Analysis:

Leadership:
Target Market

Identify Your Target Audience:

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What Channels Will You Use to Reach Your Audience?

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How Will They Submit Ideas?

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How Will You Activate and Maintain Participation Within a Community?

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How Large Do You Expect Your Audience to Be?

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Innovation Academy Week 1

Before you can solicit ideas, you want to make sure you have the problem clearly defined. Review problems that have come up through customer and prospect feedback. Once you have a list of possible issues to address, you'll need to prioritize the list based on how crucial the problems are to your organization.

A prioritized list helps provide order, but should be refined. Meet with the stakeholders that are involved in the pain point you are trying to address. This may include customer service teams, management, sales teams, and more. They will help you pinpoint exactly what the concern is so you know precisely what to ask your contributors for.

Next, you'll need a process for obtaining ideas. You can ask your staff or crowdsourcing for ideas as well. Make sure to document the process in this week's worksheet.

“The heart and soul of the company is creativity and innovation.”
— Bob Iger
Get Creative. Ideate!

Stakeholder Feedback on Problem Definition:

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Refine the Problem:

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Process for Obtaining Ideas:

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Communication Plan:

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Voting Process:

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Choosing a team can be difficult. We’ve all been on teams where one or more members simply didn’t want to be there or were disengaged. As a team leader, you may be nervous about making sure you choose both highly capable and low-maintenance people. You want to build a team that has core competencies that are well suited to innovation within your organization.

Here are some things that are important to have when building an effective team:
- Key stakeholders are represented
- The team is diverse
- Team members use their strengths
- Expectations are clear
- Rhythm is established
- Support is provided

"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."
— Andrew Carnegie
# Build a Highly Functional Team

## Team Member Expectations:


## Team Composition:

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Innovation Academy Week 3

Having a robust proposal means making sure that all key elements are addressed. You don’t want to be put in a situation where you don’t know the answers to common questions. You also don’t want your leadership team asking for data that you forgot to provide. Instead, use the COSTAR model to create a comprehensive proposal.

- **C: Customer.** The goal of the first step is to define who the target customer is and the unmet needs they have. Clearly defining the customer will help you articulate the need and prove the value of the idea.
- **O: Opportunity.** In this step, you’re sharing how this solution provides value for your organization as well as the customer. You may also articulate how the solution is far-reaching and involves more than solving one problem for one group. Maybe it provides a platform that can be used for other customers or a new idea that reduces the cost of manufacturing a widget.
- **S: Solution.** In this step, clearly define the solution that you are presenting. Make sure you anticipate questions, including how quickly the solution will be implemented, resources needed and risk mitigation strategies.
- **T: Team.** The goal of this step is to clearly define who you need at various stages. Having this clearly explained in the proposal will help ensure approval for staff and funding as implementation continues.
- **A: Advantage.** In this step, consider what competitive advantage is created by this new idea. What would it allow you to offer that no one else is offering? Knowing this will help you present your idea as a way to gain ground over competitors.
- **R: Results.** Finally, it’s important to be very clear on the results that will come from implementing your idea. You’ll want to describe the results in both qualitative and quantitative ways. What will the return on investment be? How will you measure the new process and determine whether it succeeds or fails?

“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.”
— John C. Maxwell
Refine the Idea to a Robust Proposal

Complete the COSTAR Model:

Customer

Opportunity

Solution

Team

Advantage

Results
Innovation Academy Week 4

While it’s great to have tons of innovative ideas, you’ll likely have budget and staff restrictions that require you to narrow your focus and prioritize. As a result, you’ll want to score your ideas based on the following aspects:

- **Value Factors.** You’ll want to start off by defining the value factors that matter most in your organization. Then, determine which of your new ideas bring the most value for both your company and your customers based on those criteria. You can use a point system to assign value, and rank the ideas based on resulting scores.

- **Cost Factors.** While it would be great to do absolutely everything, your budget probably doesn’t allow that. So, you’ll need to rank your top ideas based on cost. However, don’t make the mistake of only basing it on the investment required. Be sure to include the return on investment as well.

- **Constraint Factors.** Finally, you may have other constraints that affect your ability to implement ideas. Some constraints include team member availability, physical location factors, and the need to pilot the idea on a smaller scale before a large rollout. Define all of the constraint factors you face and then rank the ideas accordingly.

“True genius resides in the capacity for evaluation of uncertain, hazardous, and conflicting information.”
— Winston Churchill
Assess and Implement

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Implementation Priority

Next Steps
Summary

Surprisingly, implementation is the #1 place that organizations fail. Many companies go through an innovation program, collect ideas, and evaluate and rank them. Then they let the ideas sit and collect dust. This demoralizes your employees and makes future innovation projects less credible.

Don’t be one of the many organizations that fall short in implementation. Once you’ve collected great ideas, rated and ranked them, and received approval, be sure to follow through and execute. It’s the only way to realize the benefits of innovation for your company.

Thank you for completing the Innovation Academy! Now it’s time to implement your plan. If you follow the steps and enact these processes in your organization, you’ll see results that move the needle.

“If you are not willing to risk the unusual, you will have to settle for the ordinary.”
— Jim Rohn
Related Reading

Blogs:
- IdeaScale Blog: www.ideascale.com/blog
- Innovation Management: www.innovationmanagement.se
- Crowdsourcing Industry Site: www.crowdsourcing.org
- The Daily Crowdsourcing: www.thedailycrowdsourcing.com

Books:
- The Wisdom of Crowds by James Surowiecki
- Crowdsourcing by Jeff Howe