B600 ten face of innovation

Technology

The Ten Faces of Innovation, by Tom Kelley, provides an overview of the strategies employed by award winning design consulting firm IDEO, as means of promoting creativity and innovation leading to business excellence and success. Kelley (2005, p. 6), co-founder and current manager at IDEO, depicts ten personas, the aforementioned ten faces of innovationi?? each with "(their) own tools, (their) own skills, (and their) own point of view," that, when assembled together, create a powerful team capable of extraordinary results in a business setting.

Through the examination of many fascinating IDEO success stories, Kelley recounts how IDEO's clients' managers and executives employed these ten innovative personas to help their own companies become more innovative, through the development of creativity, the building of effective teams, and the improvement of employee job attitudes. Though gloriously inspirational. where the Ten Faces of Innovation fails as a managing tool, is that while it does well to relay the inspiring end-products of the employment of the ten faces, it does little to guide managers in ways and means of developing these personas.

Further, the text recounts only the positive outcomes, and sheds little light on the trappings or short comings that managers can and have experienced along their paths to innovation and business success, nor does it discuss strategies to overcome these failed efforts. Creativity Many factors can affect creativity, defined by Oldham and Cummings (1996, p. 608) as " the process of creating products, ideas, or procedures that are novel or original, and are potentially relevant or useful", in the business world.

Management research analyzing workplace environment and creativity has found a strong relationship linking six workplace features: challenge, resources, group dynamics, supervisory encouragement, freedom and organizational support (Amabile, 1998). In The Ten Faces of Innovation, Kelley provides numerous examples supporting the effect of these workplace features on fostering creativity. Mattel, undertaking a new product development under the guidance of IDEO, gave their top designers and project leaders use of their own unique off-site space for twelve weeks to design a new toy line.

The results of the concentrated efforts were tremendous, with the product line generating over $100 million in sales in its initial year (Kelley, 2005). Project resources such as time, people, space and money must be distributed appropriately and carefully by managers. Excess resources do not generate additional creativity and limited resources can dampen creativity (Amabile, 1998). However, distributing resources is a very difficult task, with factors changing on each project. In the Mattel's case, managers were fortunate to hit the perfect formula in allocating resources to achieve success.

Unfortunately for readers, Kelley does present a framework to help managers make this judgement and determine the appropriate level and employment of available resources to cater to creativity and innovation. Experimentation, through prototyping, is highly encouraged at IDEO for all products and processes, ranging from medical devices and children's toys to giving birth at a hospital. Kelley (2005, p. 43) states "... prototyping is central to the IDEO tool set, as essential as a hammer is for a carpenter.

" Yet, prototyping is more than just a physical idea for a new product, it is in essense a behavioural tool allowing, allowing individuals with varying degrees of creativity to move beyond merely talking about innovation and opposing ideas to actually begin working with a tangible product or process as a platform for innovation (Schrage, 2001). By encouraging prototypes, teams are more productive from their very formation by altering their work environment to cater to varying creative comprehension levels, and in turn designing innovative products and processes.

Rather than spending time discussing what could be done, individuals with varying intelligence, knowledge or personality are relating creatively and busy producing. In this environment of rapid prototyping and design, IDEO employees are immersed in a culture that accepts failure as part of the journey towards success. IDEO's axiom, " fail often, to succeed sooner" (Kelley, 2005, p. 52) allows for great team dynamics and constructive conflict, allowing peers to contribute without fear or ridicule (Connelly, Creativity & Ethics, 2007), producing better end products at a faster pace.

Alternatively, as noted by Alegere and Chiva (2007, p. 10) "... organizations tend to miss the opportunities that come from risk and fail to see that the nature of innovation requires some uncertainty. " Many firms, rather than accept and appreciate experimentation, would rather focus on minimizing risk. Schrage (2001, p. 154) makes the observation " but it's neither unfair nor unrealistic to observe that the overwhelming majority of organizations couldn't afford to make IDEO's faith in innovation the cornerstone of their culture.

" While enabling peer contribution and accepting errors are normal at IDEO, this is not the case in the vast majority of corporate cultures. If there is additional fault to be laid in Kelley's assessment and description of creativity, it is the inference that not all people can fill one or all of the ten innovation personas. Rather, managers must seek out individuals, even if outside of their company, to fill them. However, current popular belief is that " creativity is a virtually limitless resource that defies social status," and that " every human being is creative" (Florida, 2007).

It is not that people are not creative, but rather that " some people are more creative than others, (and that creative behaviour) can be affected by a number of variables" (Connelly, Creativity & Ethics, 2007). If Kelley's true ambition in writing this guide to innovation is to inspire, he does little to mention this innateness of creativity within all people, and the responsibility of effective managers to find means to extract it from existing employees, rather than hire it anew.