

innovate

The extent to which a leader is innovative, willing to explore, learn and seeks continuous improvement

'Innovate' is the extent to which leaders listen with an open mind, try new things, reflect honestly on successes and failures, create a degree of comfort with change, and help their organisation to adapt. Innovative leaders demonstrate thought leadership, continuous improvement, intellectual stimulation, risk taking and optimism.

Organisational transformation requires leaders to be innovative and to motivate others to work towards the change. Openness to feedback (positive and negative) and risk-taking can sometimes bring bad news, uncertainty and even failure, but it can also bring great success. Good innovators have a willingness to endure short-term pain for long-term gain. Optimism is a critical skill for motivating others to adapt to change and maintain their behaviour over time.

suggested actions

Developing openness to learning and risk, and promoting continuous improvement may require you to:

Learn from others

- Be humble in reflecting on your successes and failures – look for opportunities to learn from your or others' mistakes to ensure they are never repeated. Solicit feedback, information and ideas from others. Be open to the information that you receive.
- Listen to others. Practise active listening by reflecting back the key points that you hear and asking probing questions. Consciously spend less time speaking - listen twice as much as you speak. By doing this, you will naturally start to hear more.
- View, read or listen to something new. Be open to new ideas and broaden your perspective.
- Look for courses/conferences that will enhance your understanding of the social, economic and political context in which you operate.

Adapt your behaviour and environment

- Look for challenges that will push you out of your comfort zone. Doing this will help you to challenge yourself, continually learn and grow, and be open to new experiences.
- Assess and evaluate your risk appetite, and try out new initiatives by taking calculated risks.
- Create a workplace that encourages divergent, creative and positive thinking.
- Listen and register a range of ideas first, before evaluating the usefulness of those ideas.
- Challenge the assumptions that inform conversations. Going back to basics or challenging statements that were "assumed" or "a given" will possibly create some new avenues to explore. Probe and challenge information garnered from others to improve its quality and quantity.

people working with leaders high on 'innovate' say

"You are enthusiastic about change in the business"

"You have a willingness to challenge the status quo"

"You try hard at changing things even when they are uncomfortable"

"You have the ability to think outside the box and come up with creative solutions"

"You have a great ability to ask thoughtful and insightful questions before racing to answers"

"You clearly have a drive for continuous change and improvement within the organisation, and you constantly seek more efficient ways of doing things, finding creative and technical solutions"

"You are open to new ideas and engage others in the team to contribute to debate on effectiveness, improvement"

"You're not afraid to offer another view for consideration which is often very helpful in resolving a complex issue"

people working with leaders lower on 'innovate' say

"Don't be limited, take new risks"

"Be careful of jumping too quickly to solutions - take time to consider all angles"

"Be more flexible, you can at times be opinionated and resistant to changes"

"Be more courageous in thinking and manage up those thoughts even if they may be unpopular due to the ingrained culture"

useful resources

- Farber, Steve. (2009). *The Radical Leap: a Personal Lesson in Extreme Leadership*. New York: Kaplan.
- Goldsmith, M. (2007). *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*. New York: Hyperion.
- Johansen, R. (2009) *Leaders Make the Future: Ten New Leadership Skills for an Uncertain World*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Kouzes, J. & Posner, B. (1987/2012). *The Leadership Challenge* (5th ed). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Liu, E. & Noppe-Brandon, S. (2009). *Imagination First. Unlocking the power of possibility*. Hoboken, NK: Jossey-Bass.
- Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline*. New York: Doubleday/Currency.
- Zohar & Marshall (2004). *Spiritual Capital*. London: Bloomsbury.
- <http://www.bps.org.uk/events/e-learning/e-learning> - The British Psychological Society e-Learning materials: The Road to Continuous Improvement.
- http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/leadership_and_the_art_of_plate_spinning
- http://www.ted.com/talks/steven_johnson_where_good_ideas_come_from.html
- http://www.ted.com/talks/margaret_heffernan_dare_to_disagree.html