



Tucker on Innovation

Reporting on best practices, the latest research and upcoming events in the field of innovation, Tucker on Innovation is a free quarterly newsletter for organizational practitioners, thought leaders, and friends of the Global Innovation Movement. Past issues are archived on our website: <http://www.innovationresource.com>. Reprint permission granted upon request to the Editor. Copyright 2007, all rights reserved.

Judy Williams, Editor

Fourth Quarter, 2007

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"All children are artists. The challenge is to remain an artist when we grow up."

– Pablo Picasso

Recent Media Interview
Featuring
Robert B. Tucker

THE BUSINESS TIMES
Singapore

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Dear Reader,

In speaking with a number of subscribers, I'm finding that many of you tell me you no longer receive this newsletter. Obviously if you are reading these words, you still do - but I need to know. Please do me a favor and hit reply to this newsletter and let me know *Tucker on Innovation* made it through your spam filters, etc. I'd appreciate it!

It's (Almost) 2008: Are You Thinking Big?

Did you see where Andy Grove, the former CEO of Intel, has been emailing CEOs, encouraging them to think bigger? He wrote Jeff Immelt, CEO of General Electric, to suggest that GE build an electric car. He urged Lee Scott, CEO of Wal-Mart, to open more in-store health clinics, hoping the retail behemoth might transform the dysfunctional U.S. health care industry. "These are companies big and powerful enough to solve intractable, industry-wide problems and produce lasting change," wrote Grove in his blog.

Grove's calls to action got me thinking. I like his style. He's willing to invest his credibility. His challenge to anyone in business today is: are you thinking big? Or are you letting the minutia of the minute get in the way? If you and your organization had a great year in 2007, are you planning some bold moves for 2008? If you had a lousy year, the question is: what bold moves are you prepared to make to turn things around?

I just got back from Singapore, a small country (4.5 million), that thinks big. I was there to keynote the Captains of Industry Conference, part of the Global Entrepolis @ Singapore which their Economic Development Board puts on every year. It attracts 15,000 executives from all over the world. Sessions on everything from biotechnology to reducing carbon footprints. What a gathering of big thinkers!



One person who made an impression on me was Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Singapore's minister for education (see photo). Tharman was a speaker at the gala banquet where the Asia Wall Street Journal awarded prizes for innovation. Tharman, in his remarks, challenged

[strategies for innovation](#)

Singaporeans and other Asian nations to think big and become innovation-driven societies. Knowledge alone, he explained, is no longer enough.

“We need to become a nation where our students are rewarded not just for reproducing rote-like what the teacher thinks ... we have to encourage children to stand up and speak their minds, defend their ideas, and take intellectual risks starting at a very early age. We need [to become] a culture that respects and encourages risk-taking.” If this all sounds familiar, here’s what is different. Singapore has a track record of not just thinking big, but acting boldly.

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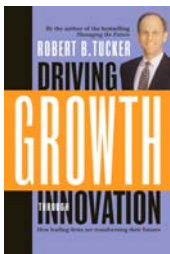
Here in the United States, the headlines would have us believe the business community is thinking its way into a funk. Beginning to hunker down because of uncertainty, refocusing on – you guessed it – cost-cutting and (here it comes) downsizing.

Contrast this with my recent visits to bustling, booming India, Russia, Israel, and Singapore, and you have to ask: Do you really have time to go on defense?

Sometimes it seems that the only really creative thinking going on concerns the topic of “how can we wrest more profits out of our customers without them squealing too loudly?” Credit card issuers, testifying before Congress, are asked about their corporate America practice of suddenly raising a customer’s interest rate without even informing them. Oh, and the thinking that led to the subprime mess, don’t get me started! A Wall Street Journal survey found that more than “55 percent of subprime loans made at the height of the housing bubble went to people with credit scores high enough to often qualify for conventional loans with far better terms.” You can just imagine the brainstorming sessions that lead to such “breakthroughs.”

Driving Growth Through Innovation

by Robert B. Tucker



We need more leaders like Andy Grove. He's ruffling feathers for a reason. If I'm right, my guess is there's probably an ongoing debate in your company that comes down to this: are we going to follow the herd and hunker down, or are we going to think differently, innovate, change, and continue to serve customers with better value propositions? Are we going to think big and try to solve intractable problems that users and customers in our industry have, or are we going to think small, wait for competitors to make a move, and follow suit?

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March 2008!**

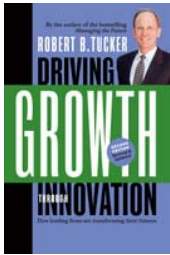
Revised Edition
of
**Driving Growth Through
Innovation**

Assessing 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” best 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)

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- 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. In our company, we have developed effective ways to measure innovation progress.
 - a) agree completely (3 points)
 - b) we have attempted to implement innovation metrics, but they have not been effective in guiding our efforts forward (2 points)
 - c) we haven't yet attempted to measure innovation at all (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 innovation activity (1 point)
 4. Our organization has produced a number of breakthrough ideas in the past, and we currently have ideas in our pipeline that could become breakthroughs for tomorrow.
 - a) agree completely (3 points)
 - b) we haven't launched a breakthrough idea in recent memory (2 points)
 - c) we have not discussed nor evaluated any big ideas that might produce a breakthrough for our company (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 more responsible for our innovation efforts than others, but there is not a single individual who is driving innovation at our company (2 points)
 - c) no one is championing the innovation efforts at our company (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 conduct 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 to improve our processes in this area (3 points)
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- b) we look at our idea factory as traditional R&D and new product development, and have taken only minor steps to enlarge our idea inputs (2 points)
- c) our idea factory seems to deliver only incremental ideas and is badly in need of retooling (1 point)

9. In my company, we have enough people with the ability to champion ideas to fruition.

- a) agree completely (3 points)
- b) we have a few but not nearly enough who really have what it takes (2 points)
- c) disagree completely (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) Our company does nothing to recognize or reward entrepreneurial behavior (1 point)

After you've answered these questions, tally up your score and email Robert B. Tucker at rtucker@innovationresource.com for a customized mini-report on where your company stacks up.

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The Innovation Resource
100 North Hope Avenue, Suite 19
Santa Barbara, CA 93110

Phone 805-682-1012
Fax 805-682-8960
www.innovationresource.com
