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Where Visionary Thinking
Meets Strategic Execution

Full Blown Innovation:

A Framework for Delivering a Sustainable Culture of Innovation



This paper was written by TomorrowToday Consulting

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1% FOR THE PLANET – ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNER –

Introduction

Innovation is not that dissimilar to growing new life.

A little over fifty years ago, under the inspired leadership of John F. Kennedy, humanity placed a man on the moon. It took four hundred thousand engineers, scientists, and other experts nearly a decade to achieve the impossible. Right now, your washing machine has more computing power than the scientists had available back then, yet we've never gone back. What happened?

It is related to leadership and innovation. They are compatible, but they are also two very different things. Leaders are not appointed. Leaders are followed. Good leaders create the environment where people can put their ideas together and converge existing and emerging technologies to go after moonshots. Good leadership gives innovators the freedom to dream.

Today, we stand at another crossroads; where rapid technological advancement, geopolitical and economic uncertainty, and shifting consumer expectations demand that businesses innovate or risk irrelevance.

However, innovation is not only about ideas; it's about building the right culture. While many organisations attempt to innovate by launching new projects or forming R&D teams, few create an environment where innovation thrives naturally.

The challenge leaders face today is not just coming up with great ideas but embedding innovation as a core capability within their teams and structures.

Indeed, innovation is not that dissimilar to growing new life. It's a delicate thing. You must do everything to create the right environment. You put fertiliser into the ground. You give it warmth and sunlight, but not too much. You give it water, but not too much or too little either. Get it right and growth flourishes. Get it wrong and growth withers away.

Your responsibility as a leader delivering innovation is to ask the question: What is the right environment in which innovation will thrive? To assist with the answer, this paper Introduces **seven practical steps** to create a culture of innovation.

Our research, spanning over two decades and multiple industries, has identified seven essential elements that collectively create a culture of innovation. These elements are:

1. Balance the Business
2. Create Shared Understanding and Ambition
3. Reward Curiosity
4. Ensure Everyone Participates
5. Develop Capable and Accountable Innovation Leaders
6. Expand the Scope of Innovation
7. Measure What Matters

Seven essential elements to create a culture of innovation.

The paradox of innovation is this: Too often, organisations seek out a single magical innovation formula. They then lock themselves into one type of strategy and say: “This is how we innovate.” For a while it works. But eventually the returns diminish. Organisations can avoid this by recognising innovation is a culture, not a process. Building a culture of innovation requires focusing on areas which might at first appear counter-intuitive. A seven-part framework called, Full Blown Innovation, offers you the tools to deliver the culture needed to be innovative. It has been formulated from TomorrowToday Consulting’s extensive research and our experience, spanning over twenty years across almost every industry sector with clients in over one hundred countries.

1. Balance the Business

Innovation does not flourish in chaos, nor does it thrive in rigid bureaucracies. Our research shows that successful companies balance five "cool" innovation drivers with five stabilising factors. Take the example of Apple: it maintains a high social purpose, fosters experimentation, embraces failure as a learning tool, ensures psychological safety, and operates with organisational flatness. However, this is counterbalanced by disciplined execution, a focus on profit and growth, openness, personal accountability, and strong leadership.

Consider the Royal Princess cruise liner, a massive and intricate engineering marvel. It remains stable because of a complex system of ballast tanks, gyroscopic control systems, and stabilising fins—mechanisms hidden from passengers’ view. The same principle applies to innovation: while creativity and disruption are essential, they must be stabilised with structure, accountability, and executional rigour.

2. Create Shared Understanding and Ambition

Successful innovators clearly define their ambition. Do they want to disrupt an industry, expand into adjacent markets, or optimise existing operations? Leaders at Netflix, for example, bet boldly on a digital streaming future while competitors hesitated.

An innovation culture must be anchored in a shared understanding of purpose. An example of this comes from the Business Roundtable’s declaration that companies must serve a broader set of stakeholders beyond just shareholders. Companies that align their innovation efforts with a compelling ambition—whether sustainability, digital transformation, or customer experience—create an environment where employees feel invested in the journey.

3. Reward Curiosity

The most innovative firms do not simply generate ideas; they cultivate a deep curiosity about the world's problems. Sebastian Thrun, the founder of Google X, did not set out to build a self-driving car. Instead, he started with the question: How can we eliminate road deaths? That curiosity led to groundbreaking innovation.

Curiosity-driven cultures reward employees for asking tough questions. The real differentiator is not a suggestion box but a systematic approach to problem discovery. Companies that consistently surface meaningful problems—before competitors do—position themselves for sustained success.

4. Ensure Everyone Participates

Innovation is a team sport. Any organisation that relies solely on an isolated R&D team will fall behind. The most successful firms democratise innovation by embedding it across roles. Consider the role of the 'hurdler'—the employee who finds creative ways to overcome obstacles. At Pixar, animators have a dedicated 'Braintrust' where all team members can challenge ideas and refine stories collaboratively.

Innovation also requires structural support. Google's 20% rule, which allowed employees to work on side projects, resulted in some of the company's most successful products, including Gmail. Encouraging participation means ensuring that every employee sees innovation as part of their role.

5. Develop Capable and Accountable Innovation Leaders

Great innovation leaders are not just visionaries; they actively foster environments where new ideas thrive. Jeff Bezos built Amazon's 'two-pizza team' concept to maintain agility and accountability within a growing organisation.

Leaders must also be held accountable for fostering innovation. At Tesla, executives set ambitious stretch goals—such as making electric vehicles outperform Ferraris in acceleration. This balance between vision and execution creates an environment where innovation is both expected and systematically supported.

6. Expand the Scope of Innovation

One of the most common pitfalls in corporate innovation is defining it too narrowly. Many assume that innovation is limited to product development, yet the most significant breakthroughs often emerge in business models, processes, and customer experience.

Rolls-Royce provides a compelling example. The company transformed its revenue model by shifting from selling aircraft engines to offering 'Power-by-the-Hour'—a service-based model where airlines pay per engine usage rather than making a large capital investment. This innovation expanded its market reach and created new value streams.

Successful innovators look beyond product innovation to consider all nine types of innovation, from brand positioning to alliances and process improvements.

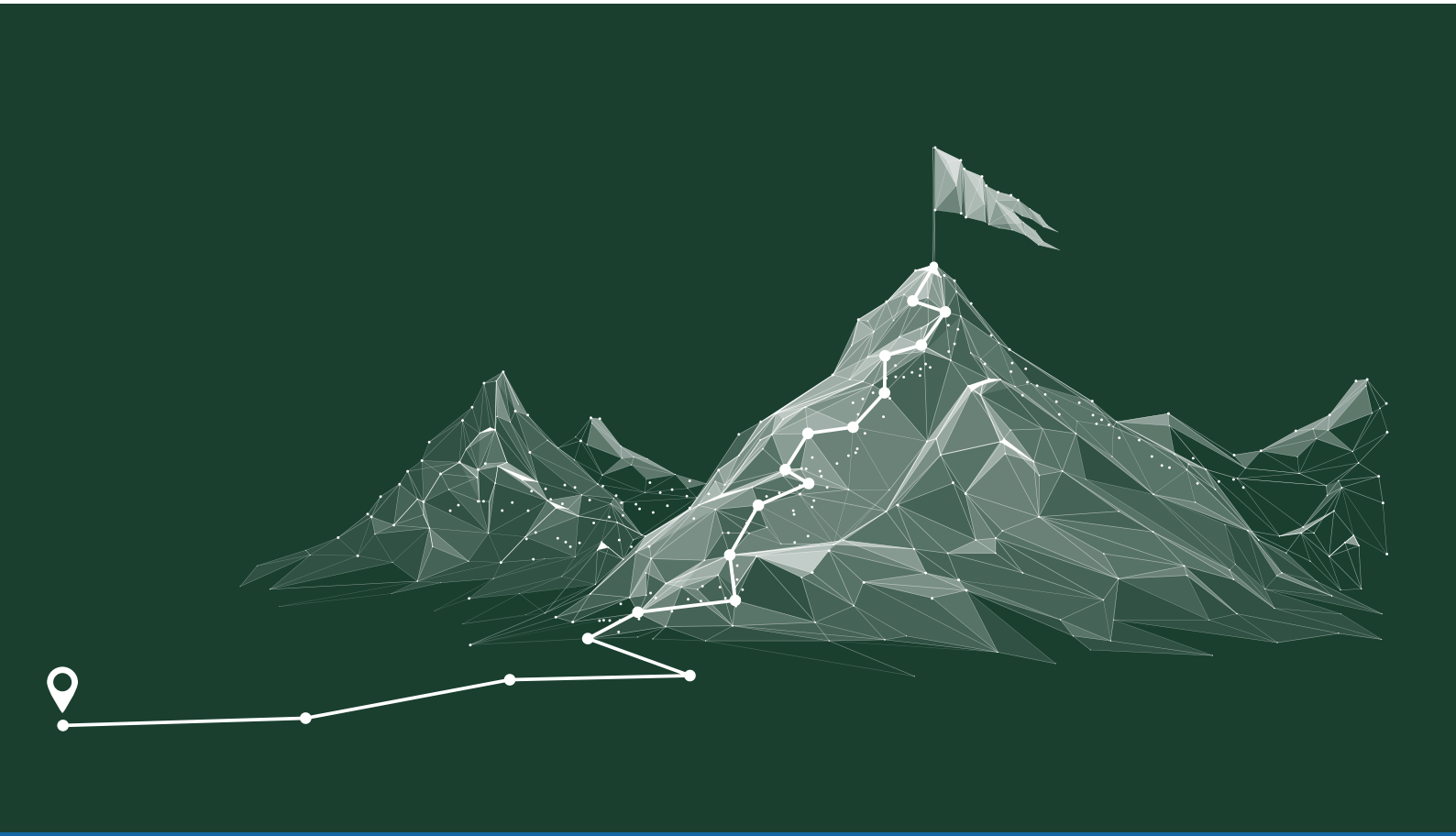
7. Measure What Matters

Culture is the most critical determinant of long-term innovation success, yet it is often the least measured. Peter Drucker famously said, 'What gets measured gets managed.' However, most companies track product pipelines rather than cultural indicators.

At TomorrowToday Consulting, we have developed a framework based on organisational DNA. Three core dimensions define an innovation culture:

- **Who you are:** Purpose, people, and working environment.
- **How you work:** Structures, decision rights, and processes.
- **What you are capable of achieving:** Motivators, measurement systems, and talent development.

Organisations that track these seven dimensions systematically are better positioned to sustain a culture of innovation over the long term.



Conclusion

Building a culture of sustained innovation into your organisation requires focusing on aspects that may at first appear counter-intuitive.

If your goal is simply to generate a handful of innovative ideas, there are numerous brainstorming techniques and innovation sprint methodologies available. However, to embed a true culture of innovation, a systematic and intentional approach is required.

We call this approach **Full Blown Innovation**.

Rather than prioritising an innovation pipeline filled with disconnected creative ideas, this paper advocates for cultivating a spirit of curiosity—one centred around identifying and solving the most pressing challenges faced by stakeholders. Innovation that is rooted in problem-solving delivers sustainable impact, ensuring that organisations remain relevant and competitive.

To be successful, Full Blown Innovation must be central to what an organisation does and stands for. It is a philosophy that integrates innovation into everyday decision-making, leadership, and execution. The strength of this approach lies in its ability to balance creativity with disciplined implementation, ensuring that the spark of new ideas leads to tangible outcomes.

This paper presents seven essential elements required to build a culture of innovation:

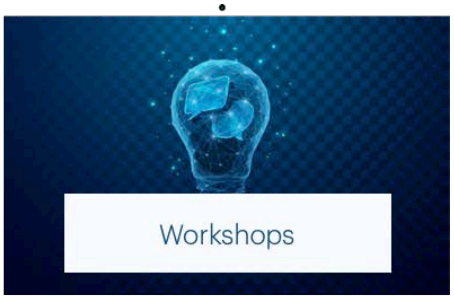
1. **Balance the Business** – Aligning disruptive thinking with structured execution.
2. Create Shared Understanding and Ambition – Defining a clear vision for innovation.
3. **Reward Curiosity** – Encouraging exploration and problem discovery.
4. **Ensure Everyone Participates** – Making innovation a collective responsibility.
5. **Develop Capable and Accountable** Innovation Leaders – Equipping leaders to drive innovation.
6. **Expand the Scope of Innovation** – Looking beyond products to business models, processes, and customer experiences.
7. **Measure What Matters** – Embedding innovation into organisational DNA through systematic tracking and accountability.

By embedding these seven principles into their strategy, organisations can create an environment where innovation thrives—not as an isolated initiative but as a fundamental part of how they operate.

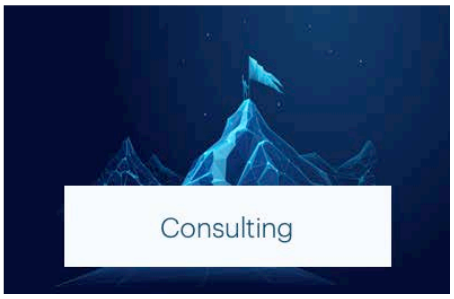
They're powerful alone — but even better when used together

TTC offers a full range of services underpinned by thought-leading insights at its core. From presentations and workshops to consulting engagements, our solutions are powerful alone — but even better when used together. We work globally and deliver virtual and in-person sessions.









Building a culture of innovation doesn't happen overnight, it requires intentional leadership, strategic alignment, and a commitment to change.

At TomorrowToday Consulting, we help organisations turn innovation theory into action. Through our tailored workshops, keynote sessions, and strategy consulting, we guide leaders in embedding Full Blown Innovation into their companies.

Get in touch now to:

- **Book a Discovery Call:** Let's explore how we can help your organisation innovate effectively.
- **Arrange an Innovation Workshop:** Gain hands on experience with practical tools to drive innovation.
- **Let us assess your Innovation Readiness:** A detailed assessment of where your organisation stands today.

Schedule a Non-Obligatory Call

About TomorrowToday Consulting

At TTC, we partner with clients to proactively create the future. Our unique approach involves exploring high impact yet often ignored forces of change, or Grey Elephants, and developing strategies that turn megatrends into ground-breaking opportunities.

We specialise in helping our clients align with imperatives for success by cultivating high-performance teams and building the capabilities needed for success and competitive advantage in tomorrow's world.

With experts across EMEA, North America and Africa, we work globally delivering successful projects for clients and have been at the forefront of driving the future of business since our inception.

Learn more about the TomorrowToday Consulting story and our focus on strategy, future insights, people and our services at:
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