



Secrets of Successful Innovation

Experts share keys to success.

BY TERRENCE FERNSLER

Leading for Innovation: And Organizing for Results

Edited by Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, & Iain Somerville. 299 pages. Hardcover.
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As with previous Drucker Foundation books, this is a series of essays written by experts—in this case, leaders with experience in encouraging innovation in organizations. Although most of the writers come from for-profit organizations, each essay provides a valuable lesson for nonprofits.

First, the writers examine the qualities needed to lead innovators. This part of the book is written for managers who want innovative people in their organizations. The writers explain what innovation looks like and how to change behavior that hinders success. They point out that innovation must begin before the need for it is felt.

Part II focuses on shaping the organizational environment to encourage innovation. One essay discusses ways innovation is prevented and suggests ways to promote new patterns for success. Another author stresses the importance of leaders in building a culture of innovation. Leaders should encourage

risk-taking with accountability, tolerate failure, demonstrate hands-on innovation, and live the organization's values.

The third section describes how to think in order to lead for innovation. Social innovation, not technological innovation, drives the most successful organizations, the writers note. Most innovative ideas come from the careful management of process, not from great leaders. Ongoing dialogue, constructive tension, and action-based learning are critical elements to managing innovation.

Part IV is about the practice (and maintaining the practice) of innovation in organizations. We read, through examples from three very different organizations, how effectively managed innovation can improve results. Finally, we are advised to make innovation a purposeful activity, not a passive one, because those organizations that do will be the masters of success.

Innovation is vital to the success of organizations today. If you don't know what innovation is and how to manage it, your organization will be left in the 20th century. Nonprofit organizations can't afford that if they want to fulfill their missions. ■

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