

Thinking Managers

Edward de Bono of www.thinkingmanagers.com implores business to create a climate in which there is a willingness to try new things and explore new possibilities.

Innovation

What is the definition of innovation?

A great deal of lip service is paid to innovation because it is always easier to talk about it than actually do anything about it.

My personal definition of innovation is: 'the putting into effect of something new for that organisation'. There might be many sources for what is new:

- 1) It could be something borrowed or copied from another organisation.
- 2) There could be a logical reaction to information and research data.
- 3) There could be a logical design that puts forwards something new.
- 4) There could be innovations produced directly by the exercise of creativity.



Innovation always requires a willingness to do something new, and anything new is risky, a distraction from the normal routine and requires commitment of some resources.

Because of this, a lot of organisations are reluctant to try new things. Executives are promoted to senior positions through being good at continuity and problem-solving; the readiness to try new things is not often a factor in a promotion.

There is also the fear of failure, as something new that doesn't work out is thought of as a mistake. There is no single term for 'a fully justified venture which, for reasons beyond your control, did not work'.

A lot of organisations work on the basis of osmosis, where if a new idea has been around for a long time and has been taken up by others then it becomes natural and low risk to adopt it. This is hardly a proactive approach. It is following as opposed to leading; not wanting to be left behind but not wanting to take the risks.

If a climate is created where there is a willingness to try new things and explore new possibilities then innovation can happen. Sadly, this is not usually the case, even when lip service is paid to innovation.

About the author:

Edward de Bono is the world's leading authority in the field of creative thinking and the teaching of thinking as a skill.