



July 28, 2022

A Culture of Innovation

BEST PRACTICES

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Many companies pride themselves on having a “culture of innovation”. As a professional services organization, we constantly straddle the line between creating predictable, high-quality, repeatable processes for our customer focused projects while still promoting the innovative, continuous improvement approach that we desire for our employees.

We work in a constantly changing, fast evolving industry that has only accelerated in the last couple decades. Product and service releases seem to occur monthly if not weekly for the platforms we utilize to develop and deliver our work. With so much change coming at us all the time, it can be tricky to balance the needs of delivering work in a predictable, stable manner while still looking forward to ensure we stay abreast of the latest capabilities that might improve our core offerings.

How then, do companies like ours, best build and maintain that culture of innovation we talk about so frequently?

Like any project, you should first create a set of objectives and measures. If you can’t measure it, how will you ever know that what you are doing is working? Once established you must share this set of objectives outside of the group that creates them, ensuring that the rest of the organization understands them and, hopefully, is on board with them.

From there I believe there are several ways for leadership to foster this culture:

Encourage People

People should be encouraged and rewarded for bringing new ideas to the table. Every idea should be met with interest, discussion, and acceptance. Even if the team chooses not to move forward with the idea, the team members should feel safe and supported in bringing ideas to the table.

Disengage Hierarchy

I’ve written before about hiring great people and giving them the autonomy to do their jobs. Resist the idea of creating an

establishment of hierarchy - especially in idea generation. Great ideas can come from anyone, anytime. Don't put false constraints in place that could limit creative thinking.

Recognize & Reward

When someone has a great idea that ends up being implemented call it out. Celebrate it. Make sure everyone in the company knows who the idea came from and why it was beneficial to implement.

Good leadership recognizes that the people they hire are talented, thoughtful individuals that have a lot to offer the organization. Tap into that and create your culture of innovation.

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