5 Ways to Encourage Learning Innovation in Your Organization

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Innovation is a term used with such frequency that can be easy to underestimate its importance from a learning standpoint. Innovation is often associated with launching a new product or service; however, innovation is fundamentally about learning.

Great leaders create the conditions and environments that support personal and organizational growth. While authors consistently cite learning as an essential ingredient for successful organizations and teams, the realities of fostering an environment that seeks out new ways of helping people learn is much more complex.

What can leaders do to encourage learning innovation?

The following list highlights five techniques leaders can use to encourage an environment of learning innovation.

1 Creating and Communicating a Vision for Innovation and Excellence

One of the core tasks a leader can do to encourage learning innovation is to create and clearly communicate a vision that values learning. People need to know that learning is fundamentally important and valued. This means investing in opportunities and methods that support new ways of learning.

Reflective Thought: Think about the last strategic initiative aimed at encouraging new ways of learning. What types of outcomes emerged through this process?

2

Establish a Common Language for Sharing Ideas

A common language for planning and implementing innovative learning experiences can be instrumental in moving great ideas into action. This gives people a common way to talk about learning, which creates an environment of trust and exploration. A language also emphasizes the importance of learning and provides people a tool for advancing innovative learning approaches.

Reflective Thought: What "language" do people use to talk about learning in your organization? Are they using common ways of sharing their ideas?

3

Encourage Learning Prototypes

A learning prototype is a test of a new way of helping people learn. Too often, organizations rely on traditional ways of delivering learning experiences. These include training, workshops, or slide presentations. Encourage new ways of thinking by helping people try out unconventional ways of delivering and supporting learning experiences.

Reflective Thought: Does your organization embrace new learning methods? What percentage of learning opportunities could be considered "innovative"?

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4

Use an Innovation Process

Part of encouraging learning innovation is giving people a roadmap and plan they can follow. Using an innovation process the compliments your organization's goals is key to providing a solid foundation for learning advancements. This process gives people a plan for how they can create new ways of helping people learn.

Reflective Thought: How does your organization create and scale new ideas? Do you apply these methods to learning?

5

Equip People with Effective Innovation Tools

Innovation is more than eureka moments. Innovation is about applying tested and reliable tools to solve complex problems. This requires that people are prepared and equipped to effectively use these tools. Learning innovation has a specific set of tools for designing and implementing new learning methods. These tools provide a means for envisioning and scaling new learning opportunities.

Reflective Thought: What tools do you use to identify and grow new ideas in your organization? How can those tools be used for encouraging learning innovation?

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Great leaders are the learning architects of their organization. They assess, envision, and create the environments that foster learning and growth.

Learning innovation is about architecting these environments in new ways that continuously improve people's learning experiences.

The Institute for Learning Environment Design provides customized consulting solutions for creating innovative learning experiences.

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