Yes, Your Company Is Actually Discouraging Innovation

Acknowledging the problem is the first step, folks.

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Presented by
So many companies claim they want to be innovative, but when it comes to creating a corresponding culture, they fall short. Sometimes, the only way to stand out in a crowded market is by dismantling the status quo. That's why I've outlined three common mistakes that discourage innovation and necessitate correction.

1. Focusing too much on productivity.

In a traditional company, busy employees translate to high rates of work completion, which hopefully results in greater revenue. However, for a company to be innovative, its employees need time to be able to generate and workshop new ideas. Simply put, they need time to think, and it's proven to be beneficial.

Time for innovation often means time away from an employee's day-to-day activities. Can you imagine a high-performer at your company having a week away from their revenue-generating work to spend incubating new ideas? What if this time resulted in a more efficient process, a business problem solved, or a new sales-generating product. Would it be worth it then?

Companies cannot say they value innovation on one hand and then stress that productivity matters above all else. Try giving employees the time and space to innovate, and you may be surprised with the result.

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2. Perpetuating a top-down culture.

In companies that have a strong top-down culture (leader says, workers do), it can be challenging to squeeze innovation out of employees. They won't be used to being heard, so they won't try to speak up, and that's dangerous. In this setting, it will take extra effort for leaders to say, "We want your new ideas" and to show they mean it. After all, it is the people on the ground engrossed in the work who can have the greatest insights into new and improved ways of doing things. The highest potential for innovation comes from the many minds fueling the company rather than the few at the top.

Companies need to create an inviting and easy mechanism for employees to share their ideas with higher-ups. This could be anything from an online submission form to focus groups or listening sessions. Make sure employees are recognized for sharing their ideas, even if all of the ideas aren't selected to move forward to implementation.

3. Lacking a way to put ideas into action.

Innovation isn't all about ideas; there also must be a way to turn them into new practices or products. If employees are encouraged to innovate, but they never observe changes actually taking place, they will eventually stop trying. Have a complete pipeline in place for innovation rather than just an idea-gathering component. Be transparent about how ideas will be selected to move forward, and then share updates on

progress along the way. Even if you evaluated the feasibility of a new approach and determined it didn’t make good business sense to implement, this is an important decision to share, as it shows thoughtful consideration.

The last thing you want is for employees to feel their ideas are going into a void and that their supposedly innovative company is stagnating despite their efforts. The most innovative employees will either disengage or go work for a more forward-thinking company.

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Do these practices sound like your company? If so, you should now have a better idea of how to transform your culture to get the most out of your best and brightest employees. Encouraging innovation can pay great dividends in morale, employee engagement and potential company profits, so set your company up for success by avoiding these common pitfalls. Start evaluating where your organization can improve to foster and cultivate innovative outcomes.

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