

# 6 Steps to Facilitate Innovation for Small Businesses

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All businesses desire to improve efficiency and productivity. Whether through people, processes, or new products, the ultimate goal is to find new ways to solve old problems. It is also important for organizations to have these capabilities so their competition does not take over the market. However, innovating is not easy. To increase your organization's ability to innovate, focus on the following fundamental things.:

## **1. STABILIZING YOUR TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROCESSES.**

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This is an absolutely vital, foundational step in creating an environment where innovation thrives. Innovation always brings chaos with it. New technology, processes, or means of doing work will create confusion and inconsistency. If the technology infrastructure and processes within the business are not stabilized first, you will experience chaos on top of chaos—which will result in frustration for your team and clients.

## **2. CREATING A CULTURE OF INNOVATION.**

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Before you can innovate, you have to create a culture that encourages and supports it. Don't just talk about innovation—support it with time and budget dollars. Each business is a bit different in how they facilitate this. Some hold a competition. Some set up a suggestion box. We feel one of the best approaches is to set aside one day per month or quarter to focus on ways to improve work. Through this kind of focused time, new products are often birthed. An example of this is Gmail from Google. But remember, you do not have to be a technology company for innovation to occur. The goal of innovation is to find new ways to achieve an outcome, whether through changes in communications, customer intake, workflows, how an application is used, or any other thing that will make your organization stronger.

## **3. COMMUNICATING THAT ALL SUGGESTIONS HAVE BEEN HEARD.**

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It is vital to demonstrate to your people that ideas have been heard and considered. This encourages those who deal with the day-to-day to find solutions and improve outcomes. It is okay that not all ideas are used. The important thing is to be open with the organization about the process of change. If people perceive that their ideas are not even considered, they will cease to share them. This can be as simple as having a brief company meeting or official communication to acknowledge the number of suggested ideas and which of those ideas will be tested, along with stating that the other suggestions will be logged for future consideration.

## 4. TESTING IDEAS.

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Conduct a specific test with a beginning and end to it. Everyone in the organization must know when the trial will begin so they can support and have patience and avoid giving up on the initiative too early. Keep in mind that there are times when you should make a big deal of the test so that others will help champion the initiative, and other times when it is better to keep an initiative quiet so the testing can speak for itself.

## 5. MEASURING AND CELEBRATING OUTCOMES.

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All initiatives should be measured for success. You want to know whether they make a difference that can be realized within the organization. To know the true impact, it is important to benchmark the innovation before and after the implementation or testing period. Demonstrating and celebrating the improvement helps ensure momentum doesn't stop with a single initiative or idea. Furthermore, even if an initiative is not successful, the attempt should be celebrated. This celebration is the only way to encourage more of the creative thinking and problem-solving that led to the initiative.

## 6. RECOGNIZING THOSE RESPONSIBLE.

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Some innovations create substantial financial reward within a business. If possible, pay such successes forward by literally paying those who helped facilitate the outcomes. This can be a bonus, time off, or other means. Communicate these with

the company, so people see that ideas and innovations have a personal reward as well as a business reward.

While it may not feel natural for some organizations to incorporate these concepts into operations, it is necessary. In fact, failure to embrace innovation has cost companies their entire existence. Just look at Blockbuster and Kodak.

JMARK regularly helps small businesses innovate to create competitive advantages. If you would like to learn how we can help your specific organization do the same, simply book a meeting [here](#).