Innovative Leadership: A Paradigm in Modern HR Practices

Poonam Anand and Arvind Kumar Saraswati

Banarsidas Chandiwala Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology

Abstract

Leadership can be termed as a relationship that involves mobilizing, influencing, and guiding team members toward the desired goals. The Modern Leader is a “democratic and innovative organizer” who walks with the team, rather than ahead of the team. Innovative Leaders are creative thinkers who are able to generate creative ideas that become the basis of innovation. The role of the Innovation Leader is very difficult as the path forward is never clear. These leaders must keep a team motivated and moving forward despite a seemingly constant set of obstacles and failures. The aim of this paper is to provide a base for organizations that are making the transition to dynamic-innovation, the need for the hour. The paper is built upon qualitative analysis of current situation prevailing in modern organizations in context to human resource and organizational behavioral issues to strive for innovation in leadership practices. The paper will provide recommendations for the organizations to successfully transition to a more innovative focus, the manner in which organizations must implement talent management and organizational processes to attract, develop, and empower Innovation leaders.

Keywords: Innovation, Leadership and Innovative leadership.

1. Introduction

Innovation in leadership is a modern philosophy of managing human resource in recent organizational practices. Innovation leadership involves synthesizing different leadership styles in organizations to influence employees to produce creative ideas, products, services and solutions. The key role in the practice of innovation leadership is the innovation leader. With the advent of time, organizations witnessing a fast moving and complex global environment, the ability of a leader to innovate and deploy faster and more profitably than competitors is now an essential pre-requisite for growth.
and success. The Modern Leader is a “democratic and innovative organizer” who
walks with the team, rather than ahead of the team. The Innovation Leader must have a
strong desire to succeed and a willingness to experiment. The move to dynamic-
novation is more difficult for many reasons which include a diverse customer base, a
complex mix of products and services, a focus on minimizing risks and a traditional
static-control culture.

The concept of evolution of innovation is often misunderstood; although there is
nothing serendipitous about it. Innovation only happens when individuals and small
teams engage in innovative thinking. In organizations that innovate consistently and
sustainably, the leaders, cultures and organizational practices systematically enable
individuals and teams to achieve value by creating and implementing new and valuable
ideas. To successfully transition to a more innovative focus, the manner in which
organizations must implement talent management and organizational processes to
attract, develop, and empower Innovation leaders. Outcomes of innovation leadership
include inspiring employees to create and implement novel ideas for products,
services, and technologies.

2. Research Objectives
The main purpose of this paper is to focus on that in last few years, how the research
has helped to understand the phenomenon of Innovative Leadership and what lessons
organizations could learn to implement this concept.

2.1 Research Design & Methodology
The paper is built upon qualitative analysis of current situation prevailing in modern
organizations in context to human resource and organizational behavioral issues to
strive for innovation in leadership practices. Data for this study were drawn from a
review of secondary sources, consisting primarily of management research papers from
reputed journals, human resource newsletters, several corporate websites and media
reports related to the study sites.

3. Innovative Leadership – Lesson from Literature
Mumford, M., & Licuanan, B. (2004) state that in order to adapt to new changes, the
need for innovation in organizations has resulted in a new focus on the role of leaders
in shaping the nature and success of creative efforts. This new call for innovation
represents the shift from the 20th century, traditional view of organizational practices,
which discouraged employee innovative behaviors, to the 21st-century view of valuing
innovative thinking as a “potentially powerful influence on organizational
performance” as stated by Mumford, M. D., Scott, G. M., Gaddis, B., & Strange, J. M.
(2002). Cushman and King (1993) and Morton (1991) saw the importance of
information technology in the global business environment. Innovation is, and will be,
central to doing business. Kling and Dunlop (1993) note the impact to the changing
business environment - computers change our jobs and how we look at business,
perhaps even the way we look at personal and social lives. As the business
environment seeks more efficiency from innovation (Loveman, 1994), the effects of innovation will be more obvious. Rogers (1983) asserted that innovation goes on all the time in organizations, but only effective organizations use the process of innovation and the resulting effects. Research from authors like Walther (1994) and Rice (1987) suggests that the act of innovating has definite social implications in the personal, organizational, and global context.

Innovative Leadership has been embedded with a strong network of value system, as stated in New and Improved, LLC Newsletter (2013), comprising of Integrity, Tenacity, Curiosity, Courage and Humility similar to the five fingers of a hand, which when united forms a power punch of an Innovative Leader, par excellence. T.S. Eliot cited by Henry Doss (2013) advocated the distinction between a leader and a follower and stated that there is today an emerging distinction between “leadership” and “innovation leadership,” a new vision of what it takes to become an innovative leader and a leader of innovation. Joanna Barsh et. al. (2008) focus on three people-management fundamentals may produce the building blocks of an innovative organization. A first step is to formally integrate innovation into the strategic-management agenda of senior leaders. Second, executives can make better use of existing (and often untapped) talent for innovation, without implementing disruptive change programs, by creating the conditions that allow dynamic innovation networks to emerge and flourish. Finally, they can take explicit steps to foster an innovation culture based on trust among employees. In such a culture, people understand that their ideas are valued, trust that it is safe to express those ideas, and oversee risk collectively, together with their managers. Joanna Barsh, Marla M. Capozzi and Jonathan Davidson (2008) indicate that most senior executives do not actively encourage and model innovative behavior. If they did, they could give employees the support needed to innovate. They can also take a number of other practical steps to advance innovations which are as follows:-

- Define the kind of innovation that drives growth and helps meet strategic objectives.
- Add innovation to the formal agenda at regular leadership meetings.
- Set performance metrics and targets for innovation.

4. Steps to Innovative Leadership
Tanya Roscorla (2010) cited that in a session on Innovative Leadership, Cheryl Lemke, President and CEO of the education technology consulting firm Metiri Group, shared seven steps to becoming an innovative leader.

1. Embrace the challenge
2. Drive change through collective creativity and knowledge
3. Shape the culture
4. Establish a professional learning system
5. Decide and systematize
6. Ensure digital access and infrastructure
7. Demand accountability
5. Qualities of Innovative Leaders
Bill George Staff (2012) stated five essential qualities that a leader must have to lead innovation:

1. Passion for innovation
2. A long-term perspective.
3. The courage to fail and learn from failure.
4. Deep engagement with the innovators.
5. Willingness to tolerate mavericks and defend them from middle management.

5.1 Business Thinking Vs Innovative Thinking
Innovative thinking is not reliant on past experience or known facts. It imagines a desired future state and figures out how to get there. It is intuitive and open to possibility. Rather than identifying right or wrong answers, the goal is to find a better way and to explore multiple possibilities. Innovative thinking is a crucial addition to traditional business thinking. It allows one to bring new ideas and energy to his role as leader and to solve the challenges.

6. Six innovative thinking skills
David Magellan Horth & Dan Buchner (2009) has identified six innovative thinking skills.

1. Paying Attention
2. Personalizing
3. Imaging
4. Serious Play
5. Collaborative Inquiry
6. Crafting

F. Scott Fitzgerald once said, “The test of intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.

Pre-requisite of Leadership for organizational innovation, David Magellan Horth & Dan Buchner (2009):
- Organizational Encouragement.
- Lack of Organizational Impediments.
- Leadership Encouragement. Sufficient Resources.
- Realistic Workload.
- Challenging Work.
- Teamwork and Collaboration.

7. Conclusion
Innovative leaders are creative visionaries who have big ideas and, most importantly, can motivate people around them to turn those ideas into reality. For long term success, the process of Innovation Leadership has to be linked and aligned with
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Organizational goals and reinforced through performance management. Organizations must invest in their leaders and also need to design their culture and organizational practices to make innovation possible. Also, organizations require a well-developed, organization-wide innovation plan to ensure a focused approach to organizational innovation. An organization-wide innovation plan enables local teams to focus their innovative thinking activities and align their innovations with the organization’s overall requirements for innovation. To regain and retain global competitiveness, a new generation of innovative leaders needs to take over zenith roles in the leading corporations.

Reference

