

03

Innovation Insights

Solverboard[®]

Innovation Blockers

Report 2021



What's in this report?

Introduction	1
Our experts	2
Proving the value of innovation	3
Getting senior management to support new initiatives	7
Getting employees to embrace innovation	11
Lack of structure throughout the idea generation and implementation process	15
Changing the organisational culture and status quo to support innovation	19
Fear of failure	23
Conflicting goals in the organisation	27
Lack of innovation skills	31
No clear definition of innovation	35
Disagreement over who owns innovation	39
Key takeaways	43
Solverboard	45

A McKinsey survey from mid-2020 revealed that

90% of executives believe the pandemic will fundamentally change their business operations over the next five years,

while 85% state that it will have a huge impact on the needs and wants of their customers. However, just 21% state that they have the resources, commitment and expertise needed for successful new growth, and two-thirds expect this to be the most challenging time in their executive career.

Already, innovation has played a huge part in the fight against COVID-19, as well as in our economic recovery. Businesses have had to adapt and change to survive during challenging times, whether by offering new products, switching to different sales channels or partnering with other businesses.

While innovation continues, the innovation landscape itself has been fundamentally changed by the pandemic. With so many people pushing for a balanced, fair and sustainable approach to post-pandemic rebuilding, can existing innovation infrastructures serve the required purpose?

Innovation **must** happen, but for some businesses, the thought of doing something new or different can be daunting. It is vital that, if innovation is to succeed, we remove any blockers that prevent it from happening. In this report, we - along with a number of innovation experts - detail ten key blockers to innovation, offering expert advice on how to break each one down successfully.

Introducing our experts...



Rob Sheffield

Director, Bluegreen Learning

With 30 years' experience of enabling change across a variety of countries and sectors, Dr Rob Sheffield is an experienced facilitator, coach, trainer and consultant. He helps leaders to build work environments that turn creative ideas into value.



Chris Potts

Enterprise Innovation Consultant

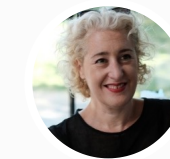
Chris is a worldwide specialist in enterprise investment. He works with a range of diverse industries, countries and cultures, helping them to grow their capabilities and performance at investing in change.



David Richmond

Innovation Consultant

David Richmond is an innovation consultant with years of experience in building and developing organisational innovation capabilities. His focus is on helping organisations improve their innovation culture, collaboration, process and delivery.



Jane Ginnever

Founder, Shift Consultancy

Jane's 25 years of experience include leadership of various business functions, including HR. Combining systems-thinking, design-thinking and strengths-based approaches, she helps individuals and organisations achieve transformational change.



Tim Stiven

Leader in energy and infrastructure

Tim recently spent 4 years at Energy Systems Catapult as a member of the interim leadership team. He uses systems-thinking disciplines from his defence sector experience to analyse and structure complex problems.



Johannah Randall

Director - Start Up Rail

For 25 years, Johannah Randall has worked in customer service and operations in the UK and Europe, leading in areas such as accessibility, innovation and sustainability. She is the Director of Start Up Rail, and sits on The Rail Innovation Group's strategy board.



Cris Beswick

Strategic advisor & corporate coach

Serial entrepreneur turned strategic advisor, bestselling author & keynote speaker, Cris Beswick, is also a published author, co-founder of innovation consulting firms and thought leadership platforms, and a visiting professor of innovation at various global business schools.



Bastiaan Saris

Divisional Head of Innovation EMEA and APAC, Molson Coors

Strategic marketing innovation leader, Bastiaan Saris, has 25+ years' experience of driving step-change business performance. His multi-category career includes everything from beer and body care to household and food marketing, at premium FMCG multinationals including Asahi, Sara Lee and more.



Katherine Allan

Founder - KSK Consulting

As well as running her own consultancy, Katherine Allan is spearheading '100 in 100': a female mentorship initiative to develop the next generation of UK talent. She also runs a women's empowerment initiative, and regularly partners with those looking to drive forward positive change.



Arend Welmers

CEO - Ninety Days

Entrepreneur and investor, Arend Welmers, is the UK and Europe's leading expert on "Ownership Thinking". He works with organisations across the globe to quickly and measurably improve business performance, while also making positive work life changes for all in the business.

01

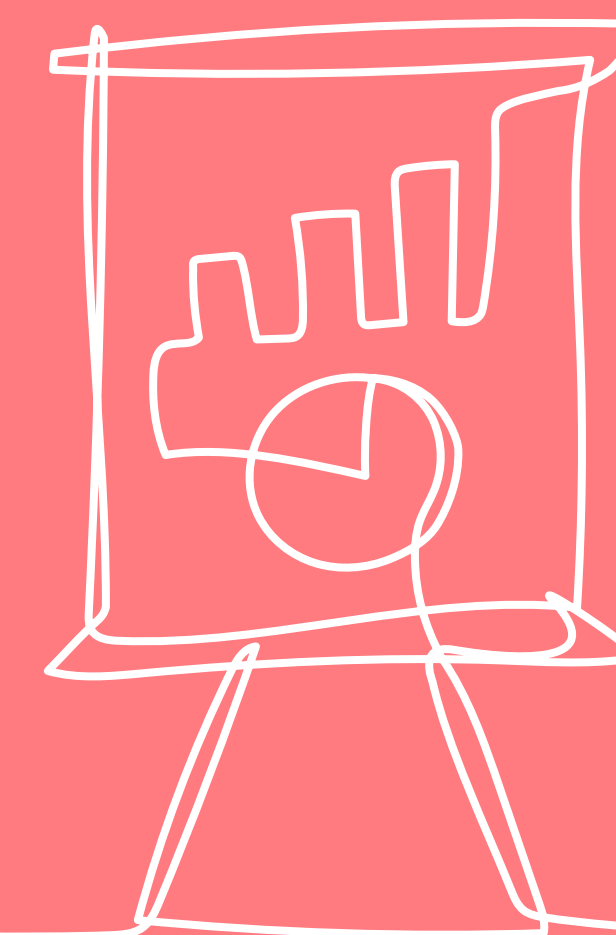
Proving the value of innovation

Innovation can have different meanings depending on the organisation, the situation and the person managing it. It also touches many different parts of the business, making it hard to define and even harder to measure.

This inevitably leads to confusion around what the innovation team is for and what they should be focussing on.

Is innovation about coming up with new ideas and products to take to market? Is it about finding ways to be more productive, or refine existing processes? Is it about securing the long-term future for the business or delivering against short-term goals?

Having a clear definition for what innovation means for your business and a practical set of metrics to measure performance by is essential when proving its value.



"Innovation isn't really measured in any way in our company."

Innovation Manager, Healthcare

"We're lacking the reporting and analytics for me to create a clear narrative."

Head of Innovation & Insight, Professional Services

Over to our experts...



Rob Sheffield

Director, Bluegreen Learning

Develop an innovation strategy

Make sure that what you want to change aligns clearly with your organisational strategy. That's the hard part. Then make sure that people throughout the organisation understand it. Talk to them and discuss the different types of innovation that are needed.

The biggest problem with measurement is usually measuring the wrong stuff. If what you need is new products, services or markets, then you should measure progress towards and achievement of those things. Your metrics should align with your strategy, not the other way around.



Chris Potts

Enterprise Innovation Consultant

Measure the actual contributions of innovative changes

Highlight the impacts that innovative changes have made to the enterprise's highest-priority goals. Make sure people see where innovation has resulted in better contributions to the value that's needed, at the right speed, with lower risks or resources, and a greater probability of success.

Concentrate on the innovation 'sweet spots' – the high-priority goals that need the most innovative changes. Make sure as many as possible of those changes work, and any doubts about the value of innovation should be a thing of the past.



David Richmond

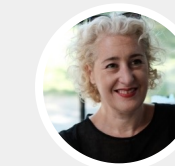
Innovation Consultant

Measure what matters

Avoid vanity metrics. I've seen managers create impressively complex dashboards but ultimately the purpose was to make the management team look good. Presentations and dashboards can be useful tools but they must be transparent and grounded in reality.

Measuring innovation can be difficult because new projects can take years to deliver real value. If an idea takes three years to go from seed to profit, how can an organisation demonstrate value within the standard 12 month reporting period?

The answer is in incremental value delivery. Creating MVP's and launching, testing and measuring results will allow organisations to demonstrate value at more frequent intervals.



Jane Ginnever

Founder, Shift Consultancy

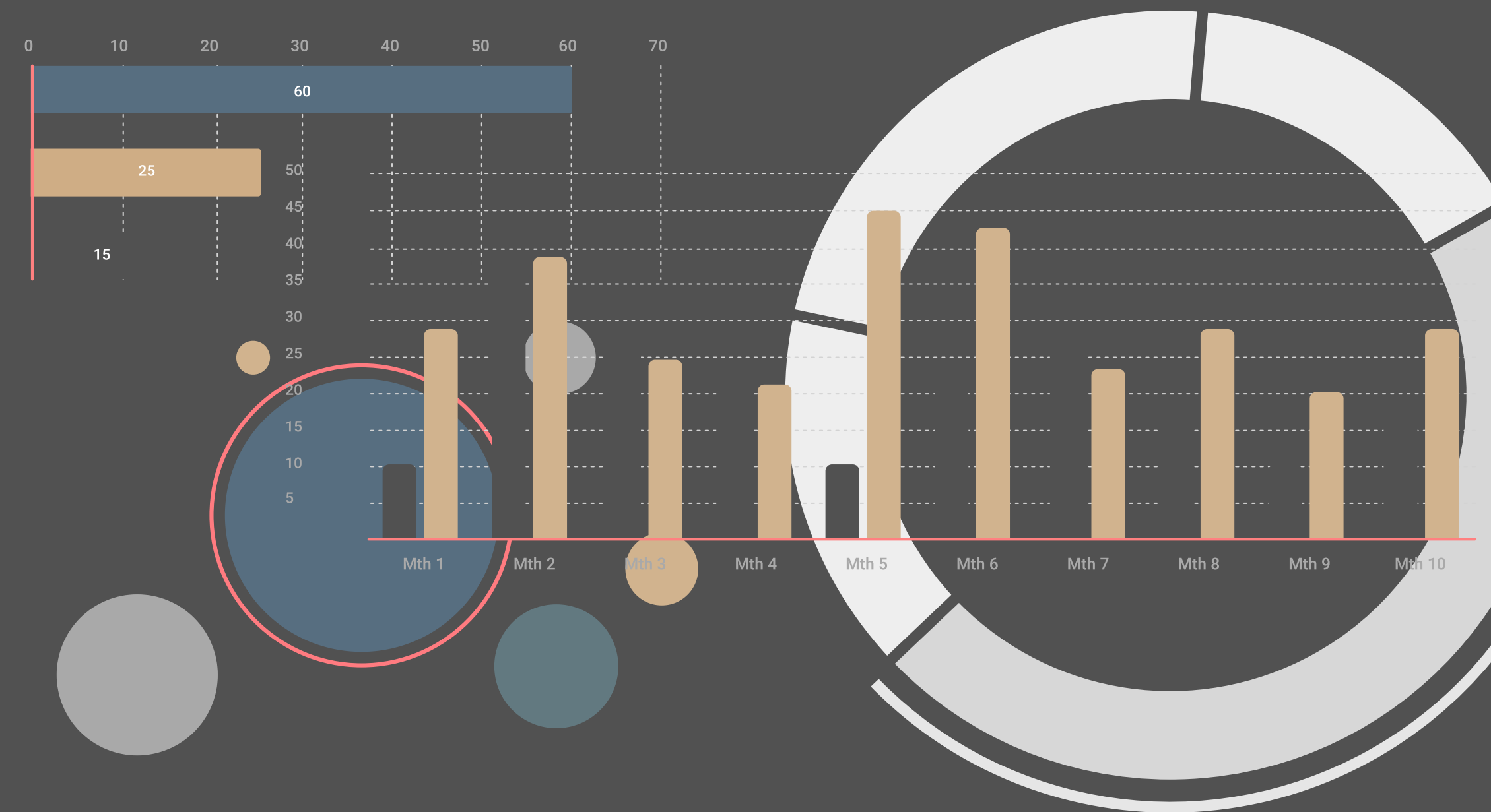
Focus on innovation outcomes

What companies often miss when looking to drive innovation is the discussion about what outcomes they're looking for. Once they're clear on the outcomes, measurement becomes much easier.

There are many potential positive outcomes from the innovation process, in addition to the new product or service you may be creating. These include improved collaboration, learning, and understanding of the aims of the business, so be clear on what outcomes you want and measure whether those are being achieved.

How can Solverboard help prove the value of innovation?

- Align your ideas to the organisation's strategic objectives
- Measure current and projected value for every project
- Track your progress against project milestones aligned to your project management frameworks
- Mine the platform's data to create specific innovation metrics or KPIs



Find out more at solverboard.com

Nearly **54%** of respondents to an Innovation Leader survey work at organisations where innovation metrics are not fully defined, while **12%** state that their organisation's approach to measuring innovation was "non-existent".

Forbes, Innovation Can Absolutely, Positively Be Measured. Four Tips From The Pros For Doing It Right, April 2021.

02

Getting senior management to support new initiatives


Leaders are under enormous pressure to deliver short-term results - their jobs depend on it.

Their decisions are scrutinised by everyone - their peers, the board, stakeholders, shareholders, employees - not to mention their clients and customers. As a result, they tend to be fairly risk-averse.

But a degree of uncertainty and risk are fundamental parts of the innovation process. As a result, leadership can be resistant to new ideas and ways of working, opting instead to sail a steady ship within the harbour walls.

Yet senior support for innovation is essential. Without it, you'll struggle to secure investment and change the way the organisation behaves. Ultimately, as the senior team sets the tone for the whole organisation, you'll need them on-side if you want to take the rest of the business on your journey.

So whether your leaders are onboard with innovation or resistant to change, getting them on side is about seeing things from their perspective and framing the opportunity and the risk in the right way.



"I'm trying to encourage the business to be more accepting of risk in innovation, and there's a bit of a journey to go on there. I'd love them to understand that failure isn't really a failure, it's an ability to learn some lessons so you can do it better next time."

Innovation Manager, Healthcare

Over to our experts...



Rob Sheffield

Director, Bluegreen Learning

Show how innovation supports long-term viability

Senior managers are usually focussed on the current organisational model and how it's performing. Innovation is about developing new models, so you can end up in a 'business-as-usual versus innovation' situation. However, both are possible, and the organisations that do both well often have 'ambidextrous' qualities.

Senior managers will support innovation when it resonates with the sustainability of your organisation. Crises, predictions, scenario planning, horizon scanning can all help to nurture a sense of urgency around innovation.



David Richmond

Innovation Consultant

Clearly define innovation and reward support

Innovation 'strategy' doesn't always translate well to actionable plans – it's hard to define. So when an organisation says that they are going to be 'innovative', middle and senior management teams don't always have enough direction to implement that strategy.

Top management therefore need to clearly define what is meant by 'innovation' and what the outcomes look like. They must also provide some guidance into the types of technical innovation that should be prioritised.

It's also important for senior managers to provide space for others to innovate. Rather than use the Google approach of giving employees a day a week to innovate, managers should be measured and assessed on their contribution to innovation.



Jane Ginnever

Founder, Shift Consultancy

Start small and build

Keep initiatives small and use prototypes to prove the concept in the first instance.

Seek evidence from a variety of sources that the initiative could deliver, including the results of your trial. Then request support to develop the initiatives that achieved the outcomes you were looking for. We can learn a lot from innovating in this way – from what doesn't work as well as what does.



Chris Potts

Enterprise Innovation Consultant

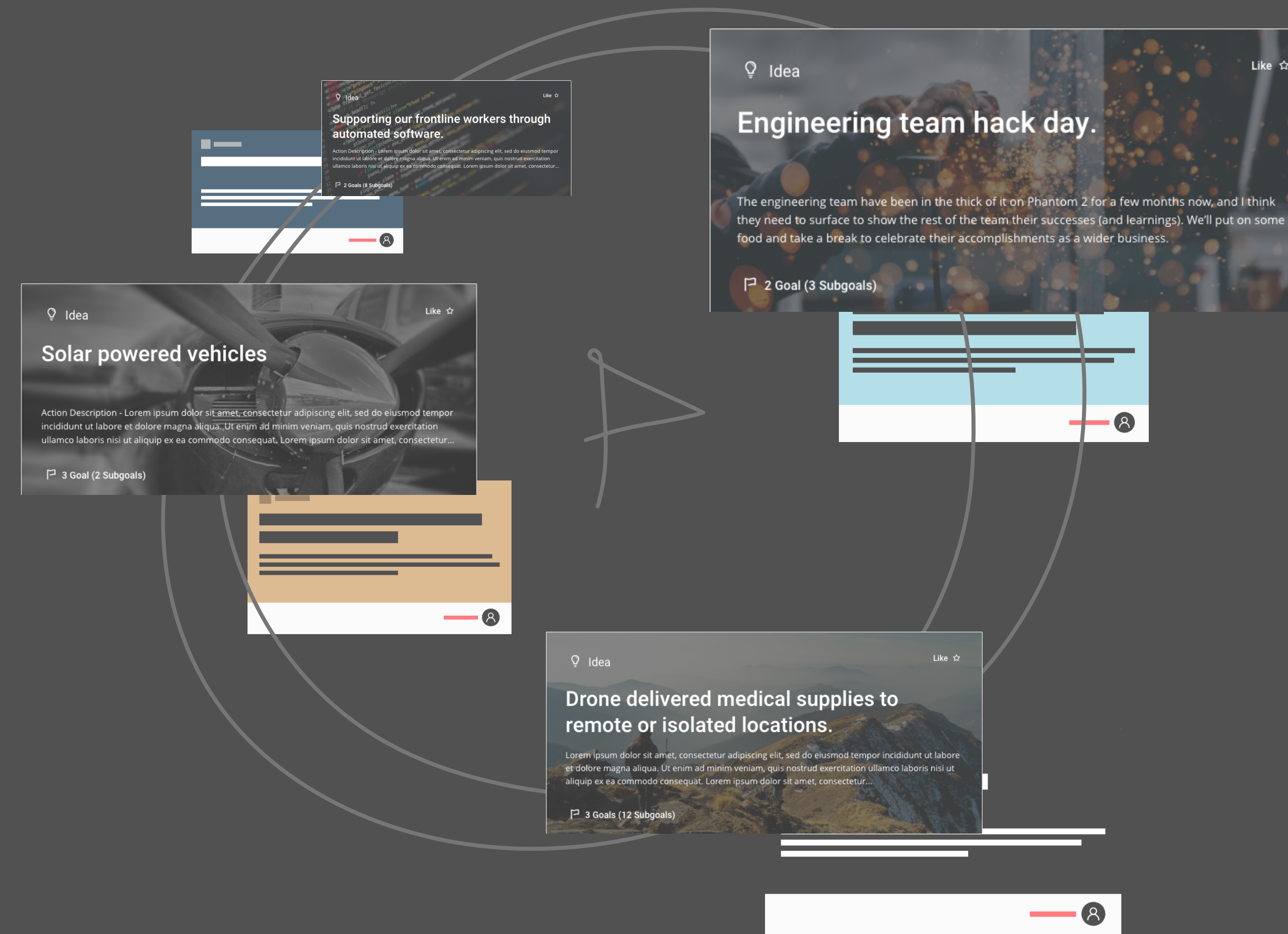
Facilitate the 'optioneering' of alternative ideas

There are usually multiple options for achieving the same outcomes. Some ideas will be more creative, risky or unfamiliar than others, so it's essential for senior managers to explore the pros-and-cons of innovating - especially where the resulting changes could have a significant impact on the success of the enterprise as a whole.

Facilitating the choice between alternative ideas is an essential capability in building support for innovation, and for the success of the changes that happen as a result.

How can Solverboard help win senior management support?

- Rapidly test ideas to garner early management buy-in
- Capture and communicate your vision for innovation
- Cluster ideas around key objectives and goals
- Easily create custom dashboards showcasing innovation progress and value
- Calculate and track project ROI and NPV
- Streamline project delivery by using proven and customisable workflows



Find out more at solverboard.com

90% of organisations that outperform their innovation outcomes show clear C-suite ownership of the innovation agenda.

Boston Consulting Group, *Overcoming the Innovation Readiness Gap*, April 2021.

03

Getting employees to embrace innovation

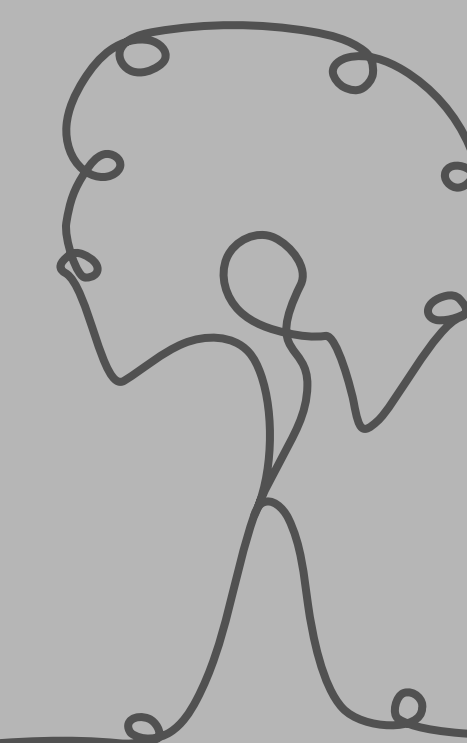
Changing people's behaviour is tough. In fact, according to IBM, only 20% of organisations are successful in managing change effectively**. This is because those behaviours are deeply-ingrained and habitual, and nowhere is this more true than at work.

When people try to change how we work and what we do, our knee-jerk response can be to resist and revert back to what we know and what is easiest.

This is especially true when the alternative, the new way of doing something, requires additional work or effort, as it often does in the innovation space. Learning new skills is hard and, for some employees, pretty intimidating.

Employees may also worry that introducing new technologies or ways of working might, in the end, lead to redundancies, as management find faster and cheaper ways to automate tasks that used to be done manually.

Whatever the cause, fear of the unknown is a powerful motivator and can be hard to overcome. Getting employees to support and participate in change is about seeing things from their perspective and involving them in the process as much as possible.



"I'm trying to shift the organisation to work in a service design, user-centred way."

Innovation Leader, Charity

"How do we upskill the workers that we've got to enable them to go into roles for the future?"

Head of Innovation & Insight, Professional Services

Over to our experts...



Rob Sheffield

Director, Bluegreen Learning

Focus on making employees' lives easier

My experience with employees is that they usually want to get involved and contribute creative ideas. They may be disillusioned because of poor innovation practices in the past, such as submitting ideas to which no-one replied!

Make sure that new ideas are focused on making life better for customers, employees, or other stakeholders. Articulate the case for change. Give power and authority to groups close to the problem – they'll have the data and understand the need best.



Chris Potts

Enterprise Innovation Consultant

Factor in employee reaction when choosing the best changes to invest in

Whether, and how, people will embrace a new way of working is a critical factor in choosing ideas. That is, very often, the essential change we are investing in, and where our innovation focus most needs to be. Otherwise all the time, energy and money that goes into projects can too-easily be wasted.

Make sure that people's readiness to innovate drives how changes are selected, designed, costed and implemented. For example, if your organisation uses Business Cases to choose which ideas to invest in, are they focused more on what happens after implementation, or before?



David Richmond

Innovation Consultant

Involve the entire organisation in innovation

Make innovation part of everyone's job from day one. Constant change and a continuous improvement mindset must be built into the culture of the organisation.

There are some parts of the organisation that lend themselves more readily to innovation. Developing innovation skills and capabilities in these areas should be prioritised.

For instance, marketing, product development, IT and R&D must be continually exposed to new tech, new methods (such as agile) and encouraged to integrate what they have learned into their roles.



Jane Ginnever

Founder, Shift Consultancy

Get employees involved

Share the outcomes you're looking for and involve people in developing the new ways of working that will enable them.

I have never come across a company where the employees couldn't see ways to make the business work better for the customer, but their ideas can often be ignored and they can feel unable or unwilling to initiate the change.

Be open about what you're looking to achieve and welcome people into the conversation. When people see that it is possible to make a difference, they will be more open to sharing ideas and getting involved.

How can Solverboard help employees embrace innovation?

- Capture, store and organise ideas from across the entire organisation and ensure that none get lost
- Create teams around specific goals or projects and coordinate their input
- Create consistent and reliable innovation processes that are easy for employees to participate in



Find out more at solverboard.com

Since the start of 2020, empowering a remote workforce has been important to **61%** of CEOs - recognising that “driving flexibility and delivering innovation” can only be realised if this happens.

IBM, Find your essential - How to thrive in a post-pandemic reality, 2021.

04


Lack of structure throughout the idea generation and implementation process

Innovation is about exploring the unknown and finding new ways of working and creating. You can't do either of those things unless you allow for a bit of unpredictability.

However, that unpredictability needs to be managed in order to produce consistent results. Senior management want outcomes they can depend on and people are unlikely to get involved in projects which look chaotic.

Enterprise innovators need to find a balance between adherence to process and freedom to explore that can enable innovation without stifling it. Every project is different, but they should be fundamentally managed in a way that is consistent.

By establishing a clear and repeatable process for innovation, you make it easier for leadership to support what you're doing and employees to participate.



"I'd love for senior management to understand that innovation should just be a consistent, ongoing system."

Head of IT Transformation, Retail

"The process of taking a new product idea through requirements gathering to getting the board to sign off gets a bit sticky."

Editorial Director, Publishing

Over to our experts...



David Richmond
Innovation Consultant

Balance process and creativity

There is a balance to be struck here. Sometimes structure can get in the way of the natural flow of ideas. Following a process for innovation can make it too formal and interrupt the natural conversation and flow of idea development.

It's important to be flexible with structure and allow for a natural flow of ideas. When we start asking creative people to fill in forms and justify ideas we are effectively pouring cold water on the process. It's a tricky situation, but one solution is to get the right mix of skills on the project team. Let creative people create while more process-oriented people can capture, record and report.

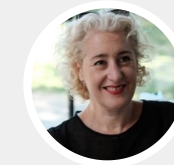


Rob Sheffield
Director, Bluegreen Learning

Support agility and learning

Most organisations don't have a process for innovation. This makes idea development unnecessarily chaotic and dependent on heroics from individuals. Often people just give up – this lost goodwill is the invisible cost of failure and it has a huge demoralising effect.

There are plenty of process examples from different sectors. The key is to balance structure, empowerment and support with agility and learning. Anyone who's struggling with innovation process should read "Managing Innovation: integrating technological, market and organizational change" by John Bessant and Joe Tidd.



Jane Ginnever
Founder, Shift Consultancy

Create a shared sense of ownership

Structure can help guide the way people collaborate on innovation and ensure that everyone feels able to have an input. It makes the process more open and so people can observe and get involved when they're ready and feel they have something to contribute.

A good structure also helps build trust and develops understanding too, so there can be more of a sense of shared ownership of the innovations that result from it.



Chris Potts
Enterprise Innovation Consultant

Use one end-to-end and 'method-proof' investment process

If your organisation is unstructured, inconsistent, inefficient, or delivery-method-driven when investing in change, that's a vital focus for innovation.

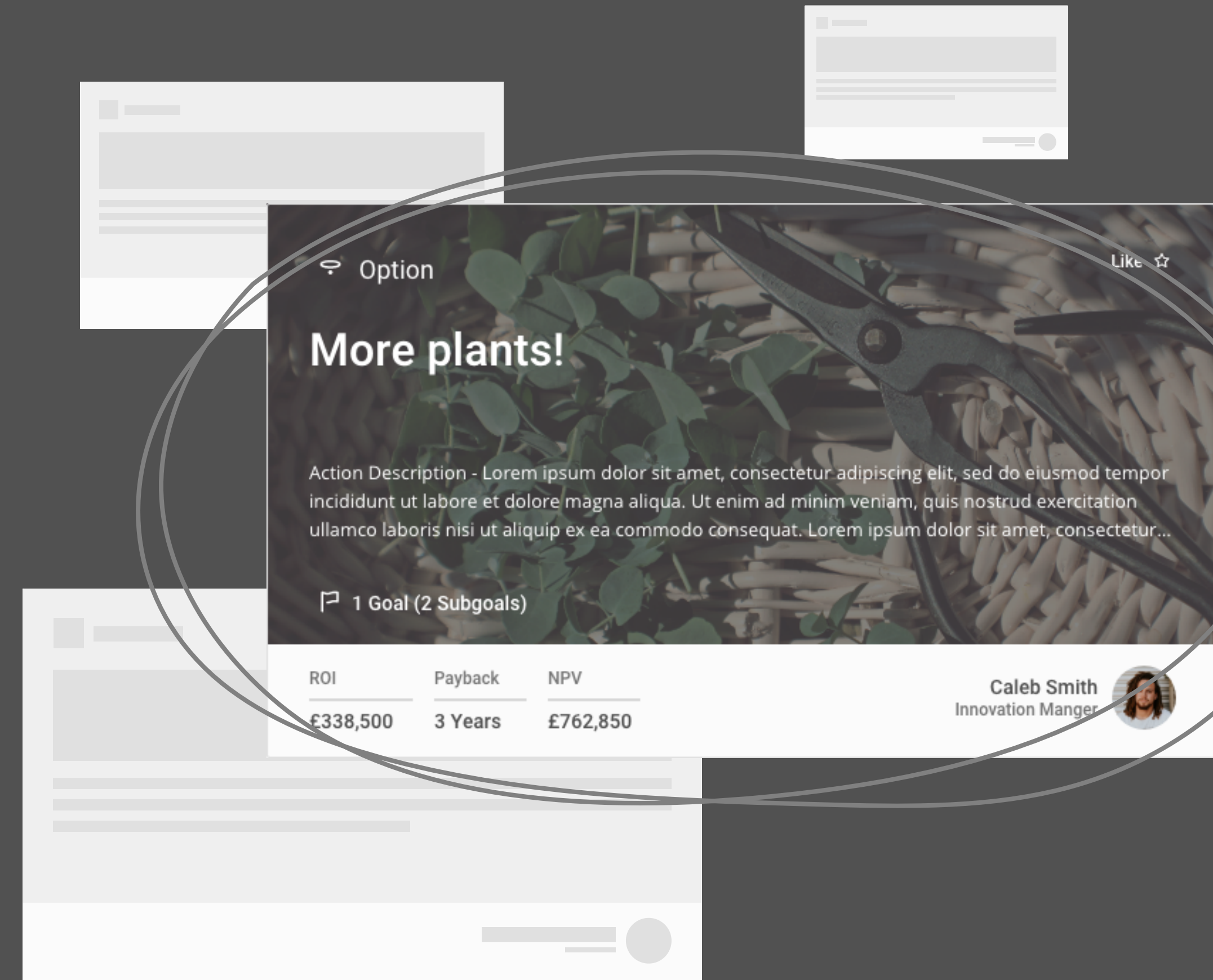
The end-to-end process of turning ideas into outcomes is core to the success of every enterprise. It's an investment process, driven by achieving our goals, at the speed that we need to, and with the least possible-risks and resources.

Development is an essential step in the process, but not its primary purpose. And, as the diversity of delivery methods expands (informal changes, waterfall, agile, scaled agile, continuous, etc.), the need for an outcomes-driven and method-proof process for innovation and investment is becoming increasingly obvious.

How can Solverboard help develop a proven innovation process?

- Align workflows with recognised frameworks or your own business processes
- Integrate with other project management tools
- Easily capture and share learnings
- Track approvals and the level of support for different ideas
- Define your scope at the outset and track budgets as you go
- Create an end-to-end workflow with a complete audit trails

Find out more at solverboard.com



Nearly **59%** of respondents describe their innovation efforts as ad hoc or emerging, while under **13%** perceive that their innovation programmes are integrated or optimised.

Innovation Leader and KPMG, *Benchmarking Innovation Impact 2020 report*, September 2019

05

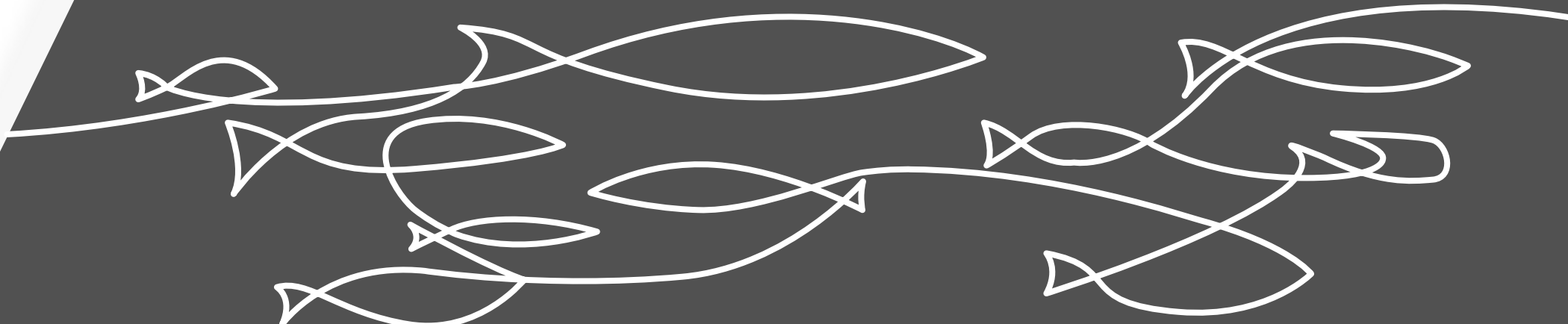
Changing the organisational culture and status quo to support innovation

The innovation team is there to champion innovation, but for innovation to really flourish, the entire organisation needs to take part. People should embrace new ideas and support experimentation, no matter what team or department they're in.

If the rest of the business isn't open to new ideas, the scope and impact of the innovation team's efforts will be severely limited. It's no good having isolated pockets of support when the organisation at large is set in its ways.

Organisations which are culturally wary of - or opposed to - new ideas will not only be slow to adapt, they will struggle to attract and hold onto people who are drawn to new ideas and ways of doing things. Over time, this cycle becomes self-reinforcing. Organisations which are set in their ways attract people who are also set in their ways and repel those who thrive on change and dynamism.

By contrast, a culture which is positive, agile and open to change will be more dynamic and better able to capitalise on new opportunities. But how can enterprise innovators encourage others outside of their team to support innovation and foster a more innovative culture?



"If the engagement levels aren't right and the culture isn't right in the organisation, then you're off to a losing start."

Commercial Director, Engineering

Over to our experts...



Rob Sheffield

Director, Bluegreen Learning

Encourage open and honest conversation

I think of culture as the conversations people have, (and don't have), and how this manifests in behaviour.

Culture can seem so overwhelming that people don't know where to start. I'd generally start by talking to senior managers about the quality of conversation in the organisation. Do people say what's on their mind? Get people from different layers of the organisation involved in this. Use a climate for innovation questionnaire, like the Situational Outlook Questionnaire to give some thorough feedback. Set clear areas for action.



Chris Potts

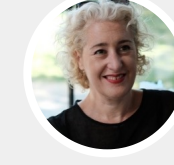
Enterprise Innovation Consultant

Focus innovation and investment on specific gaps in your culture

Every enterprise culture has an in-built inertia (direction and speed) which is both the reason it has succeeded and a potentially powerful constraint. It's an area where our capabilities as innovators may be the most tested.

When there are gaps between our existing culture and what it needs to be, it's vital we diagnose them precisely, and how they are interrelated. Focus on characteristics that we can observe in practice, and validate our diagnosis before acting on it. Choose and invest in highly-targeted ideas, and expect some to work better than others. If the organisation's inertia appears to be winning, it's time to rethink our tactics.

Being dynamic and determined innovators can have a significant impact on the organisation's culture, as long as we stay sharp about the details that matter.



Jane Ginnever

Founder, Shift Consultancy

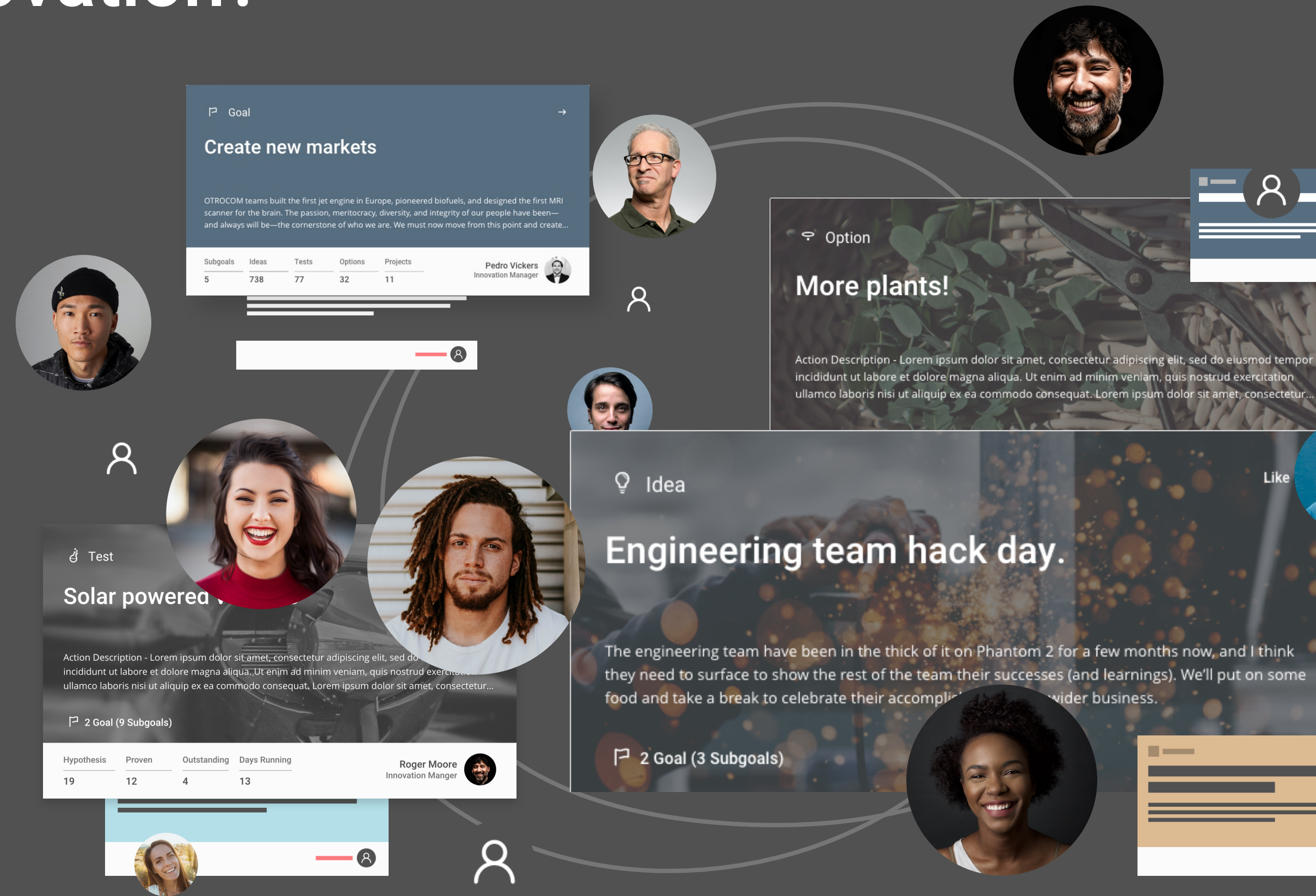
Hire and support staff who counter the status quo

Having different conversations within the business about change and innovation can in itself begin to change culture. If culture is all about 'how we do things around here', making even small changes to the way things are done can initiate change, but some of them can take a while to bear fruit.

If you're keen to make change happen but aren't getting traction in the team, a useful way to really accelerate this process is to look for people who are more comfortable challenging the way things are done when you're hiring, and then encouraging them to do that once in post. When others see that their challenges are being welcomed, even though they're new in post, they are more likely to mirror that behaviour as it will feel safer to do so.

How can Solverboard help create a culture of openness and innovation?

- Capture and share your vision for innovation and the role it plays in creating future value
- Encourage participation by crowdsourcing ideas from across the organisation
- Build teams around key challenges and manage their input
- Create an always-on innovation pipeline to keep your organisation working towards its goals



Find out more at solverboard.com

59% of respondents state that “company culture or entrenched attitudes” is one of the biggest challenges they encounter when they need to innovate to scale.

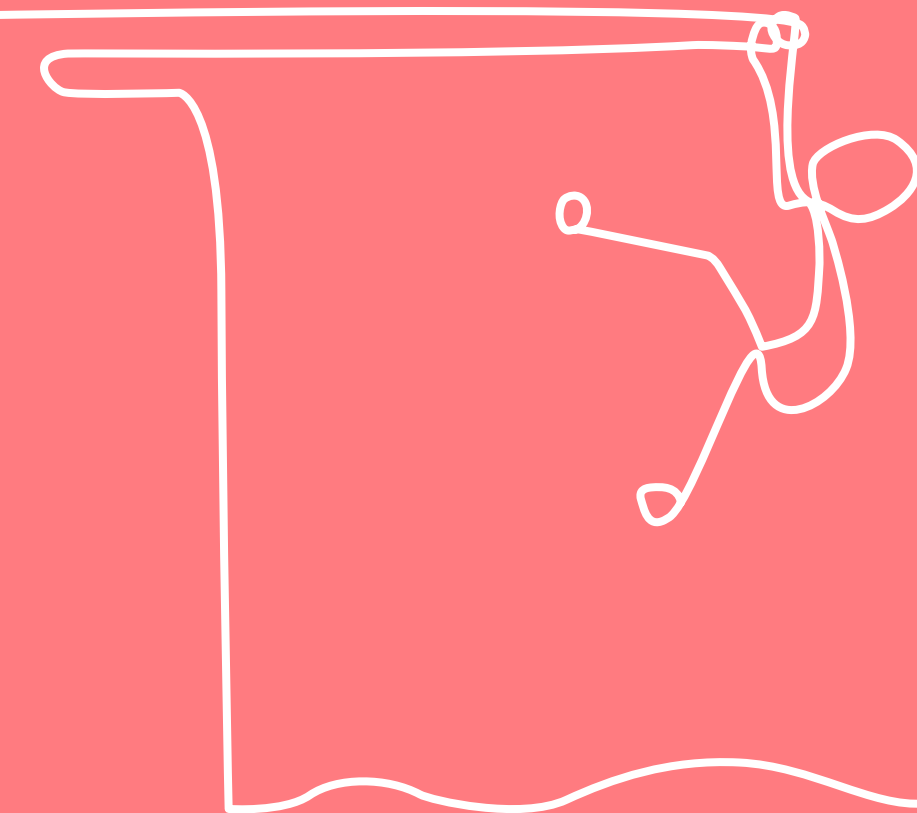
Innovation Leader and KPMG, *Benchmarking Innovation Impact 2020 report*, September 2019

Fear of failure

Every time you prototype an idea, there's a chance that you might realise it isn't viable. Uncertainty is part of the innovation process. Some organisations are more comfortable with this than others.

Often the most innovative and creative ideas are ones that don't have any historical precedent. This uncertainty can lead to innovation being stifled, especially if people don't feel comfortable taking risks and investing in ideas which may or may not yield results.

So how can innovation teams help their organisations to embrace uncertainty and see failure in a more positive light?



Over to our experts...



Arend Welmers
CEO - Ninety Days

Avoid autocratic or heavy-handed management.

Where there is fear of failure in any organization, in my experience, it's frequently indicative of a failure of leadership and management. When there is no space to take risks, when new ideas are not welcomed, people quickly learn to only bring their hands, and not their hearts and minds to work. People learn that disagreeing with the boss or other senior executives is not acceptable. So, you get what you deserve – compliance, but not a lot of added value, no ownership and no accountability. And very quickly you've created a culture where there is a fear of failure.

Leaders and employees need to understand that disagreement is not the same as conflict. The more possibilities we consider the more likely we are to identify the best solutions to our business problems and opportunities.



Katherine Allan
Founder - KSK Consulting

Define what success and failure really mean

Fear of failure can be a symptom of a more common challenge: "Will I be able to demonstrate a return on my investment"?

That investment could be money, time, effort or focus.

A lot of businesses struggle to define success and failure. Is it really a failure if we were doing nothing, decided to try something and can now successfully discount it as an option?

Rather than saying: 'I won't try if I can't see the outcome I want'. We should say: "I will try to work towards an outcome that I desire, which could see me try several iterations along the way to find the most suitable outcome for the business."



Johannah Randall
Director - Start Up Rail

Reframe failure by showing how experimentation reduces risk

I am not sure if this is fear of failure or so much as fear of being blamed. Sometimes it's easier to do nothing because you can't be told off for doing that. This can ultimately slow down decision-making and lead to a lot of governance being required.

How to solve this?

1. Develop innovation skills
2. Create safe spaces for people to be creative and innovate
3. Reframe 'failure' by showing how ideation, prototyping and failing quickly reduces risk



Cris Beswick
Strategic advisor & corporate coach

Leaders need to show that risk is part of the process

Fear of failure around innovation is typically down to two core issues. Either fear of innovation activity failing due to past experiences, or lack of understanding of how to adopt an innovation-led approach.

Leaders need to show that risk is part of the organisational approach to innovation, part of the accepted process and part of learning. They first need to understand and accept the necessity of exploration, experimentation, assumption testing and validation, all of which come with an element of risk. The end goal is a fully formed and pragmatic end-to-end innovation process.



Tim Stiven
Leader in energy and infrastructure

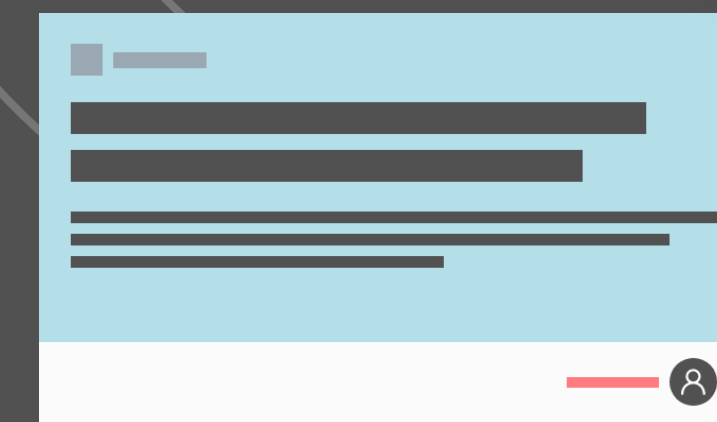
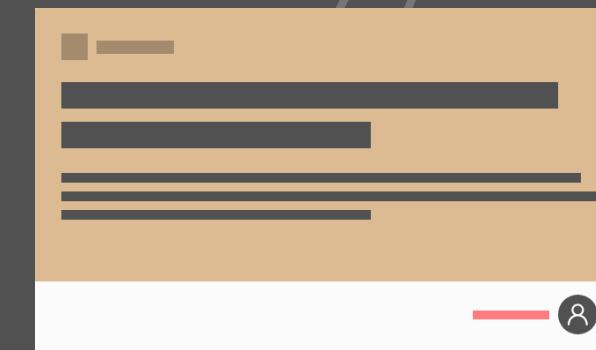
Fear of failure stems from leadership and culture

I'd call this a leadership and culture issue. Organisations don't fear failure if they have a clear purpose and sense of direction, coupled with high levels of trust and a tolerance for uncertainty.

If you don't have those things, then you have fear of failure.

How can Solverboard help overcome fear of failure?

- Create a digital 'safe space' for innovation
- Clearly measure and demonstrate the value and ROI of innovation
- Reduce uncertainty by sticking to a proven and repeatable workflow
- Embed testing and learning into the organisation's innovation culture



Test Like

Solar powered vehicles

Action Description - Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur.

2 Goal (9 Subgoals)

Hypothesis	Proven	Outstanding	Days Running
19	12	4	13

Roger Moore
Innovation Manger

Find out more at solverboard.com

Innovation failure rates are high - often as high as **90%**. Without accepting that risk is inevitable, innovation is unlikely to happen.

Forbes, *How To Think Rigorously About Innovation*, June 2021

07

Conflicting goals within the organisation

A common challenge in large organisations is conflicting goals, overlapping remits and a lack of consensus around the long-term vision that everyone is working towards.

This is particularly problematic for innovation teams, who should always be working towards long-term strategic goals, often across multiple teams.

This lack of alignment can lead to projects fizzling out or time and money being invested into ideas which aren't a strategic priority.

How can enterprise innovators help their organisations to identify and agree upon high-priority goals?



Over to our experts...



Cris Beswick

Strategic advisor & corporate coach

More effective metrics will improve goal setting

Oversimplified metrics more suited to traditional business strategy are a common cause of conflicting goals, alongside a narrow view that innovation is purely about new products and their associated revenue.

However, when a macro innovation strategy is developed and aligned to the corporate growth strategy, it should contain a range of deliverable and associated metrics and criteria for ROI aligned to each part of the business.

For example, a global sales director will undoubtedly want innovation to deliver growth, and so they should.

However, a global HR director will be more concerned by the acquisition and retention of talent, as well as reducing recruitment costs and driving employee engagement.

The pursuit of innovation is critical to both of them but in different ways and with different metrics. So, an innovation strategy would map this out and provide clarity on the desired outcomes.



Johannah Randall

Director - Start Up Rail

Goals should be aligned with customer needs

Something I see is a lot of focus on profit, revenue and growth and not enough on customer needs and adding value.

Perhaps now is a good time to restore the balance? Maybe companies can use this crisis to focus more on what is important and align their goals with the rest of society.



Tim Stiven

Leader in energy and infrastructure

It's important to understand the purpose of innovation

Businesses need to have a sense of purpose and a definition of the place that they're trying to reach and the time frame they're working to.

They should also be able to express what role innovation plays in making that happen.



Arend Welmers

CEO - Ninety Days

Introducing new management systems will change behaviour

One of the first things I do when I'm working with leadership teams is to get them to start working together – rather than just meeting together! By sitting and working together to resolve major organisational problems, leadership teams very quickly are able to identify business priorities and spot where departmental goals appear to be in conflict.

The problem stems from the way in which we've learned to work in organisations. Most (not all) organisations are structured hierarchically and arranged in functional silos. The result of this often is narrow self-interest and internal competition for scarce resources. When you change (in this way) the management system, where the leadership team now has to work together, you also change the behaviours of that team, reduce the impact of what I term "functional thinking" and reduce the likelihood of departmental goals conflicting.



Katherine Allan

Founder - KSK Consulting

Business as usual and innovation goals should be interlinked

I often find that businesses separate business as usual and innovation into two distinct camps. The assumption being that business as usual doesn't involve change and innovation isn't part of business as usual.

I don't agree with that.

Quantifying the desired outcome of all initiatives, whether they're innovation or not, and ranking them in terms of priority can help people to see that innovation and business as usual are interwoven.



Bastiaan Saris

Divisional Head of Innovation EMEA and APAC, Molson Coors

Establish an 'innovation board'

This is a key challenge.

All too often senior leaders are not setting the right goals to lead their teams towards a shared outcome. I've seen too many projects suffer because of this.

A great fix is having an "innovation board" that includes the executive team and CEO. Project progress is presented as well as all the barriers and conflicts. This is a great way to achieve alignment and push projects through.

How can Solverboard help to overcome conflicting goals?

- Set long-term strategic goals for your team to work towards
- Identify ideas that align with your strategic goals and filter those that don't
- Assign ownership of specific goals to individuals or teams so everyone knows who is accountable for their delivery



A screenshot of the Solverboard interface. The main card is titled 'Goal' and 'Create new markets'. Below the title is a paragraph of text: 'OTROCOM teams built the first jet engine in Europe, pioneered biofuels, and designed the first MRI scanner for the brain. The passion, meritocracy, diversity, and integrity of our people have been—and always will be—the cornerstone of who we are. We must now move from this point and create.' Below the text is a table with columns for Subgoals, Ideas, Tests, Options, and Projects. The values are 5, 738, 77, 32, and 11 respectively. To the right of the table is the name 'Pedro Vickers' and the title 'Innovation Manager' with a small profile picture. The interface is overlaid on a background of other blurred interface elements and a person icon.



Find out more at solverboard.com

Across **eight** different surveyed industries, only pharma and medical execs state that innovation is their number 1 or 2 priority today, compared with pre-pandemic.

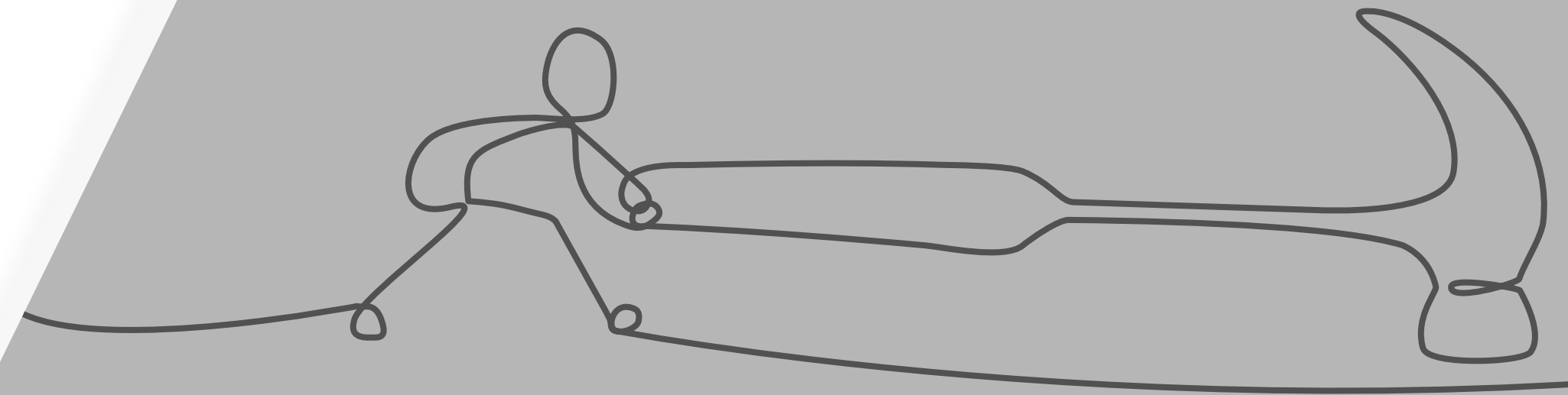
McKinsey, *Innovation in a crisis: why it is more critical than ever*, June 2020.

Lack of innovation skills

Most organisations recognise the importance of innovation, but relatively few invest time and money in building their innovation skills base. It's often assumed that some people are innovative and creative and some people aren't.

This can lead to unreliable processes and a lack of engagement with new ideas and initiatives across the business.

How can innovation teams help their organisations to build their innovation capability and improve their own performance?



Over to our experts...



Katherine Allan
Founder - KSK Consulting

Bring other people into the innovation process

I think the real issue here is a lack of understanding of where innovation sits and how it operates as a key component of the business.

Everyone has the capacity to contribute innovative ideas, be they tangible projects or conversation starters. Not everyone can successfully run an innovation project or communicate its intentions and progress.

In my opinion, this lack of understanding can leave innovation departments undervalued, misunderstood or poorly-supported.

A suggested remedy for this is to invite input from all parties and maintain an open dialogue between the innovation team, the wider business and the stakeholders. This combats preconceptions, increases buy-in and improves the potential opportunities for the business.



Arend Welmers
CEO - Ninety Days

Source ideas from outside of your organisation

Organisations do need to invest in training skills such as analytical thinking, complex problem-solving, systems-thinking and ideation strategies. These are altogether uncommon disciplines available to organisations from within.

Clearly, innovation is different from having ideas. But if you don't have the critical innovation skills in your organisation, together with a system or process for managing those ideas you don't have sustainable innovation.

If you have those skills within the organisation you may still have a problem if it's a closed system. Businesses need to look outside of their 'box' and include customers, suppliers, people from a wide variety of backgrounds and from different industries in their innovation efforts.



Cris Beswick
Strategic advisor & corporate coach

'Innovating' and 'being innovative' are different things

The shortage of the specific skills required for driving innovation is, without a doubt, a key obstacle. In my experience, it's usually a result of an organisation not having innovation on the strategic agenda.

Where you see high investment in innovation, it's almost always as a result of innovation being strategic and aligned to the corporate growth strategy. Investment in not just skills but mindset, behaviour and capability is proportionately high.

Where I've seen lack of skills most prominently is when an organisation hasn't defined whether it wants to 'innovate' or if it wants to 'be innovative'. The latter being about organisation-wide capability and the former being about the need for quick solutions.

In this situation, organisations are typically talking about capability and culture but really just want new 'stuff' to deliver against short-term metrics. Hence, the right skills are never developed. Getting clarity on this is one of the critical first steps.



Tim Stiven
Leader in energy and infrastructure

Problem definition is a key requirement

This is a hard and soft skills issue.

Some of the most important are soft. Collaboration, creativity, encouraging diverse thinking and the ability to manage complexity and uncertainty.

On the hard skills side, one stands out in particular: problem definition. Today's problems are complex, dynamic, uncertain and often span company boundaries. Strong problem analysis allows you to understand which part of the problem to address first, which best suits your ability to act, who to partner with, and what else needs to happen in the problem space (done by others) for your innovation to succeed.



Johannah Randall
Director - Start Up Rail

Create the right environment for innovation

What are innovation skills? Does there need to be an innovation department or team? Or do we all need to "learn" to be creative, and given the space to have ideas?

A key part of this is changing the culture, as people are often told they are not creative or not an ideas person. Being creative or innovative is easier than it is made out to be, you just need the right environment.



Bastiaan Saris
Divisional Head of Innovation EMEA and APAC, Molson

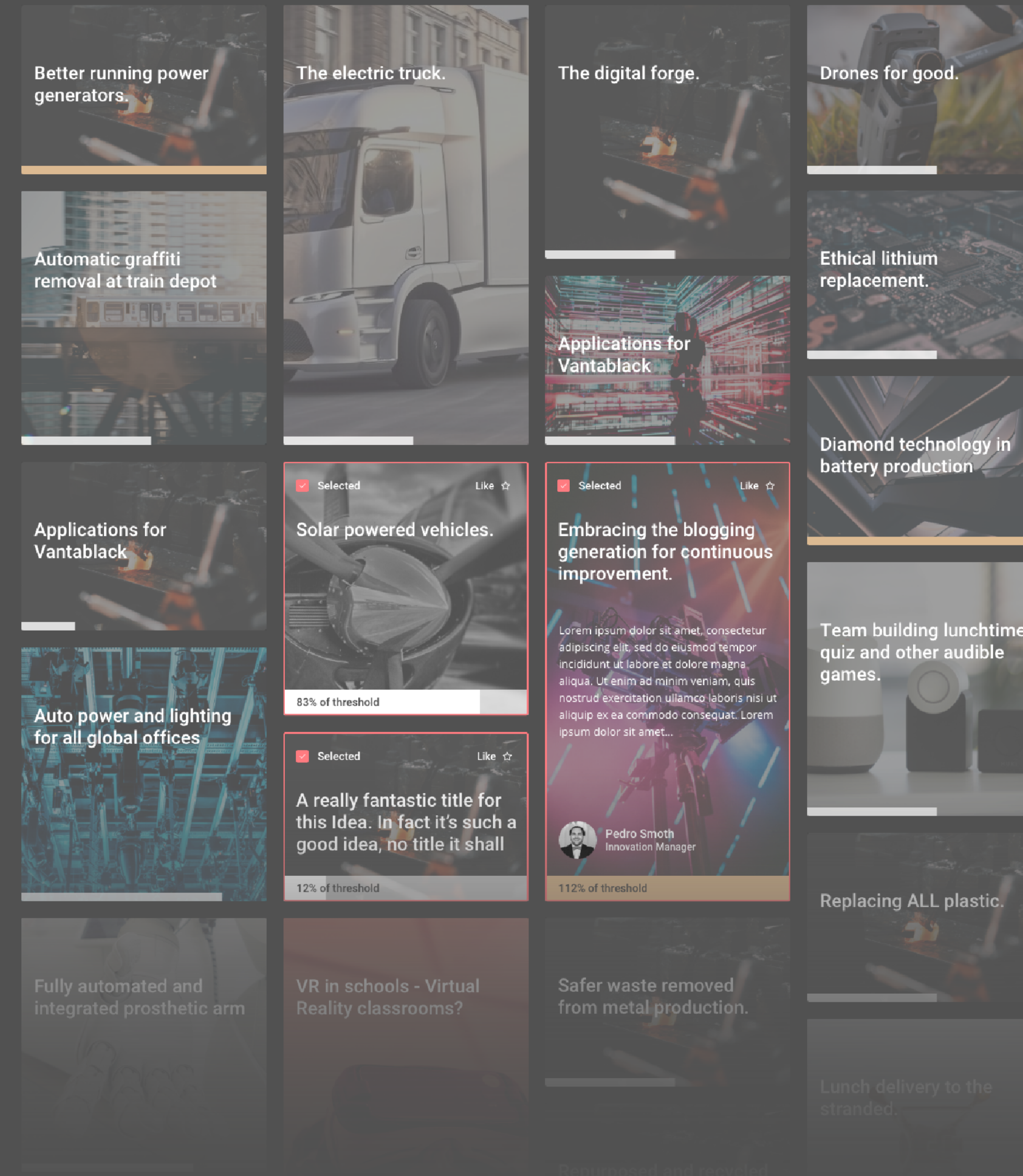
Building skills takes time - hiring the right people can speed this up

This is fairly easy to fix, but it will take time to embed new skills.

The best way to develop is through learning by doing and upgrading your skill set over time. Hiring interim staff or working with an external partner who has the experience to guide the people involved can also help.

How can Solverboard help overcome a lack of innovation skills?

- Adopt a proven and repeatable workflow founded in the latest best practice
- Measure and improve the performance of your innovation teams
- Encourage idea sharing and creativity by inviting participation across the entire organisation



Find out more at solverboard.com

Both workers and executives rank “increasing innovation” as the second most important objective of work transformation for the coming years. However, with workers prioritising “improving worker wellbeing” far more highly than executives, there is clearly still work to be done.

Deloitte, The social enterprise in a world disrupted, 2021.

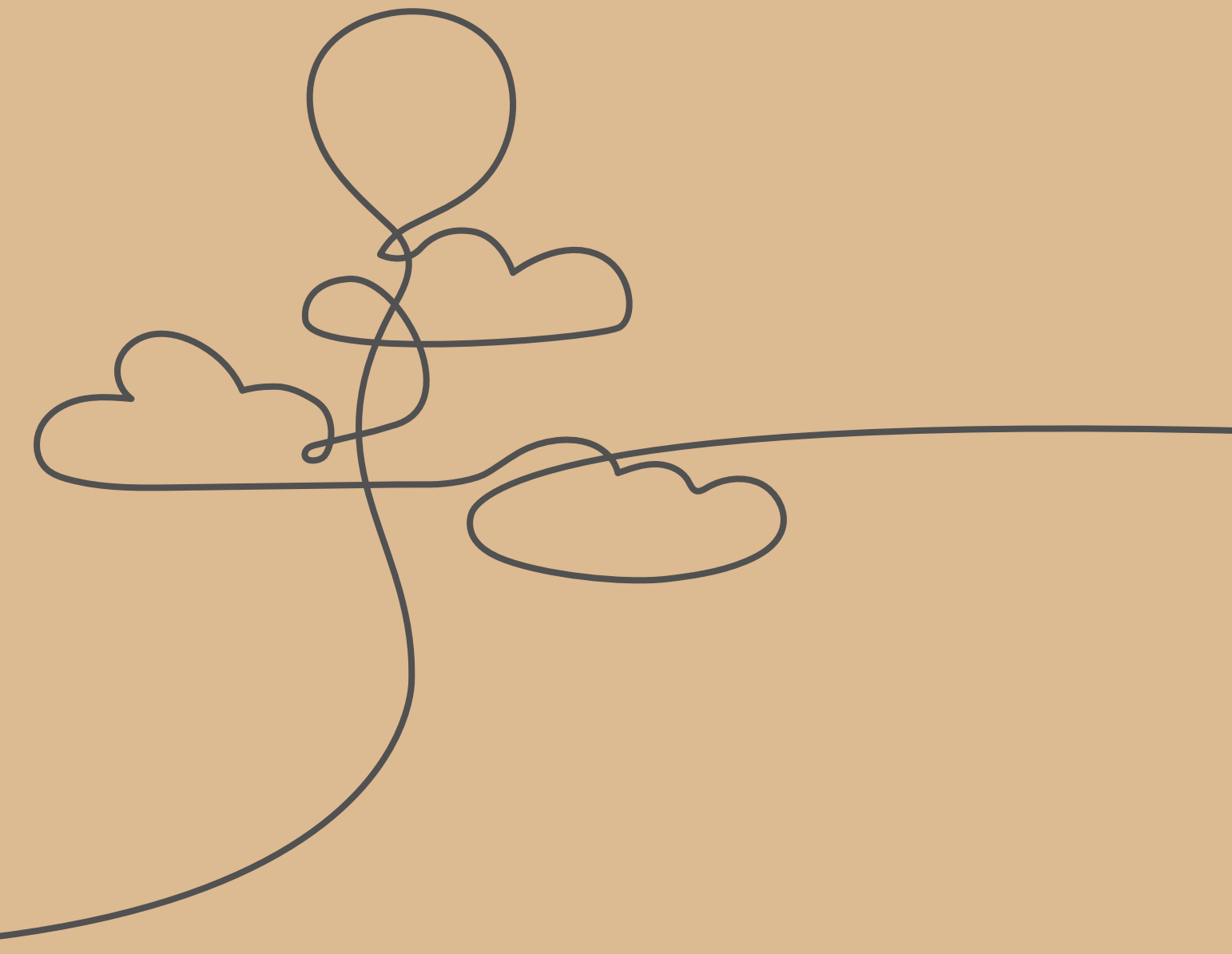
No clear definition of innovation

Innovation is a word that means different things to different people.

It's often associated with technology or confused with change management. Some people see it as coming up with radical new ideas, others see it as finding better ways to do what they've always done.

This lack of clarity can lead to breakdowns in communication and a lack of alignment around where innovation teams should focus their efforts.

So how can innovation teams help their organisation to clearly define what innovation is, why it's important and how best to support it?



Over to our experts...



Johannah Randall
Director - Start Up Rail

Innovation is turning ideas into value

The issue here can be the definition of innovation or a proper understanding of it. When we say innovation we often mean improvement or finding better ways of doing or designing things. This isn't accurate.

Innovation simply means turning ideas into value

Another problem is that everyone thinks innovation is about technology. We need to move away from this definition and start telling the real innovation story.



Katherine Allan
Founder - KSK Consulting

Define what innovation is, but also what it's not

It's important to educate the business and its staff about what innovation is, but also what it's not.

It's also useful to define the difference between innovation, change management and transformation, as well as other areas of how innovation materialises and is managed.



Arend Welmers
CEO - Ninety Days

Defining innovation is about understanding your purpose

In most organisations, people tend to think of innovation in terms of "new" products and services. But of course, you can innovate almost any aspect of your business, from the business model itself to the products and/or services you supply.

In my experience, where innovation is done inconsistently or haphazardly, or is misunderstood, it's frequently connected to the lack of a clearly articulated strategy and goals. "New" initiatives must be linked clearly to the organisation's strategy if innovation is to be well defined, understood and executable in any organisation.



Tim Stiven
Leader in energy and infrastructure

We need to get past the idea that innovation is about technology

I've wondered in the past whether the UK should create a professional institute for innovation, like we have for chartered accountants and engineers.

Innovation is a set of skills and practices that can be codified and practised. Some people disagree, they still see innovation as being about inspirational ideas and maverick thinkers.

But it definitely can and should be defined. So should the tools, methods and ways of working.

We're also addicted to the idea that innovation is about technology but it's not. It's about services, business models and in many cases policy and regulation.



Cris Beswick
Strategic advisor & corporate coach

Your definition should clarify but also falsify

This is super important, in fact, it may be THE most important question an organisation needs to answer as everything stems from this.

After all, without a definition, you can't build a strategy! The challenge is that most organisations oversimplify their interpretation to the point where it becomes too diluted and therefore of no use. For example, definitions like "The introduction of something new" are really a definition of invention, not innovation.

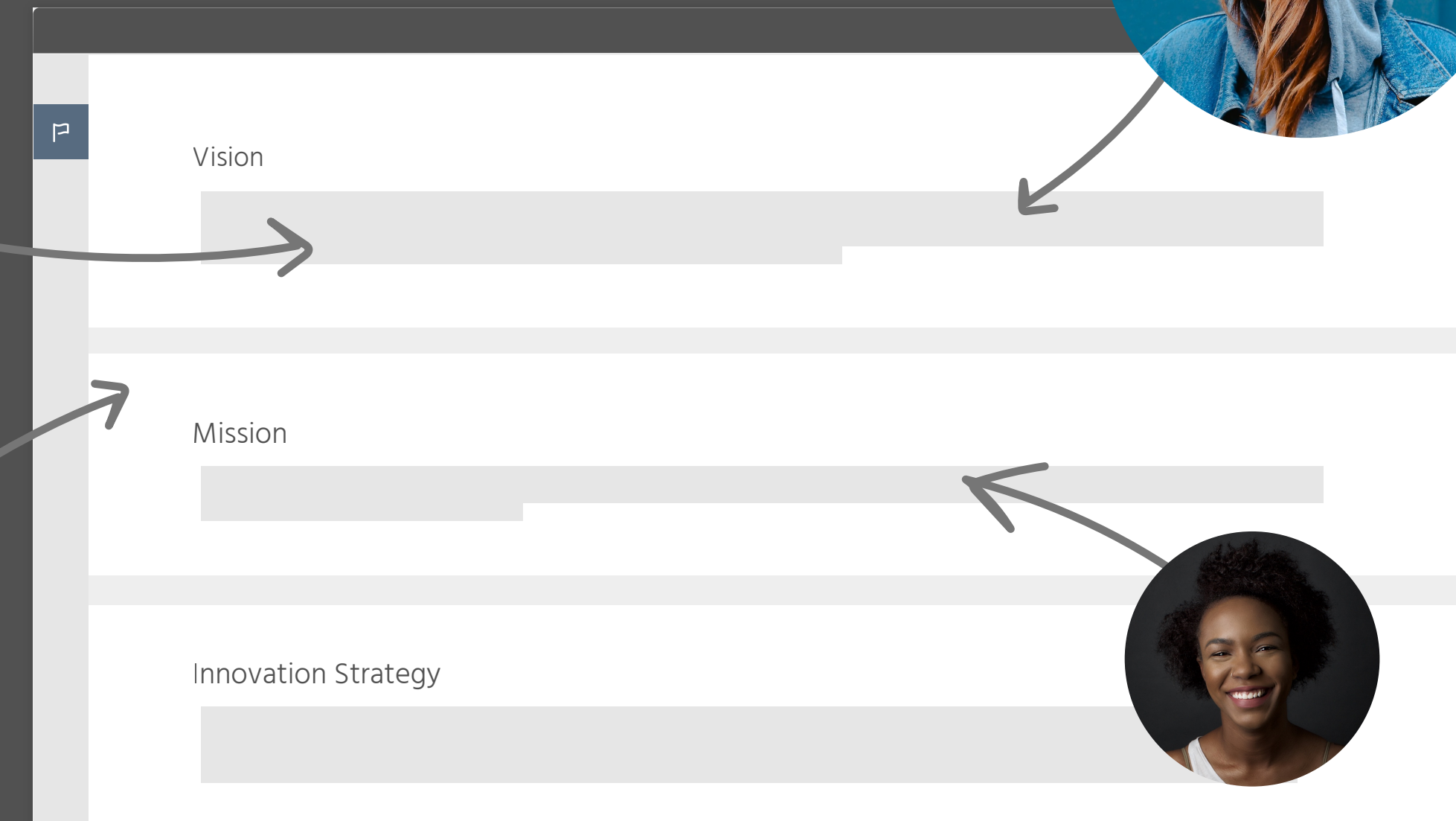
For me, a definition not only has to clarify meaning but also serve as a reference point to check against. To do that, I think a definition must have four components:

- Is it interesting?
- Is it pain relieving?
- Is it gain creating?
- And is it doable well?

The reason for the four elements is that you can use the definition as a sense-check when developing ideas, i.e. you can constantly sense-check if your idea/solution answers each of the four points.

How can Solverboard help overcome a lack of innovation skills?

- Define and communicate your vision for innovation
- Set and work towards long-term strategic objectives
- Adopt a proven innovation workflow across all projects



Find out more at solverboard.com

Nearly **59%** of respondents indicate their innovation efforts are ad hoc or emerging, with fewer than **13%** having reached a stage where their innovation programs are perceived to be integrated or optimized.

Innovation Leader and KPMG, *Benchmarking Innovation Impact 2020 report*, September 2019

10

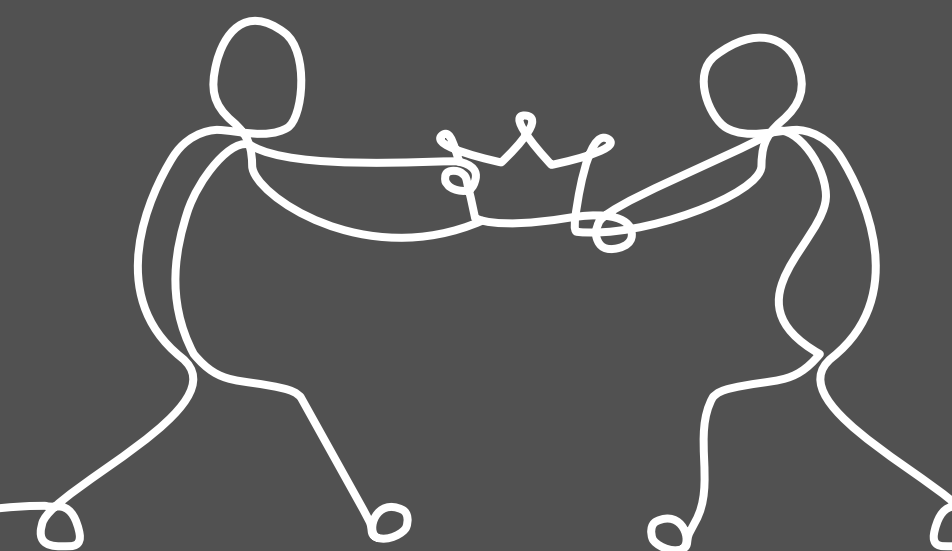
Disagreement over who owns innovation

Innovation projects tend to span multiple teams. This is intentional: interdisciplinary teams are more likely to come up with new ideas.

The innovation team will be responsible for facilitating the process and communicating progress, but responsibility for outcomes is often shared across teams.

This can lead to breakdowns in communication between teams or projects falling by the wayside because no one is ultimately accountable for their delivery.

How can innovation teams encourage ownership and accountability around innovation projects?



Over to our experts...



Cris Beswick

Strategic advisor & corporate coach

Leaders need to own the innovation agenda

The question of who is responsible for innovation in a company is a popular one. For me, it comes down to a subtle use of language and how we define 'responsible' in an organisation and how we assign 'responsibility' for the right things to the right people.

Firstly, leaders must own the innovation agenda and everything about it, both the physical 'stuff' that needs to be in place like strategy and also the emotional side, like inspiration, purpose, visibility and psychological safety.

Then they must also provide the same physical and emotional assets to allow managers to drive innovation daily. They need to bring it to life, make it part of the day-to-day.

Then finally, those leaders and managers must collaborate to enable every other employee to contribute to innovation by creating the right ecosystem and, ultimately, culture. The mindset, behaviour, habits and actions required to 'own', 'drive' and 'contribute' to innovation differ, so an innovation culture strategy is a must.



Katherine Allan

Founder - KSK Consulting

Progress requires ownership

There must be a distinction between leadership, management and contribution in terms of function. Individuals can hold multiple posts but the responsibilities and actions must be clear if there is an innovation team, by whatever name, then it is their responsibility to run the initiatives, communicate their progress, measure the impact and report to the business the outcomes along the way.

Depending on how a business is set up, there may be no innovation department or the one that exists may not communicate or educate as well as it could. Alternatively, the business may see innovation as a 'nice to have'.

To achieve progress, which may come out of investment of time or energy in innovation, there needs to be clarity around ownership and responsibility.



Bastiaan Saris

Divisional Head of Innovation EMEA and APAC, Molson Coors

Innovation should have many owners

Ultimately, it's the projects people need to have clear ownership of. Innovation as a function should not be an isolated thing, it should have many owners.



Arend Welmers

CEO - Ninety Days

Nobody thinks they're responsible for innovation, but they always think someone else is

Something I call "functional thinking" can mean that people define their contribution in terms of their job title and description. And the problem with this is that it's generally only large organisations that have specialised Innovation Directors or Managers. And even then those specialist innovation directors/managers are really mainly custodians and facilitators of the innovation process.

In my view the CEO is ultimately accountable for innovation, any innovation specialist or a company director or senior manager is the architect and the facilitator of the innovation process, but everybody "owns" innovation!



Tim Stiven

Leader in energy and infrastructure

Innovation is top-down and bottom-up

You can look at innovation in two ways.

You can see it as being driven from the top down. You have people at the top saying: "Here's what we think the solution is and this is what we should do about it."

The other is from the bottom up. You let a thousand flowers bloom, encourage great diversity of ideas, test them out and see what happens.

I think a successful system will innovate from the top down and the bottom up. You do need leadership, governance and people identifying how and why change happens. But you also need the bottom up too: brilliant ideas, testing fast, adaptation, diversity of thought.



Johannah Randall

Director - Start Up Rail

Innovation needs to become part of 'business as usual'

Innovation is often seen as something that is done 'over there', within the innovation team.

Until there is maturity and everyone is responsible for goal alignment then organisations can and will dodge making improvements to the business. Innovation needs to be seen as part of 'business as usual'.

How can Solverboard help encourage accountability and ownership?

- Assign ownership of goals and projects to teams and individuals
- Create interdisciplinary teams across innovation and other departments
- Maintain an up-to-date record of all of a project's goals, actions and communications




Find out more at solverboard.com

In **72%** of 'front-runner' organisations, leaders are seen as acting as role models in displaying openness to change and adopting new behaviours

Capgemini, *The Digital Culture Challenge: Closing the Employee-Leadership Gap*, September 2018.

Key takeaways. 1

Prove the value of innovation



Clearly define innovation and your organisation's innovation strategy

Align your strategy with your organisational goals

Develop a set of innovation metrics you can use to showcase value and progress

Focus on the outcomes of

Get senior management to support innovation



Show how innovation supports the long-term viability of the organisation

Clearly define innovation and incentivise support within senior managers

Start small, demonstrate capability and build from there

Help employees embrace innovation




Focus on making employees' lives easier

Prioritise ideas that are likely to be adopted by employees across the organisation

Involve the entire organisation in innovation as much as possible

Get employees involved in the idea generation and problem-solving process

Develop a proven innovation process




Create a repeatable process without stifling experimentation

Build a flexible end-to-end process that can interface with different innovation frameworks or methods

Open up the innovation process to people outside of innovation

Create a culture of innovation and experimentation



Encourage open and honest conversation

Understand why people resist change and target those things

Hire and support staff who counter the status quo

Key takeaways. 2

Fear of failure



Avoid autocratic or heavy-handed management.

Reframe failure by showing how experimentation reduces risk.

Define what success and failure really mean.

Encourage leaders to show that risk is an acceptable part of the process.

Conflicting goals



Introduce new management systems and incentivisation.

Establish an 'innovation board'. Align your goals to customer needs.

Clearly define the purpose of innovation.

Make sure that your goals are tied back to relevant metrics.

Lack of innovation skills



Create physical and digital environments to be used for innovation.

Source ideas from outside of your organisation and bring new people into the process.

Make sure you clearly define the problem or job to be done.

Understand the difference between 'innovating' and 'being innovative'.

Hire new people who have the skills that you need.

No definition of what innovation is



Define what innovation is, but also what it's not.

Show that innovation is not about technology.

Make sure that your organisation understands the purpose of innovation.

Disagreement over who owns innovation



Make innovation part of 'business as usual'.

Innovate from the top-down and bottom-up.

Make sure your leaders own the innovation agenda.

Encourage multiple teams and people to take ownership of innovation.

Ready to try Solverboard?

From defining an innovation process to proving the value of innovation; from getting employee buy-in to resolving any issues around ownership; our experts have shared their top tips for making innovation happen successfully. Once implemented, though, how do you track and monitor your organisation's performance?

At Solverboard, we've created the only all-in-one innovation platform that will help you streamline innovation throughout the process. Aligning ideas with business strategy; developing, filtering and piloting ideas; prioritising projects; streamlining delivery and analysing results can all be managed through the platform, giving you a single resource through which to manage the entire project lifecycle.

Find out more at solverboard.com

About Solverboard

Solverboard is the new all-in-one platform for enterprise innovators. We help organisations manage the innovation process from idea through to actualisation, allowing you to prove the value of innovation. The platform has been built with feedback from innovators in large organisations, SMEs and start-ups across the UK. We're currently in beta and organisations can request early access now.

If you have any questions about anything in this report, or want to learn more about how Solverboard can help you and your team, just get in touch.



Solverboard, Unit 1.9 Paintworks, Bristol, BS4 3EH

@solverboard | hello@solverboard.com | 01179 725 164

solverboard.com

