



# LEADING INNOVATION

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True innovation – the creation of a unique and entirely new solution to a problem – arises from people who are willing and able to connect to their unique complexity. It requires a space where people can be vulnerable to their thought and emotion. A space where they are driven to explore their authentic selves as a source of creativity and are given the permission, both implicitly and explicitly, to do so.

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

What are the characteristics of the work environment in which you are most innovative?

To what extent do you create that environment for the teams you lead?

## 01 INNOVATION

Innovation requires both personal and organizational drivers:

### 1. Purpose

A sense of personal purpose unlocks energy and motivates people to push their abilities beyond the minimum requirements of their position.

### 2. Impact

People's sense of job satisfaction increases when they are aware that they have an impact and that it is seen and valued.

### 4. Autonomy

To tap into their personal creativity, people need ownership of their innovation and to not feel that they innovate as an extension of their superiors.

### 4. Structure

Structure must determine the space for free exploration, yet at the same time set limits to hold people accountable and align objectives across teams.

*“When we are in our flow, we are always our best.”*

*- Helena Foulkes*

## 02 CREATE A SPACE FOR INNOVATION

### Guide teams to self-establish purpose

Motivation has a stronger impact on results than results on motivation. By guiding teams to self-establish their collective purpose, they are forced to connect to their underlying inner motivation. They are made to engage with what makes them proud to work and create.

## CASE STUDY

### **Purpose is knowing what you are willing to give up.**

When CVS aligned its purpose to become a healthcare company, it faced the difficult decision to give up \$2 billion in tobacco sales or not. By allowing space for paradox and complexity, CVS navigated a solution that embraced the marketing benefits of forfeiting tobacco without dire consequence to its financials.

Once the business was disrupted to match its purpose, CVS saw a rapid rise in the pride felt by its employees, attracted new creative talent, and opened up innovation through suppliers and partners that previously would not work with CVS.

Leaders must be willing to disrupt the business to create purpose for the employees. Following your teams to their definition of purpose creates an environment of greater honesty, less lip service, and a stronger commitment to the collective goals. Teams will feel invigorated by the entrepreneurial spirit versus a top-down approach.

*“The first, most important thing is grounding your teams in a sense of purpose. Sometimes to achieve results quickly, we often forget to hold back and think about what will make our teams proud, what will make ourselves proud.”*

- Helena Foulkes

### **Allow autonomy and hand back authority**

Creativity and innovation arise from people when they are the source of power. Leaders need to relinquish control and allow individuals and teams to connect to their own path of problem solving. Allow innovation to come from below.

Avoid being sucked in by people asking for an opinion because they are not brave enough to make a decision. Answering questions is satisfying and can lure you into a false feeling of productivity. Liberate teams to go after the things they should own.

Using a common language around strategy and leadership methodology can speed up discussions and improve accountability of both leaders and teams.

*“One of the things that made Radically Better so successful was that it was bottom up. People started to learn how to be accountable for what they could see as opportunity.”*

- Helena Foulkes

## CASE STUDY

### Use questions to unlock potential.

When Helena Foulkes joined Hudson's Bay, she stepped into a declining organization with damaged morale and stagnant innovation. To understand and change the culture, she asked three questions:

1. Tell me three things that are going really well and you don't want me to screw up?
2. Tell me three things that you would love me to help you fix?
3. If we are really successful a year from now, what does that look like?

Through these questions, Helena discovered that innovation already existed in the company but that people were waiting for the permission to act on it. In response, Helena implemented a new culture program called *Radically Better*. She then used 400 ambassadors to define the change and pursue it with their teams.

## Strive for mutuality

To draw innovation from individuals and teams, leadership needs to be done with others and not imposed on them. Meeting others as equals – both up and down the command chain – avoids taking the source of power away from where innovation needs to arise.

Ask direct and personal questions to encourage empathy and authenticity. Ask individuals and teams what their greatest fear is? The source of innovation lies behind the masks and work relationships should strive to take place without them.

## Allow for paradox

Paradox and complexity allow leaders to tap into what teams are feeling at any moment and create from that space. Instead of setting up problems as either/or, ask how to take advantage of both? People jump too quickly to either/or approaches, especially during crisis. Leaders want to get the negative off their plates and remain focused only on the positive.

Allow time and space for paradox. Do not rush to force a choice, rather wait for the right answer to emerge. Thinking this way among teams and leaders unlocks huge innovative potential by creating a space for alternative solutions.

*“The biggest unlock to the creative work that we all do is this notion of paradox and complexity, which really means holding onto competing emotions at the same time.”*

- Helena Foulkes

## QUESTIONS FOR YOUR TEAM

1. What fears do you feel when you face the need or desire to innovate?
2. What would you do differently were that fear to be removed?
3. With whom do you need to have an honest conversation to help remove that fear?

## Adopt work focused planning

Once goals and purpose are clearly defined, put together a work plan to hold teams accountable. Differentiate between what you do to keep yourself accountable and what keeps your teams accountable. Ensure that both needs are met.

To allow space for innovation, the focused work plan needs to orientate teams around long-term goals and not short-term achievements. Allow space for experimentation and entrepreneurial thought. Define goals alongside teams, taking into account how they define success and what achievements make them proud of their work.

*“Radically Better was about returning authority and challenging the teams to identify what needed to be better and to make it happen themselves. It was energizing for people that they had permission to go do it.”*

*- Helena Foulkes*

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