

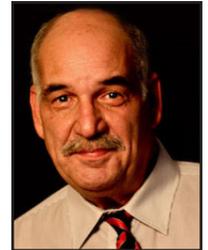
Member's Quarterly

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President's Message

Innovation: The Answer to All Our Problems

Innovate inside the box



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President

Innovation is the answer to all of our problems. Really? Innovation is certainly the key catchphrase in the modern management lexicon. The other one is agile. Now I'm certainly not as agile as I used to be, but I'd like to think that I can still be innovative. That doesn't mean however that I am prepared to follow the rest of the lemmings over the side of the mountain for the sake of innovation. There are some things that we should be careful about moving too quickly to change, mostly because they still serve a useful purpose.

My thinking is that it is always good to be innovative and a little bit different in order to stand out from the crowd and the competition. I also need to remind myself that while change is almost always good, it is not always for the better. Let's look at a couple of examples of new thinking or innovation in management. First, let's look at technology and how it is changing the landscape of talent acquisition and management.

Analytics and big data are growing in popularity in staffing and recruitment because they are far superior to our old hunt and peck systems of the past. They collect base demographic data and build a computerized corporate data bank of information that be mined later. The system will sort through the data using complex algorithms and provide HR and managers with patterns and matches. But even with all these technological improvements, the humans will still be deeply involved in the all of the processing and recruiting that follows.

Performance appraisals are another hot topic for the innovative discussion. The latest recommendation is to get rid of them altogether. I would be the first to admit that I have yet to find a system that doesn't make performance reviews a detested chore, but what's the alternative? Let employees self-manage. Okay, you go first. There's a good reason why we have annual performance reviews. They deliver results by allowing for feedback to employees and recommendations for improvement. Can we make them better? Absolutely. But let's innovate inside the box without throwing out the box entirely.

I have one more thing for you to consider. The modern, innovative workplace has to be flexible in terms of the working hours, the benefits that are provided and the freedom that individual employees have to direct their careers. That's what the innovation experts tell us. I'm all in favour of flexibility — as long as I am the one who controls expenses and the work flow. If it makes sense and we can get the work done from home, I'm in full agreement. Same with flexible benefits. If it costs roughly the same, I'll sign on. I think that sometimes we confuse flexible and elastic. I have no desire to be stretched beyond my budget or managerial comfort zone.

Brian Pascal is President of IPM [Institute of Professional Management].