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Cultivating Organizational Innovation

■ By **Joe Morray**

We are often called upon during the installation and deployment of engineering software applications to encourage, and at times ensure, that the organization is innovating in the processes and organizational responsibilities associated with the new system. This is not always easy, and we have learned many lessons over the past 20 years of bringing automation to owners and EPC companies. Some of the key lessons learned include:

- Plan and budget communication activities just like any other task on a project: We've learned time and again that every participant in an innovation effort wants to know what is coming and what successes have been achieved. Further, we have learned that the form of communication and frequency depends on the audience. We will communicate differently with the "champions," executives, receiving organizations, and general company community. Establish a budget for this communication and ensure that the project team is delivering.
- Have continual touch points: Interestingly, we have found that the greater the interaction between the delivery/configuration team and the receiving organization, the more innovation is encouraged by both groups. The user group will be able to offer improvements through its understanding of the processes and the delivery team can be assured that it will not "stray" off course for long on any innovation effort. In short, innovation is encouraged when both delivery and receiving are in close contact.
- Leave time for user discovery: Nothing frightens a user more than receiving a brief amount of training and then immediately being put on a production project. It is essential that users are able to practice in a non-stress situation, where they can become comfortable with the system usage as well as be able to get questions answered rapidly. The best practice is to combine this



discovery with user acceptance testing, where the software vendor has every incentive to ensure the user understands and is satisfied. Encourage users to explore work processes that are critical to their success and understand how the system allows different approaches before it is "for real."

- Recognize and reward: Innovation is not easy, and there are frequently many observers who are willing to share why it will "never work." The innovators (both system delivery and receiving) are frequently outside of their own comfort zones and recognize that they are in the spotlight. Recognition needs to start at the top of an organization and permeate throughout. We have found that rewards are not measured on value or size, but more on the fact that the organization is singling out individuals who have had the courage to innovate. Frequency over size is the true measure.
- Establish metrics up-front: One of the key steps we take in establishing an innovation project is to define the metrics for performance (benefits) and the processes for capturing these numbers. It is essential that

the teams understand the expected impact on the businesses of an innovation project and that there is a process for measuring the value (cost savings, time reduction, new markets, etc.). Start with the "as-is" (frequently, this is forgotten) and subsequently measure the impact over time. Nothing will have more impact on an executive team than showing real data of results.

So, it is not just chance that certain companies are constantly successful at innovation efforts. Cultivating organizational innovation is about repeatable processes and recognition of value. We can all do it.



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information systems. The company specializes in driving companies to align work processes, technology and organizational change requirements for the plant environment.

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