

Is your organization ready to improve productivity and profits through **systematic innovation**? Innovation is not necessarily the product of genius or a paradigm shift. Innovation can be a systematically planned and organized activity with a high degree of predictability of purpose and end results. Tools and roadmaps can be used to schedule and manage the innovation process. Systematic innovation is both attainable for and applicable to any business process. In fact, your back room processes may hold the most opportunity for increased productivity and profits.

Innovation is not invention. Invention is on the front end of a process. Innovation is the successful introduction or implementation of a product/service, idea, or way of doing something. Innovation is about successful change. Systematic innovation can be used to analyze customer needs, expectations, diagnose problems, and develop solutions. It involves a carefully managed sequence of steps. The ultimate reward for innovation is: loyal customers that come back and bring others. The purpose of systematic innovation is to remain competitive, keep the cash flowing, and improve profits.

Two critical areas for innovation include speed to market and decisions to continue or discontinue certain operations or processes. Speed to market provides early market entry advantage over competitors. Decisions to continue or discontinue involve methods of managing the achievement of specific milestone dates and the decisions triggered by the results. A decision to discontinue could involve a decision to terminate an aspect of your business that is financially draining the organization because it no longer provides enough value to the customer to make it a viable operation. A decision to discontinue allows you to free up and redirect valuable resources, and to get everyone focused on success rather than sentimental attachment to pet projects.

The elements of speed to market include: simplification, elimination, and integration. Simplification results from the removal of complexity and non-value added process steps. Elimination results from the removal of unnecessary steps, shortened wait and delay times, improved efficiencies, and removal of anything that does not add value. Integration entails the combining of tasks, use of parallel processing, cross-functional thinking, and the elimination of work silos. A processing step adds value if the customer recognizes the value, it alters process input, and its effective (done right the first time).

Systematic innovation provides significant advantages and can be accomplished quickly for maximum impact. It is a logical and systematic approach for improved effectiveness and efficiency resulting in innovations that position your organization ahead of the competition. The initiative begins with objectives set by the top decision makers, gains momentum and effectiveness through employee inclusion and empowerment, and concludes with implementation.

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This month's book review: "Starting From Scratch" by Wes Moss (available on our website)

Look for my column in The West "O", The Midtown "O", The Bellevue, and The Bluffs.

Measured Success Inc.
5062 S. 108th St. # 326
Omaha, NE 68137

402-926-1134
measuredsuccess@frontiernet.net
www.measuredsuccessinc.com