What a "Business Innovation Facilitator" can do for your company

*Research shows that consistently innovative companies hold 6 times market share, make 3 times the profit, and do 50% better during recessions than their average peers.*

McKinsey & Company surveyed 2,240 executives and asked how important is innovation to them - 84% responded that innovation was extremely or very important to their companies’ growth.

The [Boston Consulting Group](https://www.bcg.com/) found that - 79% of Executives put innovation as one of the top 3 priorities for their companies, and 22% made it the single top priority.

*To realize the significant benefits from Innovation, it's important to have a "Business Innovation Facilitator" with the following qualities -*

1. **They understand that innovation starts with people**

   Successful innovation is the implementation of creative ideas that meaningfully impact the business - more revenue, higher profit, additional market share, competitive advantage, impact in a new market, etc. A great Business Innovation Facilitator (BIF) focuses on people and how to encourage them to identify new capabilities and explore the options to expand business relevance - with people inside and outside the organization - to consider new things - instead of policies, posters, processes, etc.

2. **They have an "Innovation Mindset"**

   The BIF needs to have an "Innovation Mindset" that recognizes "The next Big Thing" can come from any number of sources by people with different skills, backgrounds, etc. who - have a vision or good look ahead insights, an inspiration, an ability to Connect-the-Dots, etc. In conjunction with this, good suggestions for innovation can come from inside the organization as well as external personnel with partners, and others with industry knowledge / thought leadership / experience in innovation (ie: company founders / investors in startups / innovation consultants / strategic advisors / etc.)

3. **They work to build a culture of innovation**

   They know that creativity starts with [building a culture of innovation](https://www.bcg.com/), through giving people autonomy and a very collaborative environment to encourage the flow of ideas. This is important to reduce (or preferably eliminate) bureaucracy, politics, etc. In addition, a reward system and other initiatives to encourage new ideas for product, services, processes, emerging opportunities, etc. are important to [motivate creativity](https://www.bcg.com/) and have a culture interested in new things and open to change.
4. They operate at various levels in the organization

An effective BIF presses for change and coaching throughout the organization - at the Corporate / Executive level, with Dept. Managers / Team Leaders, and with individuals - because all three levels are required to create the culture needed to improve business outcomes by getting better at innovation.

5. They assess before they intervene

As experienced, performance oriented people know, intervening on multiple levels without knowing where the challenges or the problems are, is ineffective and inefficient. A great BIF assesses the organizational environment, team(s), and individuals - with interviews, focus groups, and other means to assess the current climate and identify the areas to help people gain familiarity, comfort and competence with business innovation so they can more quickly find the new products / capabilities / services that matter, and fail fast on those not getting traction.

6. They are experienced with innovation and multiple ideation techniques

There are many different types of innovation and ideation techniques - that vary by time horizon, scope, level of organizational impact, strategic considerations, operating results, etc. As well, this can include scenario planning, war games, Design Thinking, and more. Since the best Innovation Facilitators are familiar with many of these, they can assist in selecting the appropriate one for the type of ideas sought from - solving an engineering problem, determining long-term company direction, innovation strategy, finding the next big thing, etc.

7. They are great Facilitators

A good BIF contributes to the innovation process - through leadership and suggestions, with a collaborative style to identify and encourage other stakeholders to be creative and more comfortable at envisioning the future and making suggestions for areas of opportunity, solutions, etc. This includes creating a forum that fosters innovation that results in periodic "ah ha" or "eureka" moments - with an ideation processes to effectively generate great insights to quality suggestions on the table, with informed discussion - to assess their potential to meaningfully improve business outcomes.

8. They are great mentors, teachers, trainers, and coaches

Because they know how to encourage creativity (especially if they are an external Innovation Facilitator), a good BIF knows how to encourage people to learn, pioneer, adapt, develop look-ahead skills, etc. - to get better at innovation. They teach people that getting results and developing a more innovative corporate culture starts with them, and empowers them to embrace risk, experiment, and take ownership. They teach them that failure is a viable option, as long as you learn from it.
9. They develop innovation metrics

As Peter Drucker said: “If you can't measure it, you can’t manage it.” A great BIF will contribute to determining what metrics are appropriate for the company's innovation objectives, goals, etc. to measure progress on innovation initiatives.

10. They train others to scale the process

The best BIF trains others in the organization to scale their work, so that corporate innovation will not solely rely on them. They train champions all through the organization, which makes building an innovation culture faster and more effective.

11. They are well versed in creativity research

While many Great ideas are not accidental, it's important to be open minded that "The Next Big Thing" can originate from various sources. Because of this, the BIF needs to be familiar with research on creativity in organizations, and know what factors affect personnel creativity and innovation effectiveness.

12. They recognize the need to reward successful business innovation

To encourage innovation and make it a sustainable process, it's important to compensate achievement and the significant learning's needed to be good at innovation over time. As we all know, nothing encourages people to do new things like challenge, recognition and financial gain!

June 14, 2017 This article is an adapted excerpt from Yoram Solomon’s book: Blueprints for the Next Big Thing. Dr. Yoram Solomon is an inventor, a creativity researcher, coach, consultant, and trainer to large companies and their employees. His Ph.D. examines why people are more creative in startup companies than in mature ones. Yoram was a professor of Technology and Industry Forecasting at the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, UT Dallas School of Management; is active in regional innovation and tech commercialization; and is also a speaker and author on predicting technology future and identifying opportunities for market disruption.