

Fostering Innovation Through Culture and Process

By Brandon Beal, CameraShine

Early in my career in the electronic security industry, I remember someone telling me that you are either born into this industry or you fall into it. My experience was the latter. Almost twenty years ago it began with an opening for an inside salesperson at Honeywell Security in Louisville, KY. Since then, I've enjoyed working for small dealers, large integrators, and other manufacturers. I've been in vaults with \$40 million in cash, secured critical infrastructure, and helped men wearing earbuds and sunglasses protect our country. It's been an amazing experience and I'm proud to have helped hundreds of clients along the way. One thing that stands out to me is that the most successful companies that attract the best talent and land the best clients, place a high level of focus on innovation.

Establish A Culture of Innovation

In a rapidly changing world, companies who prioritize a culture which emphasizes innovation are better positioned to adapt, grow, and thrive. Creating and maintaining this culture begins at the top and involves deliberate strategies, strong leadership, and an environment where creativity and risk-taking is encouraged. Leadership must set the tone by articulating a clear vision that prioritizes innovation as a core organizational value. This vision should be communicated consistently, ensuring that every employee understands their role in the process from taking an initial thought in a group whiteboarding session to a product or service that is ready to go to market. Leaders must embody this vision by being open to new ideas, demonstrating a willingness to take calculated risks, and embrace a culture of constant change.

An important part of a strong culture is a strong establishment of trust. As an ice climber, we say "trust your gear." This references each component of our equipment: climbing harness, ropes, carabiners, boots, crampons, ice tools, helmet, descenders, etc. When nerves are getting the better of you, whether ascending a frozen waterfall or descending into a narrow crevasse, it's time to trust your gear. It's faith that your support systems won't fail when you need them the most. Similarly, when you don't trust that your company has your back, you won't trust yourself enough to try a new approach or strategy, possibly preventing growth. A culture of innovation inherently involves taking risks, and not every idea will succeed. Organizations must create an environment where risk-

taking is encouraged, and failure is viewed as a learning opportunity rather than a setback. Celebrating successes and patiently analyzing the lessons learned from failures can reinforce this mindset, encouraging employees to experiment and push boundaries without fear of negative consequences. Build that culture and be ready to catch your team, earn their trust, and get them "back on the ice".

Effective Innovation is a Process

While creativity can sometimes appear spontaneous, having structured processes in place ensures that innovative ideas are captured, evaluated, and developed effectively. Fostering an innovative culture in any organization is more than repeating the cliché "think outside the box." It requires a multifaceted approach, encompassing leadership, structure, continuous learning, and a safe space for risk-taking. Establishing concise steps such as ideation, prototyping, testing, implementation, and customer feedback allows for rapid creation. Regular innovation meetings or idea submission platforms can help gather and assess new concepts which are under consideration. This structured approach not only nurtures creativity but also provides a roadmap for turning ideas into actionable solutions.

Stanley Black and Decker's innovation process, as an example, allowed anyone in any division to take part in various corporate "Challenges" with the goal to benefit the community as well as the company. The winners of those challenges could be selected to take part in an ExO Sprint put on by Exponential Organizations, a community for fast-accelerating corporations and businesses. These sprints targeted real business needs identified and paid for by the supporting business division. Our fastener division selected me for their sprint after I developed a DeWalt battery powered wireless surveillance camera. Our sprint team developed the world's first "smart bolt" meant to be used in critical infrastructure and in just a few weeks, the idea developed to working prototype. It set in motion an entire new revenue stream for the business, solving difficult inspection challenges remotely and adding an RMR model to a hardware-based company. Not to mention the accomplishments of the other teams that participated.

Whether you are a small business owner or a leader of a Fortune 100, innovation is the lifeblood of any successful organization. Build it into your people, products, and processes. Structure your process for controlled risk taking and trust your people enough to let them fail. Your business is going to look and act different than it does today. In one year, two, five, you may not even recognize it. Add innovation into your culture and you will be shocked by its impact.

Brandon Beal is the CEO of CameraShine, a manufacturer of camera cleaning products and other video surveillance maintenance services. The recent recipient of industry innovation awards from ESX and Security Business Magazine, he brings nearly 20 years of sales management experience with some of the most recognizable organizations in the industry including Honeywell, Stanley Black & Decker, and Securitas. When not busy developing the next great line of products, Brandon enjoys adventuring in the great outdoors and time with his family.

