



Does Your Company Need A Chief Innovation Officer?

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Humana has one. So does Coca-Cola. And Citigroup, and AMD. Even Skype, the Internet telephone service, has one. What these and many other companies have is a “chief innovation officer” as a formal position. The arrival of the CIO would appear to represent a new and important stage in the evolution of innovation. So -- is it time to ask whether you have a CIO at your company, and if not, whether it's time to move in that direction? Several indicators may point toward “yes.”

The advent of the CIO is another sign of innovation's development as a business discipline. Not too long ago, innovation was rather fuzzy and ill-defined. Did it involve breakthroughs? Was it the same as or akin to creativity? Or was it really just applied creativity, ie conversion of interesting ideas into novel new products? Or was it merely another way of describing “out-of-the-box thinking” in general? What, exactly, was this thing called innovation?

“The CIO brings a more holistic view to a broad-ranging and increasingly important process.”

Over the years, a small cadre of thought leaders, led by the likes of Clayton Christensen and John Seely Brown, sought to bring greater definition and discipline to the notion of innovation. More recently, blue-chip management consulting and research firms [Boston Consulting Group](#) and [Booz Allen Hamilton](#), as well as [IBM's consulting practice](#), have added their own substantial weight to defining innovation.

The result, at least for now, is a business discipline that spans from beginnings in ideation and R&D through to design and development, and finally to commercialization (including sales and marketing) and the realization of ROI – with various feedback loops, including the voice of the customer, built in along the way.

Obviously, we're talking about a wide span here – one that cuts across many departmental silos. If left to chance and the natural functioning of the typical siloed organization, innovation becomes messy and disorganized, lacking in accountability, and essentially non-functional and non-measurable. Hence, the emergence of a more disciplined approach – and the rise of the CIO to help bring a more holistic view to a broad-ranging but increasingly important process.

If you already have a chief innovation officer, or you want to give your existing CIO more exposure to the emerging discipline, you may want to consider a new [executive program](#) from Breakthrough Management Group designed specifically for “leaders in charge of growth and innovation inside their companies.” The formal name of the program? “Chief Innovation Officer – Lead Your Company's Growth and Innovation Initiatives.” The first two-day session kicks off April 30.

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