



Creating a Culture of Curiosity: Three Essentials to Leading Innovation in Your Organization

SOAR Performance Group

Enabling our clients to ascend to
new heights of performance.

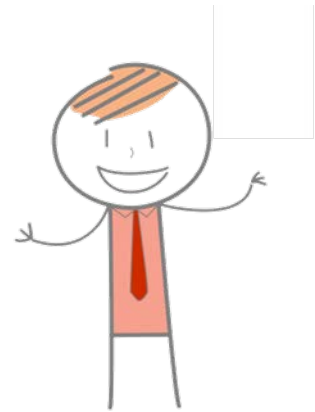
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Larry's Predicament.....	3
What is a Culture of Curiosity?.....	6
Why is Innovation Important?.....	10
Three Essentials.....	15
What Next?.....	31
About SOAR Performance Group.....	32
Recommended Reading.....	33



Larry's Predicament

Allow us to introduce you to **Larry**. Larry has been the CEO of his company for two years. When Larry first became CEO, he was *full of ideas*. He wanted to change the structure of the organization and change the way they operated. But, his everyday responsibilities as CEO got in the way, and he never got around to it.



Now, due to the pressures of the business environment today—increased competition, economic volatility, changing customer expectations—Larry is faced with the challenges of keeping up with the changing environment, as well as staying ahead of his competitors and changing before they do.

In order to become a **hero** to his customers, investors, and employees, in order to gain more business and recognition in his field, Larry must overcome *business as usual*; he must move beyond status quo, organizational silos, and resistance to implementing change.

But how can Larry overcome such giants looming over his company environment? **Larry must innovate** in order to sustain and grow his business.



How can Larry initiate Innovation in his organization?

It's all about **creating a culture of curiosity.**



Curiosity is a pre-condition for innovation. Creating a culture of curiosity in your organization—a culture of asking questions and seeking answers—will generate more ideas and lead to innovation in your organization.

The culture of your business is ultimately the sum of your actions. This eBook will reveal what actions you can take to revolutionize the culture of your organization.

At SOAR, we have found that the culture you get is in the:

- ✧ Questions you ask
- ✧ Meetings you run
- ✧ Recognition you give

CHAPTER 1:

What is a Culture of Curiosity?



**CURIOSITY
QUESTIONS
EXPLORATION
INNOVATION
SUCCESS**

// **By thinking about innovation in a more systemic way, you improve your chances of building breakthroughs.”**

Source: Ten Types of Innovation, 2013

A culture of **curiosity** encourages **questions**; they are the backbone of every conversation and the drive behind every action. The right **questions** lead to **exploration**, which leads to **innovation**.

A culture of curiosity leading to innovation will revolutionize the experiences of both your employees and your customers. Operating innovatively by engaging in new practices will create new opportunities leading to improved **success** for your business.

Curiosity leads to innovation. But what *is* innovation?

INNOVATION is defined as:

“An idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption”

Source: Diffusion of Innovations, 1995

In an organization, there are various forms of innovation. Products, services, company structures, and ways of engaging customers can all be innovative. An innovation does not have to be unique to the world, but **must** be new to those interacting with it and those affected by it. In other words, it must be new to the organization or industry to be considered innovative.

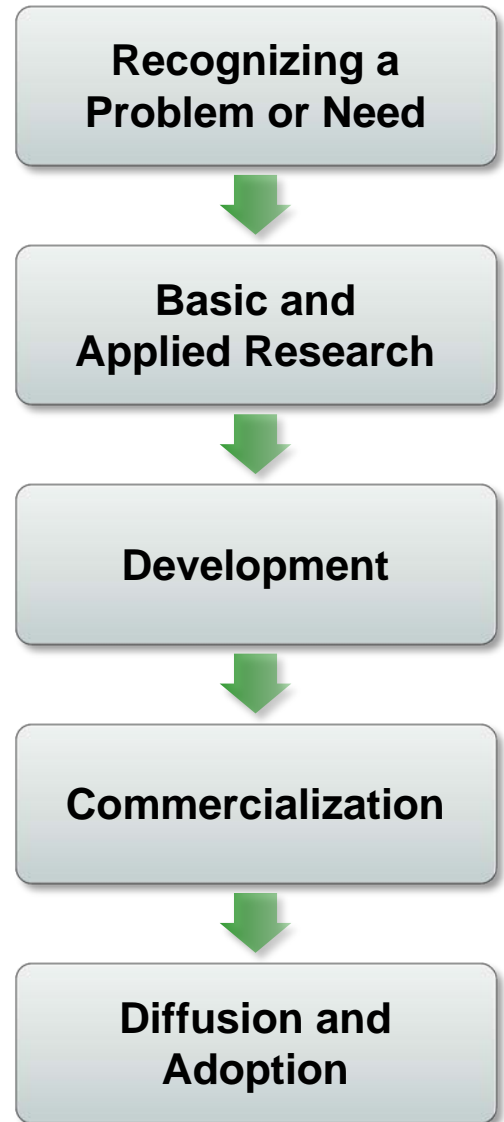
Part of the innovation development process (*Diffusion of Innovations, 1995*) is diffusion. **DIFFUSION** refers to the spreading of a new idea. **As an executive, you must take action to intentionally spread innovation throughout your organization.**



- **Increased speed of communication**
- **Increased rate of community building by social media**
- **Constantly evolving technology**

All these influences create a catalyst for the spread of innovation across your organization and your customers.

Innovation Development Process



Source: *Diffusion of Innovations, 1995*

CHAPTER 2:

Why is Innovation Important?



**// The ability to innovate—
to evolve, adapt, and improve—
is indispensable.”**

Source: Ten Types of Innovation, 2013

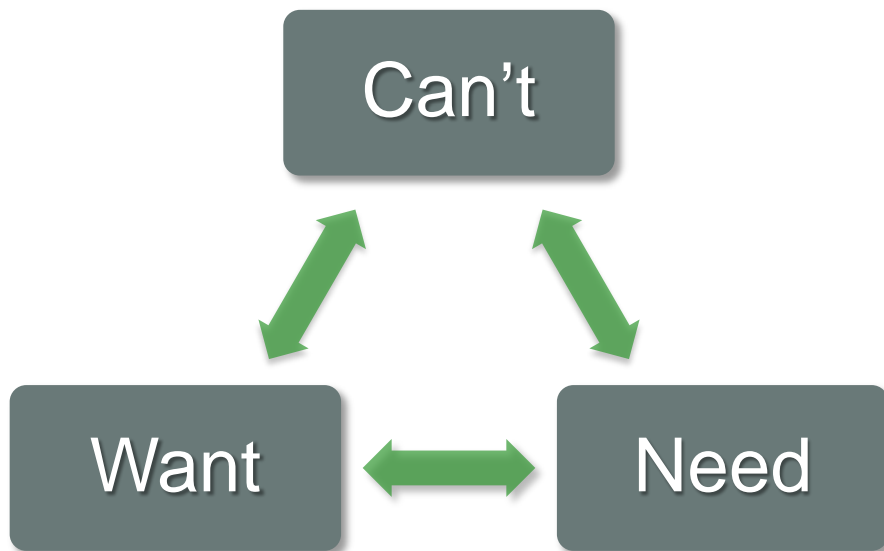
Continuous challenges and changes in the business environment make it imperative for organizations to be innovative in order to both gain and maintain business.

Innovation comes from the ability to see what is happening in the market and quickly adapt what you are doing in order to stay ahead of the changes. Additionally, you must observe what your competitors are doing in order to differentiate your organization from them.

How do you know when to **INNOVATE?**

When you want to accomplish something in your organization, but:

- You **can't** do it
- You **want** to do it better
- You **need** to do it better

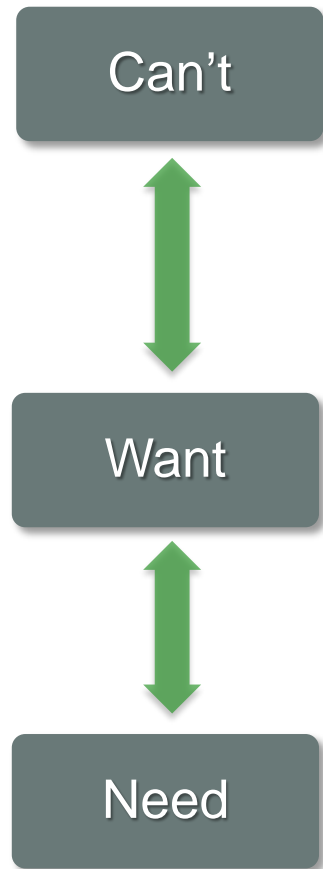


1. Why **can't** you do it?
 - Changes in customer expectations
2. Why do you **want** to do it better?
 - Changes in the market
3. Why do you **need** to do it better?
 - Changes in competition

As customer expectations change, different resources and knowledge are needed to meet customer demands, which may mean you **can't** now but must innovate in order to meet those demands.

Wanting to do something better is proactive. As you perceive opportunities due to changes in the market or in your competition, you must pursue them in order to stay ahead.

Needing to do something better is reactive. Sometimes you must be reactive to changes in the market or competition in order to survive.



Innovation is not just a one time thing. In order to bring sustainable market leadership and success to your organization, you must create a *culture* that encourages innovation. We have **determined three essentials to creating a culture of curiosity** leading to innovative actions in your organization.

The CULTURE you get is in the:

- ❖ Questions you ask
- ❖ Meetings you run
- ❖ Recognition you give

CHAPTER 3:

Three Essentials to Leading Innovation in Your Organization



Questions



Meetings



Recognition

QUESTIONS

The Culture You Get is in the
Questions You Ask



How do you know what questions to ask?

First, ask **narrow questions**

- Focus on ***what is*** happening in your organization. The goal is to determine areas you want or need to improve in order to pinpoint specific goals.

Then, ask **broad questions**

- Instead of staying focused on the status of your organization (*what is*), transition to focusing on the future. Allow yourselves to explore ***what could be***. This is the essence of curiosity and the means through which you will discover the innovative solutions to elevate levels of performance across your organization.

**GROWTH AND
OPPORTUNITY**

EXIT HERE 



Narrow vs. Broad Questions to Ask

	Narrow <i>(What is?)</i>	Broad <i>(What could be?)</i>
Within Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How much will we make this year?• What products and services do we offer our customers?• Who are our customers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can we make even more money this year?• How can we better serve our customers?• What potential customers are we missing?
With Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the revenues of our customers?• What do our customers buy from us?• What markets do our customers serve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do our customers make money?• What do our customers need?• How are our customers' markets changing?

MEETINGS

The Culture You Get is in the Meetings You Run



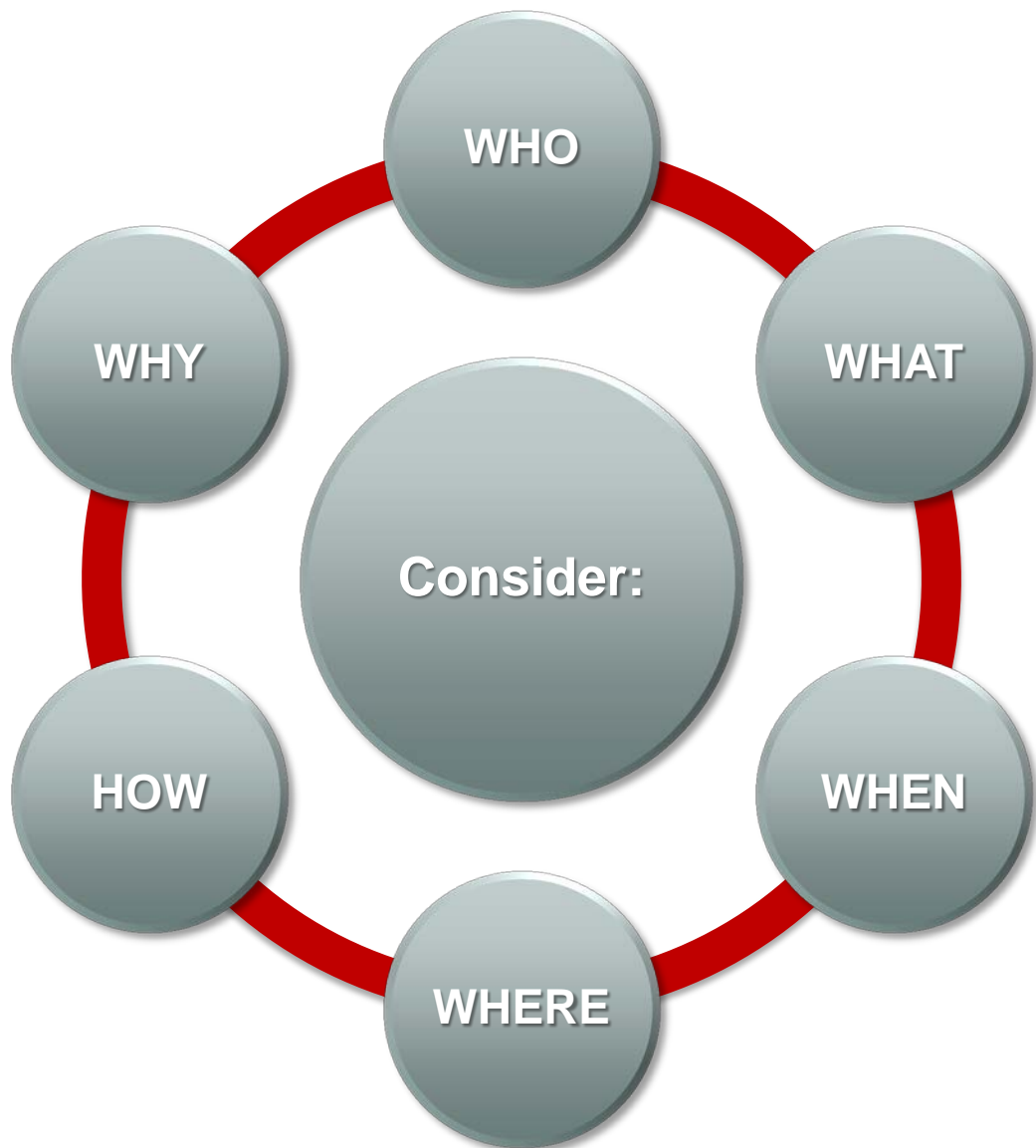
Ten Types of Innovation (2013) describes the stereotypical innovation meetings where rooms become covered in sticky notes with countless bad ideas scribbled on them.



The trouble is, these meetings are rarely successful and require follow up to determine which ideas to turn into active solutions to perceived problems.

Rather than formatting meetings this way just because that is the way it is traditionally done, it is time for businesses to start innovating in the ways they meet.

Encouraging Curiosity and Innovation in Meetings



WHO

- The people attending
 - ✓ Identify and include innovators
 - ✓ Include people with different roles and perspectives

WHAT

- The content to be discussed
 - ✓ Focus on possibilities—what could happen
 - ✓ Provide opportunities for dialogue and leave the schedule somewhat open

WHEN

- The relation to the deadline
 - ✓ Hold innovative meetings months before any deadlines
- The time of day
 - ✓ Research shows the best time for holding innovative meetings is in the morning when the brain is freshest (Business Insider, 2014)

WHERE

- The physical location
 - ✓ Remove people from their everyday environment to create a clean slate
 - ✓ Find a room with natural light and space to move around or take the meeting outside
 - ✓ Create a space to encourage collaborative thought, including round tables and whiteboards

HOW

- The way the meeting is conducted
 - ✓ Facilitate by leading the conversation through questions
 - ✓ Engage the whole group and allow everyone a chance to contribute
 - ✓ Break into small groups for collaboration, then come back together to share

WHY

- The purpose and goal of the meeting
 - ✓ Clearly define the reason for the meeting and any questions you want to answer during your time together
 - ✓ Keep your team focused, occasionally reminding them of the goal

RECOGNITION

The Culture You Get is in the
Recognition You Give



There are **four keys** to recognizing innovation in your organization:

1. IDENTIFICATION

Have you identified the innovators and opinion leaders across the organization?

2. PROMOTION

Who are you promoting—innovators or those who follow the norm?

3. COMPENSATION

Are you rewarding those who innovate?

4. CELEBRATION

Do you publicly recognize those who innovate?

IDENTIFICATION



Identifying innovators and opinion leaders across your organization will give you a point person to discuss innovation with. Appointing them will help them develop in their roles.

An **innovator** thinks outside the box, regularly imagining and proposing new products or new ways of working. Because change often makes the majority uncomfortable, innovators can be outliers in departments, and it can be difficult for them to gain support for their ideas.

An **opinion leader** is someone who is on board with innovation, but is also trusted by others. An opinion leader should be someone in a position of leadership and possessing strong interpersonal skills.

PROMOTION AND COMPENSATION

Who you promote, compensate and celebrate in your organization reveals what you value. If you **promote** based on success through following the norms, you are telling your employees to keep doing what they are doing. But, if you promote those who innovate and implement new ways of working, you encourage others to innovate as well.



Along the same lines as promotion, **compensating** those who innovate will encourage them to keep innovating and will encourage others to do the same. If an employee proposes an innovation that takes off in your company or industry, compensate them for the idea.

CELEBRATION

Publicly **celebrating** the ideas and efforts of an innovator will further communicate that you value innovation in your organization. Many businesses have top talent programs. Why not create a top innovator program to celebrate and develop the best innovators in your organization? This will communicate the prioritization of innovation in your organization and shift the focus and motivation of your employees.



WHAT NEXT?

Take the
Culture of Curiosity
Diagnostic Test
developed by SOAR

www.surveymonkey.com/s/CultureofCuriosity



CLICK HERE

To Learn More About SOAR

ABOUT

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John Thackston is the Vice President of Client Engagements and Co-Founder of SOAR Performance Group. John is responsible for ensuring the success of clients through effective client relationship development and program management.

SOAR Performance Group

SOAR is a customer focused sales consultancy headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia that applies an analytic and fact based approach to sales performance improvement.

Recommended Reading

1. Rogers, Everett M. *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York: Free Press, 1995. Print.
2. Keeley, Larry, Ryan Pikkell, Brian Quinn, and Helen Walters. *Ten Types of Innovation: The Discipline of Building Breakthroughs*. Hoboken: John & Wiley Sons, Inc., 2013. Print.
3. Barker, Eric. "Here's the Schedule Very Successful People Follow Everyday." *Business Insider*. Business Insider, Inc., 8 June 2014. Web. 21 July 2014.