The Chief Innovation Officer needs a coalition of executives that guides the transformation of innovation capabilities, capacity and business results. The presidents of business units, or whoever has line accountability within your corporate structure, should be key allies in the transformation. In most large organizations there are several of these people.

Business unit presidents are typically skilled operators. They like predictability and efficiency. They are measured on hitting the plan. They seek predictable, profitable growth. Innovation is often unpredictable and can wreak havoc on best laid plans. Getting these people on your side to improve results from innovation would be a big victory for both parties.

Think about this from a business planning perspective. The business unit president starts with a core plan based on historical performance and then adjusts by making predictions. In established enterprises, these predictions usually include growth from share gains, improved pricing, and increased distribution. When those sources of growth are insufficient to meet corporate expectations, they plug in revenue from new products and services and drop to their knees and pray.

The business unit president will be a supporter of investments that improve predictable results from innovation. Imagine a scenario where they have enough confidence in the contributions of scheduled launches that they are willing to hard code them into their business plan. Innovation results should not be a plug in the plan, but instrumental to the plan itself. It is the job of the Chief Innovation Officer to create a business system that can deliver on that promise. Those that do will find a bunch of new friends.

More Reading

Innovation Allies
Innovation Allies: The Chief Financial Officer
Innovation Allies: The Chief Marketing Officer
Innovation Allies: The Business Unit Presidents

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