Seven Chronic Innovation Problems

by Bill Poston

My work with clients in a diverse set of industries is focused exclusively on innovation and product development. Each organization I serve faces a unique set of circumstances, competitive environments, company histories, and corporate cultures. Yes, they are all special, but they also all almost always suffer from a common collection of ailments that seem to be epidemic. These seven chronic problems prevent organizations from reaching their potential in delivering growth from innovation.

Here is my list of chronic innovation problems that often represent themselves acutely in every client organization:

1) Lack of an innovation strategy (or lack of a coherent business strategy for that matter)
2) Lack of cross-functional alignment (particularly in portfolio decisions and execution)
3) Overloaded product development pipelines (human resources constrain throughput)
4) Rampant incrementalism (small, safe and short-term wins the lion’s share of investment)
5) Unclear accountability for results (functional accountabilities does not deliver results)
6) Short-term orientation (and real long-term. It’s the intermediate horizon where we struggle)
7) Lack of skills (acute shortages of specific technical and commercialization experiences and skills)

I will write further about each one of these over the next few weeks. In the meantime, assess your organization against these typical challenges. If you are honest in your assessment, you are probably severely suffering from four or more of these problems. (If not, you are exceptional and probably doing pretty well.) Addressing these ailments is the job of the Chief Innovation Officer. Heal thyself.

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Chronic Problem #7: Lack of Skills

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For the past 30 years, Bill has helped executives in technology-driven industries transform their competencies to deliver results. He is a highly regarded consultant, speaker, and writer on the topics of innovation strategy, product development, portfolio management, technology commercialization, and the software systems that enable innovation. Keep up with Bill’s latest research and thoughts on innovation and the rising role of the Chief Innovation Officer at www.TheChiefInnovationOfficer.com.