The CINO’s Team #3 - Capability Leaders

by Bill Poston

One of the responsibilities of the Chief Innovation Officer is to “evolve innovation business disciplines and competencies.” To do that, she needs a team of people that can work across business units to develop consistent capabilities and ensure the implementation of leading practices within the company.

I suggest building a team of corporate innovation capability leaders to accomplish this task. The specifics around how their scope of responsibilities are divided and their individual charters are less important than the concept of having someone responsible for evolving these competencies.

One simple structure is to have capability leaders that focus on different components of the innovation engine. I work with one organization that breaks the scope down into four distinct, but related business disciplines: front-end, portfolio and pipeline management, development execution, and launch execution. Each of these capability leaders works with counterparts from the business units in a council focused on sharing practices and learnings and driving as much consistency as possible across the corporation.

The front-end capability leader is responsible for innovation inputs, ideation methods, and concept development. They own the process up to the gate where product development starts.

The portfolio and pipeline management lead is responsible for innovation decision-making and governance processes. That includes portfolio management, as well as the phase gate process that governs individual innovation initiatives.

The development execution leader addresses design methodologies, program management, cross-functional team structure, collaboration tools, and cycle-time reduction efforts.

And the launch leader is not only responsible for launch planning and execution, they also have created a post-launch monitoring and closed-loop learning system for the corporation.

Together, these individuals own the development of important innovation capabilities. By working with their counterparts in the company’s business units they are making a real difference in the performance of the innovation engine.

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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.