All large, globally distributed innovation organizations will struggle to collaborate effectively without the aid of information technology enablers. The market for software systems that support innovation is dynamic and confusing, with hundreds of solution providers all claiming to have the secret answer to improving innovation performance.

The Chief Innovation Officer needs a strong, IT-savvy partner to help navigate this landscape and ensure that the organization is taking a deliberate approach to the use of enablers that is consistent with the firm’s innovation strategy. This role is too important to completely outsource to the IT organization.

The categories of solutions include design tools like CAD, CAM, EDA, and formulation systems; design collaboration tools; PLM applications that manage product information throughout the lifecycle; ideation and concept development tools; product portfolio management systems; program management applications; and pricing and revenue management solutions. Implementing these tools is difficult enough. Integrating them with each other and with other downstream systems increases the complexity.

My advice is to insist that a member of the corporate IT team be dedicated to the innovation organization. Given the integration requirements, infrastructure needs, and security concerns, this is generally preferable to trying to do it alone. Take advantage of the skills in IT, but get a dedicated team member.

Done right, information technology is a powerful enabler of innovation. It also has the potential to be a huge drain and distraction if the implementation is executed poorly.
About the Author

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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.