Three themes for improving corporate innovativeness

Understand the current situation.
Start by knowing where innovation is at!
Is everybody on the same page?

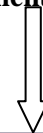**Is innovativeness sagging? If, for example,**

- your company **does not have a tradition of innovation** (F#22[1]) i.e. the founders were not innovators, or customers do not see the company as innovative, or things you do always follow 'the industry leader' either by deliberate actions or just can't keep up, or
- **innovation** in your company **seems to be going downhill** rather than improving (F#24), or
- **people** you call innovators **are leaving** the company (F#21), or
- there may be **a scarcity of career opportunities for innovators** in the company and little recognition of the their work (F#7),

you should think about why this is happening and what might be the major contributing factors.

Maybe the problem can be traced to: 1. leadership, 2. organization and management of day-to-day affairs, or 3. the corporate approach to generating and realizing on bright ideas!

1. Perhaps it's leadership

- management (and Board level people) do not explicitly look for innovation (F#2), the subject is not high on the agenda for Board meetings, management meetings, conferences, etc.
- the emphasis by senior management is on achieving short-term profit at the expense and priority of long-term goals (F#1)
- planning; business/strategic/planning/budgeting all emphasize cost cutting or rationing of resources rather than finding opportunities (F#4)
- little tolerance for risk in the planning process (F#9)

3. Maybe it's the approach to idea generation and realization

- tolerance for mavericks (F#3)
- tolerance for failure (F#5)
- tolerance for variances from a defined or undefined corporation norm(F#8)
- availability of reward mechanisms for innovators/innovations (F#14)
- a sense that resources are available should attractive ideas/projects be identified (F#19)
- R&D spending levels as compared to the competition (F#23)

Knowing more about the barriers to innovation in your corporation can help to define a starting point. Calibrate your own corporation's innovativeness! Check that everybody is on the same page!

2. Maybe it's how the company organizes and manages day-to-day affairs

- the emphasis which management places on people – human resources and interaction (F#6)
- degree of formal communication in the company (F#10)
- use of independent (groups with authority to make changes) work groups to accomplish projects and special tasks (F#11)
- the degree to which decisions are made with input from several sources in the company – or is decision making unilateral and driven from the top (F#12) – too much or too little staff involvement in decision making (F#20)
- the formality of the decision process (F#13) and the approach to organization; centralized decision making or decentralization (F#18)
- is the organization action oriented or lost in planning processes (F#15)

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[1] Reference; www.corporateinnovationonline.com for details.