ON TOPIC: FOSTERING INNOVATION

The Talent Development team is pleased to offer relevant and meaningful learning opportunities to Virginia Tech. This quarterly edition of On Topic is focused on Fostering Innovation, what it is, the conditions necessary for it, and how to harness it in your work and amongst your team.

SPECTRUM OF INNOVATION

Innovation! Innovation! Innovation! Lately, it feels as though we are inundated daily with calls to innovate or be innovative. The air waves are so saturated with its presence that the next storm may literally see innovation falling from the skies. At least, that’s what it feels like.

But what does it actually mean, to innovate? Well, one thing for sure is that innovation isn’t finding a way to add an LCD screen to something or developing an app. Innovation has a purpose, it needs to solve a problem. Sometimes this means refining old techniques, creating new ones, or some hybrid of the two.

Most importantly innovation is not something that you just do. No good boss, manager, supervisor, or leader has ever walked into the office and declared at the top of their lungs, “We’re going to innovate today!” Innovation is a process that requires creating an environment and set of conditions that allows for creativity to blossom. It is this environment that allows for a multitude of possibilities to be created. Once created, they are examined with a magnifying glass, sifted and sorted with a fine toothed-comb, until only the best ideas remain. Finally, what’s left is shaped and honed until what emerges is something that can be released to the world as a viable solution.

The important question here is not, “How do we innovate?” but should instead be, “How do we create an environment that fosters innovation?” An environment that fosters innovation exists as a spectrum that changes from person to person, office to office, and organization to organization. While there’s no one single answer, we can look at some of the elements that are absolutely crucial when fostering innovation.

This edition will provide a variety of resources on innovation. How innovation is fostered will be up to each leader and their respective team. Keep in mind this is a work in progress and what works today might not work in six months as individuals and teams develop and grow.

INSPIRING INNOVATION

“If you look at history, innovation doesn’t come just from giving people incentives; it comes from creating environments where their ideas can connect.”

- Steven Johnson
Below is a collection of articles that address each of the six elements of innovation that are highlighted in this edition of On Topic.

**Diversity in Innovation**
- Why Diversity Is Necessary For Innovation At the Workplace
- Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters

**Creativity in Innovation**
- A Guide To Creating Creativity In Your Organization
- Creativity Is Not Innovation (But You Need Both)

**Trust in Innovation**
- Why Too Much Trust Is Death to Innovation
- The Symbiotic Relationship Between Trust and Innovation

**Communication in Innovation**
- The Role of Communication in Innovation Programs
- What’s the Big Idea? To Innovate, First Communicate

**Feedback in Innovation**
- Why Successful Innovation Begins and Ends with Customers
- How to Channel Feedback into an Impactful Innovation

**Culture in Innovation**
- What is Innovation Culture?
- The Hard Truth About Innovative Cultures

Many more development opportunities and resources are available for faculty and staff at Virginia Tech. See what is available [HERE]!