

High Performance Government: Leading Large Scale Change in the Public Sector

Annotated Bibliography

Introducing Innovation: Sources of New Thinking¹

Abramson MA, Littman ID eds. (2002) *Innovation*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.

An excellent introduction to innovation in the public sector. Chapter 1 offers a definition and description of innovation and summarizes current thinking about innovation, and outlines the book, giving a brief description of each of the remaining chapters. Chapter 2 addresses the factors that inspire innovation and support success. Chapter 3 is an edited version of Sanford Borins' article *The Challenge of Innovating in Government* referenced later in the bibliography. The Appendix to this chapter includes an excellent guide for managers to identify obstacles to innovation within their organization. Chapter 4 uses a case study of the experiences of the city of Phoenix, AZ to explore the issue of creating a culture of innovation. The remaining chapters are case studies of innovation in San Diego, CA and five federally owned public airports. These case studies illustrate various points about innovation raised in earlier chapters of this book.

Barringer MW, Milkovich GT. (1998) A theoretical exploration of the adoption and design of flexible benefit plans: A case of human resource innovation. *The Academy of Management Review*, 23:2 pp305-324.

Although theoretical in nature, this article outlines several organizational "conditions" under which innovation is likely to be (or not to be) readily adopted. It uses four lenses (institutional, resource dependence, agency theory, and transaction cost) to examine the adoption and design of flexible benefit plans by organizations. The article concludes by applying this approach to other types of innovation that may occur in organizations. It proposes how an organization may react to adoption of an innovative idea based on certain types of environmental and personnel constraints. This article provides an approach to organizational assessment in order to tailor implementation strategies to particular organization characteristics.

Borins S. (2000) What border? Public management innovation in the United States and Canada. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 19:1 pp46-74.

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The author of this article surveyed 250 applicants to the Ford Foundation – Kennedy School of Government innovation award and the Institute of Public Administration of Canada’s management innovation award to describe the nature of public management innovation in the United States and Canada. Some issues examined were: the characteristics of public sector innovations; where in the organization innovations originate; whether innovations come about as a result of planning or groping; the obstacles to change innovators faced and how they overcame them; the results achieved and whether these innovations were replicated. Cases illustrate each of these six points. The article concludes with a summary of the similarities in public sector administration between Canada and the United States and suggests that further research should be done to explore the potential universality of innovation in the public sector across many developed nations.

Borins S. (2001) The challenge of innovating in government. *Innovations in Management Series*. The PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment for the Business of Government.

This article describes the results of a study of over 300 surveys of government reformers around the world who have received awards for their innovations from either the Innovations in American Government Awards program or the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management. It is divided into 5 sections, each dealing with a step of the innovation process and examples of award recipients who used that particular building block while implementing their innovation. Section 1 describes the basic building blocks for introducing innovation into a government organization. Section 2 discusses implementation techniques, including identifying obstacles to innovation, overcoming those obstacles, and obtaining support for innovation. Section 3 debunks the myth that innovation comes from the top of the organization. The author argues that, based on data from this analysis of surveys, innovation actually comes from middle managers and front line workers. Section 4 discusses where support for innovation originates, and how government executives can continue to foster innovation in their respective organizations. Section 5 concludes with several recommendations for managers about how to innovate. These recommendations are based on five building blocks: anticipating encountering obstacles when attempting to implement innovation; being aware of the likely responses to these obstacles; being able to recognize that there are a wide variety of potential supporters of innovation both within and outside of the organization; making use of all of the potential and necessary stakeholders once identified; and being able to provide support and resources to foster an innovative culture within the organization.

Davenport T, Prusak L, Wilson HJ. (2003). Who’s bringing you hot ideas and how are you responding? *Harvard Business Review*, 81:2 pp58-64.

This article provides an overview of the kind of people in organizations that are potential sources of innovation. The authors outline personal characteristics of individuals who are responsible for introducing new ideas and bringing about organizational change. The article continues by describing the ideal organizational environment for fostering the adoption of innovation. Such an environment includes organizational practices such as rewarding innovation, top executive support of innovation, cultivating an idea-friendly environment that encourages people to seek new ways to conduct organizational activities, and an environment that is supportive of such creativity and risk-taking.

Dougherty D, Heller T. (1994) The illegitimacy of successful product innovation in established firms. *Organization Science*, 5:2 pp200-218.

This article applies innovation concepts to product development. It suggests innovation must be institutionalized in the product development system. The culture of an organization must view innovation as an important part of work rather than a distraction from the production process. Organizational culture must reward innovation with celebration, recognition or other incentives (an observation especially salient in the public sector, where monetary rewards are scarce). The article concludes new insights for why barriers to innovation exist in large, established firms, and how those barriers can be effectively managed. For example, innovators who were most successful linked new process and products to existing practices and products so that the innovation would seem more familiar (e.g. less radical) and would be more readily accepted by employees.

Eadie DC. (1983) Putting a powerful tool to practical use: The application of strategic planning in the public sector. *Public Administration Review*, 43:5 pp447-453.

This article guides managers in the application of strategic planning for innovation in their organizations. The article cites three case studies in which strategic planning was used to introduce an innovative change in a public sector organization. The author notes that a boilerplate approach to introducing innovation is likely to prove inadequate since variations in implementation are often vital to success in introducing innovation. The strategic planning process described here encourages environmental scanning to identify time and resources to invest in implementing innovation. In order to point to obstacles that should be addressed to facilitate the acceptance of an innovation, the article underlines the importance of fully understanding financial, operational and human resource capacity. The author outlines guidelines for a planning process for innovation. These guidelines recommend viewing strategic planning as a multi-year process that starts on a limited basis and gradually expands, incorporating the strategic planning initiative into a broader framework of planning improvements, and ensuring that the strategic planning application produces clear outcomes, methodologies, schedules and responsibilities.

Hassel BC, Steiner L. (2000) Strategies for scale: Learning from two educational innovations. *Occasional Paper 6-00 The Innovations in American Government Program*. <http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu/Ash/hass-stein.pdf> Accessed August 22, 2004.

This paper looks at two programs, *Success for All* and *Accelerated Schools*, each of which have been adopted by over 1000 schools in the past decade. After describing the two programs, this paper identifies management dilemmas that education reformers must navigate if they seek to scale up new ideas. Although this paper deals with education reform, the management dilemmas that are identified are more generally applicable. For example, the two main dilemmas faced by innovators of these programs were how to induce sustained change in operating practices and how to manage external forces that might impede innovation. According to the authors, “what it takes” is a deep commitment from employees, employee involvement in the process and a change in organizational culture. The article explores in depth the extent of success of each program at dealing with these management dilemmas and offers suggestions about how the innovators might have approached the situation differently.

Klein KJ, Sorra JS. (1996) The challenge of innovation implementation. *Academy of Management Review*, 21:4 pp1055-1080.

This article suggests that it is not necessarily the innovative idea that fails, but rather the implementation of the idea. It offers helpful details on the elements of a culture that can encourage and sustain innovation. This paper proposes a theoretical model that makes implementation of an idea a function of the strength of an organizations' climate and the fit of that innovation to targeted users' values. It specifies a range of implementation outcomes and highlights the need for a match between an organization's climate for implementation and the type of innovation introduced. The authors illustrate many of their hypotheses with theoretical cases.

Kotter JP, Schlesinger LA. (1979) Choosing strategies for change. *Harvard Business Review*, 57:2 pp106-114.

This article emphasizes the importance of identifying resistance to change within the organization. It cites four common reasons people resist change: a desire not to lose something of value; a misunderstanding of the change and its implications; a belief that the change does not make sense for the organization; and a low tolerance for change. These four mechanisms for resisting change are explored in depth and each described using an organizational example. They are followed by suggestions for dealing with and overcoming resistance to change. The mechanisms described include education and communication, participation and involvement, facilitation and support, negotiation and agreement, manipulation and co-optation, and explicit and implicit coercion. A table of each approach is included. It connects each mechanism with when it is commonly used and its

advantages and disadvantages. The article concludes with a description of situational factors that influence the strategic options available to managers for implementing and overcoming resistance to change.

Page S. (2003) Entrepreneurial strategies for managing interagency collaboration. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 13:3 pp311-340.

This article contributes to the innovation literature by addressing the topic of managing innovation within an interagency collaboration. It explores the strategies used by managers to introduce innovation and shows how two public agencies in Georgia and Vermont adapted these strategies for use in interagency collaboration. The authors suggest that the experiences of agencies in these two states demonstrate that managers can promote innovation and continuous improvement in collaborative settings by building interorganizational bonds around specific measures of progress. In combination, such bonds and measures can help align collaborators' understandings of what their organizations are working together to produce and how they can achieve their joint aims.

Pascale R, Millemann M, Gioja L. (1997) Changing the way we change. *Harvard Business Review*, 75:6 pp127-139.

This article suggests that it is not the change initiative itself, but rather the people and culture of an organization, that prevent innovation from taking hold. Organizations have a remarkable capacity to resist change that is named by employees as radical and uncomfortable. Three interventions are proposed that will allow innovations to be introduced and sustained in organizations. The authors recommend incorporating employees fully into the process of dealing with organizational challenges. They suggest that managers should lead, but not dictate, maintaining employee involvement. They suggest that managers should expect employees to generate answers to some organizational challenges, inducing what they call constructive stress. They also underline the importance of a culture that encourages and sustains new behaviors. The authors studied the revitalization of three companies: Sears, Roebuck and Company, Royal Dutch Shell and the U.S. Army to illustrate how organizations introduced innovations that enhanced operations. These three examples describe how each organization was "diagnosed" using four signs of organizational health that are described in this article.

Schall E. (1997) Public-sector succession: A strategic approach to sustaining innovation. *Public Administration Review*, 57:1 pp4-10.

Using a case study based on the author's own experience managing succession at the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice, she offers a four step strategic approach to succession that might increase the likelihood of innovations remaining in a public agency despite senior management change. The four steps consist of launching the "finishing up" phase, designing a treasure map, keeping

successful innovations alive and finding a successor who would continue current organizational efforts. The “finishing up” phase encourages leaders to assess the current state of the organization and its innovations. It also suggests that senior leaders outline the challenges that will be faced in appointing a new leader and preserving the legacy that the current leader would leave behind. In designing a treasure map, a series of “clues” about the current efforts are developed in order to sustain the momentum and direction of the organization. To keep successful innovations alive, the author recommends grooming people to take the place of those that are leaving and institutionalizing process and procedures so that they can continue to be used. Finally, finding a leader who will continue current organizational efforts involves brainstorming all of the issues that could arise with each candidate, and thinking about who will be influential in the process of choosing the new leader.

Sutton R.I. (2002) Building companies where innovation is a way of life. In R.I. Sutton, *Weird Ideas that Work*: 177-199. New York: The Free Press.

This chapter of Sutton’s book, *Weird Ideas that Work*, describes nine guidelines that are useful for promoting and sustaining innovation in an organization. These include: The best management is no management or managing by getting out of the way; innovation means selling, not just inventing, new ideas (by making new ideas seem familiar by framing them in terms of existing products or practices); innovation requires both flexibility and rigidity (e.g. flexibility to generate new ideas; rigidity to define problems narrowly enough so they can be discussed in a constructive way); incite and uncover discomfort (discomfort helps people to break out of mindless action and think about how to change routines); treat everything like a temporary condition (the current way of doing things might be fine for now, but may be useless in the future, which is why new ways of “doing” need to be developed); make the process as simple as possible (simple messages travel faster, simple designs allow for less confusion); innovation means living with some nasty drawbacks (order may be disturbed, you may have to team up with people you don’t like etc.); learn to fail faster, not less often (know when to pull the plug, don’t hang on to failing projects too long); open is good, closed is bad (being open to ideas from other people, organizations and places can bring in different perspectives and expertise). These guidelines are geared to fostering the spirit of innovation and helping organizations make necessary changes to implement innovation.

Van de Ven AH. (1986) Central problems in the management of innovation. *Management Science*, 32:5 pp590-607.

Van de Ven presents a framework for studying how innovation is introduced into organizations. He cites a lack of research on the mechanisms of introducing innovation, though he does give a useful framework for those interested in doing such research, as well as those wishing to analyze the innovation process in their own organizations. The author cites specific factors that facilitate or inhibit the

development of innovations including people, ideas, transactions and context over time. He describes a “people problem” of managing attention because people and organizations are largely designed to focus on and protect existing practices rather than devoting time and resources to developing new ideas. He describes a process problem of managing ideas into “good currency” so that innovative ideas may be implemented and eventually institutionalized. He reviews the challenge combining multiple functions, resources and disciplines to transform an innovative idea into a reality. Finally, he explores the issue of creating an infrastructure that is conducive to innovation. The problems illustrated in this article are not necessarily solved, but are posed as tools to help managers develop their structures for introducing innovation.