



Agenda & Note for our Seventh
Leadership Conversation from
6.00pm on Tuesday May 2nd to
3.30pm on Weds May 3rd 2017

Leading Innovation

Aims of the Conversation

To support Leadership Fellows and key colleagues/ partners in taking stock of how to be a successful leader of innovation.

On the basis of your responses we will:

- Ask how much your leadership of innovation is about promoting your own innovations or encouraging others to step forward as innovators in their own right
- Ask what tensions there might be between acting as an innovator and encouraging others to do the same
- Support each other in sharpening up one innovation which we can each take forward in our own right, and one innovation - or set of innovations - that we hope will come about through the inspirational leadership that we offer others.

As with all of our Leadership Conversations, discussions will be structured around a series of “killer questions” that you consider in small standing groups. It is your personal responses to these questions that will drive the discussion and determine the development of our agenda.

This Conversation will be facilitated with the support of our Leadership Fellow David Bott, who has spent many years as a leading thinker and strategist in this field. David is currently Principal Fellow of Warwick Manufacturing Group and was previously Director of Innovation Programmes for the Technology Strategy Board.

A brief Note written by David as background for the Conversation is attached to this agenda.

**Drawing on skills
and expertise
within the Society**

Our Opening Question



In our opening session we will start by asking you to consider the following questions in small standing groups for 20 minutes:

Do you see yourself as a leader of innovation and if so, what do you mean by this? If you are hesitant about describing yourself in this way, what is it about your leadership style, or your organisation, that makes you hesitant about this term?

As our discussion develops we will address the following questions:

For those who enjoy driving innovations that you favour as a leader, what in your experience has been the impact on others stepping forward as innovators in their own right? For those who see tensions between your role as direct innovator and encourager of others' capacity for driving innovations, what is the best strategy for managing these tensions?

If you think back to what you regard as your most successful innovation as a leader, what was the key quality you brought to this process?

**Learning from
experience**

Please also think back to an idea or innovation that you wanted to promote and didn't happen, and what lesson you take away from that experience.

Through this process we hope to open up some rich discussion about the leadership challenges involved in encouraging a more innovation-friendly culture across an organisation. So many processes for quality control and performance management can very easily deter innovation and risk-taking unless there is a profound commitment from the very top of the organisation to combining innovative ways of thinking and working with rigorous processes for standard-setting and performance management.

Leaders who have the capacity to unlock their own creativity as well as that of others are truly gifted individuals.

We hope that we can support each other in moving further down this path ourselves and in the process gain some powerful insights that empower us in stepping forward as leaders committed to fostering innovation on the part of others, as well as promoting innovations inspired by ourselves.

Key timings

Tuesday May 2nd 2017

2.30pm onwards.	You can check into your room in St George's House
4.30pm	Tea in St George's House for those joining Evensong in the Chapel
5.05pm (<i>Optional</i>)	Evensong in the Chapel
6.00pm	Start of the Conversation in the Vicars' Hall. After agreeing our groundrules we agree our opening question for small groups and your answers determine the future direction of the Conversation
7.30pm	We agree our top challenges to explore over dinner
7.45pm	Free time until dinner is served promptly at 8.30pm in the dining room in St George's house
10.00pm	Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel (<i>optional</i>)

Wednesday May 3rd 2017

7.45am	Breakfast is served in St George's House
8.45am	Back in the Vicars' Hall where we hear the outcomes of discussions over dinner, agree the question for our next round of small groups and "get on a roll"
11.00am	By late morning we expect to be closely engaged with the tension between leading innovation favoured by yourself as a leader and inspiring others to lead innovation on their own initiative
12.30pm	A hot buffet lunch will be served in the Vicars' Hall. In small groups we ask what are the key leadership lessons to be drawn from our discussions so far and the one or two personal insights for each of you that will guide you in developing your own leadership role as an innovator and encourager of others' innovations
1.15pm	We hear feedback from your time in small groups and then allocate ourselves to our final round of small groups
1.45pm-2.30pm	Our final burst of creative thinking in small groups, developing practical strategies for innovation that we can each take forward as an integral part of our own leadership role
2.30-3.30pm	In our final lap we hear each other's strategies for leading as innovators and sharpen up the emerging strongest ideas enabling you to manage the tension between driving your own favoured innovations and empowering others to do the same.

The Conversation will finish on the dot of 3.30pm.

Note by David Bott

It's always the people

Human beings are not sure about change. Their innate curiosity means that they notice and are attracted to different things, but they are also wary and apprehensive in case the new things are a threat. These aspects of behaviour probably come from our early history and are primal.

But human beings are also diverse in every one of their personality traits, so you will find some people actively seek out new object and experiences whereas others stick rigidly to what they know. And, of course, there is everything in-between!

Innovation

Innovation is a word that has been around for a long time, but over the last few decades has acquired a specific meaning in government and business circles. It always meant the process of developing something new, but it is now widely used to describe the process by which knowledge gained by research is applied to provide a solution to a problem. That problem can be one with a commercial return or one that is more societal in nature – and hence the return is more difficult to measure. Innovation is generally thought to be a good thing, fostering growth, providing jobs and enabling us to enjoy a better standard of living.

The basics

Being a leader therefore means you have to encourage innovation in your organisation. Unless the organisation develops new products and services it will be trampled underfoot by the competition that does.

But how does a leader ensure that the innovation carried out is as good as it can be?

It pays to start with the goal of the organisation. If you understand what success would look like, it is easier to harness available knowledge to address the challenges you face and the sorts of products and services that will be successful.

Once you know what you are striving for, it is best to understand the capability of the organisation. Desirability is good but achievability is vital!

But by far the most important activity is to ensure that everyone in the organisation knows what the goal is and how you are going about reaching it. Unless they understand these factors, their natural wariness will mean they don't commit fully to achieving anything.

Getting it wrong

This is all quite simple, but many find ways to mess it up.

By far the easiest and most damaging way to get it wrong is to delegate or outsource. Effective innovation must be driven as an integral part of the business process. A Chief Innovation Officer, or worse still an external consultant, sends the wrong message to all of the employees, namely that it is someone else's responsibility.

The next most common fault is that leaders come to believe that they are the only source of innovation. Whilst this may have been true when they were the only employee (for start-ups), if it continues to be true it is a shocking indictment of their recruitment skills and the culture of the organisation.

Given that the best innovations seem to start with an idea for a way to address a specific challenge, not only is everyone in the organisation capable of contributing – because they see the challenge from their perspective in the organisation – but since the idea will need to be developed into a real world product or service, they will all need to understand and believe in the idea as it is developed. People are apprehensive about innovation being “done to them”, so often reject other people’s idea – even their boss's ideas!

Once the wider organisation has been engaged, the process still needs to be managed, because not only do people tend to be partisan about their ideas, but the practice of listening to other people’s ideas and helping develop them does not come easily in most organisations. It pays to agree success criteria up front, but most forget.

As a result, what makes a successful idea is usually decided by the best debaters promoting their own ideas. The reality is that the success of ideas is only decided by the customers and they rarely get involved!

It takes resolve and listening

To be successful as a leader of innovation, it is necessary to understand the many stages of successful innovation. You need to encourage people to articulate a potentially valuable challenge, discuss and agree on a way for the organisation to address it, and secure total commitment to making it happen.

The personal leadership challenge is to realise that everyone else can – and must – contribute for the process to result in success. Now that’s difficult!