

An aerial photograph of an industrial facility, likely a refinery or chemical plant. The image shows a dense arrangement of large, cylindrical storage tanks, some with white tops and others with blue or grey tops. A network of pipes and walkways connects the tanks. In the upper right, there is a large, rectangular building with a corrugated metal roof. The facility is situated near a body of water, with a rocky shoreline and green vegetation visible in the lower portion of the image. A dark grey rectangular box with a white border is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text.

6 AREAS OF FOCUS TO ACHIEVE REAL INNOVATION IN MANUFACTURING

Courtesy: Adam Robinson



6 Areas of Focus to achieve real Innovation in Manufacturing

3. Create Innovation Culture



- ❑ How do manufacturers turn “ordinary” employees into extraordinary innovators? How does a manager or executive drive innovation to the core?
- ❑ A company should build and sustain an innovation infrastructure, a deep, corporate-wide capability for innovation, where employees are able to quickly find the resources and the management support that they need to turn their ideas into market success stories.
- ❑ Manufacturers should seek monetizing the imagination of employees, customers, and business partners everyday, everywhere.

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- ❑ According to Innovation to the Core by Gibson and Skarzynsky, within Quality Systems, Six Sigma Black Belts had been trained to wield the weapons of statistical process analysis and continuous improvement.
- ❑ In this manner manufacturers must implant the innovation gene in the company and must train and support “Intrapreneurs” or “Innovation Champion.” By doing so, innovation evolves into a systemic capability inside of the organization.
- ❑ Every single one of the organization’s employees, in every level and in every location, must be trained in the principles, skills, and tools of innovation. This practice of embedding such a culture of innovation in manufacturing greatly enhances the ability to discover new insights, spot unexploited opportunities, and generate novel business ideas.

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- ❑ There are two great examples of real innovation in manufacturing. In 2001, Jeff Immelt, GE's chairman and CEO, launched a "Cultural Revolution." He and his team at GE, from the top down, pushed the strategic focus beyond continuous improvement and bottom-line results toward the creation of bold, imaginative ideas. So when Whirlpool's former CEO Dave Whitwam set out to define his company's global innovation strategy back in 1999, the exact words he used were "Innovation from Everyone and Everywhere".
- ❑ According to several successful companies such as Whirlpool, P&G, CEMEX, GE, some models to instil changes or activities to create a Culture of Innovation in Manufacturing.

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1. The creation of cross-functional “innovation teams” in each region of the operation. The team is lead by an innovation director. Each team consists of 10 to 12 members from across the company, whose mandate is to generate new ideas and breakout proposals.
2. The participation of “innovation mentors” and “innovation consultants”, in part time or full time roles, who act as highly skilled advisers to new project development teams.
3. The introduction of a company-wide training program aimed at developing and distributing the mind-set and skills of innovation. Support for “innovation champions” in every part of the organization, who are there to guide and mentor any employee who comes up with an idea. The creation of “innovation boards” in each region and each major business unit to screen and fund the best proposals.

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4. The organization of big communication events called “innovation days” where innovation teams showcase their ideas to stakeholders. These events are necessary to recognizing and celebrating the work of innovators.

5. The creation of a comprehensive set of metrics to continually measure the company's innovation performance as well as its progress in embedding innovation as a core competence.

6. The establishment of a complete IT infrastructure, which integrates all employees into the innovation effort and allows them to track progress on innovation activities across the corporation. Many enterprise social networks, such as Yammer are quite helpful at getting everyone involved and get new employees on board quickly to a culture of innovation.

To be Continued...