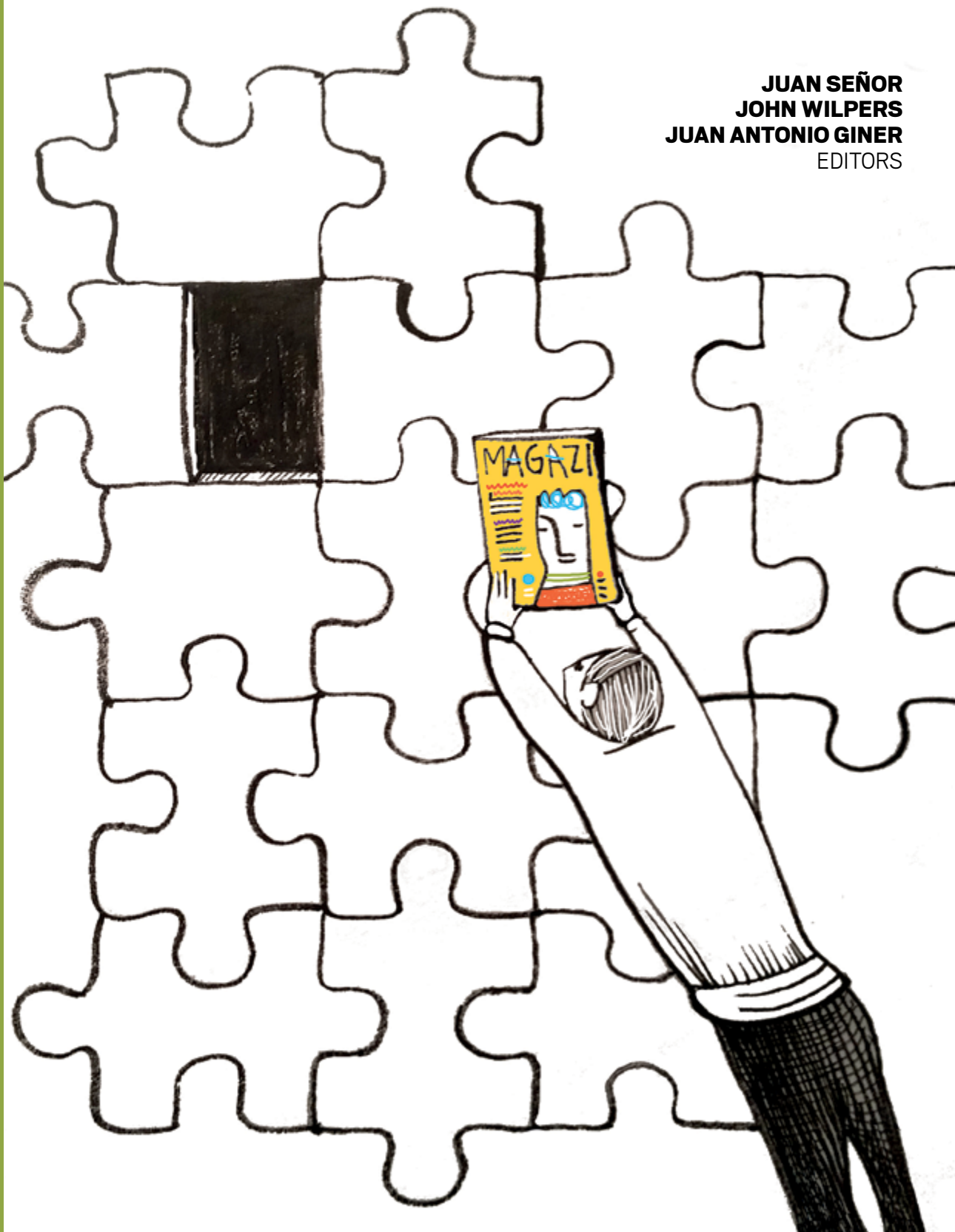


INNOVATION IN MAGAZINE MEDIA 2016-2017 WORLD REPORT

A SURVEY BY INNOVATION MEDIA CONSULTING
FOR FIPP – THE NETWORK FOR GLOBAL MEDIA

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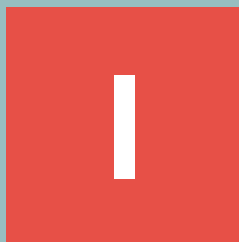






Give your boss this story: Innovation starts with the leader

Without leadership, training, and rewards,
innovation will not happen



Innovation dies at the top.

Without a leader who creates a culture that encourages and rewards innovation, creativity, and risk-taking, no one will feel safe enough or empowered enough to risk failing. Nothing will change because change will have no champions.

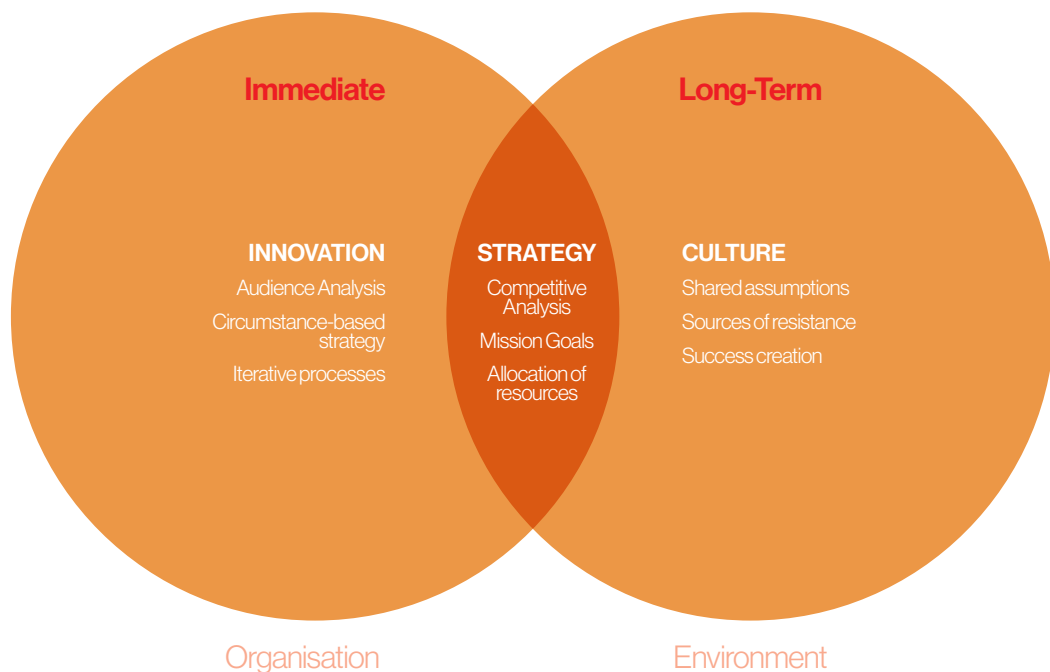
Why should your boss care? Well, only because publishing companies that don't change die.

However, it's not as easy as the leader issuing a memo: "We will be innovative."

The publisher or managing director must create priorities, organisational structures, work flows, teams, budgets, and rewards all aimed at creatively achieving innovative goals that ensure the company's health in the 21st century.

And then he or she must model that creative, innovative behaviour.

The Lean Newsroom: A model for change



Nothing happens without the leader's commitment

In our work with publishing companies around the world, we have found that nothing happens without the leader's personal commitment followed by his or her reallocation of priorities, time, resources, and personnel. Even smart, innovative staff often sit back in safety and wait for the publisher's signal.

But, as soon as the leader makes those kinds of structural changes and invites the staff into the change process, good things begin to happen. We have helped moribund, money-losing publishing companies become future-focused, innovative, profitable publishers, but it all began with the commitment from the top.

In mid-2015, the American Press Institute (API) published "Best Practices for Innovation", a study of the key elements of successful innovation at publishing companies. At the beginning of the report, author Craig Silverman said, "Innovation can't happen unless the leaders of an organisation instigate change and experimentation, and create structures, a culture, and processes that encourage innovation to flourish."

The overwhelming temptation for leaders is to hold a staff meeting and declare that the

company is committed to innovation, and then sit back and wait.

But a publisher or managing director cannot simply announce that the company will now be innovative. "It's just shouting empty words," David Skok, Boston Globe digital advisor to the editor in chief, told Silverman. The leader must change the "structure or the tasks that people do to allow that (innovation) to happen," Skok said.

Innovation requires "transformative leadership"

That kind of leadership is called "transformative leadership", the kind of leader who "engages employees by appealing to more intrinsic motivations such as autonomy, fulfilment, mastery, a sense of purpose, and a spirit of camaraderie at work," Don Peppers, an author of management books and a consultant, told Silverman.

In our work with publishing companies, we have found that leaders who make it clear that innovation is in the self-interest of the staff acquire followers more quickly and more enthusiastically than asking staff to change for the sake of the company alone. Leaders can show that staffers who acquire the kinds of

A CEO's 10 steps to create an innovation-friendly culture

- 1 Announce a commitment to innovation in an all-staff meeting
- 2 Invite managers and staff to participate in building an innovation-friendly organisation
- 3 Create cross-discipline task forces to tackle organisational, workflow, technology, training, etc. challenges and changes
- 4 Determine training needs across all departments, identify skill/knowledge champions, send them for training, have them train the rest of the staff
- 5 Report progress regularly
- 6 Change job descriptions to reflect changes (the task of one of the task forces)
- 7 Decide what work does NOT need to be done anymore to free up time for innovation
- 8 Create a budget and process for rewarding innovative thinking and projects
- 9 Change meeting agendas to focus on innovative thinking and project planning
- 10 Either create a Twitter account or blog or other digital communication system, or start using your existing account more regularly to demonstrate your personal commitment to innovation



Jonathan Groves, co-author, "The Lean Newsroom"
(Photo, Drury Univ.)

skills needed to advance innovation (video, social media, photo, data, etc. skills) become better, more powerful, and ultimately more marketable journalists.

Culture is a key barrier to change

Transformative leadership also means changing your corporate culture. And that is no mean feat. The existing culture has been developed over decades. Now you must change it. Why? Because existing corporate cultures have been found to be one of, if not THE key barrier to innovation and change.

"Culture is the ultimate source of most of the defensive mechanisms that block organisational change and prevent learning from occurring," wrote "Lean Newsroom" co-author Jonathan Groves, a Drury University associate professor of communication, in the API report.

To change the culture and enable innovative change, publishers must give their staff the resources and rewards they need.

Managers and staff must be empowered and recognised for innovation. Once a leader has made innovation a goal, the leader must then provide the training and support to give staff the skills and knowledge that make innovation possible. And then provide the kind of verbal and financial rewards and recognitions that send a message to the rest of the staff.

“The most successful leaders are usually ones balancing between pushing people to change but also, through providing training and support, are managing some of the anxiety that comes up around that,”

Carrie Brown

Co-author of the Lean Newsroom

Training removes fears, empowers staff

“The most successful leaders are usually ones balancing between pushing people to change but also, through providing training and support, are managing some of the anxiety that comes up around that,” co-author of “The Lean Newsroom” Carrie Brown told Silverman.

Without training and knowledge, even the greatest enthusiasts of innovation among the staff will be hesitant to try new ideas for fear of failure and embarrassment due to lack of skills. Training provided by the leader emboldens staff to put themselves and their reputations on the line.

We have found that publishers can pay for the training of individuals who then return to become the guru of a particular skill or process and the in-house trainer, spreading leadership and project ownership around the company.

A good leader also enables innovation by deciding what NOT to do anymore

One of the next most important steps a leader can take to enable innovation is to decide what to STOP doing. Without changing priorities and eliminating some work, staff will just see innovation as piling more work on top of their already overworked lives. They will insist they are just too busy doing their existing jobs to find time for innovation.

“The reason that’s important is that unless you stop doing those things [that aren’t core to your operation], you don’t have the time and space you need to try out new things and fail

and figure out where to go next,” former vice president of journalism and media innovation for the Knight Foundation Michael Maness told Silverman.

Good leaders model innovative behaviour

Beyond the training, reorganisation, and elimination of non-core activities, leaders must also model innovation. A publisher or managing director without an active Twitter account or blog or Tumblr is sending a message to the staff that innovation is important for everyone else, but not for him or her.

A leader must also go beyond the technological stuff and reinforce innovative initiatives every day.

The day-to-day behaviour of the chief executive is the equivalent of reading tea leaves for the staff. “Leaders seeking to evolve their culture toward greater iteration and learning need to examine carefully what is rewarded and punished, and recognise the critical role they play not only in what they say but in every action they take, no matter how subtle,” wrote Brown and Groves. “Staffers are quick to notice not only the more obvious internal awards or raises but also how attention and simple praise are distributed.”

Collaboration is a key to innovation success

In building an innovative culture and integrated operation, leaders must also enable and insist on collaboration between previously isolated silos or departments within the organisation.

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Trei Brundrett
Chief product officer
of Vox Media



How to decide what innovations to pursue

Once your corporate culture and organisational structure is innovation-friendly, then it's time to start innovating.

But where do you start?

In the American Press Institute's Innovation Best Practices report, author Craig Silverman cited the suggestions of authors Len Schlesinger and Charlie Kiefer in their Harvard Business Review article, *Act Like an Entrepreneur Inside Your Organisation*.

Here's how Silverman summarised their recommendations:

1 Assess your level of desire for the project or idea

"Curiosity is sufficient but if it's 'just a good idea' that you don't personally care about, stop wasting your time and those around you by considering it any further," wrote the authors.

2 Ask yourself, "What am I willing to invest to take the first step?"

For publishers, there must be a budget. What are you willing to risk? But the authors also note that for people inside an organisation, it's less about investing money and more about "their social standing and relationship capital within the organisation."

3 Think about who you can bring along

Internal innovators need "employee partners and supportive bosses (or at least passive ones) as they build a marketplace and political support for their evolving idea." No one can do it alone.

4 Do something

The authors emphasise the Act-Learn-Build cycle they outlined in their book, *Just Start: Take Action, Embrace Uncertainty, Create the Future*. They warn against over-planning and over-thinking, and instead encourage you to embrace "low-cost, low-risk steps using the means you and your network have readily at hand." Then adapt as you go.

Brundrett, chief product officer of Vox Media, told Silverman. "If you're working together it's really about understanding where they are coming from and their background and where the hard work is, and what's valuable that they bring to it. And when you do that, instead of getting the editorial team telling the product team what to build, what you have is people making things together, having ownership together and trusting each other. And much better things come out of that."

At Innovation Media Consulting, we help publishers build small cross-discipline teams charged with the responsibility for making pieces of the innovation transformation happen. That participation and ownership eliminates fear and enables buy-in and builds enthusiasm. Publishers who share leadership build teams of leaders throughout the company who help move the enterprise forward.

Do NOT create separate entities or staff for innovation

But here's a warning: Do not create a separate

innovation vice president or build an Innovation Lab. That just creates another silo and sends the message that innovation and creativity are not for everyone. Spread the responsibility (and fun) of innovation around so you can have many innovation champions and heroes.

Finally, for innovation to really take hold, leaders must turn over some of the leadership to the staff and managers. Every member of the company must feel they have ownership and the power to make decisions.

Give people ownership and power

"I'm a strong believer that performance management fundamentally is about giving people ownership over their own product and what it is that they're trying to do," Skok said. "The more you can own that product or feel that you have ownership over your ability to influence it, the more empowered you are to go forward and do things that may be innovative."

When that happens, innovation is no longer a topic for discussion or a goal. It just happens. It becomes the new normal.