



# Beware the Lazy Thinkers

In order to spark innovative thinking, leaders must put the right framework in place so individuals and teams can easily share ideas. **Dawn Murden** finds out what that means in practice

“The rise and fall of empires is dramatic in the consumer and industrial technology space,” says **Andy Griffiths**, CEO of the Consumer Appliances Division at Glen Dimplex. “Getting teams together to continuously challenge and reappraise your market, which changes every day in this digital world, is fundamental.”

This continues to be a central challenge for companies across myriad sectors, whether they’re in B2B or B2C. “You

have to get away from the running of the business because it can be intellectually lazy. Studying this month’s figures, working out this quarter’s results – that’s not interesting,” continues **Andy**, who is also former President for the UK and Ireland at Samsung Electronics.

“You need to challenge yourself and your teams to something longer term. You’ve got to do it realistically and for as far as you can see. Normally that’s between two and five years.”

**Anita Chandraker**, Head of Digital at PA Consulting Group, agrees. She warns: “Beware the lazy thinkers – there are many of them out there. It’s also important to take accountability for tomorrow, because too many people are looking at today. If no one is accountable for innovation, it won’t happen.”

There are very real difficulties for organisations in achieving this, from resetting KPIs to developing a tolerance for failure. “Leaders must put the right >



framework in place so that individuals and teams can share ideas,” comments **Alison Bennett**, Relationship Manager at Criticleye. “Setting up cross-functional teams that include a range of individuals with varying skills and experiences could be one way of doing this.”

For **Andy** there is a simple, yet crucial, point that boards and executive teams need to bear in mind: “The last thing you ever want as a start point is a bunch of clones marching in one single direction going off doing the same things.”

In most cases, a shift in mindset is required. **Kevin George**, CEO at passenger ferry company Red Funnel Group, reflects on his experiences at British Airways when his team were first tasked with inventing a flat-bed business class seat.

“To come up with a seat that would lie flat and be economically viable just seemed impossible,” he explains. “But it was a question of overcoming that mental barrier and finding a way of doing it.”

When BA created the fully reclining seat in 2001, **Kevin** said it broke new ground in the airline industry. Now, almost every international airline has adopted them.

## From Incubation to Execution

Those organisations faced with the prospect of having to relearn the art of innovation need a clear understanding of who will be responsible for generating ideas, and who delivers on going to market.

On that point, **Anita** noted the client challenges highlighted in PA Consulting

Group’s ongoing [research](#) into innovation. “Certainly the data shows that the biggest challenge companies face is the ability to scale up once they’ve got a good idea,” she said.

There will be serious questions about investment, resource allocation and the risks around how to integrate a new product or service into an organisation.

This is why it’s vital to reflect on the structure, what the levels of accountability and oversight should be, and how this all runs in parallel with ‘business as usual’.

**David Hollander**, CEO at Aqualisa, a UK-based shower manufacturer, comments: “Coming up with new concepts is the easy bit; it’s almost all about execution. That’s where management plays a big part in driving fledgling ideas, presenting visible confidence, allowing time to discuss and evaluate the viability of an idea. Then, it’s about enabling the processes needed to see it through.”

At Aqualisa, **David** says the company is preparing to launch a new product and different teams are fully involved, working on a collaborative basis: “Our R&D and marketing teams are closely linked. R&D may work to develop a new product in response to a marketing imperative, but equally it can be the other way round. They are led by a Brand and Design Director, who oversees both teams.”

According to **Andy**, proper thought should be given to creating teams for different stages of the innovation process: “It’s relevant to keep your good thinkers thinking, and have your good doers doing. That, in a consumer market

is a more natural segmentation of skills, because you have end users who are continuously demanding, as well as a bunch of competitors agitating your business.

“The innovation team, once they catch their breath post-launch, need to come back to the table two or three months later and start again, using some of the data from how the last project landed.”

That’s the Holy Grail for any business when it comes to innovation – how to keep that cycle going. One great idea and seamless execution won’t guarantee success. Rather, a winning approach lies in the ability to empower those within an organisation to do it time and again. ■

This article includes insights shared at Criticleye’s Discussion Group: [How to Create a Successful Innovation Team](#)

Featuring Commentary From:



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