

## Using the Cultural Web in an Innovation Context

My previous two posts have introduced the [cultural web](#), and how it can be used to analyse corporate culture and looked at [different questions](#) which can be asked when applying the web. This post takes the discussion of the web a stage further and considers how it can be used in an innovation context.

Overall, there are three steps to using it in such a context:

1. Determine the current cultural web – how well does the existing culture support innovation?
2. Identify a ‘desired’ cultural web that supports innovation more effectively.
3. Determine the changes necessary and how they can be achieved.

Other articles have discussed the constituents of the cultural web, and the elements which need to be analysed, so they will not be repeated here.

To help identify a ‘desired’ cultural web that supports innovation more effectively, the following comments should be considered:

*Organisational structures.* Four different best practices can be identified for organisational structures to promote innovation: market orientation; frequent reorganisations; autonomous teams; and innovation managers. Aligning organisations to markets is a common and effective practice. Autonomous teams can be the best way of dealing with radical innovations, which cannot efficiently be developed within the existing organisation and processes.

*Power structures.* Cross-functional awareness is a powerful tool. This can be achieved by placements in different parts of an organisation to foster a greater understanding of the organisation and its products.

*Symbols.* Communication, both internal and external, needs to have an innovation focus and can demonstrate a fundamental understanding of innovation. Displays of product and service



innovation can be powerful ways to make innovation highly visible. Outstanding individual contributions can be recognised through plaques and certificates that are visible in the workplace and act as symbols of innovation.

*Stories.* Innovative leaders reshape old stories and inspire the future.

*Routines and rituals.* Both of these can be used to support innovation through both promoting ideas for new products, service and process improvements, and tolerating mistakes, or ‘celebrating failure’.

*Control systems.* Mechanisms must exist that enable employees to suggest ideas and obtain the resources to investigate them further. Processes for portfolio management and prioritisation are also critical. Processes for corporate and individual performance metrics and reward and recognition must be set up, which need to be transparent and readily understood.

Once the first two steps have been completed, it is relatively easy to assess what changes are needed. However, do not underestimate the potential resistance to change which might exist, or indeed expect it to be quick and smooth.