Training Managers to Support Innovation at HP

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Creativity
Education
Innovation
Process
ROI
Teamwork
Training

In training
sessions, half a
world apart, two
innovation
experts told the
same story. Art
Beckman and Silvi Steigerwald are two of the key architects of the innovation program in
HP Software. Part of their job is training HP Software managers, more than a thousand
worldwide, to support a culture of innovation. Recently they went on the road—Art to
Massachusetts and Silvi to Shanghai—to train more HP managers in innovation HP style.
Their innovation curriculum starts with FourSight: Your Thinking Profile, and they always
tell the same story.

The science of creativity

It was nearly five years ago, in the early days of the HP innovation effort. The innovation
team hosted a 'Creative Camp' for employees. "We thought it would be great to do a
workshop on the science behind creativity and innovation," recalled Silvi. Someone
suggested doing the FourSight Thinking Profile. "That was our first experience," she said.
"It was a huge hit. Everyone who did it wanted their teams to do it when they got back. Our
team alone had a huge leap in productivity when we understood each other's profiles."

As Silvi tells it: "Art is a Driver. I'm an Integrator. I used to drive him crazy with all my
questions and how precise I am. Once he understood our preferences, he realized, 'We
really complement each other. I really need you.' After that, he thought the questions I was
asking and the detailed plans I put together were really valuable."

As Art tells it: "We used to gnaw at each other. But once I realized Silvi was an Integrator
and had a high tolerance for the steps I dislike, I started asking, 'Have we got this working
well enough for you? Because if it's good enough for you, I'm good with it.'"

FourSight training is only a small part of the impressive innovation effort that Art and Silvi helped construct at HP over the last five years. "The two things we spend the most time on are sourcing ideas and developing a creative culture," said Art.

A huge hole in management

"When we first started, our number-one goal was employee engagement," recalled Silvi. They launched an idea capture system, first for HP Software and then throughout HP, and ran brainstorming sessions to generate ideas. Soon, it became clear that new ideas weren't enough to produce innovation. There was "a huge hole" in management's ability to support an innovation culture.

That was an "aha" moment. Silvi captured it. "The executives want innovation. The employees want to innovate. It's the managers we really need to reach."

At the time, HP was putting together a new course for managers. Art and Silvi decided to pitch the course developers on the idea of adding an innovation component. Ironically, the course developers approached them first.

"We all recognized the need," said Art. "We really wanted to get information to every manager on how to make the best environment to support effective innovation. And we got more specific, defining innovation as: When ideas are implemented, put into action and provide value."

A great way to start the discussion

Now innovation is officially part of the 2.5-day training for every manager in HP Software. "We introduce FourSight at the beginning of the first day as the bridge between understanding yourself and understanding your team," said Art. "It's a great way to start the discussion: How do I as a manger go about solving a problem?"

From there, it's an easy leap to learn to manage a more innovative team. After FourSight debriefs, Art often hears managers exclaim, "Now I understand why that team never worked. I really need to think more about the teams I'm setting up.

Silvi added, "FourSight opens up the mind block that holds managers back when they wonder: 'Can I be creative?' and 'Can that be important to my team?' Now they've got this conduit, they want to get more involved."

Today, thanks to the efforts of the innovation team, HP boasts a full-blown "InnoStream," a robust system of collecting and sharing new ideas that drive new products. The combination of that sophisticated idea development program and the worldwide management training has really begun to pay dividends for HP. Silvi reported, "More people are submitting more ideas, and higher quality ideas. As the managers are taking it on, we're starting to see that culture of innovation.

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