



Innovation and agility in the face of a crisis

Innovation should be considered as a process, like any other business activity. Instead of waiting for the “light-bulb moment”, having strategies to help structure innovation across all aspects of your business, will ensure you can optimize and harness creativity and inspiration as it occurs.

Businesses don't need to reinvent the wheel to stay ahead of the curve. Standards can help organizations draw on expert knowledge to help implement reliable processes to reliably capture new ideas.

Introducing an innovation management system will help your business assess its current performance and implement a framework for sustained and measurable growth.

Such a system should consider how relationships with other businesses can be made mutually beneficial. Collaboration can help your business become more creative, as well as mitigate disruption by sharing knowledge and joint objectives.

Empower your people to innovate

Your people are a major source of potential creativity. Making staff feel heard, valued and empowered will foster trust and inspire new ways of doing things, even during times of crisis. It's important to create a supportive work environment where innovative ideas can flourish.

There are specific standards to help businesses shape their culture to encourage optimal innovation. Each can be integrated into wider management standards (for organizational quality and governance, for example) to help you implement, monitor and evaluate the right system for your business.

A structured learning and development strategy will help to drive increased engagement amongst your people. By investing in your employees' skills, you'll give them the motivation to challenge and improve existing processes and norms.

Partners and other stakeholders alike are also rich sources of ideas and inspiration, so it's important to extend this approach beyond your immediate staff to engage these parties in any innovation strategy.

Of course, as well as fostering a creative working culture, paying attention to employee potential in this way improves your long-term recruitment and talent retention prospects.

The green recovery: sustainable opportunities

This year the government announced its Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, highlighting the increasing need for businesses to operate more sustainably. Billions of pounds of public and private investment are set to transform the UK's green sector, heralding significant innovation opportunity.

Using management standards to ensure your business is ready to take advantage of this green growth potential should be a priority for all. In addition, setting long-term sustainability goals can both optimize your operational efficiency and boost long-term resilience, offering benefits for your business and the communities in which you operate.

Standards can help every company assess its environmental impact, and benchmark operations to identify where operations can be optimized. By responding to environmental demands, you can reduce costs and risk through improved waste management and energy efficiency.

Building a framework to meet sustainable goals, allows your business to grow while meeting its legal and ethical duties, and contribute to global initiatives like the UN Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs).

Embracing new technology

Digital technology and new platforms offer solutions for businesses trying to adapt during crises, as demonstrated by the record number of retailers who moved their business online during national lockdowns in the UK.

With a greater reliance on online and digital channels, it's important to assess your information security and data management systems to ensure your business and your customers are protected.

Standards can help businesses make a commitment to cybersecurity by identifying potential threats and implementing processes to manage and reduce them.

By managing information appropriately, you can prove to consumers that you are taking responsibility for their personal data, which will have positive reputational consequences.

Finally, using standards to shape your approach to innovation will help you respond to changing demands, faster. By systematically accelerating the ability to introduce new approaches and concepts, you can maintain your competitive edge and build vital resilience.

Summary

- Innovation is a process, and can be managed just like any other business activity
- Look for new opportunities and introduce an innovation management system to turn ideas into actions
- Give power to your people by creating a supportive work environment where innovative ideas flourish
- Give back to your communities and set long-term sustainability goals to boost the long-term resilience of your business
- Embrace new technologies by using standards to manage and protect information
- Look towards the future and let innovation come naturally through effective management throughout your business.

Read the innovation issue of Standards Outlook here:

<https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/about-bsi/uk-national-standards-body/standards-outlook/>