

initial focus is on innovation skills development and team development, including creativity workshops, ideation to commercialisation programmes and a review of HR support for incorporating innovation training programmes.

With the IMP³rove approach, the consultant, Business Dynamix, was able to demonstrate to the company the need to embrace Innovation Management and the impact it will have on the bottom line. IMP³rove helped establish a long-term relationship and provided the opportunity to introduce concepts, such as open innovation, that the company would previously have seen as unimportant.

Acknowledgement

This case study was written by Peter Ives, Business Dynamix, Enfield, UK.

5.4.9 AUSTRALIA

LEVESYS: Innovation Management Enabling a Conversation about the Future

Australia-based, 22-year-old family-owned software company with 17 employees.

Abstract

This case study reports on the impact and business transformation of an IMP³rove assessment and follow-up workshop on Australian SME LEVESYS (www.levesys.com), which was undertaken by QMI Solutions. Innovation was not a foreign term to the company, which focuses on the development of enterprise resource planning (ERP) software for the Australian construction sector. However, before seeing and undergoing the IMP³rove process, this company had difficulty articulating their innovation problems and, therefore, had not achieved growth targets from its R&D efforts. This case study highlights the role of IMP³rove in assisting LEVESYS to take the first step in transforming itself through innovation.

Getting Started: How to Engage in Innovation

LEVESYS is an Australia-based SME that designs, develops and supplies the highest quality software and services to address the particular needs of companies in the construction, engineering and service contractor industries in Australia. LEVESYS clients grow and succeed by using the company's products and services to become more efficient, more accurate and more reliable. Established for more than 22 years, this family-based business employs about 17 staff members in Brisbane, Australia. Before the IMP³rove audit, the company was

focusing solely on the development and distribution of its proprietary software products. The company was successful, having developed a significant niche in its target market based on the knowledge the company had developed about its customers. As with all small businesses, securing the necessary resources was a challenge, but this did not prevent the company from achieving moderate growth. However, LEVESYS believed it could go further. It had a feeling that its R&D process was inefficient and allowed for development blowouts and "feature creep." However, the company did not believe they could articulate the problem sufficiently to seek the assistance they required. Some of the management team knew something needed to be done and that a change needed to occur. They knew they needed to engage in innovation somehow, but they did not have any idea what it was or how to go about engaging in it.

Trigger for Change: Customer Demands New Offering

QMI Solutions (www.qmisolutions.com.au) is a not-for-profit company dedicated to improving the skills, performance, innovation and capability of the Queensland manufacturing industry. As part of their innovation service offering, they were piloting the IMP³rove programme with Queensland-based businesses. As part of the industry engagement, a breakfast seminar was held with about 30 businesses. LEVESYS was one of those attendees. Based on the material provided, LEVESYS immediately believed the IMP³rove programme could help their company identify and understand their innovation challenges. As the director of LEVESYS noted, "The seminar presented IMP³rove as a vehicle to show companies what the problems were rather than what the potential solutions would be." However, although this seminar provided an opportunity for change, having the knowledge of what might be possible is often not enough to get SMEs to engage with the change process. In this case, a LEVESYS client had asked the company to push the boundaries on their product offering and go beyond current developments. This client saw the value of LEVESYS' market intelligence to develop a new offering. Therefore, the combination of new knowledge and client push provided the right environment for LEVESYS to consider change.

Beginning the Change Process

An IMP³rove assessment session was scheduled with a QMI consultant. All of the assessments QMI were undertaking during the pilot phase were consultant facilitated, as QMI's experience with benchmarking programmes indicated that the con-

versation with the client was just as important to the benchmarking score. The IMP³rove assessment was undertaken with three members of the executive team, conducted over a three-hour period in their offices. When asked about their experiences during the assessment, the company mentioned that they were able to have a conversation about innovation without becoming defensive and emotional. At the completion of the assessment, the company believed they had a solid, robust discussion about the strategy and challenges within their business.

After receiving the IMP³rove benchmarking report and the consultant's analysis of the data, LEVESYS immediately believed they needed to focus on the R&D process. Although not low, these scores identified specific gaps that they could address immediately, such as setting project targets and separating R&D activities from daily operational activities. However, after further discussion with the consultant and then finding the time to go into greater depth into the individual sections of the report, LEVESYS realised they also needed to look at their organisational culture, which was their lowest score. Upon deeper reflection, the spider chart in the IMP³rove benchmarking report showed the organisation that they could have the most technically competent software development people on earth, but if they did not know what their customers want, then it does not mean a thing. Therefore, a connection must be made with the way the teams were working and how they engaged with customers and then capture their passion in the software development process.

Implementing Change

Once LEVESYS defined an innovation strategy (with the assistance of QMI Solutions) and agreed that they needed to grow the business, the shift within the company was made from a product focus to a service offering for the construction industry. Customers then became the driver of the development process, and focus turned more toward keeping customer needs met rather than focusing on software feature development. They then began to prototype, mock up and test solutions with various brainstorming techniques. The staff members were involved with the rollout of the changes and were excited and proud to work at LEVESYS.

After nine months, they believed they were still at the beginning of this process. It was apparent that management still had different opinions about what a successful business was. One person's view of this was about growth while another's was about developing the best software. However,

they now believe they can discuss this openly and all get on the same page to allow the real opportunities to innovate rather than just be debated. IMP³rove was giving them the language to have this conversation.

Achieved Results: Moving from Software Development to Consulting Services for the Construction Industry

Before the IMP³rove programme, LEVESYS was a product-based business that was achieving modest growth. Through IMP³rove, they have transformed into a world-class consulting service supplier to the construction industry that, when required, can also provide an added product platform. The company now has the value-adding ability to exploit their intellectual property further through their service offering. LEVESYS now understands their customer value proposition much more clearly and has structured their product releases accordingly. They understand the value that services play within their business, and in doing so, they have reframed the business problem to be understood from the customers' perspective. LEVESYS now runs their projects in the same way their customers do business, so the company is able to understand its customers much more clearly than before.

Conclusion

Before entering the IMP³rove programme, LEVESYS understood innovation. However, they believed this could only be executed within the company if there was a willingness and desire to transform. This drive came from a major customer rather than from IMP³rove itself. However, having the tool available was a key enabler to immediately start the process.

Further, the company was adamant that QMI Solutions' process facilitation was critical to the success of the audit process. Through the consulting process and with the use of the IMP³rove platform, their unique business challenges could be identified rather than treated as a generic set of issues.

In the words of the company, "The IMP³rove programme has opened the door to the future for our company. It has allowed us to see our potential opportunities, and it has enabled us to transform the way we do things as a team."

Acknowledgments

This case study was written by Dr. Sam Bucolo and Dr. Cara Wrigley from the School of Design, Queensland University of Technology. Dr. Sam Bucolo also holds a joint appointment with QMI Solutions, which

participated in the facilitated IMP³rove assessment with Bruce Macaulay from QMI Solutions. Special thanks also go to Gabrielle and Mark Gravolin from LEVESYS, who gave up their time to be interviewed for this case study.

5.5 Conclusions from the Case Examples: IMP³rove Contributes to Effective and Efficient Innovation Management Consulting Support

The case examples illustrate the approaches to high-impact Innovation Management consulting for

SMEs. With the IMP³rove approach, very different challenges can be addressed and tangible results achieved. The view on Innovation Management still can be rather holistic or rather focussed. The consulting process applied showed some common patterns. However, the depth of consulting support varied along with how IMP³rove was integrated with other consulting tools.

Figure 43: Innovation Management Consulting Impact

SME CHALLENGE	TANGIBLE RESULTS FROM CONSULTING SUPPORT	CONSULTING PROCESS	INTEGRATION OF OTHER TOOLS	SCOPE OF INNOVATION MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE
Better exploiting IP and change in Innovation Management	Setting clear targets for innovation projects Initiating cultural change	IMP ³ rove assessment facilitated by consultant		IP Innovation culture
Managing several innovation projects at a time in a small organisation	Measuring innovation success	IMP ³ rove assessment, Benchmarking results, Recommendations	SWOT	Innovation Life Cycle Management
Competitive pressure triggered by disruptive technologies	Development of new Business Unit building on the disruptive technology	IMP ³ rove assessment, Benchmarking results, Roadmap for action, Market analysis, forecast and business plan	Scenario techniques, portfolio management, brain-storming, fore-casting	Strategic shift to new business area
Feasibility of large innovation project for a rather small organisation	Effective support for funding of the project	IMP ³ rove assessment, Analysis of the benchmarking results, Roadmap with activities		Entering new market
Rapid growth causing bottleneck in the manufacturing facilities	Increased effectiveness in the manufacturing processes and improved product management	IMP ³ rove assessment, Complementary analyses, Production process improvements		Meeting high market demand for innovative products
Low results from innovation	Expected improvements in the area of radical innovations	IMP ³ rove assessment, Complementary analyses, Further consulting support pending		Innovation results