

## 5CLOSING THE GAP: WORKPLACE INNOVATION AND POST-COVID RECOVERY

**Peter TOTTERDILL**

*Workplace Innovation Europe CLG, Clockwise, Broadwalk House, Exeter EX1 1TS, UK*

### **Abstract.**

Substantial evidence shows that workplace practices which empower employees to make day-to-day-decisions, contribute ideas for innovation and improvement and be heard at senior level lead to superior performance as well as enhanced workforce health and engagement. Yet successive surveys indicate that most European businesses are either unaware of this evidence, or unable or unwilling to act on it. This gap between evidence and practice has significant implications for Europe's competitiveness and workforce wellbeing.

The concept of Workplace Innovation grew from an international study commissioned by the EU and provides a framework for actionable knowledge, building bridges between research and practice. Workplace Innovation has been recognised by many national governments and the European Commission, leading to the creation of the European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN) in 2013. EUWIN brings together enterprise-level decision-makers, public policy-makers, social partners, researchers and other actors.

Whilst there is a growing body of Workplace Innovation literature, studies of implementation at enterprise level remain rare. This paper examines, the evidence underpinning Workplace Innovation and how it is used in practice, based on the author's collaboration with a Scottish company over a 4year period. The case demonstrates workplace innovation as a generative, non-prescriptive and non-linear framework for change, leading to positive outcomes for staff and business performance. It reveals workplace innovation as a social process with inherent participative and dialogical characteristics, and shows how guided competence development of in-company change facilitators can lead to a sustainable momentum of productive reflection and organisational innovation.

**Keywords:** Workplace innovation, productivity, competitiveness, employee health, employee engagement, EUWIN, *The Fifth Element*, public policy.

**JEL Classification:** M50.