

# Moving Innovation Beyond Boundaries

By Jeff DeGraff, University of Michigan



NOTES: THOUGHTS FROM THE THOUGHT LEADERS AT THE ROSS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

**Innovation has moved well beyond the walls of the R&D lab to encompass all aspects of a business. The most innovative corporations see no boundaries, bringing together the brightest people across disciplines to share ideas and quickly generate results. One of the biggest challenges to making innovation happen is identifying the proper formula for your organization.**

There is not one set of best practices for innovating, but every formula for making innovation work should take into account four key elements:

**High quality targets.** It is necessary to set forward-thinking yet attainable objectives. Too often organizations find themselves setting targets based on things that have happened in the past.

**Deep and diverse domain expertise.** Innovation is a team sport. The best results come when innovators work in groups, pulling on each member's vast range of experience and knowledge.

**Shots on goal.** The more ideas that are explored, the better the chances of identifying one that works. While more attempts may accelerate the failure cycle, it also

increases the chances of scoring successes.

**Review. Revise. Renew.** Learning and innovation are tightly connected. It is important to discuss what has worked and what didn't work. Revise plans based on lessons learned, while continuing to innovate.

Leading innovation is as much about connecting dots and crossing boundaries as it is about being inspired or creative.

To help organizations innovate, we have created a collaborative innovation community in Ann Arbor. The *Innovatrium* (Innovation + Atrium) – as it is appropriately titled – aims to be a proving ground for innovation projects; an idea market, think tank and research lab.

We equate the *Innovatrium* with what the Juilliard School is to music, bringing together master artists, teachers and students in a collaborative effort to create new ideas, skills and practices through a "see one, do one, teach one" approach.

The *Innovatrium* will be used as placeholder for Ross Executive Education custom-designed programs where organizations can

**"Take shots on goal. The more ideas that are explored, the better the chances of identifying one that works."**

**Apathy is the death of innovation.**

**Learn today how you can partner with Ross Executive Education to design a custom program that helps your firm innovate to meet your business challenges and deliver meaningful results at [www.execed.bus.umich.edu](http://www.execed.bus.umich.edu) or call 734.763.1000.**

get away from their offices, populate the room with very bright, energetic people from diverse backgrounds, and innovate. Organizations can work with the school to design a custom program and then roll up their sleeves and get to work in the *Innovatrium* building and implementing effective solutions.

*Jeff DeGraff is a professor at the University of Michigan Ross School of Business Executive Education program specializing in managing creativity, innovation and change. Take it the next level and think outside the box with Ross.*

Through its unique model of thought leadership and action-based learning, Executive Education at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business partners with leaders to co-create personalized learning experiences to help them realize meaningful results. Ross faculty includes some of the world's best known and most respected thought leaders, expert at integrating knowledge with competitive insights and practical application. A unique, results-driven approach is one reason that thousands of executives from more than 70 countries around the globe have chosen Ross for Executive Education. Michigan's worldwide presence includes offices in Hong Kong, Dubai and India.

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