



Trust the Process: Planning, Preparing and Creating Innovation in your Strategy

New tech and resources are being created and entering the marketplace much more quickly than we have experienced in the past. How do you remain aware (and educated) about what is available to best identify solutions and innovation within your organization?

What goes into creating your overall strategy?...

Think about your answers to the following questions to help ensure you develop a robust strategic plan.

- ☐ How do you determine whether you should evolve or erase a process step or program tool?
- ☐ Are you setting annual strategic goals for your HR department that help enable or support the company's' overall strategic/financial goals?
- ☐ Do you become intrigued with new tech tools and innovation, making sure the latest and greatest are being utilized or adopted?
- ☐ Do you have patience to sit back and evaluate the long-term effectiveness and overall value of new things, preferring to learn from others and avoid experiencing growing pains that sometimes happen with new things?
- ☐ Do you build your strategic plans to not only support the organization's goals but to address current opportunities as well as solve problems within your department/processes today?
- ☐ How do you engage your customer? Your HR team? Your employee population?

Which methods help you build your strategy action plan?...

Which of these are you using to *create your strategic goals, identify opportunities and innovate?*

- ☐ Brainstorming Sessions (Team WORKOUTS, "What If...?", Suggestions Box, Whiteboards, Current VS Future State Analysis)
- ☐ HR Services and Technology Market Assessments and Education (i.e.. *HRO Today's* Annual Bakers Dozen Customer Satisfaction Surveys)
- ☐ Assess Need/Readiness for Partnership Opportunities [with HR Services and Technology Providers]
- ☐ Review Data Analytics AND Process Quality (AUDIT)
- ☐ Current and Future State Value Process Mapping
- ☐ Voice of Customer (VoC)
- ☐ Competitor Analysis
- ☐ Past, Present and/or Future Analysis

Maybe it is not just one, but several of these that you should consider using to stay aware, informed, mindful, and innovative in conquering your strategic plan and finding the solutions to



be successful and remain competitive during a time that some are calling “the HR Tech Revolution” - which shows no signs of stopping or slowing down anytime soon!

Creating a **culture of innovation**, which certainly includes technology and new technology ideas, but is not dependent upon or solely comprised of technology, can become a critical component to your organization’s ability to **remain relevant and resourceful, exceed customer satisfaction and revenue goals**, as well as maintain your **purpose, profitability and competitive advantage!**

To create a culture of innovation it helps to be mindful in creating a variety of ways that you can educate and engage **employees** [and customers] throughout the year.

ACTIVITIES

“INNOVATION DOESN'T JUST LIVE IN SILICON VALLEY OR THE EXECUTIVE SUITE—IT LIVES IN THE DAY-TO-DAY IDEAS OF YOUR PEOPLE. TAKE THESE ACTIVITIES BACK TO YOUR TEAM AND START BUILDING A CULTURE WHERE EVERYONE IS EMPOWERED TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION.”

The following activities are designed to be *fun, impactful, and immediately actionable* for HR leaders to take back to their teams.

Activity 1: “Innovation Hall of Fame”

Goal: Recognize past innovations and celebrate creative problem-solving within the organization.

How It Works:

Create a physical or virtual “Innovation Hall of Fame” board.

Invite employees and HR teams to nominate innovations—big or small—that have improved the way the organization works. These could be new tools, a reimagined process, a DEI initiative, a unique team practice, or even a clever time-saving hack.

Nominations must include:

- ✓ The innovation or idea
- ✓ The person or team behind it
- ✓ What problem it solved or impact it made

Feature winning innovations each quarter in internal newsletters, all-hands meetings, or even through digital signage or intranet shout-outs.



Why It Works:

- ✓ Celebrates internal creativity and contributions that might otherwise go unrecognized.
- ✓ Encourages a culture where innovation isn't top-down—it's owned by everyone.
- ✓ Promotes knowledge sharing across teams.

Activity 2: "Future Forward Innovation Challenge"

Goal: Crowdsource employee-driven ideas that improve operations, engagement, or business outcomes.

How It Works:

Host a team-based or department-wide challenge over a set time period (e.g., 2-4 weeks).

Challenge employees to submit future-focused ideas that could:

- ✓ Increase efficiency or reduce waste/cost
- ✓ Improve the customer or employee experience
- ✓ Solve an ongoing internal challenge
- ✓ Introduce a completely new service, product, or workflow

Provide a short submission template with 3 prompts:

- ☐ What's the idea?
- ☐ What challenge does it solve or opportunity does it create?
- ☐ What would it take to implement?

Finalists can pitch their ideas in a "Shark Tank"-style session with leaders voting on pilots or rewards.

Optional Incentives: Offer recognition, executive coaching sessions, a professional development stipend, or lunch with the CEO for selected ideas.

Why It Works:

- ✓ Fosters a sense of ownership and participation in company strategy.
- ✓ Unearths innovation from across the organization—not just leadership.
- ✓ Helps HR capture the voice of the employee and support bottom-up change.
- ✓ This one blends cross-functional collaboration with a bit of fun and competition to keep energy high.



Activity 3: “The Innovation Sprint”

Goal: Inspire cross-functional teams to rapidly generate, pitch, and prototype solutions to real workplace challenges.

How It Works:

- ☐ Choose a key challenge or opportunity area (e.g., onboarding, retention, employee wellness, internal communication, DEI, etc.).
- ☐ Invite employees from various departments to form small sprint teams (3–5 people).
- ☐ Each team has 1 hour to brainstorm and design a creative solution—this could be a new process, tool, program, or policy.
- ☐ Teams must prepare a 2-minute pitch and present their idea to a panel of “judges” (HR leaders, executives, or peers).
- ☐ Bonus: Give each team a “wild card” constraint (e.g., must use no budget, must be tech-enabled, must be employee-led) to spark creativity.

Optional Add-ons: Award prizes like “Most Creative,” “Most Practical,” or “Most Likely to Be Implemented.” Allow winning teams to pilot their ideas with support from HR or leadership.

Why It Works:

- ✓ Encourages collaboration across silos and roles.
- ✓ Builds excitement and momentum for continuous improvement.
- ✓ Transforms brainstorming into action in a short, energizing format.

Activity 4: “Idea Post-It Parade”

Goal: Create an ongoing, visible culture of innovation by encouraging quick, low-barrier idea sharing across the organization.

How It Works:

- ☐ Set up physical “Idea Walls” in high-traffic areas or create a digital idea board using tools like Miro, Jamboard, or MS Teams.
- ☐ Encourage employees to write down any idea—no matter how big or small—that could improve the company, reduce friction, or delight a customer or colleague.
- ☐ Ideas can be anonymous or signed, and should answer: “What’s one thing we could do better, differently, or more creatively?”
- ☐ HR or managers review the wall weekly or monthly, pick standout ideas, and highlight them in company communications or meetings.



Optional Twist: Rotate a monthly theme (e.g., “Boosting Belonging,” “Saving Time,” or “Making Onboarding Better”) to focus idea generation around strategic goals.

Why It Works:

- ✓ Makes innovation accessible and continuous—not just a one-off event.
- ✓ Captures diverse perspectives in a low-pressure, inclusive format.
- ✓ Reinforces the message: everyone has the power to improve the organization.

NOTE: The following *innovation activities or exercises* work great in *virtual environments* like Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Each one is designed to boost creativity, collaboration, and innovation among remote or hybrid teams.

Activity 5: “Mission: Innovation – Virtual Idea Jam”

Goal: Spark creative thinking and solution-building among remote or blended teams in a fast-paced, energizing virtual setting.

How It Works (Ideal for 45–60 minutes on Zoom/Teams):

Set the Stage: Begin with a brief welcome and prompt. “What’s one challenge we face right now that, if solved, could dramatically improve our employee or customer experience?”

Breakout Brainstorm (15 minutes):

- ☐ Divide attendees into small breakout groups (3–5 people).
- ☐ Each group is assigned one of the selected challenge areas.
- ☐ Their mission: brainstorm as many bold, unconventional solutions as possible in 10–15 minutes using a shared digital whiteboard or chat.

Pitch & Play (20 minutes):

- ☐ Each group picks their best idea and presents it back to the main room in a 2-minute “pitch.”
- ☐ Encourage fun, energetic presentations—props, metaphors, or storytelling are welcome!

Crowd Voting (5 minutes):

- ☐ Use polling or emoji reactions to vote on categories like “Most Creative,” “Most Practical,” or “Most Likely to Go Viral.”

Wrap & Reflect (10 minutes):

- ☐ Close with quick team reflections or a shared takeaway via the chat.



Optional Add-On: Capture and summarize the top ideas in a follow-up email or digital “Innovation Gallery” to keep momentum going.

Why It Works:

- ✓ Brings distributed teams together in a high-energy, interactive way.
- ✓ Promotes inclusion and creativity from all levels of the org.
- ✓ Works within the tools most remote teams already use—no fancy tech required.

Activity 6: “Future Headlines”

Goal: Encourage employees to think big and envision bold, future-focused outcomes for the organization.

How It Works:

- ❑ In breakout groups, participants are asked to imagine it’s 3 years in the future and your organization just made the cover of a major publication (e.g., Fast Company, Forbes).
- ❑ Each group writes a headline and short article excerpt describing the innovative thing the company accomplished and how it made it happen.
- ❑ Teams present their “headlines” to the full group, sparking discussion about what it would take to turn those visions into reality.

Why It Works:

- ✓ Promotes future-thinking and long-term strategic ideation.
- ✓ Builds alignment around aspirational goals and values.

Activity 7: “Innovation Remix”

Goal: Reinvent existing processes or experiences by combining ideas from unexpected places.

How It Works:

- ❑ Assign each team a current workplace process (e.g., onboarding, performance reviews, customer support).
- ❑ Then give them a “wildcard” inspiration source (e.g., Disney, IKEA, Spotify, NASA).
- ❑ Their task: redesign the process using ideas, methods, or principles from that company or industry. (Example: What if our onboarding process worked like Spotify’s playlist suggestions?)
- ❑ Each group shares their creative “remix” and why it could work.



Why It Works:

- ✓ Unlocks lateral thinking and inspiration from outside the usual HR bubble.
- ✓ Leads to surprising, practical insights with real-world potential.

Activity 8: “Lightning Idea Round”

Goal: Quickly surface and share small, impactful ideas from a large group in a short time.

How It Works:

- ☐ Pose a focused question (e.g., “What’s one small change that would make your daily work easier or more fun?”).
- ☐ Use chat flood style—everyone types their idea in the chat but waits to hit “Enter” until the facilitator says “Go.”
- ☐ Once everyone submits at once, read through the rapid-fire ideas aloud and group similar ones together.
- ☐ Invite attendees to vote on the top 3 ideas they’d like to see explored further using reactions or a follow-up poll.

Why It Works:

- ✓ Inclusive for all personality types—especially those who prefer writing over speaking.
- ✓ Fast, energetic, and ideal for kicking off deeper innovation work.

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