

DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION: Questions for the C-Suite



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It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor is it the most intelligent. It is the one that is most adaptable to change.

Whether a direct quote from Charles Darwin or a summary of his writings, this statement is perhaps the most profound scientific explanation of life itself, in all its shapes, forms and colors.

Why then is the Life Sciences industry, whose mission is to help human and animal species survive and thrive, perceived to be unable or unwilling to adapt to the changing needs of the healthcare consumer, provider, and payer?

Every day, the collective intelligence of tens of thousands of researchers and clinicians is deployed at the bleeding-edge of discovery - from gene-editing techniques to novel mechanisms of action that battle the most dogged of diseases.

And balance sheets are strong, allowing biopharmaceutical companies to spend an average of \$2.6 billion to bring a new molecular entity to market, according to the latest research from the Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development.

Yet the ability to innovate disruptively and change the way we bring the wonders of science to patients in the fastest, most seamless, and cost-efficient manner seems lacking. The consensus on the average time it takes for an experimental drug to travel from the laboratory to your medicine cabinet is still 12 years.

Are we truly pushing the boundaries of disruptive innovation in areas such as patient engagement, integrated supply chain, launch excellence, target identification, manufacturing intelligence and customer experience?

The answer isn't in mirroring the Silicon Valley startup culture - epitomized by an environment laden with skinny jeans, hoodies, lava lamps, bean bag chairs and WeWork-style office space - hoping it will magically bring forth change.

Rather, disruptive innovation comes from the C-suite, where leaders:

- Create a culture that constantly challenges conventional wisdom
- Recognize and harness the human capital - and "data capital" - within their enterprise
- Seek inspiration from the best experiences that both adjacent and unrelated industries have to offer

After all, it's not fun to be the last surviving finch on a Galapagos island with the wrong beak type. ●

of scope, budget, or role. Leadership is a personal decision that everyone can make by creating and following through on mutual accountability for success. Being genuine is key, which also means being comfortable not knowing everything and being able to admit when wrong. Transparency is key. Sharing both the good and bad with teams is vital, as is expecting them to be adults and understand not everything works out the way you expect. The flip side is celebrating success and giving people resources to both make their own decisions and put time and capital to work and to have responsibility for the outcome. It is important to take time to coach and help individuals — either directly or through a broader team — and to see what they want to see from a career/business perspective. You must trust those on the team and be prepared to lose some visibility. I believe great cultures are shaped by intentional energy, not entropy. As a team we value our own ideas that are relevant to us and that fuel us to move quickly, as opposed to relying on the ideas of others, relevant to many, that inspire without direction.

JOAN BRADLEY

JB Ashtin

Maintaining our corporate culture is vital to the health of our company. Our leadership team has learned that hiring people who do not share our core values — excellence, proactivity, respect, dedication, thoughtfulness, humility, and fun — only ends in frustration for both the individual and our team. We recruit, evaluate, and reward individuals in our organization based on our corporate core values; we also make departure decisions when necessary based on those values. We talk about these values constantly, being sure to relate them to our work and interactions. Admittedly, I've sometimes failed at the motivating part, especially when we have many ongoing complex projects. One way that my leadership team and I are trying to improve at this is to slow down and start with "why." Sometimes knowing the purpose and envisioned outcome and how it will indirectly improve patient care is all that is needed to motivate and inspire the team. In addition, all of our employees know they have a voice and that their opinions matter. They know the company's vision and our short- and long-term goals and that we encourage innovation that helps us achieve these goals. We also work hard at providing opportunities outside the roles for which they were hired.

ALEX HUANG

Quellthera

As much as I would like to have others pitch and evangelize, that remains the passion and job that the CEO/founder must lead. The goal of any executive should be to find a better successor, but that is not always realistic until a certain level of financial stability can be achieved. When resource limited, the CEO and a small cadre of dedicated executives with a skeleton operational staff must take on a great deal. The sacrifice and commitment is driven by example and momentum must be maintained and made visible at all costs to shareholders and employees.

ALISTAIR MACDONALD

Syneos Health

We have a big communications skill set and we use it through internal multi-channels to reach all employees regularly. We also walk the walk, there are a lot of organizations that pay lip service to development; we don't, it's key to our culture. Also no Ivory Towers here, we are all on the same team and we are all engaged daily with the mission of the organization. I'm not sure I really have a style; adaptable would be one word I would think of. I've