



# Cultivating the Organizational Soil for Innovation

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# Innovation...

*(directed creativity implemented)*

The purposeful production of creative ideas in a given topic area, followed up by deliberate efforts to implement some of those ideas.



# Culture: Why Should I Care?

“Dammit Jim, I’ m a doctor, not an anthropologist!”

*Dr. “Bones” McCoy  
Star Trek*

Because...

- Evidence: Culture affects speed and frequency of innovation
- Underlying culture may be key to the problem of transferring visions into reality (ideas into action)

# “Culture eats strategy and tools for lunch”



*Marc Bard*  
*Management guru*

# Dimensions of innovation culture

- risk taking
- resources
- knowledge
- goals
- rewards and recognition
- tools and methods
- relationships

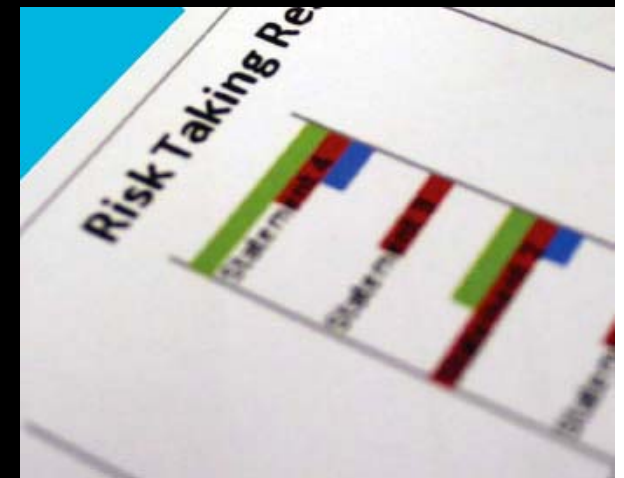


# Dimensions of innovation culture



# Risk Taking: Key Constructs

- ✓ Trying new things is a norm
- ✓ Emotional support for risk takers
- ✓ Balanced assessment of risk
- ✓ Learning from failure rather than punishing it



# Risk Taking: Some Literature

- Jaskyte's (2009) research on innovation in 20 US human services organisations found most innovative ones were “willing to experiment, quick to take advantage of opportunities, and risk taking”
- Miller and Oileros' (2007) study of innovation in multi-national corporations identified factors such as “learning by doing” as key
- ATKearney's Best Innovator 2004-2007 Competition found that “openness to new ideas” was one of the features that distinguished innovation leaders
- Dewett's (2004) literature review concluded that the emotional support and behaviours of supervisors and peers following creative efforts played a key role in employees' subsequent willingness to take risks
- A study undertaken by the UK National School of Government (Dennis, Tanner, Walker 2005) identified “balanced assessment of risk” as a feature common in organizations in the public sector that excelled

# Risk Taking

- In studies of innovative organizations, failure was viewed as a learning process rather than something to chastise – most of the organizations planned for it and actively welcomed it as an important part of the process
- 3M reward ‘intelligent’ risk taking
- The only possible “failure” for a test of an innovation is the *failure to learn something!*



“The fastest way to succeed is to double your failure rate”

*Thomas Watson, Sr.  
Founder, IBM*

# Resources: Key Constructs

- ✓ Access to (at least some) funding
- ✓ Time to work on innovative ideas
- ✓ Authority to act (empowerment, at least to test ideas)

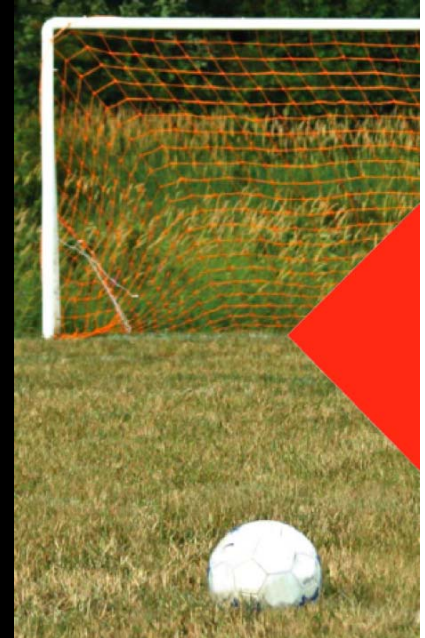
# Knowledge: Key Constructs

- ✓ Wide scope search (beyond industry bounds)
- ✓ Uncensored, unfiltered, unsummarized
- ✓ Free flowing



# Goals: Key Constructs

- ✓ Specific call for innovation
- ✓ What, but not how
- ✓ ‘Stretch’ targets (aspirational, visionary)
- ✓ Tie to strategic plan (implying resources and follow through)
- ✓ Clear case for need (framing to engage)



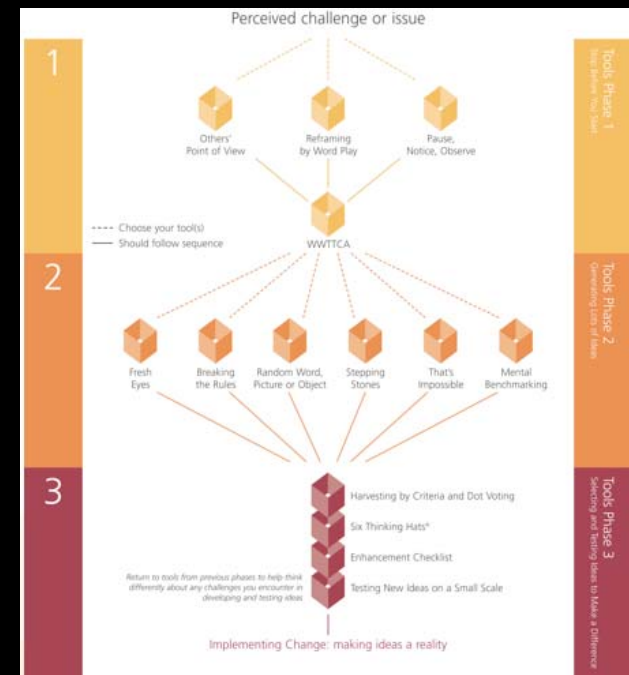
# Rewards: Key Constructs

- ✓ Recognition of innovative effort
- ✓ Individualized
- ✓ Appealing to intrinsic motivation and values
- ✓ Aligned with organizational goals



# Tools: Key Constructs

- ✓ Deliberate process
- ✓ Flexibility to adapt to varying situations
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Encouragement for skills development



# Relationships: Key Constructs

- ✓ Diversity
- ✓ Honoring everyone's input
- ✓ Trusting, open environment
- ✓ Team-based work is the norm

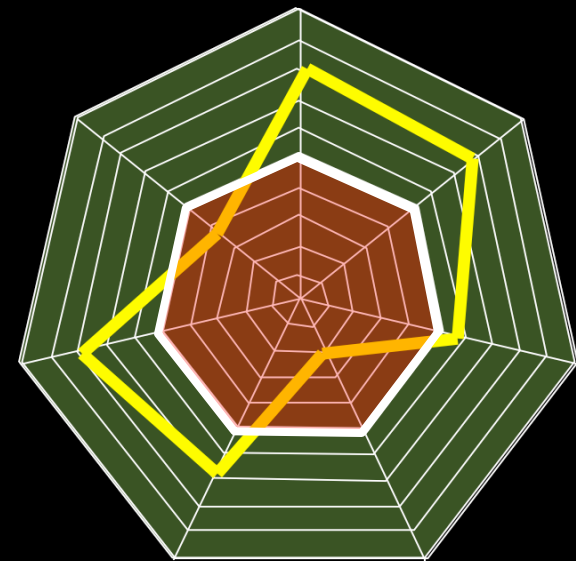


# Dimensions of innovation culture



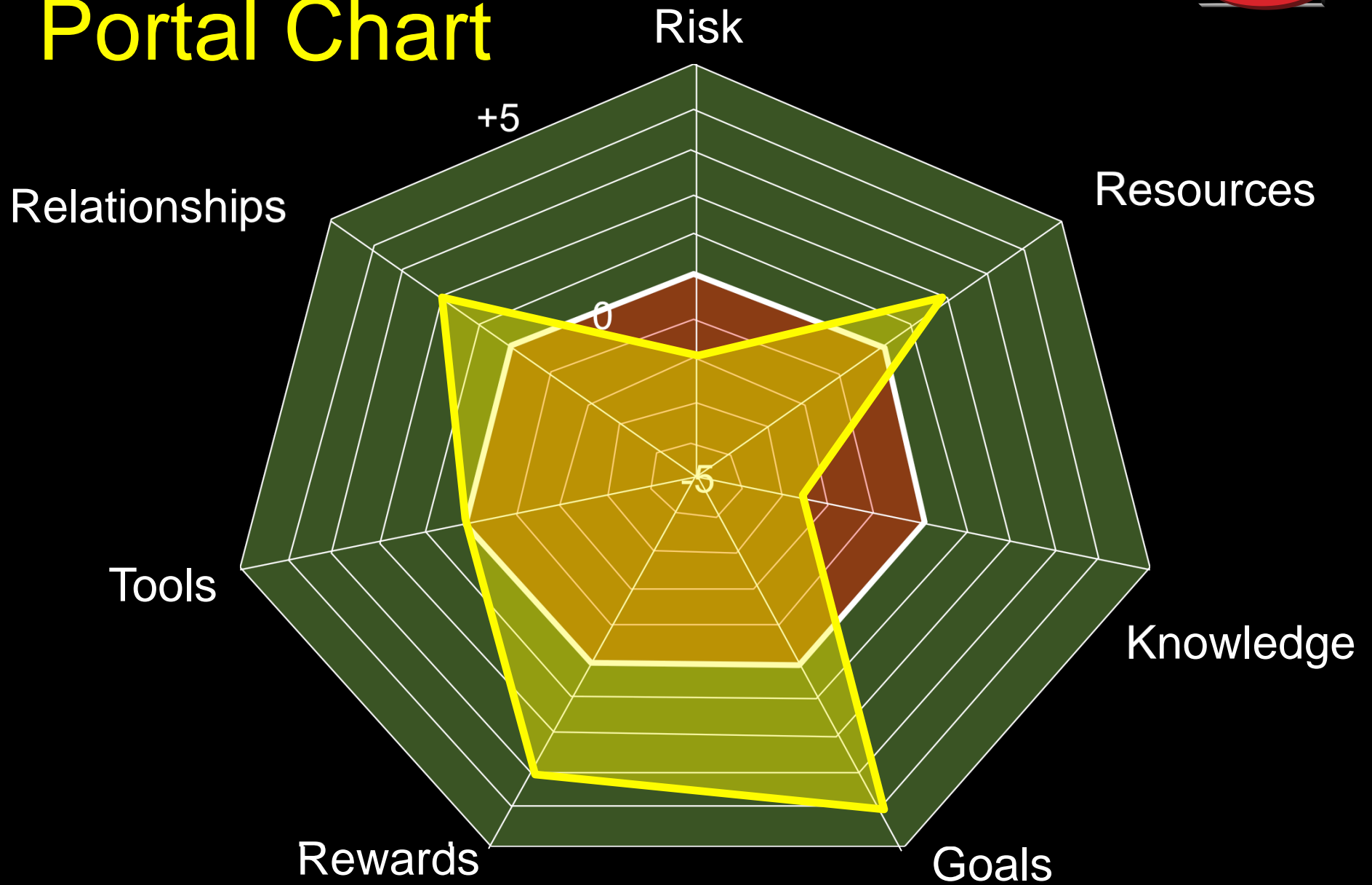
# Visualising culture for innovation: Portal charts

- Used to display multi-factor information where all factors can be related to a common scale and are roughly equal in importance
- Also called a spider chart
- The greater the “opening” the better





# Portal Chart



## *How to read a portal chart...*

### *Assessing conditions for innovation: how to read a portal chart*

Here we see depicted a culture where there are strong goals for innovation (+4), fairly strong rewards (+3), pretty good resources for innovation (+2) and supportive relationships (+2). So far, it sounds good. The tools, processes and methods of the organisation neither hinder nor aid innovation (0), which may be OK, but is not very assertive for innovation. Of even more concern, risk taking is somewhat discouraged (-2) and lack of knowledge somewhat hinders innovation (-2.5).

We conclude, based on our seven dimensions framework, that despite the strong goals and rewards for innovation, other factors in the culture will limit innovative output. To put it another way, the portal is not exactly wide open for the free flow of ideas. The leaders of this organisation or system clearly have some work to do to create better conditions for innovation. Stronger language about goals and more rewards will have only limited impact if risk taking and knowledge sharing are not also addressed.

# Applying the Framework

- Seven dimensions can be applied to any collection of individuals where innovative output is desired
  - A meeting or event
  - Project or front-line team
  - Department
  - Organization
  - Multi-organization system



# *Uses of the framework....*

- Assess current environment
  - via dialogue
  - via a survey tool
- Plan actions to increase likelihood of innovation





*31 tips for creating  
the culture for  
innovation*

# Creating the Climate for Innovation

- The need is great
- Culture affects speed and frequency of innovation
- We can identify key dimensions of innovation culture
- Honest assessment leads to actions to change the culture
- Start somewhere



# Culture: Why Should I Care?

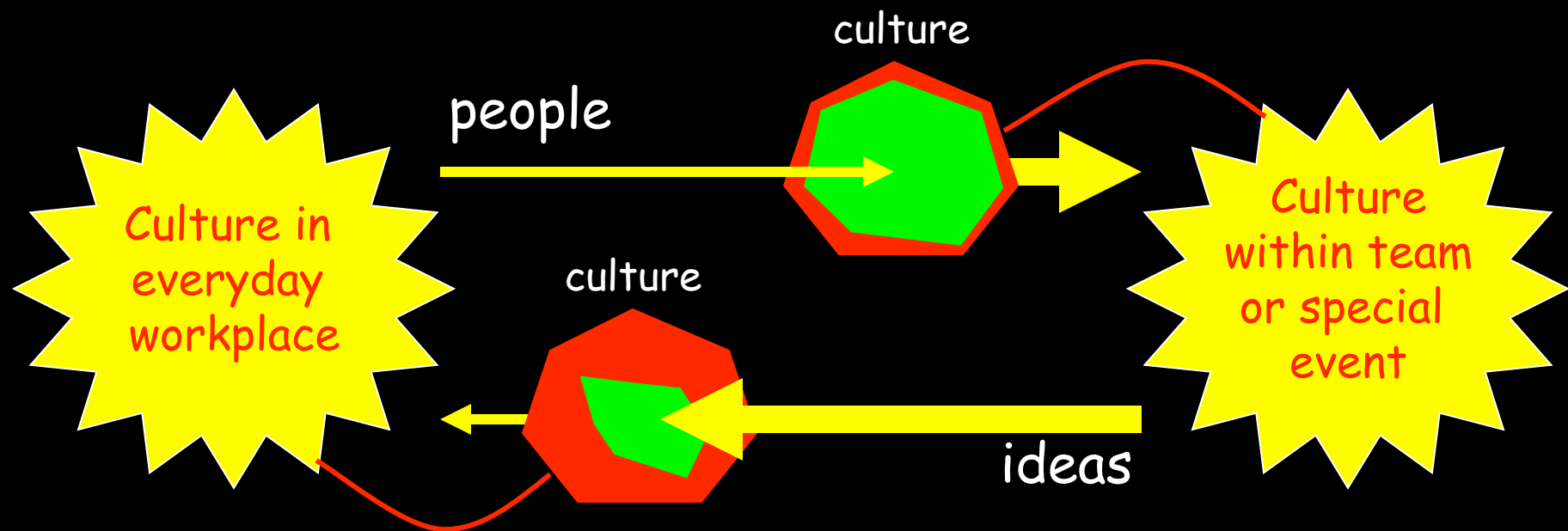
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# Culture Clash and the “Ideas to Action Problem”



Lots of great vision and ideas generated...  
...few are translated into reality across the organization



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