

# Innovation Alignment – Achieving the Choice-Cascading Effect

Using the Executive Innovation Work Mat methodology to ‘wrestle’ with alignment of your organizations or teams innovation approaches, so as to enable the ‘cascading effect’ to exploit and align the activities to the best



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## The Innovation (harsh) reality.

Regardless of the approach, innovation success starts always with senior executives being committed, being fully engaged. Only senior executives can establish and communicate a vision that overcomes the barriers innovation faces in an organization.

They have the ability to 'alter and shape' a culture and led it for lasting change so as to align it to the growth goals needed.

Innovation is inherently associated with change, of novelty, risk and seeking out the unexpected and for many, takes the attention and resources away from efforts to achieve short-term performance goals, managing for stability and predictability.

**Innovation often does conflict.** Shifting the mindset is hard but necessary, to inspire people to do the things that lead to innovation. Many hesitate, as innovation often is in organizational conflict that requires clear leadership understanding and managing carefully. The issue boils down to 'make change' or 'be changed' in today's world and managing the consequences.

Only senior executives can define the kind of innovation that drives growth and helps meet the strategic objectives. They communicate the type of innovation they expect, not the other way round.

**Innovation needs clear direction,** encouragement and resourcing. It needs strong signals and protection in the face of conflicting messages.

Innovation to succeed, *really succeed*, needs to be formally integrated into the strategic-management agenda so it can be managed, tracked and measured as a core element in a company's growth aspirations. Senior executive set the innovation conditions to ensure innovation can flourish and emerge consistently. It needs to be explicitly lead and managed.

## The Innovation Reality Gaps

**Point One:** There's clearly a gap between what executives want in regards to innovation and what their firms actually produce. Consistently, over 70% of executives identify innovation as a top three priority. Yet often while **innovation is clearly *important*, it is clearly not *urgent***. Why is that?

**Point Two:** As markets grow and customer demands change, firms cannot exclusively rely on a stable of existing products. They must innovate in order to stay abreast of competition. Failure to innovate relegates the firm to commodity status very quickly. How can we all identify and pull together?

**Reality: Executives have no choice but to close the innovation knowing/doing/ wanting gap.**

**Point Three:** What are the reasons for the knowing/doing/ wanting gap in regards to innovation:

1. Lack of resources
2. Cultural/structural barriers
3. Restricted Reward systems
4. Short timeframes
5. Avoidance of risk and uncertainty
6. Previous "failures" create barriers to new attempts
7. Little innovation experience or leadership
8. Poor alignment between strategic goals and innovation vision
9. Poor understanding of innovation strategies and implications

## Which of these reasons/barriers can executives impact/change/control?

Executives often aren't involved in day to day activities, but they must establish the conditions for success and communicate their clear goals and expectations, while providing adequate resources and funding. They must seek alignment of the innovation activities to the strategic needs.

- ✓ So they need to **set the innovation strategic agenda**:
- ✓ Executives must **understand the investment** required for innovation and provide appropriate financial resources and personnel
- ✓ **Cultural/structural barriers resolution**- Executives must set clear goals, change corporate perspectives and cultural attitudes about innovation, risk taking and structuring reward systems for innovation that DO differ from the established ones
- ✓ **Experience/Leadership development** – Executives must identify capable innovation leaders and must become more involved in innovation activities and programs
- ✓ **Goals/Vision/ Governance** – Executives must establish a clear strategic vision, define and communicate corporate goals which become innovation targets and lay down the governance for innovation.
- ✓ **Outcomes and implications** – Executives must describe the outcomes and benefits they seek for their firms from an investment in innovation, and help innovators choose the methods or tools that improve the likelihood of success
- ❑ **Ok- but how? What can bring this ALL together?**

# The Important C's we need to grasp here

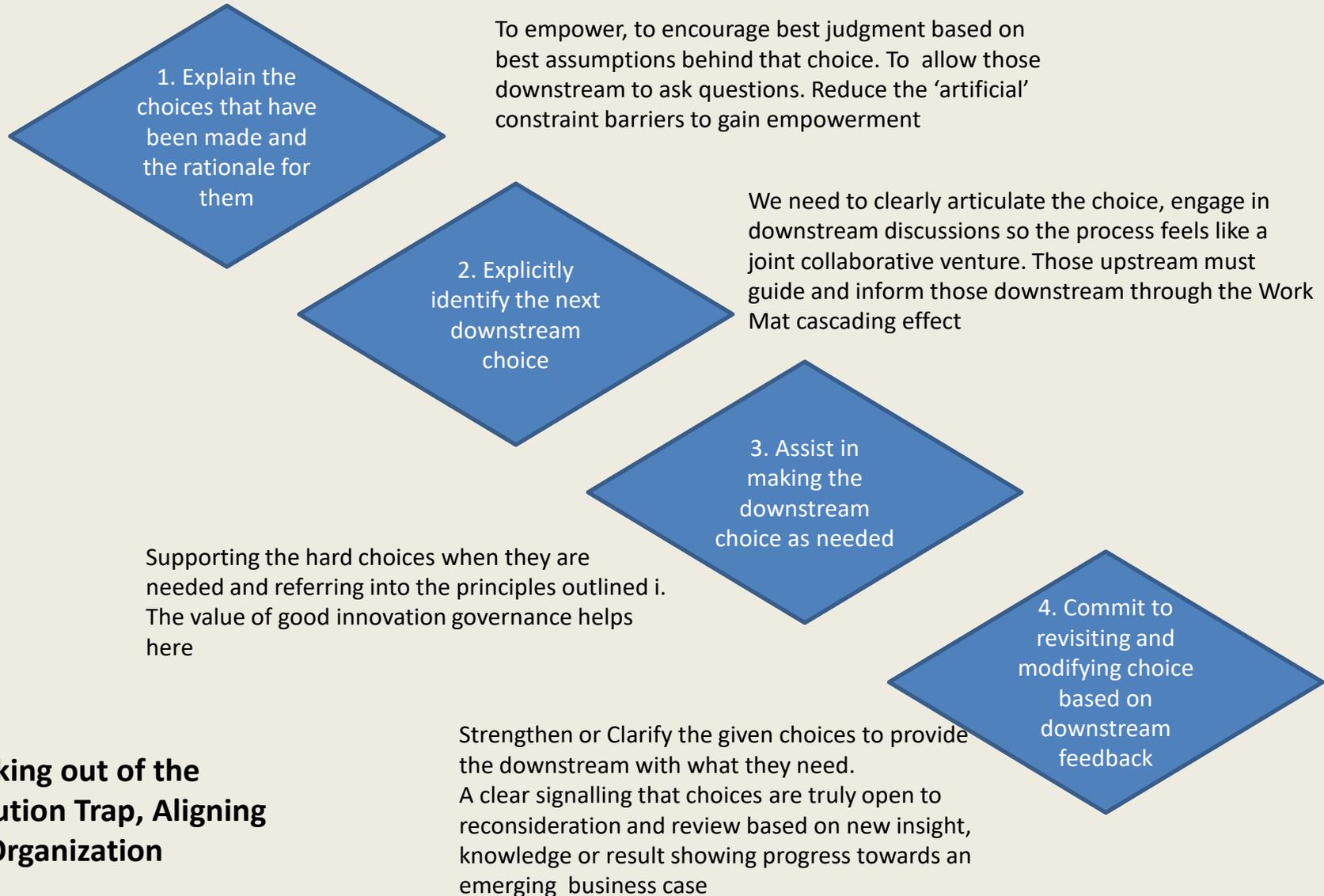
- **Cascading innovation for empowerment is the proverbial 'rubber hitting the road'**
- When you provide the 'overarching' framework to seek innovation alignment with the organizational strategy. People know where they are going and begin to make the fit.
- **Clarify your innovation strategy-** we need to connect an organization to the strategic need and align innovation activities to this intent
- **Communicate your innovation strategy-** We should communicate often and with plenty of clarity. Communicating is the very essence of achieving alignment. We seek to develop the 'connective tissue' of achieving a common language and identification
- **Cascade the innovation strategy thinking:** If strategy is 'what' you should do, then tactics are 'how' you do it. We struggle always with the 'how', not so much with the what or why.



By translating the core elements can allow the organization to develop and design their implementation plans to fit the innovation strategic framework.

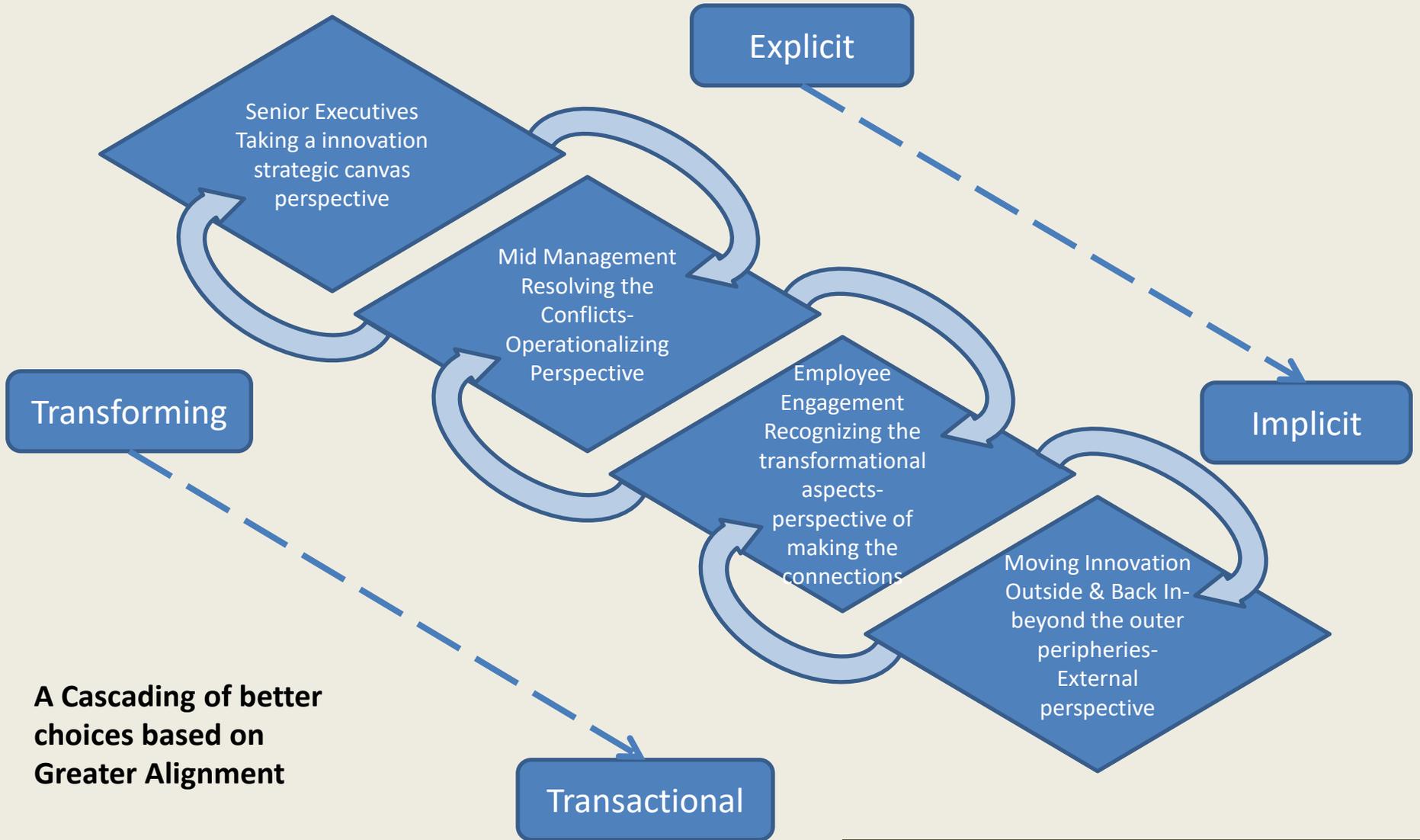
*Have you a cascading plan in mind?*

## A Cascade of Better Choices to achieve Desired Innovation Outcomes



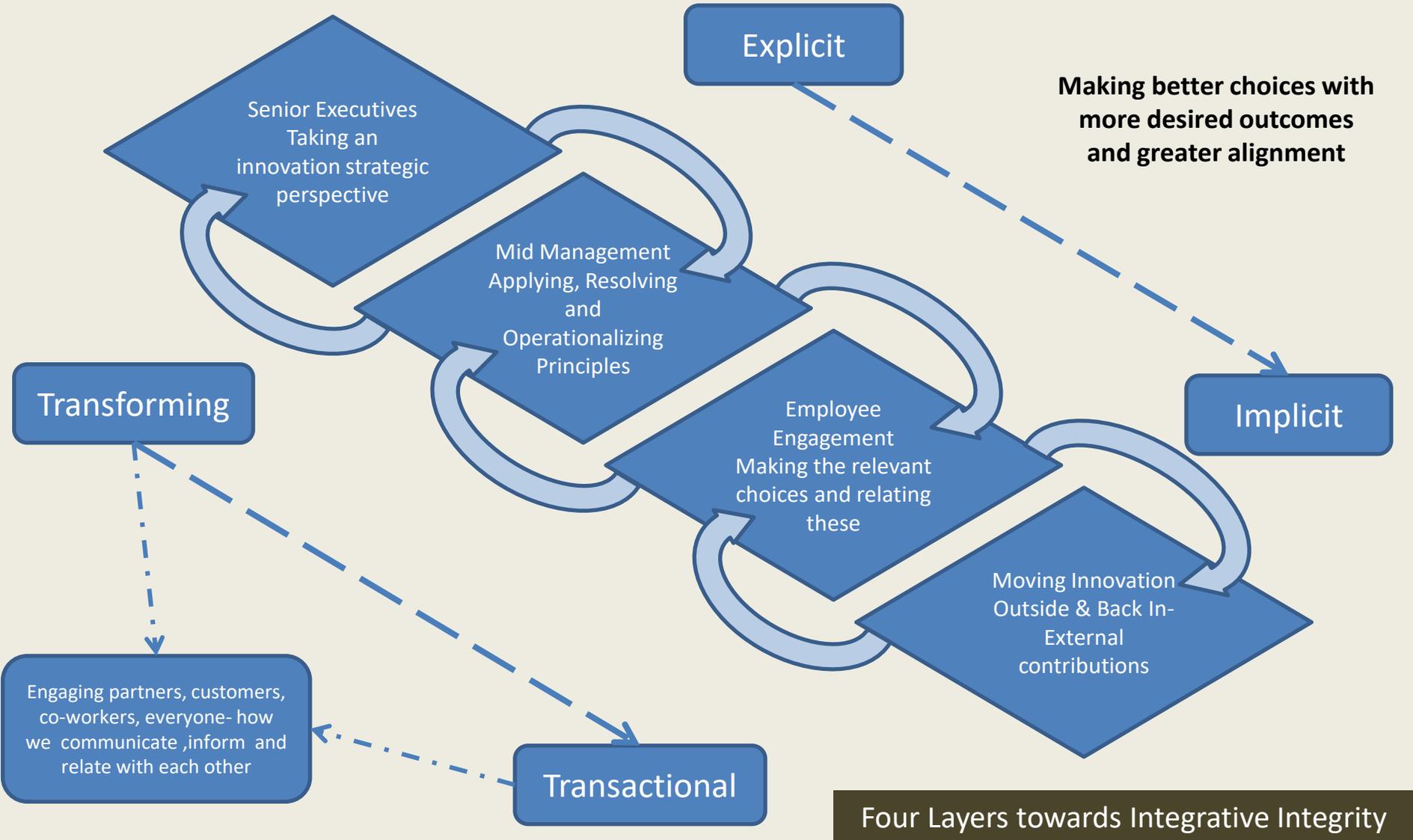
**Breaking out of the Execution Trap, Aligning the Organization**

# The Need to Cascade Innovation throughout the Total Working Environment

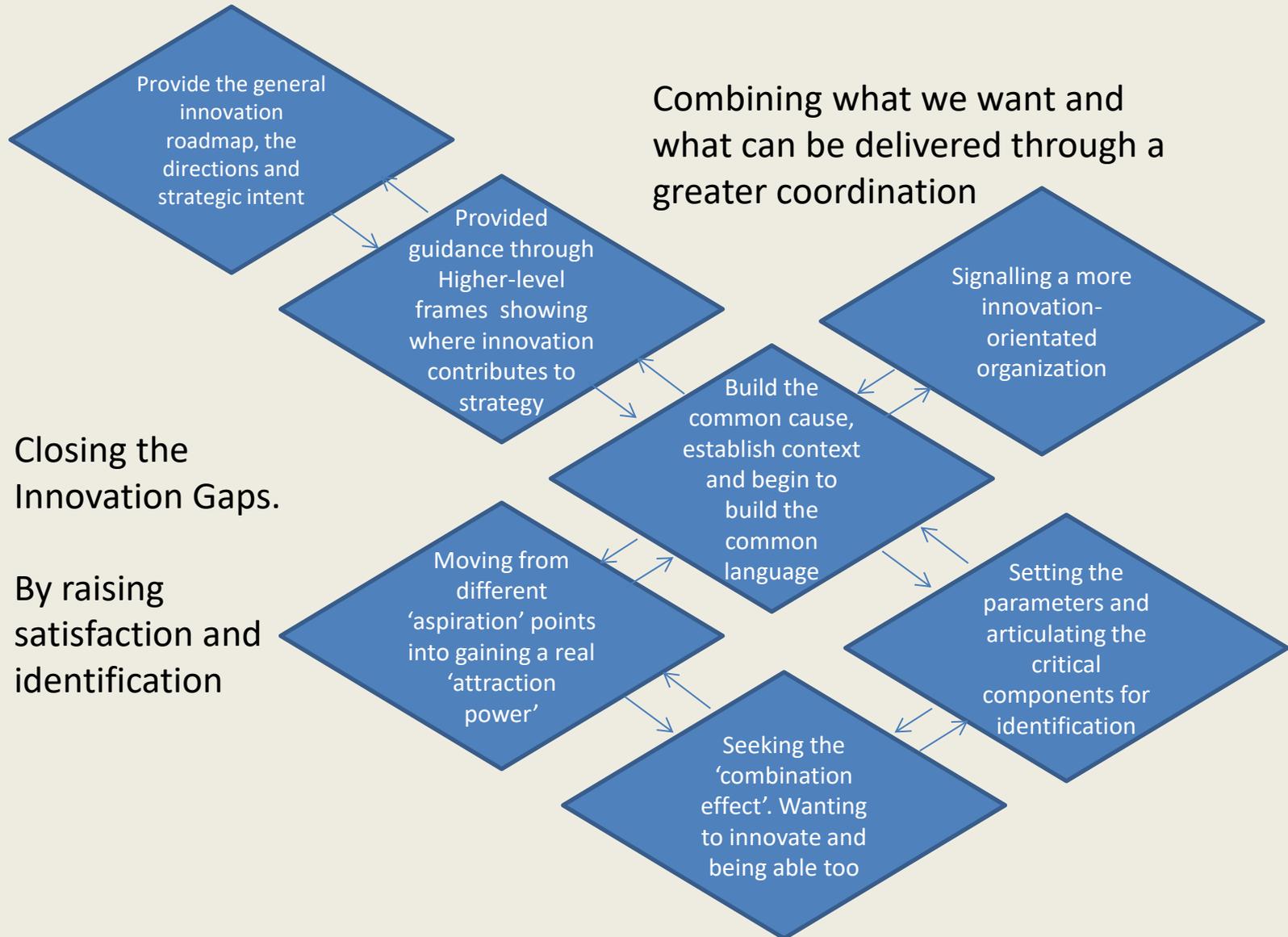


**A Cascading of better choices based on Greater Alignment**

*We require higher order choices as they set the context and guidelines*



## The Need to Cascade Innovation throughout the Environment



## How we can begin to close the Innovation Gap

### Characteristics for leaders to enable

1. Everyone understands the organizational innovation direction
2. Why innovation is a priority
3. The models and components the Executive team regard as important and overarching
4. The type of innovation practices
5. The encouragement of diverse views
6. The position of risk-taking and focusing on delivering value and advancing learning
7. Pushing innovation thinking and practices with the discipline to implement aligned solutions

### Focus upon clear objectives

1. Focus on clear innovation objectives
2. Engage within and across the whole organization
3. Top-down but bottom-up constant input
4. Ensure clear boundaries of working
5. Resource and enforce the innovation alignment plan
6. Keep improving the work mat on knowledge gained
7. Include metrics that track progress.

There is a **webinar or workshop** that consists of **FIVE** focal points for potential takeaway.

This we call the **Executive Innovation Work Mat methodology**

**Focal Point 1: There's clearly a gap between what executives want in regards to innovation and what their firms actually produce.** Innovation needs to be explicit, fully integrated, understood and placed in context. This solution suggested tackles the 'knowing-doing- wanting' gap.

**Focal Point 2: Figuring out the obstacles to innovation and closing these gaps** needs often considerable investigation and understanding. What inhibits innovation performance, why is there often a serious disconnect? Figuring out the core structure and design of innovation is a central role of innovation leader. In this webinar we explore, link, separate and integrate the core components that lead to a clearer pathway for leading innovation through strategic design.

**Focal Point 3: As markets grow and customer demands change,** senior executives need to define the kind of innovation that will capture and drive the growth that meets the strategic objectives. They need to communicate the type of innovation they expect not the other way round. This webinar clarifies the cascading aspects and choices and provides the methods.

**Focal Point 4: Senior executives often aren't involved in day to day activities,** but must establish the conditions for success and communicate clear goals and expectations, while providing adequate resources and funding. Executives must describe the outcomes and benefits they seek for their firms from an investment in innovation, and encourage innovators to choose the methods or tools that improve the likelihood of success. The question is what is right? The webinar provides the appropriate guidance to organizing the correct management of innovation.

**Focal Point 5: Finally what are the reasons for the knowing-doing-wanting gap in regards to innovation?** There are many self-inflicted ones that simply do not have to be!. This webinar helps to introduce to you the insights and knowledge to deliver an actionable framework for your organization to begin to put into place the conditions to resolve this gap so you align strategic intent and innovation activity.

# ABOUT ME

## Paul Hobcraft

*"I run an advisory business that focuses solely on stimulating sound innovation practice for building capabilities and capacities into organizations, teams and for individuals".*

*I also write a blog under paul4innovating and contribute into different publishers on innovation issues, across a broad range of innovation challenges, seen through my observations, experience or research."*

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*"For me innovation is 100% my passion and my focus.*

*It is where I have enjoyed a terrific range of diverse exchanges with some great people, leading to better and greater significant lasting outcomes"*

**Agility Innovation Specialists**

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