



Given that the economic outlook in many parts of the world seems uncertain:

- ***What's your philosophy on maintaining a focus on innovation?***
- ***How do you encourage and foster a growth mindset with your employees and partners?***
- ***What do you do as CEO to keep your organization focused on customers and value?***

On maintaining a focus on innovation, an organization's culture has significant influence. Given culture is generally driven from the top down, executive-level planning should be centered around information exchange and idea sharing among employees, business partners and customers. This approach will lead to stronger collaboration and help facilitate a growth mindset among all stakeholders. Whether improved job satisfaction for employees, a stronger overall business relationship for partners or greater value-driven consumption by customers, everyone involved shares in a common goal that's better defined and easier to obtain.

In following this mindset, however, an organization should first consider focusing on a talent acquisition strategy. This will identify the most appropriate candidate profiles by position and then carry out a unified process that offers a structured approach to ongoing performance reviews, which ensures an employee's skill sets maintain alignment with their specific job function over time. To continually foster innovation, most successful organizations focus a portion of management's energy on evaluating the various tools that will best assist with information exchange between employees, business units and customers. Advancements in technology and differences in execution strategies change as leading market indicators, competitive pressures and other factors weigh in on management decision-making. Taking these factors into account, automation of workflow should be a key component of exchanging information and sharing ideas in a timely, accurate and complete way.

Once a free flow of information and ideas has been established, further consideration must be placed on formulating an objective analysis methodology to ensure the 'innovation pool' is managed appropriately based on realistic benchmarking data. This includes the organization's ability to bring such an idea or concept to market, specific internal subject matter experience in the area, overall business risk, time-to-market and other factors that offer a closer view at the

probability of a successful rollout. Adoption of social technology at the enterprise level is significantly changing the landscape in which innovation is born and brought to market, and is a driving force behind much of today's collaboration and decision-making in the business community.

If an organization remains focused on improving a product's or service's extensibility in the marketplace, increased consumer demand will drive profitability, which, in turn, will continue to spur innovation and sustain a growth mindset.

Social media and social business are big themes for 2012. In which areas of business will the social movement have the most impact (or most potential for impact)? Why?

As the number of users on social networks continues to grow, an increasing number of people, at both the business and consumer level, are being exposed to the social movement. Facebook noted that its social network had 845 million active users at the end of December 2011, and according to ZDNet, the network is expected to reach the 1 billion active user mark by August 2012. As the social movement continues to spread, technology will work its way into more aspects of everyday life that extend well beyond today's current uses. With consumer-driven market demand driving innovation, social technology will continue to augment how we interact with one another, make buying decisions and collaborate on new ideas.

As this transition occurs and creates a more virtual-centric society, there is an overall broader exposure to information not otherwise readily available. With this extension of information not only comes facts and figures, but publishing of personal opinions and beliefs about the products and services we seek out, and the people we know. This expanded view requires us to process more information in our daily lives, but offers greater insight into an array of social, cultural and systemic aspects of the world we live in. These additional facts, figures and viewpoints continue to change buying behavior and the manner in which we interact with one another. Those of us using social technology are more heavily influencing the overall direction in how we interact with technology. Because the social movement is predominantly user-driven, it is likely to evolve in parallel with changes in society, while driving innovation and advancement in software, hardware, infrastructure and related technologies.

So, what does this all potentially mean?

- Organizations that deliver product and service offerings centered around building an online presence for clients will flourish. By keeping these clients connected with their prospects and existing clients in a more meaningful way, these organizations will be reaping a greater piece of many sales and marketing budgets.
- Due to the social movement's ability to drastically shorten geographic boundaries between businesses and consumers, a greater demand for improved Internet backbone performance, speed and throughput will create a reinvestment of dollars into infrastructure, which is good news for the fiber, telecom, and other related industries.
- Whether purchasing an "app" or connecting with a friend, users are seeking immediate gratification. This will require further creativity in software, firmware and related technology development that focuses on enhancing usability and delivering a more intuitive user experience with little to no training or documentation required. To accomplish this, most software developers will need to adopt an agile approach to research and development with shorter intervals between software releases.
- The 'always connected' mentality of today's society will force device manufacturers of smart phones and tablets, and those that manufacture screens, memory, electrical components and other gadgets, to shift even further down the path of a just-in-time approach to inventory management. This will create significant changes in logistics when it comes to the distribution of raw materials and finished product.

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