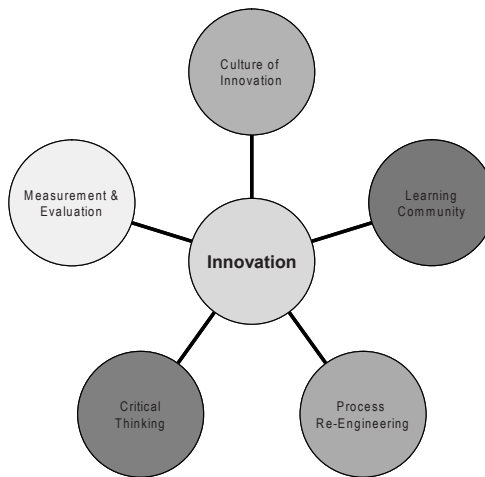


Chapter VI

Innovation: Creating Ideas



“The future belongs to organisations that learned to truly unleash the creative powers of self-organising project communities, knowledge networks, open source teams, and other new ways of work and learning, based on free associations of people who are passionate about what they do together. Communities of practise are in the centre of this widening innovation movement.” (Pör & van Bekkum, 2003, p. 3)

Overview: The global environment has become more turbulent, and innovations in telecommunication and information processing are both part of this turbulence and an adaptive response to it. How can telecommunication infrastructure enable the social and economic development of communities? With diminishing barriers in terms of price, speed and availability, how can individuals and groups in a community become innovators?

This chapter will discuss:

- The importance of innovation in an ICT-enabled world;
- A model of innovation for continuous and discontinuous change;
- The nature of innovation—describing the concepts of creativity and invention, and the source of innovation;
- The development of a local innovation culture;
- Evaluation of the innovation environment.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATION IN THE ICT WORLD

Key Concept: *Growth in the new economy is achieved through greater performance. Given that there will be increased competition, access to additional resources—especially knowledge-based resources—will be needed. New growth also intensifies the need for differentiation.*

According to Abraham and Knight (2001), many managers operate with an industrial economy mentality based on the rules of scarcity and diminishing returns. In continually worrying about the bottom line, companies and communities, even governments, can lose sight of the need for innovation. Trying to provide more products and services while decreasing costs often results in products and services being treated as commodities. Lack of innovation—and thus lack of differentiation—hampers growth and can eventually become the death-knell of many such organisations and communities.

Commercial and other community organisations spend considerable time establishing relationships that work, but Birkinshaw, Bessant and Delbridge (2007) point out the inflexibility of long-term relationships and value-chains. The authors conclude that long-established relationships can create obstacles to innovation, and they recommend forming new networks of relationships that can bring new insights, competencies and innovative possibilities (p. 69). In the new millennium, wired and “digitally networked communities” are creating new opportunities for themselves by promoting more open, community-based systems of innovation.

Writing in the *Wall Street Journal* more than a decade ago, R. T. King noted how the high-tech advantage was giving U.S. firms the global lead in computer networks:

Networks have become the information factories that speed innovation and compress product cycles.... Like factory systems in the 1920s, networks will be the key to establishing leadership in many industries in the future.

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