10X
Your Thinking -
And Build a Culture of
INNOVATION

? Is your company a hotbed of invention?

? Do your employees have more good ideas than they know what to do with?

? What was the last calculated risk your team embraced, and what did you learn from it?

If these questions are tough to answer, you're not alone – and it's time to leave the pack. Questions like these are easy and exciting for innovators. In this eBook, we show you how to make them easy and exciting for you, too.

In these pages, you'll find:

- The top characteristics of an innovative company.

- Tips for building a culture of innovation.

- How to beat two of innovation's biggest enemies: groupthink and pessimism.

- Processes for innovation you can put to work.

- Guidance on choosing innovative people.

- Insight on how staffing firms help companies innovate daily.

Ready to change the world? *Let's go!*

How to Spot an Innovative Company

What does an innovative corporate culture look like?

Here's how to spot one:

- They promote the development of great ideas through support, mentorship, formal programs, and freedom to create.

- They support and encourage reasonable risk-taking and help staff practice analysis to determine whether a risk is reasonable.

- They see failure as a learning experience, not a crisis.

- They tolerate healthy conflict and encourage the resolution of issues rather than focusing on personalities.

- They build teams that collaborate well by focusing on cultural "fit" as well as needed skills.

**How do you build a company that matches this description?**

We've got you covered.

Building a Culture of Innovation

An innovative culture doesn't appear overnight. Like any company culture, it grows out of the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the people who work for the company.

The good news is that those attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors can be changed – and your team can grow and learn as a result. To build innovation into your company culture, start here:

- **Face your fears.** Does giving employees more freedom sound risky? Do the words "it's okay to fail" make your stomach drop? Find the places that foster fear and sit with them. Ask: "Why is this terrifying? How can we make it work?"

- **Diversify your work teams.** Filling teams with people of varying backgrounds, values, and points of view creates fertile ground for "out of the box" thinking. It also increases the chances of conflict – but a focus on productive problem-solving can result in far greater innovation than managing conflict through uniformity.

- **Support your people.** Welcome your team's ideas, no matter how controversial, unprecedented, or "zany" they seem. Make it clear that you won't tolerate any ridicule or punishment of those who make recommendations outside the status quo. Trust, mutual support, and shared confidence help innovation thrive.

- **Think outside the office.** Remote and hybrid work open up your organization to new ideas and perspectives – from anywhere in the world. They also help your team break out of their rut by breaking out of their cubicle and gaining insight and inspiration from the wider world.
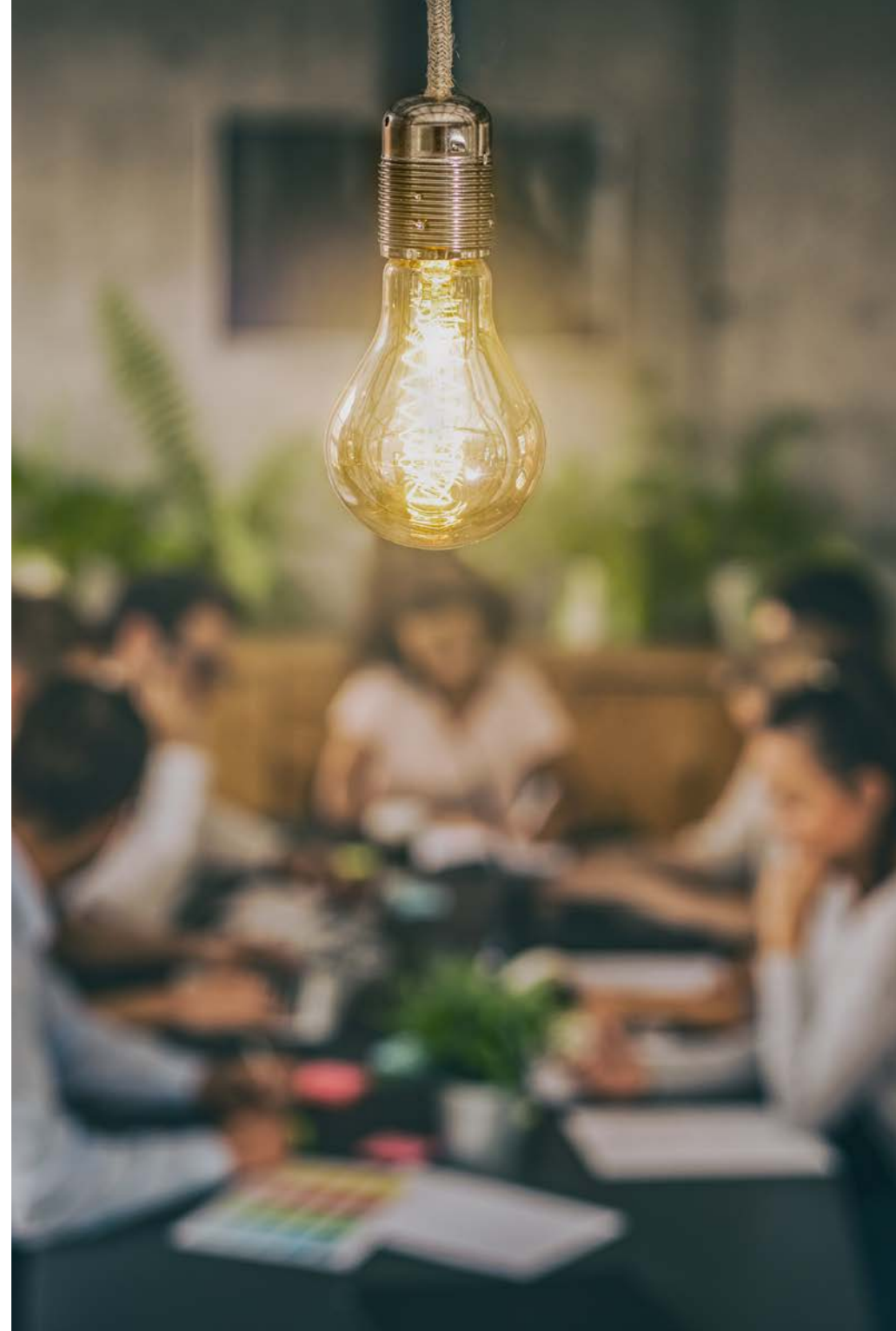
Saying No to Groupthink

Diversifying your teams is a great way to start innovating – but it's only the beginning. Even the most diverse team will suffer if conformity and groupthink rule the roost.

Here's how to start saying no to groupthink:

- **'Fess up.** Share your toughest problems with your employees. Admit your company's challenges and challenge your staff to share thoughts and ideas.

- **Teach (and model) productive disagreement.** Disagreement that focuses on the issue needn't be personal, and it can be revolutionary. Teach staff how to disagree constructively, and model constructive disagreement yourself.

- **Don't wait for unanimity.** Consensus helps teams feel good, but it also lets them avoid risks. Streamline decision-making so team leaders have the space they need to innovate and provide enough structure and access to allow them to ask for help when necessary.

Giving Pessimism the Boot

If "yes men" are innovation's biggest enemy, then "the glass is half empty" types are its second biggest. Pessimism can kill innovation just as quickly as groupthink – and it can stifle future attempts before they even start.

To kick pessimism off your teams:

- **Put your whiners to work.** Which team members always criticize, whine, or naysay any new suggestion? Put them to work by asking, "What do you think are the likely outcomes? How can we prepare for those?" You'll help them see that the worst is unlikely to happen, and you'll help the rest of the team calculate and anticipate risk.

- **Don't punish mistakes.** Punishing mistakes causes your team to avoid any situation in which a mistake could occur – which means they'll avoid risk and creativity hardest of all. Instead of punishing mistakes, reward the finding of effective solutions, even if employees need a few tries to get it right.

- **The glass isn't half-empty...but it is leaking.** While pessimism and naysaying will kill innovation, people who presume that everything you're currently doing is about to become obsolete can be your biggest innovators. Look for staff and candidates whose optimism focuses on the future by spotting today's problems and fixing them.
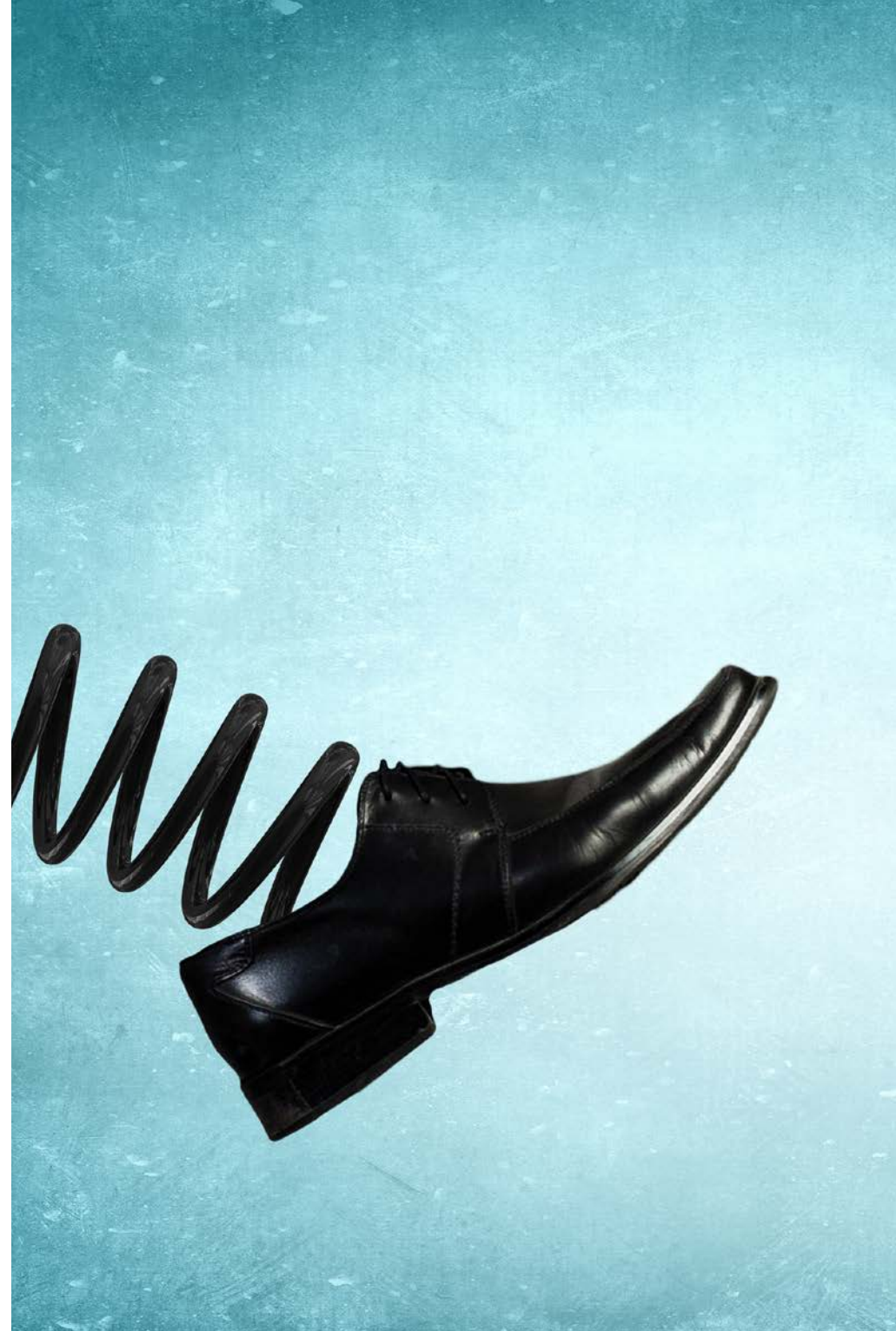
Innovation: A How-To

Building an innovative company is a process, but every process starts with a single step.

Here are a few "first steps" you can take toward building a more innovative company:

Celebrate "Innovation Day"…. Innovation Day isn't a national holiday – it's any day you want it to be. Plan the purpose of the day: is it to consider a major challenge, develop ideas for new products, or brainstorm new projects? Get leadership on board, and then hold a day to play, create, and generate new ideas.

….and then follow through. Generating ideas is exhilarating, but few things are more demoralizing than being asked for ideas and then seeing them ignored. Choose the best plan from Innovation Day and move forward with it, recruiting the team to help with the process.

Create metrics. How will innovative plans be approved or rejected? How will projects be funded (or not funded)? Create a system and share it with everyone on staff. This will encourage staff members to develop ideas and present them, knowing what the rules are for getting the green light.

Embrace New Trends in Innovation

From manufacturing to R&D to retail, every sector of the economy is enjoying new trends in innovation spurred by pandemic challenges and new technologies. Here are the top trends to put to work for your team.

- **Industry 4.0.** Industry 4.0 uses machine learning and smart technology to revolutionize computer-assisted manufacturing. Putting machine learning and AI to work on your teams can free up team members' mental space to innovate by automating routine tasks.

- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging.** DEI is no longer a nice to have – it's a must-have. Not only do diverse teams outperform their competitors, but top talent is no longer content to work for companies that talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion without making any meaningful changes.

- **Collaborating globally.** Digital interconnectivity now makes it possible to think in terms of a global effort. Companies that find new ways to collaborate with core supply chain partners, industrial ecosystem partners, and public sector stakeholders find themselves innovating more effectively and pulling ahead of competitors still stuck in the old ways of doing business.

Hiring the Innovators You Need

Building any company culture requires the right people. Innovation is no different.

But, since true innovators rarely label themselves as such, how do you choose them from among the outstanding candidates you're considering?

Here's how to spot (and hire) the innovators you need:

- **Read for innovation.** Read resumes and cover letters for evidence of the candidate identifying a problem and solving it. Words like "risk-taking," "collaboration," "breakthroughs," and "exploration," as well as a penchant for winning awards and grants, indicates a willingness to have new ideas and stand by them.

- **Check out their LinkedIn profile or portfolio.** Candidates tend to showcase the work they're proudest of, and innovators are no exception. The candidate who shows off a truly creative idea is one who is likely to innovate in the future.

- **Ask the right interview questions.** Questions that ask about problems in existing processes, seek solutions to complex problems, or that explore the candidate's vision of the future can all help you sort innovators from the rest of the pack.

Your Staffing Partner: A 10x Secret Waiting to Be Discovered

Your staffing partner can be one of your biggest innovation resources – if you let them.

Your staffing provider can:

- **Offer creative solutions to business challenges.** From finding the right temporary staff to tackle a tough project, to planning your hiring strategy for this year and beyond, your staffing partner has out-of-the-box ideas for your toughest business challenges.

- **Build your "dream team" of passionate innovators.** Who's your ideal candidate? Describe them to your staffing partner. Chances are good your staffing firm knows exactly who you're talking about – and can give them a call today.

- **Help you test new services and business concepts.** Put your team's innovation to the test without breaking your budget. Your staffing provider can help.

- **Tackle low-level tasks so you can focus on the big payoffs.** Staffing partners are happy to handle the work of finding candidates, reading resumes, contacting references, and more – so you can focus on choosing the best of the best for your team.