
Case Report Template and Interview Guide for the Innovative Workplace Lessons Learned

Background Document for Lessons Learned
on the Innovative Workplace

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1. The "Drivers"

(a) Firm Characteristics

- Workforce characteristics: sex, age, education/skill level, hierarchy.
- Size: number of employees, value of assets, sales.
- Industry: private/public, goods/service, what industry, under what jurisdiction.
- Prior performance: sales growth.
- Unionization: number in union or under collective agreement.
- Leadership: corporate/management philosophy/culture, risk-taking, know-how.
- Technology: per cent of employees using, R&D/sales ratio.
- Capital intensity: property, plant, equipment to employment ratio.
- Ownership: single or multi-establishment.

(b) Environment

- Market: growing and increasingly global competition, foreign orientation, changing consumer tastes.
- Technology: availability of, and accessibility to, new technologies.
- Business conditions: upturn or downturn in economy/industry.
- Demographic structure of labour force: sex, age, education.
- Information: availability of information on workplace innovation.
- Union attitudes: confrontational or cooperative.
- Regulatory/political factors: labour standards and taxes.
- Societal values: "corporate" versus "cooperative" traditions.

2. Strategic Choices

- Competitiveness strategy: costs, quality, technology, or people.
- Technology: negotiation, design, implementation.
- Human resources: negotiation, design, and implementation, and skills-, compensation- or participation-based.

3. Innovation Process

- Whether designed and implemented top-down or bottom-up, i.e., in genuine consultation with union/employees or imposed unilaterally.
- Whether or not there is real management commitment and whether management motives are short- or long-term, cost-cutting or value-added.
- Whether introduced in isolation or with other innovations such as employee participation and training.
- Level of penetration and diffusion, i.e., made available to all employees, or just a select group (e.g., CEOs or only one branch within the organization).
- Whether or not there is built-in flexibility, i.e., the extent to which innovation is able to adapt to change.
- Timing of the implementation, i.e., with respect to the firm's lifecycle and the economy.

4. The Innovations

(a) General Description of Innovation

- Innovation history: innovative workplace arrangements in place prior to "event" in question.
- Primary purpose and objective: improve quality of life, improve communications, introduce technology, respond to competition, lower costs, raise productivity, raise skills, enhance value, etc..
- Cost: time spent in meetings and otherwise in planning, designing, implementing, monitoring, and sustaining the innovation.
- Involvement of workers and/or unions in design and implementation.
- Length of time of time in existence when studied.
- Scope: number of workers directly participating and directly and indirectly affected, by occupation and level, and what departments and/or aspects of production or service process involved.
- Existence of overall management approach: socio-technical systems (STS), total/continuous quality management (TQM), etc..

(b) Specific Types of Innovations

i) Changes in work organization

- Downsizing.
- Combining/integrating units.
- Decentralization.
- Centralization.
- Integrating suppliers with respect to relations and production/quality standards.
- Profit centres, mini-enterprise units.
- Reduced work rules, work simplification.
- Flattening hierarchies, delayering, reducing managerial/supervisory positions.
- Job re-design: enlargement/broad-banding (increased breadth), enrichment (depth).
- Job/position rotation.

Work teams/groups:

- autonomy: little (supervised), some ("coached"/self-directed), full (self-managed);
- domains: see under Participation, below; and
- mandatory or voluntary.

Continuous/total quality management (TQM):

- self-inspection;
- work simplification;
- monitor cost of quality;
- collaborate with suppliers on quality and production standards;
- just-in-time delivery;
- work cells;
- performance measurement; and
- statistical process control.

ii) Human resource management practices

Flexible work arrangements and non-standard employment:

- work-at-home;
- job sharing;
- flexible hours and compressed workweek;
- part-time work;
- short-term work; and
- contract work/out-sourcing.

Participation/involvement/empowerment:

- individual versus group;
- voluntary versus mandatory;
- domains: technology, work org., work flow, scheduling, training, strategy, QWL, etc.;
- input into decisions affecting: just group, several departments or entire firm;
- staff newsletter;
- suggestion box, feedback survey;
- "360 " employee appraisal;
- ombudsman, formal grievance system;
- information sharing: among/between workers, management, engineering, marketing;
- self-supervision; and
- quality circles, problem-solving groups, worker-management committees, quality of life.

Compensation:

- based on individual or group performance;
- nature of pay-performance link;
- profit sharing (based on organization-wide profits);
- gain-sharing, revenue-sharing, Scanlon Plan, Improshare, etc. (suborganizational);
- employee stock/share ownership/option plans (ESOP);
- pay-for-skill, pay-for-knowledge, skill-/competency-based pay;

- individual bonuses, monetary awards;
- non-monetary recognition: certificate;
- piecework;
- commissions;
- small-group incentive;
- salaried blue-collar workers (all salaried);
- flexible benefits;
- generous fringe benefits: e.g., health, pension, etc.; employer-paid or not; and
- generous leave provisions: work-family, education, etc..

Training and education:

- vision/mission statement;
- basic skills/literacy;
- "social"/"soft" skills: interpersonal, team building, problem solving, etc.;
- management/leadership skills;
- technical, job-specific;
- cross-training, multi-tasking/-skilling;
- computer skills; and
- quality principles, statistical process control, ISO 9000, etc..

Hiring/firing/promotion:

- merit promotion;
- job security: re-assignment within, no-layoff pledge;
- flexible firing rules; and
- recruiting from within.

iii) Industrial relations (in unionized settings only)

- Collective bargaining:
- strategic;
- concessions;
- mutual gains/win-win; and
- quality of work life.

Decision-making mechanisms:

- unilateral: decisions made by company without worker/union input;
- consultative/advisory: management consults union/workers but makes decisions;
- substantive/delegative: employees make major decisions; and
- representative: union represents workers in *joint* decisions

5. Outcomes

(a) Measured at the worker level

i) Impact on aspects of the firm:

- labour-management relations: grievances, problem-solving;
- inter-worker relations;
- information flow; and
- hierarchy: number of supervisory/management positions.

ii) Impact on aspects of the job:

- compensation: earnings and benefits;
- job quality, quality of working life, working conditions in general;
- variety; tasks per job;
- control/responsibility/discretion/autonomy (Barker 1993);
- job stability/security, layoffs, quits;
- skill requirements, need for training;
- training opportunities;
- job stress, speed-up, work intensification, work load;
- peer pressure;
- "satisfaction"; and
- accidents: frequency, severity.

iii) Impact on aspects of the individual:

- flexibility/portability with respect to job assignments;
- employability: internally and externally;
- absences;

- tardiness;
- skills and skill level;
- tasks per employee; hours worked;
- promotions;
- training;
- morale, confidence;
- productivity;
- commitment;
- participation/input in decision-making; power shared;
- information flow;
- work-family pressures; and
- opinion of management and the job.

(b) Measured at the firm level

i) Labour impact indicators:

- wage: levels (costs) and spread (incentive, social cohesion);
- employment levels;
- employment security; separations: quits and layoffs/firings;
- hires: from outside and from within organization;
- skill-level of workers;
- education-/skill- composition of workforce;
- autonomy, discretion, control;
- health and safety: absenteeism, illnesses, accidents/injuries, frequency/severity;
- employee commitment, morale, confidence;
- training: firm-sponsored or not; number, cost, type;
- working conditions in general, quality of working life;
- flexibility in moving workers into different positions;
- communications/social cohesion among staff;
- hierarchy: pyramid or flattened/compressed, number of management positions;
- number of job classifications;
- information flow among workers and departments; between workers and management; and
- labour-management relations: strikes, grievances, trust, communications.

ii) Efficiency impact indicators:

- productivity: widgets or requests filled per employee;
- unit costs, cost savings;
- re-do rates;
- service: quality, turnaround/delivery/cycle time;
- product quality: defects, rejection rates, returns;
- customer satisfaction/complaints, interaction with customers;
- technology successfully implemented;
- inventories;
- scrappage/usage rates; and
- flexibility: number of job rules.

iii) Financial impact indicators:

- output;
- sales/revenue;
- market share;
- profits;
- Tobin's q : ratio of market value of stock to value of property, plant, equipment;
- cash-flow to capital ratio; and
- relative price of products.

iv) Other (longer-run):

- community links;
- employing "the under-represented" and "the socially assisted";
- longevity of practice;
- diffusion of practice within firm;
- survival of firm; and
- organizational effectiveness.

(c) Union

- Labour-management relations.
- Union survival.

- Greater/lesser role for union, popularity of union.

(d) Community/society (long-run)

- Living standards.
- Welfare and jobless rate.
- Crime.
- Health.
- Individual and societal well-being; harmony.

(e) Outcome issues

- Direction of causality: some "outcomes" may in fact be antecedents.
- Lag between innovation and ultimate impact and differences between short- and long-run effects.
- Whether or not social and community-level impacts considered.
- Qualitative nature of performance measures.
- Generalizability of case-study findings.
- Consideration of factors contributing to outcomes (see next section).
- Subjectivity and degree of success and failure.

6. Factors Affecting Outcomes

(a) Pre-conditions

- Corporate and management philosophy and business strategy: the role of human resources.
- Whether or not good communications within organization and between labour and management.
- Characteristics of organization: size, industry, unionization, prior performance, competitive environment, technology, financing/marketing functions, workforce composition, existing workplace "innovativeness".

(b) Timing

- Whether implemented into a greenfield or existing site, i.e., organization's stage of development: start-up or mature.
- Whether or not accompanied by other major changes such as change in ownership, downsizing or technological innovation.
- The economic cycle: downturn or upturn.

(c) Design and implementation

- The degree of "fit:" the extent to which workplace innovation matches corporate philosophy/strategy with regard to competitiveness and human resources, and workers to the technology.
- Original intention, objectives, rationale: to ease technology implementation, cut costs, enhance flexibility, or raise productivity/value.
- Degree of commitment from management: long-run or short-run, whether middle/line managers' under-cutting concerns have been looked after.
- Participation of employees/union with respect to design and implementation: consultative or real input, top-down or bottom-up, whether or not employees' buy-in ensured and concerns over co-option and speed-up looked after.
- Communication about the change: whether or not information provided about innovation and its repercussions and successes, before, initially and regularly after implementation.
- Accessibility/penetration within the firm: widespread or exclusive, all employees or just managers, narrow versus wide: many units or just one (piece-meal or not).
- Voluntary or mandatory participation in innovation.
- Whether practices implemented piecemeal or systematically, in isolation or with other practices, exploiting synergies (e.g., gainsharing and training combined with employee participation).
- Whether or not flexibility built into innovation to accommodate unexpected events, or changes made along the way to adapt innovation to changes in circumstances.
- Whether or not benchmarks/measurable outcomes/targets developed and "reasonable," and whether or not monitored and evaluated regularly after implementation.
- Innovation-specific design concerns: e.g., amount of autonomy granted work teams in various human-resource and production areas, or whether or not there are transparent and immediate links between performance and pay in variable pay schemes.