

## Innovation: The One Driver for Future Success

By [Jim Cranston](#) on February 3, 2017

Professor Gabriel Teninbaum, Director of Suffolk University's Institute on Law Practice Technology & Innovation, gave a thought-provoking keynote address on *innovation* to 300 plus attendees at last week's [Marketing Partner Forum](#) annual conference.

Obviously a prognosticator, he gave three terrific examples of law firm innovation:

- Goodwin Procter's [Founders Workbench](#)
- Littler Mendelson's [Big Data Initiative](#)
- Reed Smith's [Innovation Hubs](#)

If innovation is so important, why aren't more firms doing it? In a nutshell, innovation is not what law firms do. According to [Maxwell Wessel](#),

"The reason most mature businesses can't innovate is because they're not designed to innovate. Instead, they've been carefully organized to execute. Processes, organizational cultures, and resources emerge inside companies, creating pressure that runs opposite to the pursuit of innovation."

Successful innovation, although challenging, has a much greater chance for success if you consider the following:

**Solicit Ideas** – Great innovations are rarely the result of one person's efforts. Solicit free flowing ideas from a common group which will build upon one another's contributions.

**Create Immunity** – For reasons that Mr. Wessel points out above, organizations tend to destroy innovation. Start by protecting your innovation group, practice or entity to ensure a safe environment for creativity. Innovation needs space to imagine, try and fail risk free.

**Test for Viability** – Before spending too much time and money, immediately go from idea to "proof of concept" and test your innovation. Viable execution of your new idea gets you from the dreaming stage to reality. Don't underestimate the execution phase.

Steve Jobs, considered one of the greatest innovators of all time, famously said "you can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future."

Good luck connecting those dots.

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