

# Innovation Champions and Networks Survey Results



Summary Report, March 19, 2007  
© 2007 InnovationLabs LLC

## Overview

This report is a summary review of the results of the *Innovation Champions and Networks* Survey, conducted by InnovationLabs in February 2007.

The purpose of the survey was to explore the role of innovation champions and networks in organizations.

"Innovation Champions" are individuals and/or teams of people who promote, encourage, prod, support, and drive innovation in their organizations. They may be in senior management positions, line management, staff, or operations roles. They may work in an ad-hoc manner, or in a highly structured program such as a Game Changer system.

"Innovation Networks" are self-organizing, ad-hoc teams of people who work together as required on innovation projects in their organizations.

...

The broad context for the survey was derived from the new book, *Permanent Innovation*, by Langdon Morris. For a detailed discussion of innovation networks please see chapter 10 of *Permanent Innovation*. The book may be purchased or downloaded for free at [www.permanentinnovation.com](http://www.permanentinnovation.com).

A full presentation of the survey results follows these comments.

A total of about 3200 invitations were sent, and 223 people responded to the survey (7%). We appreciate that so many of you took the time to participate.

## Insights & Observations

The survey was divided into 2 segments. The first set of questions examined views on Innovation Champions, and it was followed by a series of questions about Innovation Networks.

To the general questions concerning the value that both champions and networks provide their organizations there was clear agreement that both elements are important. There are opportunities for improvement and concerns, but overall they are both considered beneficial.

## The Key Insight: The Human Dimensions

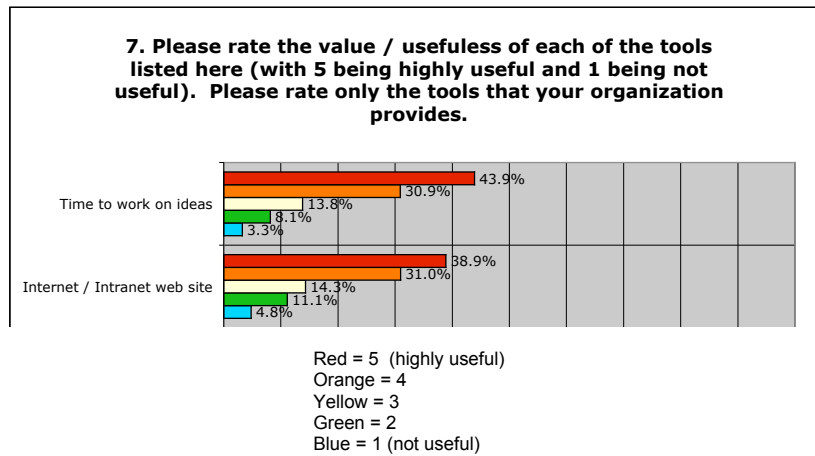
The survey offers one key insight that stands out far above everything else, an insight that really emphasizes the human dimension of innovation.

Innovating, after all, means thinking - looking for insights; looking for inspirations; looking for unknown and unmet needs; looking, finally, for ideas! Since all companies are now engaged in the same quest, real, true, penetrating insights are rare and valuable, and good or great ideas even rarer.

Innovation champions are those people who, by their own choice or by “official” designation, are empowered (and in many cases, compelled by their own personalities and aspirations) to look for such insights and ideas.

In this regard, it seems that perhaps the most revealing question is number 7, which asks people to rank the value of the various innovation tools they use. The responses show that what’s most important is not software tools, trainings, case studies, or guides. In fact, these are considered of low to moderate importance.

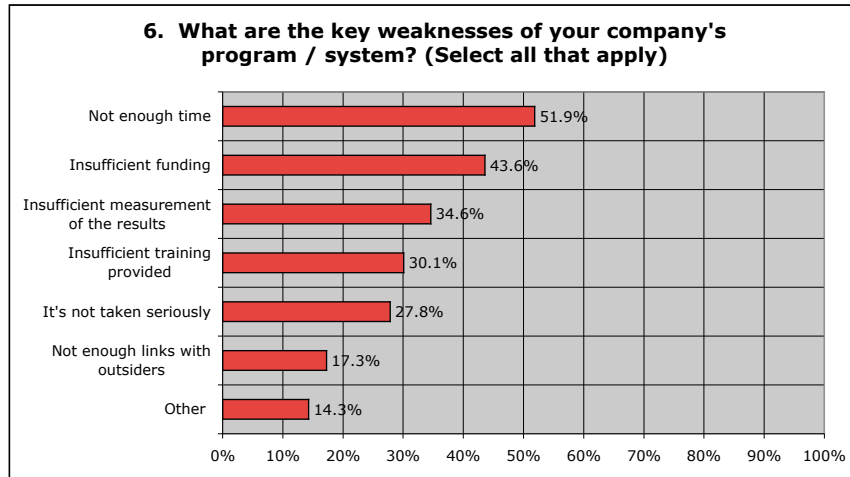
Instead what was most important to them? Time! Time to work on their ideas.



When we put the survey together, we were expecting “software tools” to rank higher, and in fact we only added the option of “time to work on ideas” as an afterthought. But clearly it is right in the center of peoples’ concerns.

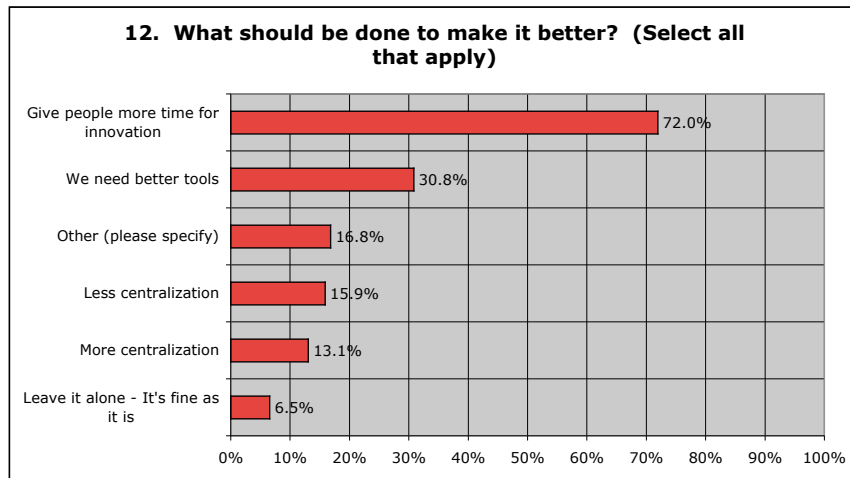
And what was next most important? Inter and intranet sites, which are the key tools for communicating with colleagues inside and outside of the organization.

This emphasis is verified by question 6, which asks about key weaknesses. So what is the biggest problem? It’s not money, nor training. It’s the *lack* of time.



133 responses

It's further confirmed by question 12, which asks how to improve effectiveness. The answer: Give us more time! This was noted by 72% of respondents; the next highest was chosen by only 31%, give us better tools.



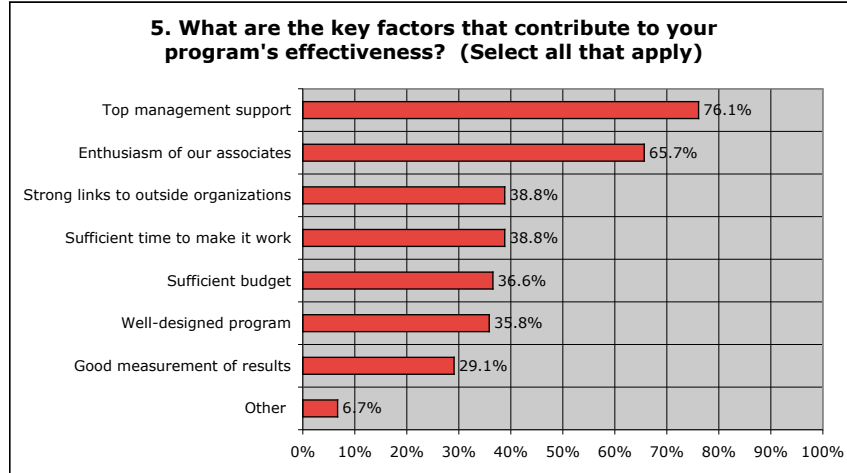
107 responses

However, we also need to consider the possibility that the request for “more time” is merely a symptom of a chronic attachment to the “urgent” rather than the “important” issues we face. How often do we cite the lack of time to excuse our own procrastination or disorganization? This isn't because we're malicious or manipulative, but simply unable or unwilling to put the priority on the important issues rather than on the last 25 urgent emails we received.

If managers are indeed promoting what we might call “the tyranny of the urgent,” then they are accentuating the problem; it is, in any case, their role to help us focus on what truly matters, and in this leadership is critical given the limitless

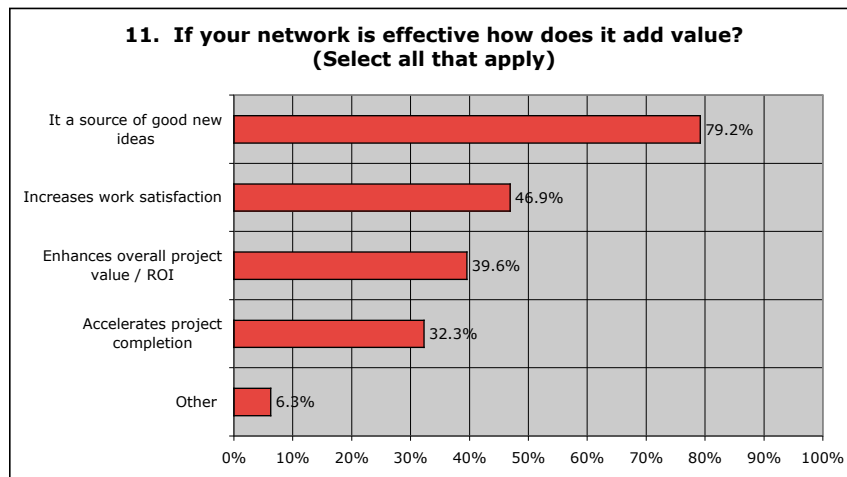
demands that day to day operations can place upon us.

Hence, the responses to question 5 also reveal something important about the human side of innovation. The survey participants indicated that the key factors contributing to effectiveness were the very human aspects of *top management support*, and also the *enthusiasm* (and by inference, the support) of colleagues. It is their support and encouragement that will help us make good decisions regarding the priority of our time.



134 responses

Question 11 shows that innovation networks can also add significant value. The key for our respondents was that it is a source of good ideas.



96 responses



## Summary

So what have we learned? The key factors according to the survey are:

Time  
The Means to Communicate  
Management Support  
Enthusiasm, and  
Ideas.

These are the key differentiators, and we would certainly agree that they are critical factors in the success of any innovation efforts.

Other dimensions play key roles - in our work we return again and again to the importance of methodology. But given the structure of this survey and the perspectives we were probing concerning innovation champions and innovation networks, these human dimensions of innovation emerged as the critical ones.

...

As you might wish to draw your own conclusions from the survey results, a full presentation of the responses begins on the next page.

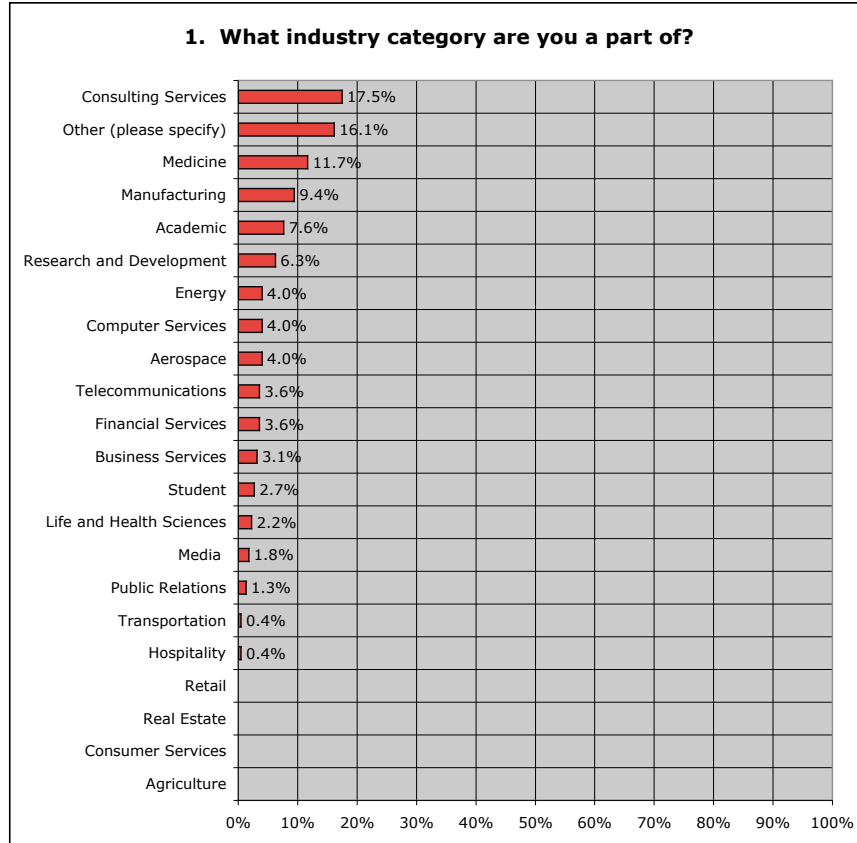
We'd also like to mention that a new version of the *Permanent Innovation* web site has been posted at [www.permanentinnovation.com](http://www.permanentinnovation.com), and you will find additional information and materials there.

...

In conclusion, we would like to again thank those who participated. We hope that you find the results of this survey interesting and useful, and we appreciate your interest in *Permanent Innovation*.

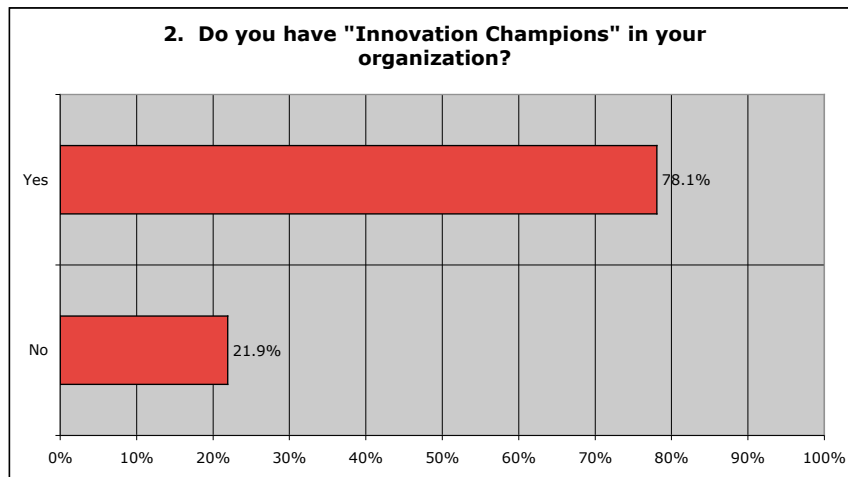
We welcome any future ideas, thoughts, and comments that you wish to share concerning the survey, the book, or the field of innovation in general. It remains our passion and our commitment!

# Complete Survey Results

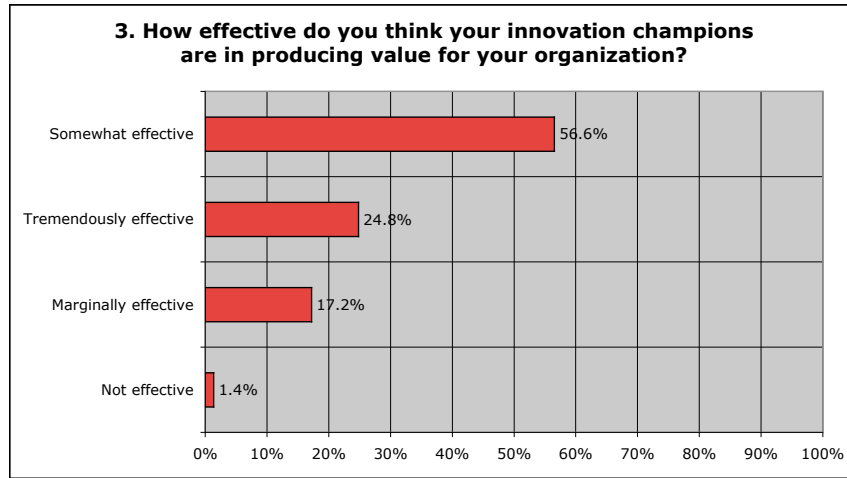


223 responses

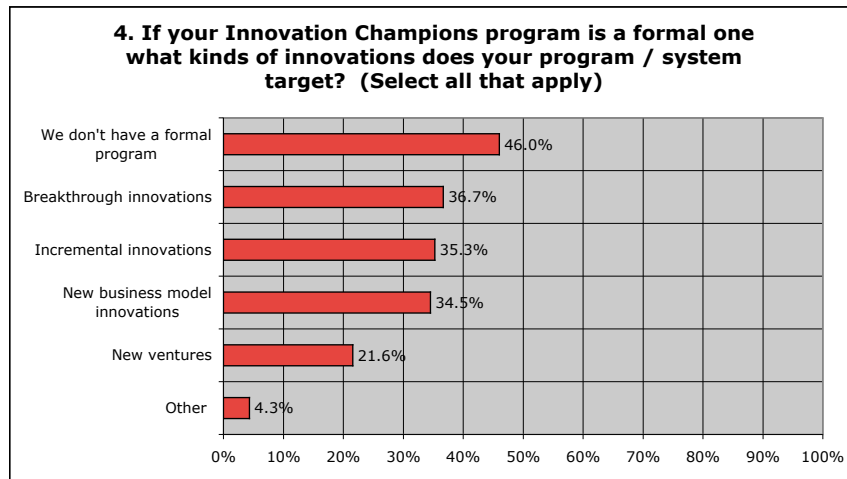
Note: Most people who selected the "Other" category actually fit into one of the defined categories.



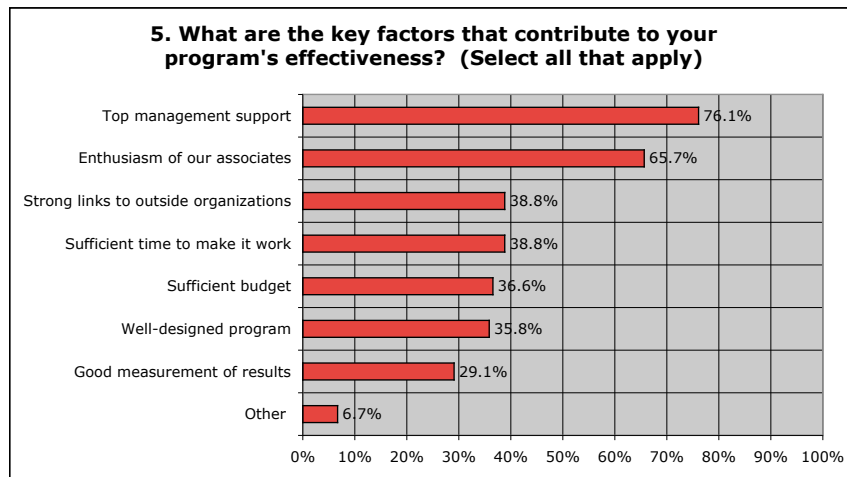
210 responses



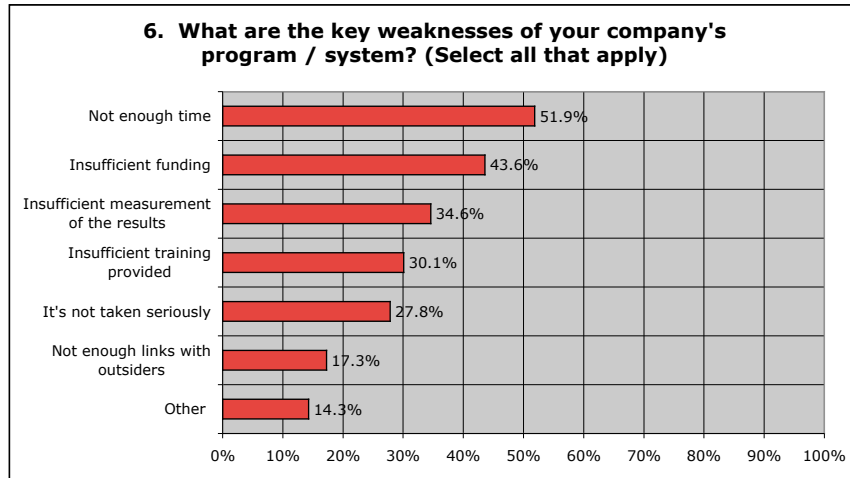
145 responses



139 responses



134 responses



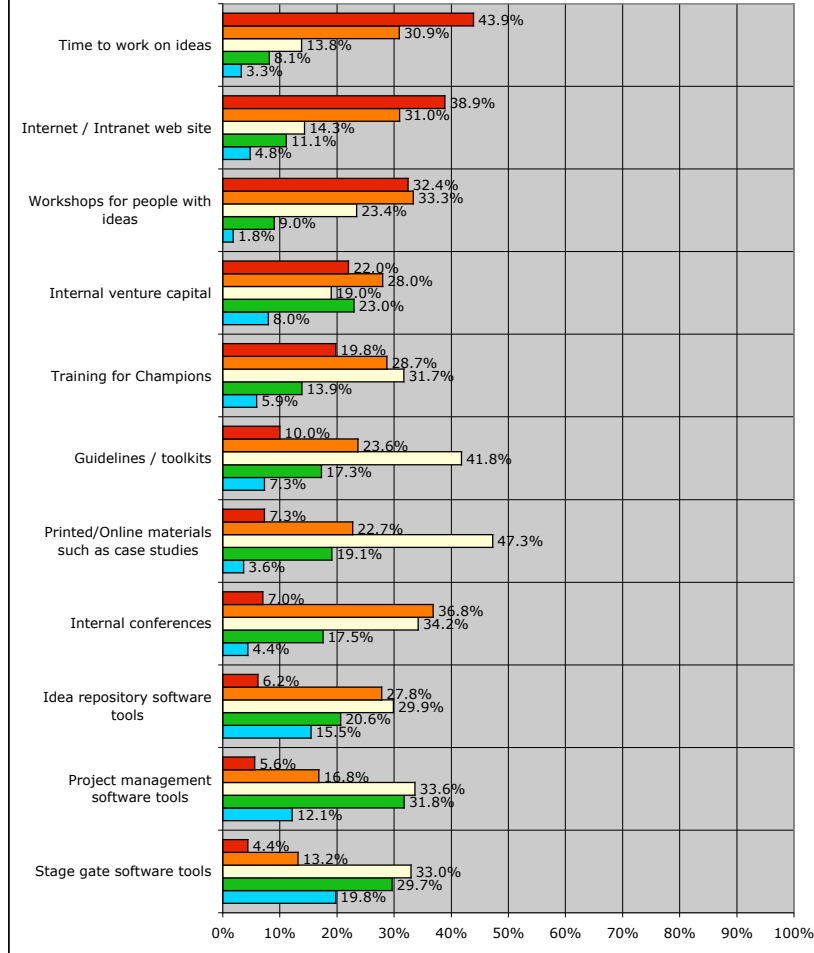
133 responses

**Other Comments:**

- No staff buy in, little visibility
- Lack of basic understanding of innovation culture
- Staying up to date with current information
- People get caught up in day-to-day operations and need to be continually pushed to look to the future
- Not enough information about opportunities
- Not enough time to discuss all the options
- Trying to support is neglected
- No formal program
- Communication and convincing to all stake holders was weak
- Not enough risk taking
- Cultural issues
- Not enough staff to service the student
- Too many links with outside collaborators
- Takes a top-down approach, with inconsistent acceptance by remainder of organization
- Complexity
- Customers' business-as-usual mindset
- Exposure is to the limited employees than key performers
- No pressure to produce results
- Nay sayers; conservatism

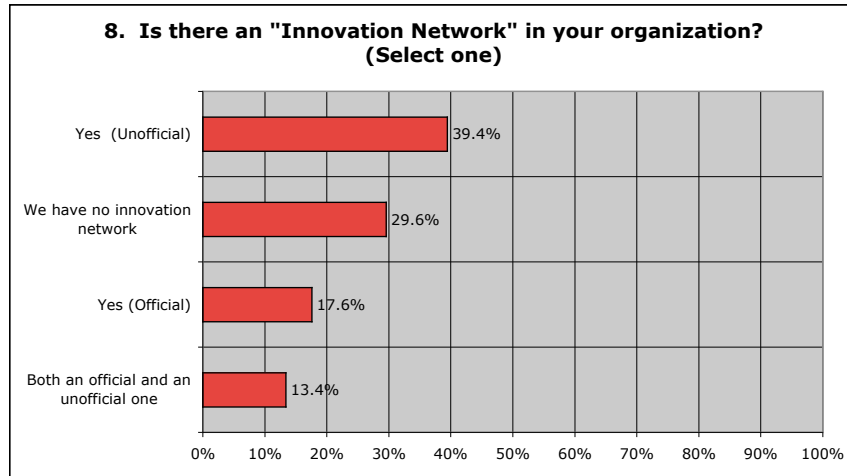


**7. Please rate the value / usefulness of each of the tools listed here (with 5 being highly useful and 1 being not useful). Please rate only the tools that your organization provides.**

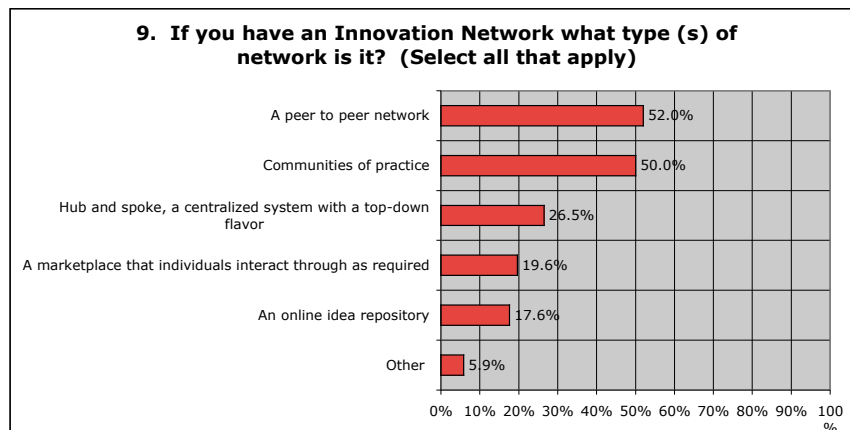


Red = 5 (highly useful)  
 Orange = 4  
 Yellow = 3  
 Green = 2  
 Blue = 1 (not useful)

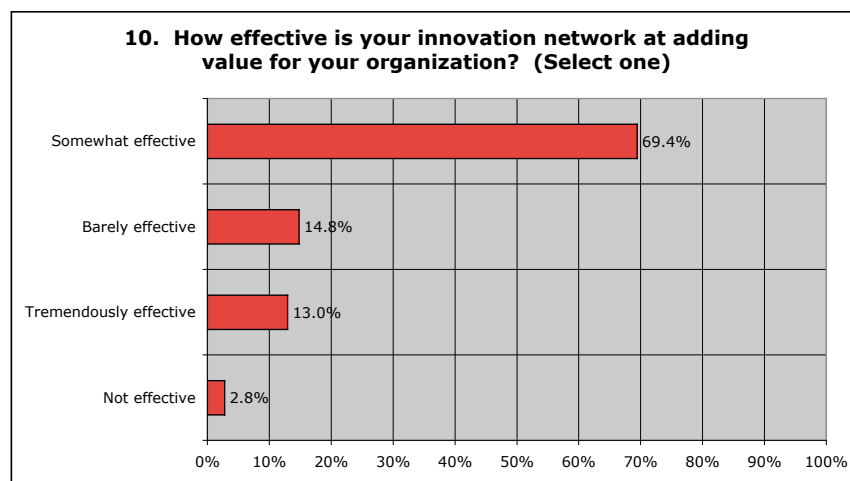
136 responses



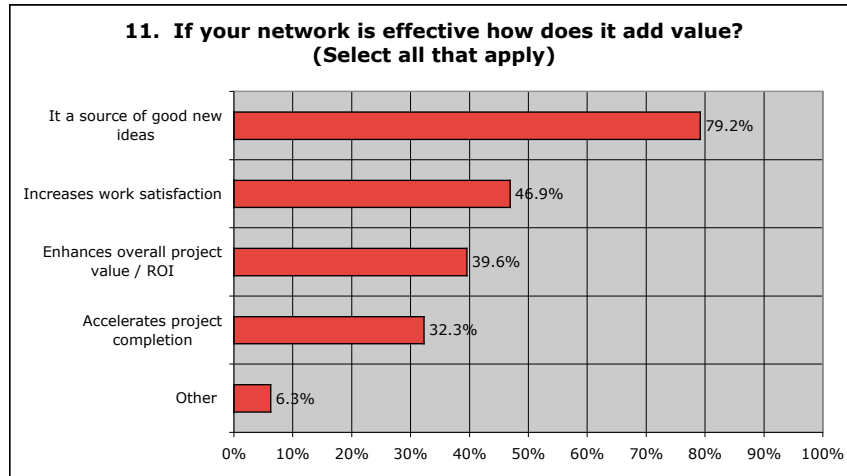
142 responses



102 responses



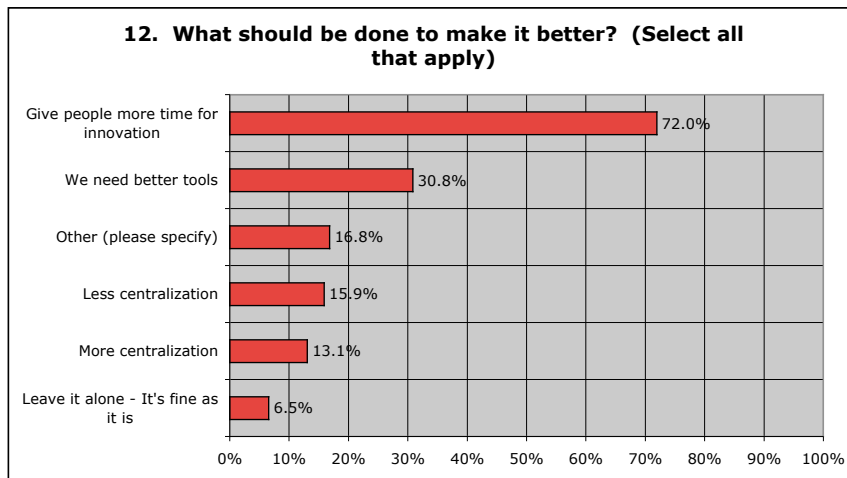
108 responses



96 responses

**Other Comments:**

- Powerful tool in influencing external perception of the organization
- It's a source of new projects
- Increases Awareness of staff as to personal ability to Innovate
- Allow more ideas to become innovations
- Steadily improves methods
- Help in defining new business organisation

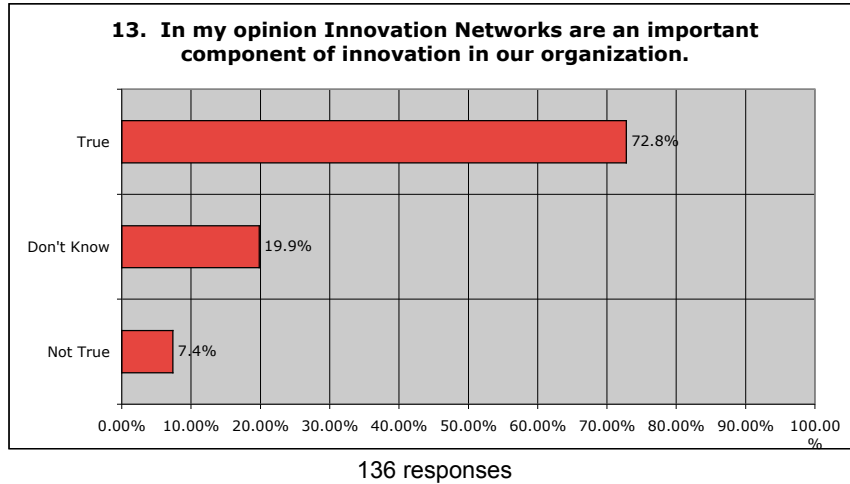


107 responses

**Other Comments:**

- More evident sponsorship; staff passion for Innovation
- Create a culture of innovation among more people
- Clear direction on innovation goals
- Continue bringing more people into the network until all employees are part of it.
- Language that sells innovation value
- Gain more management leadership
- An active support of innovators from outside the official coaches community
- Greater Diversity in the group - levels of staff

- Patience by champion to allow team members to develop themselves
- More front office involvement
- Staff
- More research
- Increase the competitiveness and multifold growth
- Get alignment of the top management on what and how to organize the 'innovative' company
- Management support



#### 14. Additional Comments

[Selected responses shown.]

- The key in less centralized organizations is a strong high-level structure that nurtures innovation. It rewards the successes but doesn't punish the failures.
- A couple of observations about innovation champions: 1) Regular rotation of the group keeps it fresh and energy levels high (outgoing members then become part of the innovation network). 2) We start innovation champions in an implementation team but after about a year they tend to want to get more involved in the strategy of innovation rather than the doing. This is good because they bring practical experience to our strategic decision making and it allows new champions to be brought into the implementation team.
- Organizational leadership models innovation, and this sets the stage for the rest of the organization.
- Amongst all the 'ideation' tools that I know, TRIZ is the most effective.
- Most important possibly are 4 pre-steps for any innovation champions and network to give tangible benefits. 1) Goal of company and individuals are aligned, communicated and committed by all individuals not (just complied). 2) Necessary motivation, resources, and environment are provided in terms of rules, policies, measurements, assumptions etc. (then get out of the way of

the performers road). 3) Reflect on results and improve on that with appropriate measurements on company/whole level. 4) Run this cycle without past baggage.

- The Innovation champion and network must be supported by an effective Innovation methodology and overall innovation strategy. This is usually the shortfall of such initiative as there is no organised and structured organisational mechanism to support it in difficult and bad times. To ensure that innovation is sustainable, a methodology that encourages sustainability and consistency would allow the innovation champions and networks to work towards continuous innovation.
- Our organization is so bureaucratized that it is almost moribund.
- Our champions feel lonely and not as effective as they desire.
- The need to have bottom of pyramid concepts for understanding the need for innovation, as well contributions in generating ideas. The budget for innovation should include budget for failure. Innovation is not cost cutting initiative; it is the non-ending strategic initiative.

...

*For more information:*

[www.permanentinnovation.com](http://www.permanentinnovation.com)

[www.innovationlabs.com](http://www.innovationlabs.com)

...

*Feedback:*

LMorris@innovationlabs.com

*Thank you!*