



Minute Interview with Paul Dove June 2011

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Matthew Dallisson conducts a minute's interview with Paul Dove, R&D
Director at PepsiCo International Western Europe and UK

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Matthew Dallisson: In your opinion, what is the biggest-innovation related challenge that organizations face today?

Paul Dove: One of the largest challenges companies face in the current economic climate is to be able to ring fence the longer term innovation resources and maintain this long term game in the face of constant commodity inflation pressures and low consumer confidence. The temptation to cut costs out now are too tempting, evidence from recent recessionary times suggests that the companies that invest appropriately during the rough times are more likely to come out of the recession in pole position as consumer confidence picks up. Equally cost and consumer relevant innovation in a down turn is also important to focus on.

MD: Which is more important: a culture for innovation or processes for innovation? Why?

PD: I am going to sound like I am hedging my bet's when I say you need both an innovation culture and a level of process to guide that innovation. After all an innovation that is not delivered to market is not going to be successful in the end. Companies have fallen into the trap of believing that lots of innovation will be key to success, in the end you need to be able to get that innovation to market and do so in a reliable and consistent fashion. What companies like Apple and P&G have done is combine the culture with a level of rigour around managing the innovation process that leads to long term success.

MD: Do you think the field of innovation is in danger of becoming over-heated and over-hyped?

PD: No, not at all. Innovation is simply the lifeblood of mankind, there will always be someone looking at the world upside down and looking to find new connections and ways of doing things we take for granted today.

MD: What are the benefits of getting customers involved, either directly or indirectly, in the innovation process?

PD: I touched on this a little bit in the question on process of innovation. In my experience the “innovator” has to walk with their consumer in order to understand their world. I was privileged to work at Procter & Gamble for 20 years and I would say there was not a day that did not pass where we were not talking to consumers and customers as a way to find out how to make lives better in some way. The mantra often quoted by the then CEO (AG Lafley) was that “The Consumer is Boss!” and with that mindset you can really get to see the consumer experience from the user's view. The upside

to working with consumers is the massive amounts of learning you get, the key is to work out what is important and what's not – you need to have team members who are gifted and the skills to be able to interpret the massive amounts of data that can be generated. The downsides are that it can be expensive and time consuming to get the data you need, that's the innovators dilemma...time and investment challenges to get just the right amount of data.

MD: What is the leader's role in innovation? What percentage of leaders do you think truly understand what this role calls them to do?

PD: The Innovation leader needs to be open to look at problems in a different way and let their teams "try it on" as they learn and potentially do things differently – there should be no sacred cows. You also need to have a rigorous approach to portfolio and project management; you need to know when to kill a project versus keeping small pet projects going. That's the critical question....when and how to tell the CEO/General Manager (delete as appropriate) that their pet project is really a lame duck? As to the number of managers who get innovation and know how to manage it, I honestly don't know, I would guess it is less than 25% but that's my guess!

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