

Steal with Pride

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Humans are by nature innovative. But far too often we end up reinventing the wheel instead of reusing the innovations that are already out there. This is not sound economics and poses a specific problem when innovating within the public sector. As the taxpayers have paid for the innovative solutions once, we have an obligation to reuse innovations. Therefore, Danish civil servants are encouraged to “Steal with Pride”.

By reusing the solutions of others, public sector workplaces can save development costs, avoid unsuccessful strategies and achieve desired outcomes faster. Furthermore, by sharing our own solutions with others, we can use their experiences to improve the original solution.

What is innovation?

Innovation is a new or significantly changed way of improving the workplace's activities and results. Innovations can be services, products, processes, methods of organization or methods of communicating with external parties. The value of an innovation can be to: Redeem political objectives, increase efficiency, achieve higher quality, enhance democracy or increase employee satisfaction.

Innovation is spread when a solution, which is implemented and has created value in one situation, is implemented and creates value somewhere new. The solution can be either directly adopted, reused in an adapted form, or inspire and accelerate new development somewhere else. Merely sharing knowledge is not enough. The innovation is not spread until the behavior has changed and the solution is being used.

Spreading differs from implementation because implementation deals with the process from development to the entry into service. Spreading differs from scaling, because scaling is the act of

introducing something that has been successfully implemented in one part of an organization to other parts of that same organization under the same leadership.

A guide to spread innovation

In Denmark, we have a plethora of innovation tools such as project models and innovation process models to help us innovate. However, until recently we did not have a tool that enabled the sharing and reusing of innovations. The National Centre for Public Sector Innovation, therefore, developed a guide to help public sector workplaces share their own innovations and reuse others'. The guide is for anyone who wants to collaborate on spreading an innovation from one context to another. The guide is based on research and field studies and is tested with leaders and employees on all levels of government and in various sectors.

This process revealed that employees in the public sector are eager to share their innovation; but they also expressed a need for something that made sharing quicker and smarter. We discovered that to succeed in spreading innovation, employees have to

meet face-to-face to honestly and openly discuss their work. Websites and distant presentations on stages is not enough.

How do you steal with pride?

The guide consists of six steps with recommended actions and associated tools that help structure the dialogue throughout the process between the innovator and the person, who wants to steal the innovation. The guide provides an overview of an otherwise complex process. Download the guide here: <http://coi.dk/spreadinginnovation>.

The first step is to check if it makes sense to spread the innovation from one place to another. If you were inspired by one of Edge of Government's many exiting innovations you can use the guide to help you steal that innovation. Maybe the Peruvian innovation where vultures locate illegal waste dumps? In Lima 10 vultures have been kitted with GoPro video cameras and GPS trackers and are then left to do what they do best: Sniff out rubbish around town. If you think this might be worth stealing, the guide recommends that you enter into dialogue with the Vulture project inventor. Use this dialogue to learn more about the purpose of the innovation, what needs it met, the effects, and the ups and downs of the innovation process. Thus, you can form a decision on whether the innovation is relevant in your context.

The second step is to test the innovation in the new context. Take the innovation and use it as your prototype. Does it work in your context? Can you learn from the previous tests? Maybe you do not have vultures in your country, but then which bird sniffs rubbish around town?

The third step is to adopt or adapt the innovation in the new context. Can you cut corners? Do you need to add or remove elements of the original innovation to make it work? Can the innovators learn something new from the way their innovation is being adapted to the new context?

The fourth step is to remove the obstacles and old habits that stand in the way of the innovation. Unlearn old habits, revise strategy, and replace incentives for old ways of working.

The fifth step is implementing the innovation in the new context. Stay in touch with the original innovators if you are stuck, they probably experienced something similar.

The sixth and final step is to sum up and share what you have gained from spreading the innovation.

Experiences with spreading innovation so far

Published in 2016 the guide has been used in different innovation processes in the Danish public sector. One example is a government agency that wishes to steal an innovation from a municipality: "Complaints-driven innovation" where a municipality successfully turns citizens' complaints into new ideas for innovation. Another example is the hospital that invented a new hip surgery follow-up procedure, which it shared with similar departments in other hospitals. The guide is also used for adapting the procedure to other types of surgeries. A third example is the new and better ways to reduce employees' sick leave that one organizational unit learned from another unit. Overall, the guide is experienced as a useful tool to spread innovation. However, spreading innovation is still far from easy.

Work place changes are a frequent barrier for spreading innovation e.g. changes in management or a key person leaving, an organizational restructuring, or the introduction of new IT-systems.

Another type of barrier is documenting the innovation. A prerequisite for sharing is to tell what you did, which key decisions were made and what the outcome of the innovation was. The framework for evaluating innovation is still being developed with the intention of supporting not only the innovation process but also key actions for spreading innovation. A third barrier for the spreading of innovations is the

time innovators spend on sharing the innovation. Therefore, it is important to allow employees to help other organizations and to recognize the efforts e.g. financially.

Finally, an innovation can be lost in translation. Many employees need help in the process of “translating” an innovation between different workplaces or services.

Some barriers can be overcome by having a facilitator build bridges between the “inventors” and “reusers” and to dedicate an employee within the innovation project for documenting process and effects.

In the Danish public sector, stealing innovation is not considered a crime but encouraged. There are several examples of Danish workplaces with awards for creative ideas and reusing innovation. Stealing innovation is even encouraged by the Minister of Public Sector Innovation, Sophie Loehde: “Normally, I do not encourage people to steal from each other, but when public sector workplaces steal and reuse each other’s good ideas, I strongly endorse their initiative”.

We want to share



We want to reuse

1

Check

The first step is to find out if it makes sense to spread the innovation from one place to another



2

Test

At this step the innovation is tested in the new context



3

Adapt

Here, the innovation is adopted or adapted to the new context



4

Remove

At this step you remove the obstacles and old habits that stand in the way of the innovation



5

Implement

At this step you implement the innovation in its new context



6

Harvest

For the last step you sum up what you have gained from spreading the innovation



**CONGRATULATIONS! THE INNOVATION IS NOW SPREAD.
REMEMBER TO SHARE YOUR LEARNINGS AND PASS THE INNOVATION FURTHER ON.**

DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE: COI.DK/SPREADINGINNOVATION

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