

Who needs innovation?

Or rather, who needs innovations groups? Once upon a time, people had ideas. People in big companies had ideas. And told their friends, and took them to their bosses, who if they were good ideas often took them to their bosses who had private venture funds that they could allocate to promising-looking ideas. 20-odd years ago I got my own crazy ideas funded that way: some of them turned into products, some of them died, but none of them needed someone specifically dedicated to innovations processing to make them appear.

So what changed? I worked for monolithic companies back then, I work for monolithic companies now, and engineers have always been engineers, whatever the decade (although there wasn't really the concept of a 'hip' engineer back in the 1980s). So maybe the environment changed. Maybe the standards for what makes a good engineer have changed, maybe it's the move from 5% training and PV budgets, maybe it's even the style of management changing from hierarchical and experienced to village market and image-driven. But whatever has changed, it's driving a need for people who can make the safe space in which innovations can thrive, and champion ideas to the image-makers and transient.