

Client: Afton Chemical

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Operational Excellence Network Case Study

Best practices in sustaining innovation

SITUATION

Afton Chemical develops and manufactures petroleum additives that enhance the performance of lubricating oils and fuels in machinery, vehicles, and other equipment. In its Europe, Africa, Middle East and India (EMEA) region, Afton launched an initiative in 2009 to increase innovation across the company. The initial launch had gone well, most of the company had been trained in techniques to increase creativity, and an 'idea' management tool had been selected to support the initiative. Attention turned to the practices that would be needed to sustain innovation over the coming years. Afton was seeking to hear of best practices and lessons learned in other organisations with a longer track record of innovation.

OBJECTIVE

The key objective of the tailored programme was to understand the best practices needed, and learn the mistakes to be avoided, as it transitions from launch to continual operation of an innovation initiative. In particular, Afton was seeking to understand:

- How to develop an innovation strategy and gain acceptance of it
- How to improve collaboration within, and outside, the firm
- How to make the best use of technology to support innovation.

APPROACH

H-I Network used its extensive network of contacts to create a collaborative tailored programme that included:

- Detailed discussion on the objectives and definition of successful outcomes
- Creation of a 'wish list' from the participants
- Survey and interviews with staff members at different levels to understand how Afton rated as an 'innovative' organisation and the areas requiring most attention to ensure success
- Survey and interviews with individual managers from target organisations to identify critical success factors
- De-brief with Afton on the results of the surveys and interviews, resulting in the design for a workshop and list of attendees to invite
- Facilitated workshop at Afton with key findings captured and distributed to participants after

- Afton-specific recommendations discussed and documented.

Participants included AkzoNobel, BASF, BP, DSM, Mars, P&G, Reckitt Benckiser, Royal Mail, and Shell.

RESULT

The programme resulted in five key recommendations for Afton to sustain its innovation initiative.

"Exploring this topic with peer organisations as part of the H-I Network programme was very valuable. In particular it reinforced the fact that increasing our levels of innovation will be achieved primarily through changing the behaviours of our staff. It also highlighted the need to keep driving the change rather than seeing innovation as something that can be introduced and left to our workforce".

Mike Lewis, Managing Director, EMEA

"The internal survey pinpointed the areas that required our attention and the workshop generated many ideas to address them. I was particularly pleased to establish relationships with other innovation leaders and to contact them to discuss ideas and approaches following the workshop".

Alan Cotter, Innovation Manager

