

Your CEO cares deeply about innovation, and so should you. Innovation is the only way to consistently drive profitable growth. And profitable growth is the most basic goal of every CEO. If you want to contribute at a strategic level in your organization, become an enabler of innovation.

There are lots of books and articles written about innovation, and I've read many of them. None seem to capture the primary lesson that I've learned about innovation and that is borne out by research: expertise, more than any other factor, determines your ability to innovate.

I know what you're thinking... *That's no revelation! Of course you need expertise to innovate.*

Well, it must not be that obvious because so many books on innovation gloss over or completely ignore the role of expertise and instead focus on getting the right culture, recruiting diverse teams, implementing gate reviews and process metrics, taking risk, and celebrating failure. A lot of what's written about innovation is, in my estimation, just so much twaddle.

Look, there's no such thing as the perfect culture to drive innovation. Even if there was a perfect innovation culture, it wouldn't guarantee innovation. The power of team diversity is over-rated. In fact, diversity may work against you. And go ahead, use gate reviews, take risks, celebrate failure, and do a great job measuring everything. Good luck. It doesn't mean you'll innovate.

But if you do nothing other than assemble a handful of engaged experts—I'm talking true experts—you've at least got a shot at innovation. And when talent managers understand the nature of expertise, the unique characteristics and career paths of experts, and the dynamics of functional expert teams, then the magic can really happen.

If you want to add real value in your organization, if you want talent management to really contribute to the organization's success, become an expert on expertise!