

IS INNOVATION NEEDED?

If So, Then Where?

BY EIRIKUR INGVARSSON

Innovation is not a new construct in organizational circles and has continually reared its head in one way or another. Rapid changes in society demand innovation and renewal, such as in commerce, production, transportation, and interaction between individuals, to mention but a few examples. It is important to recognize that innovation and renewal is not a luxury option, but a necessity in order to maintain a system irrespective of where it is found or its nature. This is true for economic systems, sociological movements, and religious institutions. This is true because innovation is woven into the very fabric of culture, society, and economics. Innovation and renewal are foundational for growth and quality of life. This has been true in history, remains true today, and will be proven true for the unforeseen future.

Need for Innovation

While Coca-Cola is a well-known company, few may think of it in relation to innovation. It is a 130-year-old company, that needs no introduction. But when their senior vice president of global talent and development, Stacey Valy Panayiotou, speaks about innovation in their search for human resources, it is wise to pause for



May 5, 2020: A woman wearing a face mask walks in front of graffiti of Coca-Cola soda, painted on a wall in the city of Valencia, Carabobo state, Venezuela.

a moment and listen to what she has to say. In a recent interview with CBS News.com, Panayiotou said, “We need candidates who understand Coke’s new approach. It’s not a specific skill set but a mindset about change. We want people who know how to solve problems, people that can help us be disruptive and win at that.”



Raufarhólshellir, located in Iceland, is one of the largest lava tubes in the country, and features rainbow-colored walls and stunning rock formations. The lava tube is located on the property of an Adventist academy. This natural resource has become a popular tourist attraction generating income for the church.

History has shown them that they need to avoid stagnation and the trap of celebrating former success. Coca-Cola does this through constant innovation. It is well known that beverage companies have their ups and downs, but today there is a generally negative attitude towards sugary soda drinks; thus it is imperative to go outside the box and respond to consumer demand. It is imperative to respond to their demand in a different way than in the past.

One of their innovative actions is to recruit employees from a different perspective. It is not enough to seek individuals with good ideas and great team-building skills; rather, they need to seek employees who are intent on learning new things and new methods, who are keen on continual learning, who are willing to listen to society and adapt to present demands.

She mentioned the following example as an illustration: “A group of our marketers were recently working on a project, and, rather than sitting at a conference table, they decided to go to Chicago, where they spent the day with musicians and artists, visiting museums, looking for inspiration. It was very effective.”

Her interview was widely noticed, with media

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outlet Innovation Excellence pointing out that this shows the importance of being always ready and to be always looking to learn something new, and that this skill

should be expected to be ever present. This is especially true for individuals wanting to be in development and production of new products.

Is There a Need for Innovation in the Church?

No matter what we think about the work and message of our church, we must consider

innovation in similar ways as Coca-Cola. It does not mean that we change our core message, or that the Three Angels’ Message needs to undergo product development. Rather, it is how we approach and handle our message that needs review. The foundation of Coca-Cola is still to satisfy customer thirst, but how they go about fulfilling that thirst will change. In the same way, the church will continue to seek to satisfy the spiritual thirst of society. Spiritual thirst still exists, and it is the living water that the church has that will satisfy this thirst. It is the same living water the church has presented for decades and centuries. The foundation, the living water, will not change, but how it is presented to society must adapt to present-day needs.

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Seventh-day Adventists are familiar with innovation. Most church members are familiar with the story of how Will Keith Kellogg and Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, in effect, changed the breakfast habits of American society. Dr. Kellogg also changed the taste buds of all nations with the introduction of peanut butter.

A Modern Encouragement

It is interesting that the Kelloggs' innovation became contagious and improved the life of millions worldwide. How does one measure up with innovative actions and thoughts? When one performs an online search for "Innovation and Adventist," very few hits emerge. The ability to innovate and generate new value is still a fundamental necessity of society. This involves not only generating increasing financial value but being at the forefront of encouraging and welcoming innovation in order to create new opportunities. The greatest treasure the church has is human resource. God did not create us with half-empty cups; rather, our cups are brimming and overflowing with talent and gifts from the Creator.

It is possible that the church's treasured foundations and valued history blinds her from seeing that current treasures are handed down from previous generations, and with the soon-coming of Jesus, the church is preaching the end of time with no option, or urgency, to innovate and re-evaluate the church's life and methods.

It is imperative that church leaders and professors at higher-learning institutions be aware that the world is not so much interested in what the church knows as they are interested in what the church is doing and how it is done. This is demonstrated by the experience of the Kelloggs. Thus, it is important that the church approaches its work and ministry from a perspective of innovation. Innovation

is not a reserve for difficult times; it is a prerequisite for progress all over the world and it always applies. Without new approaches, the church leaders of the future will have neither the ability nor the opportunity to make critical decisions to impact a complex and modern society of the future. There is a need for a new vision. The church needs to prepare the Seventh-day Adventist movement to be ready to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future by creating a foundation of innovation in every area. The church can bring together individuals from various sectors such as business and commerce, as well as arts and culture, along with pastors and professors. The church members are all in this together; thus, a conversation for creative innovation must begin now. There is no time to wait.



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