



Growing a culture of innovation at RNIB

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) is the UK's leading charity offering support, advice and information to over two million people with sight loss. The fundraising department wanted to foster a culture of innovation to boost their income. **RNIB** worked with **The Management Centre (=mc)** to design an innovation framework that was right for **RNIB** and has resulted in a true culture change.

About RNIB

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) is the UK's leading charity offering information, support and advice to over two million people with sight loss.

RNIB is leading the UK Vision Strategy, a Vision 2020UK initiative, which aims to:

- improve the eye health of the people of the UK
- eliminate avoidable sight loss and deliver excellent support to those with a visual impairment
- enhance the inclusion, participation and independence of blind and partially sighted people

Background

In order to fund this pioneering work, **RNIB** relies on income from a variety of sources. With just over 50% of their income coming from voluntary donations, maximising this source of income was a key strategic priority.

Challenge

By many measures, **RNIB** was a successful fundraising charity. But they didn't want to rest on past success. The fundraising market in the UK has grown increasingly competitive in recent years, and the economic downturn has resulted in a drop in total donations. **RNIB** wanted to invest in developing new fundraising products to stay ahead of the competition and reach new donor audiences.

Previous efforts to foster a culture of innovation in the fundraising department hadn't been completely successful. They wanted to know why, and how they could advance their innovation work to become a leader in the charitable sector.

=mc's brief

In order to foster a strong culture of innovation that could drive voluntary income growth, **RNIB** asked **=mc** to:

1. help them analyse the strengths and weaknesses of their existing approach to innovation
2. develop a stage by stage process to develop and deliver innovative fundraising products

Solution

RNIB Innovation Project staff had invested months of work in considering the big questions: what is meant by “innovation”, who else is doing it and how should we do it here? **=mc** built on this, and working with key staff, we used our Innovation Value Chain model to create a staff survey. This was designed to identify the strengths and bottlenecks in **RNIB**'s innovation process, and had the added benefit of establishing a benchmark against which the Innovation Project could monitor their future progress. **RNIB** found they were good at generating ideas, but not as good at sharing information, prioritising and developing ideas, and delivering new products.

Based on this finding, we focused on helping the Innovation Project team develop a series of tools, such as Appreciative Enquiry, Six Thinking Hats and Mind Tiles which formed the ‘Innovation Laboratory’. We also helped them develop internal innovation processes to address these weaknesses. We then worked with them to design a series of training workshops to empower fundraising staff across the organisation to develop innovative products, with the ultimate aim of fostering an innovative culture within **RNIB**.

Result

RNIB, led by Tom Lewis-Reynier and aided by Rebecca Williams, created a fully-developed innovation strategy and process, key activities and objectives with KPIs and targets. Critically, **RNIB** identified two kinds of innovation they wanted to support:

- **big ideas that required coordinated resourcing:** these projects are managed by the newly-named Innovation Services Team (formerly the Innovation Project team). This team uses an innovation value chain-based process to design, develop and deliver new Big Idea products
- **incremental innovation:** to help with the process of creating an innovation culture, teams across the fundraising function are encouraged to develop and deliver their own initiatives, supported by the Innovation Services Team

A second survey demonstrates that staff now feel more empowered and supported in creating and developing new ideas compared to the previous year – a strong indication that innovation has now become an essential part of the organisational culture.

The Innovation Services Team demonstrated the power of the innovation process by helping to develop the ‘Rushton Ripple’, a new Community Fundraising product designed to support their Capital Appeal for the redevelopment of Rushton School. The Innovation Services Team supported this project throughout the innovation process – from helping with idea generation to developing the business case for the product and pitching it internally. Stakeholders from across the **RNIB** applauded the new and refreshing approach the Innovation Services Team brought to the project.

The Innovation Services Team now use every opportunity to incorporate innovation process concepts into projects: innovation is no longer a project at **RNIB**. It's what they do.

"It was essential for us to bring in specific skills and an external perspective and experience to this project. Working with =mc has delivered on both those dimensions – and has been a lot of fun too. =mc's collaborative work-style has prepared the strong foundations of internal capacity to help with the sustainability and delivery of our Innovation Programme."

Tom Lewis-Reynier
Innovation Services Manager, RNIB

Further help

For more information about the RNIB visit www.rnib.org.

=mc has a team of unrivalled management consultants able to assist with the biggest and smallest organisational changes. Between us we share experience in small and large charity work, international development, arts and culture, disability and the environment. **=mc** consultants have worked with many of the UK's major charities on their strategy. We're proud to have helped **Oxfam, WSPA, Wateraid, UNICEF, Concern Worldwide, Greenpeace International, NSPCC** and the **British Red Cross**.

To find out how we've helped these organisations achieve their big ideas - and how we could help you - call us on **+44 (0) 20 7978 1516** or visit www.managementcentre.co.uk/consultancy.

We hope you found this download useful and enjoyable.

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About =mc

The Management Centre (=mc) is an international management training and consultancy agency working exclusively for not for profit organisations worldwide. We provide help in management consultancy, fundraising consultancy and training.

To find out more about us, please visit our website at www.managementcentre.com