

Building a Culture of Innovation at a Leading Port Investor, Developer & Operator



The Highlights From → To

From: The Business Context

- Slow GDP growth & price pressure
- Innovation as key priority, but original tactic proved ineffective
- Challenged to accelerate innovation moving forward

To: The Outcome

- Implementation of new innovations delivering positive impact
- Stronger ideation skills among leaders
- Foundation for a company-wide culture fostering innovation

Facing slow GDP growth and price pressure from shipping liners, a large port investor, developer and operator is committed to re-igniting the culture of innovation that made the company successful in the first place.

With its expansive operations spanning 319 berths, 52 ports and 26 countries, the company is already recognized as one of the most innovative corporations in the industry. In recent years, the firm has pioneered innovations in all of its operational areas and streamlined the transportation supply chain. Today, the port operator is a sought-after partner for companies throughout the maritime and transport community.

Yet, going forward, innovation remains a core strategic priority. The company established an innovation task force responsible for bringing new ideas and concepts to the board. After two years of work, the output did not meet expectations, and despite escalating pressure from the firm's managing director, innovation stalled.

Challenged to identify the root causes of the problem and accelerate innovation moving forward, the port operator made a strategic investment and engaged BTS to assess the organization and provide recommendations. However, the partnership quickly deepened and expanded beyond the original scope to enable the effective implementation of the company strategy.

From Insight to Action

For the port operator, successful execution would depend on:

- Individual leaders' ideation skills
- The company's ability to promote a culture of innovation
- Strategic alignment around the direction and end-goals of innovation

While the BTS partnership originally encompassed interviews with senior leaders and organization assessments, it quickly expanded to the development of a robust and customized experiential learning program.

Immersed in a high-impact business simulation, leaders across global regions and all lines of business stepped outside of their traditional roles, collaborated in new ways, and worked together to fully understand the process and capabilities key to innovation.

"The program carried huge depth and insight and stimulated thought, discussion and dynamism amongst leaders, which will benefit the business for years. With a high level of participation from delegates and impressive interpretation and feedback, BTS is an inspirational organization which can benefit any business that wants to thrive and grow."

– A Business
Division
President

The Experience at a Glance: Innovation Taught, Practiced and Mastered

In the competitive and interactive program, the port operator's leaders faced a challenge. Competing in small teams, they were responsible for developing and executing an innovation, carrying break-through ideas from infancy all the way to commercialization. Successfully trying new things with uncertain outcomes would be a stretch for the group. Fortunately, within the simulated environment, the associated risks were not at stake.

Through the business simulation engagement, leaders:

- Experienced the comprehensive challenges and opportunities related to developing and executing innovations first-hand
- Developed the capabilities critical to success in the future
- Laid the foundation for a company-wide culture of innovation
- Developed actionable insights, tools and techniques to improve their effectiveness on the job

Strong Results Create New Opportunities

Reflecting on the value of the program, participating leaders described it as an eye-opening experience, and from the perspective of the port operator, the innovation initiative delivered tangible value.

"In truth, I was a little cynical at first about the innovation initiative that the group rolled out," admitted the President of the Australian Division. "However, after 2 stimulating days with the BTS team, I really feel inspired and have started to look at our many business challenges in a more client facing way." The President of the Central and Eastern European Division continued, "The BTS workshop was invigorating, fluid and seamless. The program carried huge depth and insight and stimulated thought, discussion and dynamism amongst leaders, which will benefit the business for years."

Testaments to the program's success:

- Leaders accelerated skill development motivated shifts in perceptions around the business and customers.
- Embedding the new capabilities into daily work, the tools and techniques have been applied to solve problems, explore insights and strengthen business proposals.
- With several innovations launched, the persuasive return on investment inspired further application.

The port operator subsequently cascaded the program to additional layers of employees in several regions.

Going forward, while innovation was the core focus, the initiative exposed fundamental capability and alignment gaps, creating new insights and further opportunities to move the company forward.

About BTS

BTS focuses on the people side of strategy, working with leaders at all levels to help them make better decisions, convert those decisions to actions and deliver results. At our core, we believe people learn best by doing. For 30 years, we've been designing fun, powerful experiences™ that have profound and lasting impact on people and their careers. We inspire new ways of thinking, build critical capabilities and unleash business success. It's strategy made personal.

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