

"What, role (if any) does training and development have in improving innovation on the workplace?"

There is a difference between training and development. Training is about skill-set, development is about mind-set. Development is about personal growth and a desire to do better which is a fundamental building block to innovation.

The language we use is important. Innovation is a corporate word. An "Innovation Training Course" may be an off put, whereas a "Finding even better ways to work" workshop may have more appeal.

Ask questions such as "Could we do this better? What's one thing in your week that you can improve?"

Forcing people to be innovative won't work. Neither will putting people through a sheep dip innovation workshop. People have got to want to innovate and find ways of doing things better, so people must be motivated and engaged, regardless of what training the organisation may give them.

Rather than just training for innovation, it's more about culture change and liberating people to innovate.

Training can help because there are fundamental principles of innovation that can provide a framework for innovation e.g.

- Innovation is as much about small incremental changes as the next big idea
- Managers have an important role to play in creating the right environment for innovation - "It's ok to try and fail provided that you learn from the process"
- It's important to understand the question before we start working on the answer e.g. how can we reduce wastage on the cutting machine? It's the leader's role to identify the questions. Leaders are innovation architects but not necessarily the builders

Over-controlling Managers can be innovation blockers. Some Managers don't like the fact that the idea didn't come from them so we must coach our managers to create an environment of innovation and actively encourage new ideas.

Training is in itself a good environment for innovation as it is a safe place where people come together outside of the day-to-day operation.

Innovation should feature in the companies' induction training with examples from the organisation of innovation in action.

Celebrating employee success and reward and recognising innovation also plays an important part.

So in summary, training and development does have a role to play but it is not the only answer to improving innovation. There are principles of innovation that we can learn and train in which will help improve innovation techniques, but fundamental to success is an inherent desire to innovate and a culture that actively supports innovation. Without such a culture, investment in training and development is wasted.