



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOR MEMBERS

OVERVIEW

Technology Innovation: The First 100 Days

by Sanjay Khunger

Former chief technologist with OnStar, now VP Technology for Valassis

Learn how a senior technology leader with a talent for transformation is making big changes in innovation at an established company.

SANJAY KHUNGER is a senior technology leader with experience leading transformation programs and delivering business solutions through advanced technology innovation. Khunger is responsible for systems architecture and advanced technology solutions for Valassis, a leader in intelligent media delivery that uses print and online to help its clients reach consumers.

“It is people who are the key component of innovation and what really helps with innovation is collaboration.”

IT is part of the operations side of the business at Valassis, which, in early 2013, launched a major effort to simplify processes. Khunger was hired to help build up IT innovation as the company was moving out of the recession, entering growth mode and starting to plan for its future. He organized his team to handle the applications of technology for revenue and efficiency, and data analysis solutions.

Innovation has two elements: coming up with ideas and taking them to market. It requires creative thinking, as well as a disciplined approach, and it has three key ingredients:

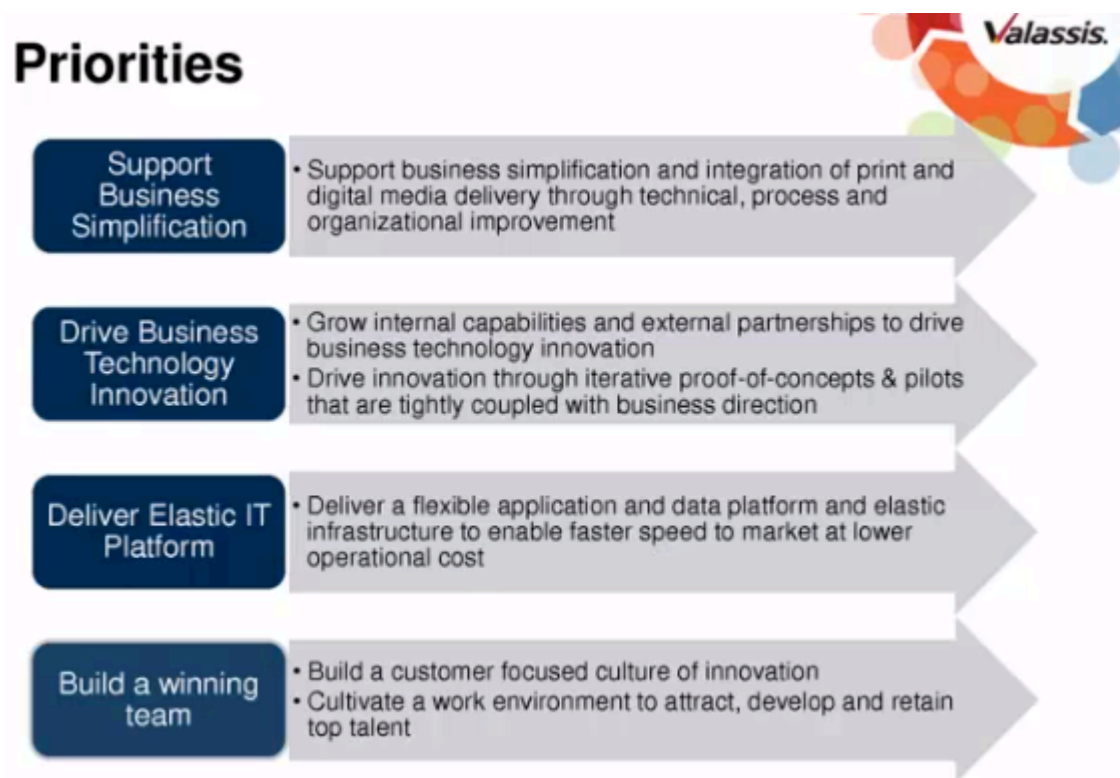
- Inspired and committed people.
- A compelling goal aligned with the organization’s mission and strategy
- A disciplined approach that allows collaborative experimentation and learning – it has to accommodate mistakes.

At Valassis, only IT and marketing have structured innovation programs. The rest of the company practices problem-based innovation.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

Khunger said he spent his first 6 to 8 weeks at Valassis studying the organization to understand what it wanted to achieve, the areas in which his team would need to be augmented and who he would need to bring in. Since then, they have been working on innovation.

Step 1 was establishing a clear vision for his team that aligned with the company vision. They settled on this mission statement: Deliver simpler systems architecture and innovative technology solutions with accelerated delivery cycles to enable business transformation and organizational change for market disrupting intelligent media delivery. They also set priorities:



Step 2 was putting together a team. It was difficult to do with everything else that was going on in the company, but Khunger moved people into his group, reducing their work load to allow

them the time to innovate. He needed them on his team because they knew the organization and knew how to make things happen when it came to production. He said companies that bring in creative people only from the outside can have problems because those people are not well connected within the organization.

His group is divided into three sections: architecture and technology modernization, advanced solution labs (data analytics and technology solutions) and communication and governance.

Step 3 was to establish a structured approach, to incorporate agility. His team goes through discovery, elaboration and execution phases, then a demonstration phase after which the project is either transitioned to implementation or shelved as lessons are learned. It takes 4-6 weeks from discovery to execution.

In the first 10 weeks or so, his team has generated and logged more than 50 ideas, completed proof-of-concept on 10 and has one moved to production.

Khunger is pleased with his group's early success but says there is more to do, including establishing innovation metrics and very measurable objectives.



The executive summary above was written by staff from watching the presentation and many other ideas were presented. Members may watch the full presentation if wished by logging in.