

Overseeing an innovation function is very different from a traditional corporate management role. This document was written by the Head of Innovation at Brown Brothers Harriman, Phil Swisher, to brief the firm's executive leadership on how they can best engage with and support the Innovation team.

Guide to Overseeing the Innovation Team

Innovation Discipline Mission Statement: We rapidly take big swings at things that matter to BBH

Two long-term goals:

1. Generate meaningful revenue from new businesses
2. Build a stronger culture of innovation

High Level Role of Senior Leadership, as written by Clay Christensen in *The Innovator's Solution*:

"The senior executives [defined as Chairman, Vice Chairman, CEO and President] of a company that seeks repeatedly to create new waves of disruptive growth have three jobs. The first is a near-term assignment: personally to stand astride the interface between disruptive growth businesses and the mainstream businesses to determine through judgment which of the corporation's resources and processes should be imposed on the new business, and which should not. The second is a longer-term responsibility: to shepherd the creation of a process that we call a 'disruptive growth engine,' which capably and repeatedly launches successful growth businesses. The third responsibility is perpetual: to sense when the circumstances are changing, and to keep teaching others to recognize these signals....Until processes that can competently manage disruptive innovation have coalesced, the personal oversight of a senior executive is one of the most crucial resources that disruptive businesses need to reach success."

Day to Day Role of Senior Leadership, as written by Intuit CEO Brad Smith:

"The best leaders don't need to have all of the answers. They ask the right questions. There are three questions I always ask when meeting with teams:

1. What surprised you to the upside, and what did you learn that drove the upside versus expectations?
2. What surprised you to a downside, and what did you learn that caused the downside surprise?
3. What barriers are getting in the way of what you are trying to achieve?

The first two have to do with savoring the surprises that can often lead to breakthroughs. The third helps me understand where I can help the team be more successful."

Our Innovation Process, as written by Eric Ries, author of *The Lean Startup*:

"The fundamental activity of a startup is to turn ideas into products, measure how customers respond, and then learn whether to pivot or persevere. All successful startup processes should be geared to accelerate that feedback loop."