

# the CROW Chronicle

We hope you had some good rest and recharge time over the Summer because ...it's the run into Christmas again! In the

Chronicle this time, we wanted to put a little focus on **innovation** because whether it is coincidence, Covid 19 after-effects, or cost-of-living challenges, we've been helping our Crow Friends innovate more this year than ever. From developing service and product propositions, building insight-based innovation start points, or helping innovation flourish within often risk-averse corporate structures, companies are increasingly seeing both the importance and the need to use innovation to build brand and commercial success. We've corralled good thinking with research and practise to give you some tip-top tips to consider when you're next innovating; and if you want to talk more about them, drop us a line.

## 1 Get the right foundations

Getting strong foundations for innovation isn't about one thing or the other. It's about building up a picture of the opportunities, unmet and under-met needs from lots of angles. Consumer input; critical stakeholders; customers; internal capabilities, capacity and restraint – all valid. The key is to build up a multi-layered picture and your innovation platforms from there

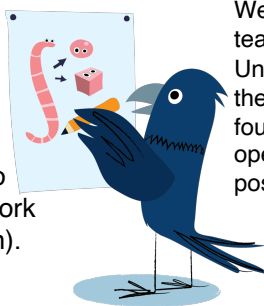


## 2 The future is about Little Data

So much of the debate in society is about the next revolution; about how AI will change everything, how digital will kill traditional and so on. But innovation is providing a solution for human issues. Spotting the little details in the small trends is where success often lies, especially for existing brands and business. Get the value from Big Data, sure – but never forget to mine the richness in the small stuff. Roll your sleeves up; get nosy, be curious and you'll spot the opportunities.

## 3 "Coming up with ideas is easy"

Crow my goodness... people *still* say this. "It's the execution that's difficult", that too. Let's deal with these glib accusations. The truth is that *all* innovation is difficult - from a nascent idea being crushed by an offhand comment, to getting a successfully tested idea produced in a big business set up for volume, innovation success – at any stage – is never guaranteed. Generating lots of *poor* ideas is easy, but finding high potential winners, not so. And yes, execution is difficult, but typically, this is due to trying to do too many things, and fragmenting resource. Ironically, what makes creativity sing is structure – *limiting* it in the right ways to allow creative muscle to be unleashed where it counts (our Innovation Framework approach helps link commercial requirements to creative energy for this reason).



## 4 Dynamic Core, Outstanding New

This is an oldie but a goodie and always worth remembering. It's human nature to be enticed by something new and different. It's easy to be beguiled into thinking that the problems in your business or your brand will be solved by focusing on another commercial space altogether. If you can't be successful in what you've built your fame on, then you're in trouble. Leverage your points of advantage to ensure the core of your brand is vibrant and dynamic, and then, only then focus on something new.

Dynamic



## 5 Consumer Compelling, Brand Exploitable

In innovation, lots of effort is put into finding unmet needs and then finding the most engaging way into the problem for consumers. But as you do this, you always need a strong focus on whether the insight is credibly exploitable by your brand – so that activating against it will help to refresh or reinforce what your brand stands for. If it doesn't – move on.

## 6 Cut through the clutter

Crow hasn't worked on any brand where the eyes aren't bigger than the stomach. When faced with riches, it's tempting to gorge. But innovation success means control. It means spotting the high potential concepts; focusing on them alone; sacrificing (don't just de-prioritise, it's not the same) other initiatives and then scaling support and focus on them as much as you can muster. Oh, and not getting bored – consider a product launched after two or three years in, not just after it is first available.

## 7 Get creative with research

Innovation development is fundamentally an act of creativity, and it makes sense that the research that tests it, validates it, stretches it, needs to be too. Asking a consumer to imagine a future where the new product exists is always going to be difficult, so think about appropriate methodologies for the stage you're at, make ideas real, and encourage consumers to get their hands dirty in the process.

### Some Crow successes...



**Harper Adams University**

Together, we will make the difference

We loved working with the team at Harper Adams University this year to develop their positioning and strategic foundations. It's now out in the open and attracting lovely positive comments!

It was great to work with the team at INEOS Hygienics on their innovation pipeline; new products now out in market with new listings in ASDA amongst their first wins



Coming out of a focus on breaking down the health barrier to pie eating, we always get a cawsome kick working with the filled-to-the-brim team at Pieminister. Their new Filo Pies are lighter and super tasty and available now in Waitrose and Ocado – go buy!



**Remember!** The run-in to Christmas gets busy for research in particular, so whether it's some diagnostic qual Groups, funky food diaries or a splash of intelligent quant, if you've got a project you're considering, let's get it booked in early!

