

Building Innovative Workplaces Through Partnership



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National Centre for
Partnership  Performance

CHANGING WORKPLACES, CHANGING IRELAND

There's more to innovation than R&D...

The key to Ireland's future economic success as a fully fledged knowledge society lies in our ability to move quickly to high value-added and high-skilled activities.

To make this transition, we need to foster a culture of partnership and openness to change in our workplaces.

We need to be:

- Open to innovation
- Open to learning
- Open to flexibility
- Open to equality and diversity
- Open to partnership

Employee involvement and participation is the key to innovation in our workplaces, regardless of size or sector.

Irish and international research provides compelling evidence that companies and organisations with a progressive approach to workplace partnership also enjoy increased productivity and better working environments.

Arising from the Forum on the Workplace of the Future, the *National Workplace Strategy* is the Government's blueprint to create high-performance, high-quality workplaces throughout Ireland.

Towards 2016, the national Social Partnership agreement, reinforces this goal by committing employers, trade unions and Government to take practical steps to transform our places of work into Workplaces of the Future.

A Vision of the Workplace of the Future

Characteristics	Because...
Agile	We are committed to and ready for change
Customer centred	Our customers' needs are paramount
Knowledge intensive	We search for and harness all sources of knowledge
Responsive to employees' needs	This is a great place to work for all of us
Networked	We work collaboratively and build relationships
Highly productive	We continuously improve our ways of working
Involved and participatory	Everyone has a say and all voices and ideas are valued
Continually learning	We are supported and expected to learn and develop
Proactively diverse	We are better because we are diverse

*Help to transform your place of
work into a Workplace of the Future
by building a culture of partnership
and employee participation*

How to promote innovation through partners

Key success factors

Promoting a culture of partnership involves certain attitudes and behaviours being in place before you begin.

These include:

- Strong **commitment** to a culture of partnership from the **CEO and senior management team**.
- Visible **support** from **employees and trade union representatives** to partnership-style practices, and to tackling issues and challenges in a participative and collaborative manner.
- A **shared approach** to solving problems, identifying solutions, taking responsibility for implementation and delivery, and ownership of outcomes, both positive and negative.

Getting started

An important first step is to ensure that partnership is **clearly linked to your organisation's overall business strategy** and the achievement of positive outcomes for all.

- Identify **'partnership champions'** throughout the workforce to promote and drive a culture of partnership across the organisation.
- Consider setting up an **innovation and partnership group** to 'kick-start' the process. Use it to review current practice, engage in widespread consultation and propose new ways to facilitate employee involvement in problem-solving and decision-making. Such a group is a means to an end, not an end in itself.
- Proactively **recognise progress** that has already been made in relation to workplace change and innovation, and brand these activities as practical examples of 'workplace innovation and partnership in action'.

- Encourage **individual and collective responsibility** for the behaviours and attitudes that contribute to a culture of partnership.
- **Recognise and reward** these behaviours and attitudes.

Partnership practices

Employee participation is the key to workplace innovation. In seeking to encourage greater levels of involvement in the workplace, organisations can adopt a range of different practices, such as:

- **Participation and involvement:** increasing participation and involvement of employees through a strong emphasis on teamwork and staff involvement in business and strategic planning.
- **Information and consultation:** developing more effective information sharing and consultation arrangements which encourage shared ownership of organisational challenges and successes.
- **Equality and diversity:** developing and implementing proactive equality and diversity programmes.
- **Problem solving:** improving problem-solving capacity by focusing on the generation of creative and credible solutions.
- **Workplace learning:** prioritising support for workplace learning and staff development across all levels of the organisation.
- **Continuous improvement:** fostering continuous improvement and experimentation.
- **Performance management:** ensuring that partnership activities and competencies are fully integrated into performance management and reward systems.

Partnership in your workplace

Roles and responsibilities

A strong culture of employee involvement and participation is required within Irish workplaces. In such a culture, the roles and responsibilities of those involved are characterised as follows:

■ Employers/Managers

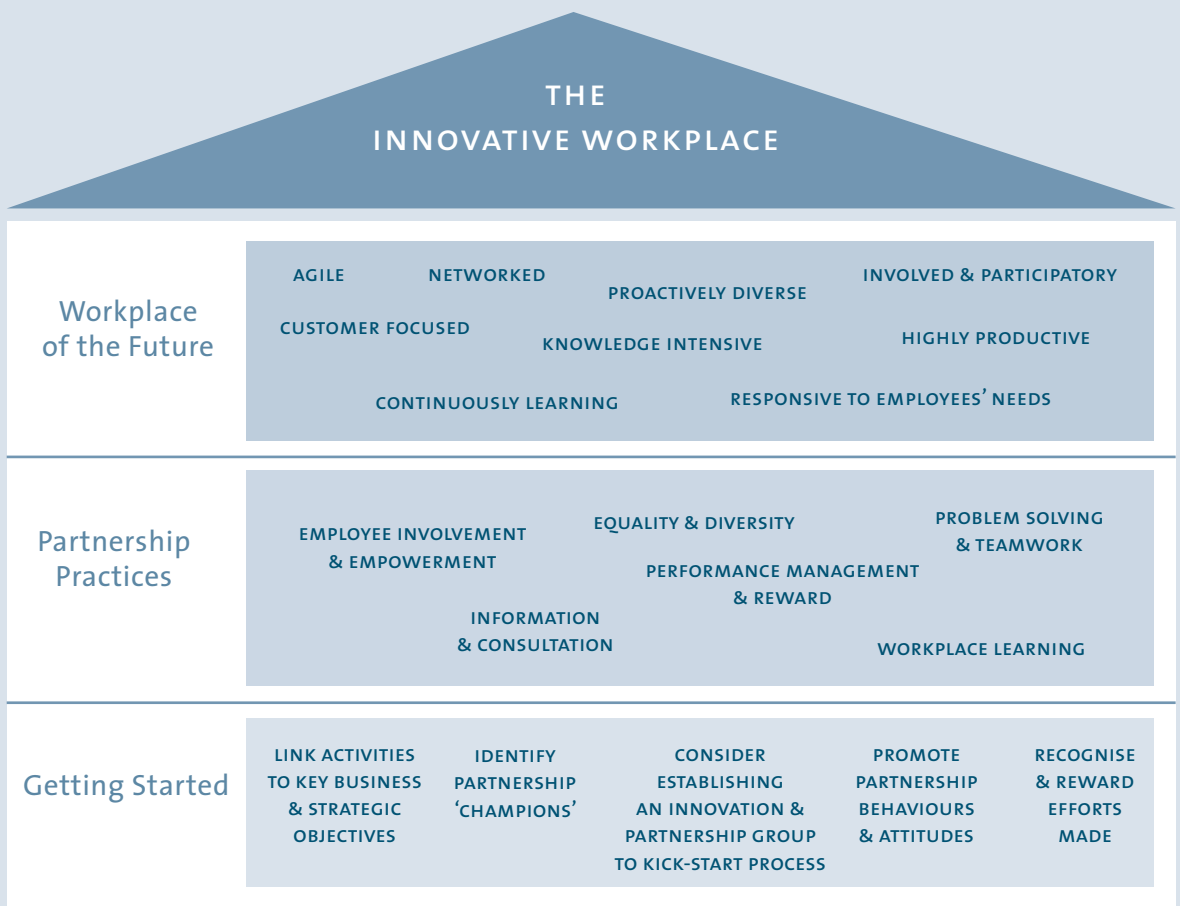
The management style is open and participative, rather than hierarchical. The contribution of employees at all levels is sought and valued, and new ideas are welcomed and rewarded. Developing this type of culture requires new approaches to work organisation and people management, as well as new forms of leadership and new managerial competencies.

■ Employees

Employees display openness to change and a clear willingness to take advantage of the opportunities and supports that such a culture provides. This encourages a more proactive role in the management of change and the development of skills.

■ Trade Unions

In this context, the role of trade unions is to support change and encourage workplace innovation. Fulfilling this role requires that unions adopt a proactive approach to engaging with employers in collaborative efforts to enhance performance and improve the working environment.



Driving Workplace Innovation Through a Culture of Partnership

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