

**INNOVATION AND LETTUCE OR FOSTERING INNOVATION IN
ORGANIZATIONS: a synthesis of successful cases**

Flavio Bressan, PhD E-mail: bremat@terra.com.br

CAMPINAS UNIVERSITY – UNICAMP / BREMAT INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC
THINKING & LEADERSHIP

Psychologist, Business Administrator, Doctor in Administration and Post-Doctorate

Abstract:

The pressures of the globalized business environment, and the easy access to disruptive technologies, and the difficulties of the Economy and the companies for the growth generated an intense debate between executives, researchers and government in the search of understanding the factors that lead to the innovation. The literature points to many organizational factors needed to promote innovation. Many companies are investing in these factors for promoting the innovation, but innovations often do not come to life. Why does this occur? Literature reports seem to indicate that investing on these factors is enough to get people to innovate. It is like to prepare the ground for planting lettuce. In order to answer this question, a study was carried out to investigate how innovation initiatives are affected by these organizational factors. Six in-depth “polar type” case-studies were conducted to investigate how innovation initiatives are affected by these organizational factors. Results support the proposition that the identified factors - business environment (Porter's five forces), organizational characteristics (exploratory strategy), management (transformational leadership), and the complementors were present in these cases. They may be an 'equation' to foster innovation. However, results also indicate that the innovator has the main role in the innovation process. It is the innovators that, like the lettuce seed, by identifying opportunities for innovation, will creatively mobilize company resources and partners to have innovation blooming. In this way, for promoting innovation, first of all, an organization needs to identify and map especially employees with the strategic mental model, the most suitable to meet the challenges and risks of innovation. Secondly, prepare the terrain: put innovators into a team under a transformational leadership manager, the most appropriate leadership style for enhancing and supporting innovation and its risks, and in an organization aligned with a prospector strategy.

Keywords: Fostering Innovation; Innovation Challenge and Risk; Mental Models; Willingness to Innovate.