

The "Chief Innovation Officer"

If you just met someone who introduced themselves as 'Chief Innovation Officer', what would you assume they actually did in that role?

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I'd assume that the board spent too much time reading "Wired" magazine and thinking about titles to make the company look progressive. :)

Innovation has to be pervasive in the culture, not driven by an individual. While I applaud companies for realizing that innovation is important, assigning an "individual" to that role would make me assume that they "don't get it". This would be especially true if the title was in a non-engineering company.

Innovation initiatives need to be separated out from the mainstream projects, administrative and organizational politics. But the drive and sponsorship needs to come from the entire leadership team and not an isolated individual. In short, the Chief Innovation Officer needs to be every "C" level executive, every manager and every individual in the company.

If it was a development or engineering company, I would assume that the Chief Innovation Officer is just the head of R&D with a shiny new "cool" title.

I've met quite a few very impressive individuals with titles like these. But it doesn't stop me from cringing when I see them printed on business cards. They're so nebulous, that they could mean anything from "head of coffee flavour selection" to "Right hand to the CEO". If the title comes with the underlying organizational commitment and culture, that's a whole different ballgame. However, all too often it's just a bandaid for a company that simply doesn't get it.