



10. Incubation

Change is a necessary part of every modern, forward looking organisation and a vital part of change involves revising attitudes towards all of the stakeholders – customers, staff, suppliers and so on – whilst adopting new ways of working. But how can business change without impacting the essential “business as usual” and at the same time minimize risk if any change theory does not work in practice?

One way is to adopt an Incubation approach – essentially an approach which enables tests and experiments to be undertaken within a carefully considered and representative group of prospects and/or customers. When the tests prove successful (or otherwise) they can be rolled out to the entire organisation against an already established blueprint, complete with known cost impacts, risks and benefits. Furthermore, for organisations who say they believe in empowerment, then the Incubation approach can bring the practicalities of empowerment into sharp focus - in fact it takes empowerment to the next step, where staff have a very key, practical and influential role in changing the way the organisation works and treats its customers. An Incubator can set the example for the rest of the structure and can start to quickly change attitudes, methods, approaches and indeed the culture of the structure, from the inside by an amoebic growth as opposed to attempting to do everything at once and trying to be all things to all people.

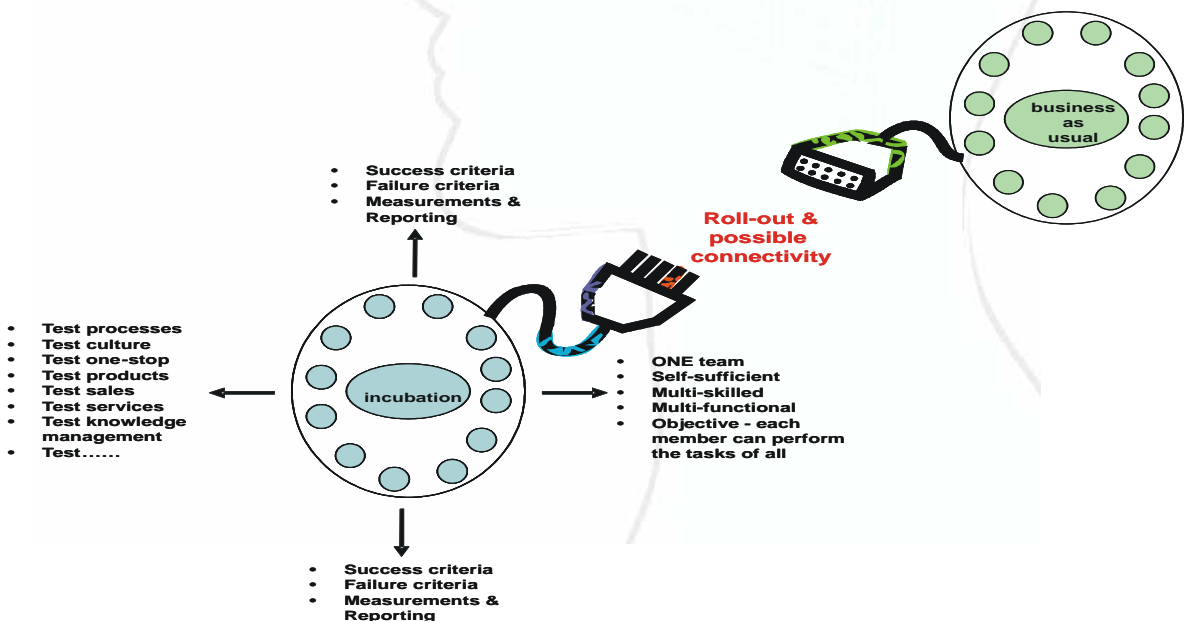
Incubation can often be used in acquisition and/or telemarketing environments or where an organisation wants to try out new things but believes them to be potentially costly and where gain/offsets are not clearly understood or believed. Other uses for Incubation include testing markets for new product or service introductions or functionality, special offers or implementation of new technology to the customer base (for example – use of IVR and messaging in a call centre). Additionally Incubation can test new business processes in a controlled environment; test new reward, motivation and compensation plans; different approaches to gathering customer attitudes; training programme effectiveness and so on. They can also be used effectively in the customer servicing arena - that is to say the on-going relationship with the customer post-initial sale - to test changes to various processes and procedures, including complaint handling. In this way customers and staff alike can have a genuine input into shaping a truly workable process which satisfies all parties and maintains that essential competitive edge.

Another use for Incubation is where other parties, often those representing the interests of the workforce, may need to be convinced of new working methods before agreeing to any more global changes.

Incubation affords the opportunity for a professional testing ground for new concepts or ideas or changes to existing practices - but with a significantly minimised risk to the organisation and to the customer base – and also staff who may be reluctant to change but who will be more likely to do so when they see the clear, positive and proven advantages.

Incubation is normally a team of people who should directly or indirectly remain an integral part of the function(s) from which they are drawn although Incubation can also be a separate part of the business.

When considering Incubation a number of points need to be reviewed, namely structure, infrastructure, objectives, administrative support, measurement and reporting, change and continuous improvement, size, responsibility and authority, competencies and skills sets, training, etc.



Coalesce Consulting are experts in the design, set-up, implementation and management of incubation processes and teams.

