

## Obama, a role model for innovation leadership?



Our county's unique strength lies in its core belief that we can achieve anything--that we are not defined by our class, our race our religion, or our personal history. When our back is up against the wall, we meet these challenges and successfully address them. Each of us can create a more productive and valued future. This is also the critical underpinnings of an innovation culture. As a citizen and someone who works in innovation, I am impressed with how Obama's path aligns with innovation best practices and it gives me confidence on the president-elect's ability to create positive change. Let's take a look at some of them.

### **Innovation requires an aspirational and challenge-laden focus.**

Obama's ability to articulate a return to America's higher ideals appeals to our better side, our nobler side, our side that is willing to be both committed and passionate about moving change forward is clear. And while the challenges are multifold and complex, the overall goal energizes us to overcome the challenges ahead with vigor.

### **Innovation requires a roadmap with clear decision criteria and yet freedom within them to address the challenge.**

In the initial weeks of the financial crisis, Obama laid down key principles that he was looking for in a solution. These were the requirements for acceptance of a plan. The plan itself was open to an array of solutions many of which could meet the criteria but the principles provided a framework for the solutions. It is both the framework and the freedom that is essential for innovation.

**Innovation requires that leaders led through example.** The leader must behave in a manner that he or she expects. "No-drama" Obama made it clear that the focus was on movement forward, that we don't have the luxury of politics as usual, that staying focused on the strategy with near flawless execution would deliver success. What he did lead his staff to do the same. His inclusion focus will migrate downward through the government. His deliberate focus on issues not personalities will lead to more effective change.

**Innovation requires seeking out and integrating different views.** Research has shown that while groups composed of background and thinking style diversity have more conflict initially, they deliver more productive, more innovative and more successful results over time. Obama has tapped into this in a few ways: First, Obama's electronic grass roots system creates an opportunity for ongoing dialogue with the American people unheard of even four years ago. Second, his outreach to leaders and the press are further evidence of his desire to listen and consider others views. Finally, his selection of a strong and diverse support team in key government positions underscores his understanding and commitment to embracing diverse viewpoints and the solutions that will result. There will be conflict, but my bet is that we will see exciting and successful change in the years to come.

Obama is a great role model for innovation leadership whose methods we can all learn and apply. Good luck Mr. President!

You can work with The Innovation Practice to become more successful with innovation. For more information, contact Carol Franczek at 847 786-4243 or email at [cfranczek@theinnovationpractice.com](mailto:cfranczek@theinnovationpractice.com)

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