

Innovation Management - The online learning center for Managing Innovation.

Much like the practice of innovation, the process of standardization too has been with us for quite some time. In terms of [management system standards](#), one of the most successful applications to date is seen in Quality Management (QM), where the famous ISO 9001 has generated over 1 million certifications worldwide over the past decade.

Whether a standard in Innovation Management (IM) will follow the same trend is certainly a question of credibility and especially time. One frequent dilemma is whether QM accounts for the systematic part of innovation.

Why does one need a separate IM system to guide this part? stakeholders frequently ask, signaling a potential contact area that needs to be explored further. [KTH Royal Institute of Technology](#) for example, is currently in the process of establishing a project that will take a closer look at this parallel and attempt to shed some light from different perspectives.



Image by Cocreatr

What is an Innovation Management System

“a set of interrelated or interacting elements of an organization to establish innovation policies and objectives, and processes to achieve those objectives” [CEN/TC 389 N 106, 2012]

Finally, whereas QM standardization has reached maturity, IM is still in an early phase. For practitioners to engage and acknowledge the usefulness of an innovation management standard, benefits need to be clear, and deliverables need to be at hand. Yet as of today, IM standardization is moving from an inception to an elaboration phase, with the first document finalized (a “Technical Specification” in standardization language) and scheduled for publication in mid-2013.

Key drivers for innovation management standards adoption

With an official document under way, it is equally important to cast a critical eye upon the complex dynamics and drivers that will influence the adoption of innovation management standards.

Diver #1 –organizational pull

To reiterate a point made in our first [article](#), businesses currently find themselves in a dilemma: on one hand, confusion persists regarding what innovation is, what it can do and why it should be formally managed, while on the other, fierce competition commands flawless and streamlined development of innovative products and services. Given this conflict, experts believe organizations will be incentivized to “opt in” to follow guidelines that promise to help them operate more quickly and more systematically when it comes to innovation management. Though traction might be slow in the beginning, the movement will gradually reveal whether these standards are useful and easily implementable.

Driver #2 – consultants

Another important category of players includes consultants. Such professionals, who also show interest in the standardization project, visit organizations every day, helping document and streamline a wide array of IM processes and enablers. If consultants present their work as compatible with standards, they can both provide insurance to their clients, and also raise the credibility of the movement. In other words, one key driver for the uptake of innovation management standards is, in fact, *creating a potential market for consultants and reinforcing certainty on the buyer side.*

Driver #3 – funding organizations

The third point brings us to funding organizations (e.g. [VINNOVA](#), the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems, or [EIT](#), the European Institute of Innovation and Technology) that allocate public money to innovation projects. Once the framework is in place, funding organizations may choose to analyze the extent to which innovation management standards are adopted by an organization when determining its eligibility for subsidies or co-financing.

After all, why direct money to a business that cannot provide the necessary infrastructure for innovation?

Driver #4 – the entities themselves

A final driver for the adoption of standards could be the organizations themselves. It is believed that pressure from early adopters of standards can have a cascading effect down the supply chain, enabling everyone to work more productively, in a more unified manner. For example, a firm might require IM standards to be in place at their suppliers as to ensure a continuous stream of innovative inputs to their own products and services.

Though unlikely to happen over night, the trend may stand a chance of being picked up by customers and the market.

The debate. The project.

Having an understanding of why innovation standards matter and how strong the wave of diffusion could be, it is now useful to note the progress of the debate in Europe. Here, Spain, France, Germany, UK, Ireland and the Nordics are examples of highly involved countries in the standardization efforts. With respect to the focus areas, current working groups include: Collaboration and Creativity Management (led by the UK), Innovation Management System (Spain), Innovation Self Assessment Tools (Portugal), Design Thinking (Ireland), Intellectual Property Management (France) and Strategic Intelligence Management (France).

Despite fluctuating support, the progress of the project itself is evident. When asked to detail the current status of the Innovation Management Standardization Project, expert Magnus Karlsson, Director New Business Development & Innovation at Ericsson Headquarters in Stockholm and Chairman of the SIS Technical Committee TK 532 on Innovation Management, explains: “We have reached a point where

we will soon have some deliverables and this raises interest among other parties since they can see that this is finally going somewhere. Many organizations start to sense the value and feel the need for systematic innovation more and more. Some already have frameworks in place, others are still struggling with the basics. At this time, we are keen on bringing the management standard to a number of selected organizations to understand if and how it can be useful and provide benefits.”

Summing up, whether it will be organizational pull, innovation management consultants, funding organizations or entities themselves that will drive this initiative further is still unclear. What is clear though, is that as awareness grows, participation in the debate will too become larger. Popularity will help consolidate the work with standardization as many more opinions are interwoven and the necessary modifications made for a better, sustained framework for innovation management.

By Oana-Maria Pop

Next in this dedicated article series, we will explore a few essential questions connected to the progress of Innovation Management Standardization in Europe as well as how entities should expect to benefit from them.

About the author:

Oana-Maria is a Senior Editor of IM.se and enjoys devoting her time and energy to working with business publishing, design-driven innovation, corporate transformation and turnaround, and new product development in small and mid-sized firms. Her background includes a MSc in Innovation Management, numerous project-based collaborations with major Danish and international innovators (firms and inventors), a research assistant position, experience with high-profile interviewing as well as strong creative and academic writing skills.



Access more free Innovation Management content!

[Subscribe to our weekly newsletter.](#)