

GRASSROOTING INNOVATION IN QATAR

Moving from project-based
to holistic thinking

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01 Abstract

Innovation is crucial for Qatar's economic diversification and the successful realisation of the National Development Strategy and Qatar National Vision 2030. However, achieving sustainable innovation requires a fundamental shift — from short-term, project-based thinking to a long-term, holistic approach.

This white paper argues that establishing the correct groundwork is essential for organisations to achieve sustainable innovation outcomes. It presents Ibtechar's innovation framework as a roadmap for organisations in Qatar to cultivate a true ground-up culture of innovation and unlock their full potential.

By embedding innovation into their DNA, organisations can drive progress, enhance competitiveness, and contribute to a thriving future for Qatar.

“A knowledge-based economy characterised by innovation”

— Qatar National Vision 2030

02 Foreword



Since 2011, Ibtechar has been dedicated to enabling innovation within organisations, helping them turn their vision into tangible actions. We understand the challenges organisations face in today's rapidly evolving landscape, from implementing cutting-edge technologies like AI and automation to navigating complex market dynamics.

Our vision is to empower organisations in Qatar and beyond to embed innovation into their DNA, making it a core channel for driving progress and achieving strategic goals.

We believe innovation should not be treated as a series of isolated projects but as an ongoing process, a fundamental shift in mindset and approach that informs every facet of an organisation's strategy and activities — from the boardroom to the ground level.

In this white paper, we offer a pragmatic solution for organisations of all sizes and sectors: a holistic framework for cultivating and sustaining a culture of innovation with real impact."

Nayef Al-Ibrahim

CEO and Co-Founder



03 What's holding us back?

Qatar's future hinges on innovation, yet many organisations lack a clear understanding of what constitutes *effective, sustainable* innovation. While Qatar possesses the raw ingredients — a talented workforce, ambition, and drive — these elements alone are insufficient.

Simply having innovative ideas is not enough; organisations need a structured approach to turn those ideas into tangible outcomes. This requires a shift in mindset, moving away from viewing innovation as a series of discrete and disconnected initiatives towards embracing it as an ongoing process, a cultural shift that permeates all levels of an organisation.

Only 6% of companies are entirely satisfied with their current innovation performance.¹

Too often, organisations focus on short-term gains and quick wins, neglecting the long-term, strategic importance of embedding innovation into their processes. This often results in fragmented initiatives that fail to gain traction or deliver lasting value.

Without this supportive ecosystem, Qatar risks squandering its innovation potential and limiting its future growth. Organisations must cultivate an environment where intrapreneurship is encouraged, individuals are empowered as agents of change, and the necessary support systems are in place for innovation to flourish. This requires investment in training and development, access to cutting-edge technologies and methodologies, and a leadership commitment to nurturing innovation at all levels of the organisation.

Above all, what's needed is a clear roadmap, a framework that guides them through the complexities of building a sustainable innovation culture — fostering a collaborative environment where ideas are nurtured, risks are embraced, and failure is seen as a learning opportunity. This white paper proposes such a framework.

04 From projects to permanence

Ibtechar has a proven track record of delivering impactful innovation projects across various sectors in Qatar. Our experience, evidenced through numerous case studies, highlights the successes achievable through a project-based approach, where we collaborate with organisations to develop and implement tailored solutions for specific challenges.

These projects have yielded tangible results, from streamlining internal processes to launching innovative new products and services. However, we also recognise the inherent limitations of solely focusing on individual projects.

While project-based initiatives can deliver immediate value, they often fail to embed innovation into the fabric of an organisation, limiting their long-term impact. This approach can create silos within organisations, where innovation is seen as the responsibility of a select few rather than a collective endeavour.

To address this, we have developed a holistic innovation framework, moving beyond project-based interventions to cultivate a lasting culture of innovation within organisations.

This shift towards a more holistic approach is driven by our understanding that sustainable innovation requires a supportive ecosystem, one that empowers individuals at all levels to contribute their ideas and expertise. We recognise that innovation thrives in environments where collaboration, creativity, and a willingness to challenge the status quo are encouraged.

“You can’t use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.”

— Maya Angelou

This transition reflects Ibtechar's commitment to providing our clients with not just solutions but also the knowledge and capabilities to drive continuous innovation within their organisations. We believe that by empowering organisations of all shapes and sizes to become self-sufficient innovators, we can create a sustainable and impactful legacy in Qatar.

05 Innovation as culture

At Ibtechar, we believe in fostering a lifelong culture of innovation, laying the groundwork as early as possible within an organisation's development — and at an individual, grassroots level.



Our years of experience have taught us that **innovation thrives in environments where it is embraced as an ongoing process, not a one-off event.**

We recognise that true innovation is not about chasing the latest trends but about fostering a mindset that encourages creativity, collaboration, and a willingness to challenge the status quo. This belief in continuous learning and improvement is at the heart of our approach.

To guide organisations on this journey, we have developed a modular and adaptable innovation framework, drawing on our deep understanding of the complexities and nuances of the innovation process. This framework, detailed in the following sections, provides a clear roadmap for organisations of all sizes and sectors, guiding them through a transformational “innovation journey”.

The foundational goals of our philosophy are:



Spreading an innovation culture and mindset



Crafting an experiential learning journey across different layers of organisations



Building employees' confidence to drive innovative solutions



Scouting and moulding Innovation Champions from within organisations



Equipping them with the tools, frameworks and technology necessary to drive change

Our framework provides the tools and methodologies to foster and nurture innovative thinking and actions, enabling organisations to unlock their full potential. The structured approach we propose ensures that innovation is not a one-off event but an ongoing process integrated into the organisation's DNA.

By embracing this approach, organisations can move beyond short-term wins and build a sustainable culture of innovation that drives lasting value.

06 A framework for success

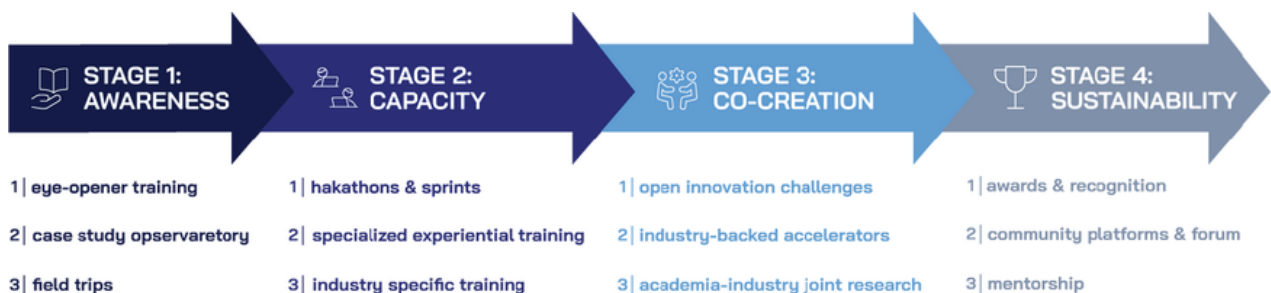
“Without change, there is no innovation, creativity, or incentive for improvement.”

— William Pollard

Ibtechar's innovation framework provides a structured and adaptable roadmap for organisations to cultivate a sustainable culture of innovation. Grounded in our extensive experience and tailored to the specific needs of each client, this framework guides organisations through four interconnected stages:

Stage 1| Awareness Stage 2| Capacity Stage 3| Co-creation Stage 4| Sustainability

This approach ensures that innovation becomes an integral part of the organisational DNA, driving continuous improvement and long-term success. Within each stage, we engage with organisations in the form of training and mentorship programs — varying from theoretical to practical — and build on the work completed and knowledge transferred earlier in the process.



Stage1: Awareness

Innovation is more than just a buzzword; it's a fundamental shift in mindset and approach.

This stage focuses on building a shared understanding of innovation within the organisation, clearly defining what it means and why it's crucial for success. We work closely with organisations to identify and challenge existing mindsets, behaviours, and processes that may hinder innovation. This includes addressing resistance to change, fear of failure, and a lack of understanding regarding the value of innovation.

Through interactive workshops or field trips, engaging eye-opener training sessions, and clear communication strategies, we ensure that all stakeholders understand the value and benefits of embracing innovation. We facilitate open dialogues, encouraging employees at all levels to share their perspectives and ideas. By showcasing successful examples of innovation, both within and outside the organisation's industry, we inspire and motivate individuals to embrace new ways of thinking and working.

The most innovative companies, at 79%, possess well-defined innovation strategies, while just 47% of the least innovative ones do.³

The awareness stage is crucial for securing buy-in from all levels of the organisation, from senior leadership to frontline staff. We emphasise how a culture of innovation can lead to improved efficiency, increased competitiveness, and greater employee satisfaction. By fostering a shared understanding of the importance of innovation and its potential impact, we create a solid foundation for a thriving innovation culture.

Stage2: Capacity

Building a sustainable innovation culture requires more than just good ideas; it demands specific skills, knowledge, and resources.

We begin by assessing the organisation's current innovation capabilities — identifying strengths and areas for improvement. This assessment considers factors such as the organisation's structure, processes, resources, and overall culture. We utilise tools and methodologies to evaluate the organisation's existing innovation maturity level and identify any gaps that must be addressed.

Through specialised training programmes, we equip individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to become effective innovators. These programmes provide a structured learning journey tailored to different levels of experience and areas of focus.

This encompasses training in design thinking, problem-solving, creative collaboration, data analysis, and digital upskilling. We employ diverse, engaging and interactive training methods, including workshops, hackathons, sprints, simulations, and online learning platforms.

We also help organisations establish the infrastructure and resources needed to support innovation, such as dedicated innovation labs, funding mechanisms, and mutually beneficial partnerships.

This might involve implementing new technologies, creating physical spaces that encourage collaboration, or establishing clear processes for idea generation and development.

We guide organisations in establishing clear innovation goals, metrics, and reporting mechanisms to track progress and measure the impact of innovation initiatives. This ensures that innovation efforts are aligned with strategic objectives and deliver tangible results.

Stage3: Co-creation

Innovation thrives in collaborative environments where diverse perspectives converge.

This stage focuses on fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing, both within the organisation and with external partners. We encourage organisations to break down silos and create opportunities for cross-functional collaboration, bringing together individuals with diverse skills and perspectives to tackle challenges from multiple angles. This might involve establishing cross-functional innovation teams, organising innovation or accelerator challenges, or implementing online collaboration platforms.

Companies that seek innovation ideas from external sources are more likely to achieve top performance in revenue growth, profitability, and innovation.²

We help organisations embrace open innovation practices, leveraging external expertise, technologies, and insights to accelerate their innovation efforts. Examples include partnering with academic or research institutions to access new knowledge and resources. We help facilitate these partnerships, providing guidance on intellectual property considerations and ensuring that collaborations are mutually beneficial.

We facilitate the design and implementation of pilot projects, allowing organisations to test and refine innovative solutions in a controlled environment. This iterative approach allows for learning, adaptation, and identifying the most viable solutions for scaling. We guide organisations in selecting the right pilot projects, defining clear success criteria, and establishing a structured process for capturing learnings and iterating on solutions.

Highly innovative companies prioritise collaboration. When it comes to jointly developing new products and services with external partners, the most innovative companies do so over three times more frequently (34%) than the least innovative ones (10%).³

Stage4: Sustainability

For innovation to deliver lasting value, it must become an integral part of the organisational DNA.

This stage focuses on sustaining innovation within the organisation's culture, processes, and decision-making frameworks. We work with organisations to develop clear metrics and methods for monitoring and evaluating the impact of their innovation initiatives. This data-driven approach ensures accountability, enables continuous improvement, and demonstrates the return on investment in innovation.

We help organisations establish clear processes for capturing, evaluating, and implementing innovative ideas. This can include creating online suggestion boxes, implementing innovation challenges, or establishing dedicated innovation committees.

We also guide and mentor organisations in developing communication strategies to celebrate innovation successes and share learnings across the organisation.

“Innovation doesn't come just from giving people incentives; it comes from creating environments where their ideas can connect”

— Steven Johnson

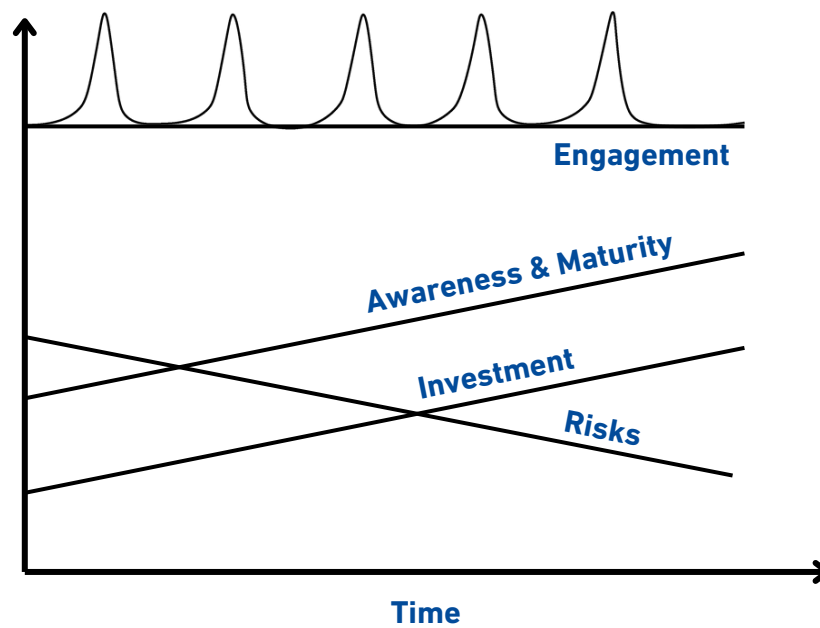
We work closely with leadership to champion a culture that values and rewards innovation. This includes recognising and rewarding individuals and teams who contribute to the organisation's innovation success.

We help organisations implement incentive programs, recognition platforms, and performance management systems that encourage and reward innovative thinking and behaviour.

By embedding innovation into the fabric of the organisation, we ensure that it becomes a sustainable and integral part of its operations. This involves creating a cyclical process of continuous improvement, where learnings from past innovation initiatives are used to inform and enhance future efforts.

07 A journey of structured change

Ibtechar's innovation framework is not merely a “grocery list” of potential initiatives but a carefully curated journey designed to embed innovation into an organisation's core. Each phase builds upon the previous one, ensuring a logical and modular approach that allows organisations to progress at their own pace while guaranteeing a solid foundation for sustainable innovation.



The aim is that with each successive engagement, organisations achieve greater innovation awareness and maturity. Capital-intensive initiatives or activities are only introduced when an organisation has attained the appropriate maturity level — derisking the investment over time.

It is, therefore, vital that the framework is implemented chronologically — avoiding “skipping ahead” to more advanced elements without laying the proper groundwork to ensure success.

08 Putting theory into practice

The framework we propose is designed to be sector and size-agnostic — that is to say, it is equally applicable to a global corporation or an early-stage startup, to an industrial manufacturer or a cutting-edge software company. The value is in the application.

The structure, elements and dependencies of the framework can be shaped and moulded to fit each use case. What's important is that it is implemented consistently and thoroughly — rather than being used merely as inspiration or reference material.

“Creativity is thinking up new things. Innovation is doing new things.”
— Theodore Levitt

To illustrate the practical application of the innovation framework, let's consider two distinct use cases: one within a government ministry and another within a private sector manufacturing company.

These examples demonstrate how the framework can be tailored to address specific organisational challenges and drive impactful outcomes.



Use Case: Government

A government ministry tasked with enhancing citizen engagement and streamlining service delivery faces mounting pressure to improve efficiency and responsiveness. By applying Ibtechar's framework, the ministry can embark on a transformative journey.

STAGE 1: AWARENESS

The Awareness stage would involve conducting workshops and training sessions to instil an innovation mindset within the ministry, emphasising the importance of citizen-centricity and agile methodologies.

STAGE 2: CAPACITY

The Capacity stage would focus on equipping ministry staff with the necessary skills and tools, such as design thinking workshops and data analysis training, to identify citizen pain points and develop innovative solutions.

STAGE 3: CO-CREATION

Through accelerator challenges and pilot programmes, the Co-creation stage would facilitate the development and testing of new service delivery models, incorporating citizen feedback throughout the process.

STAGE 4: SUSTAINABILITY

Finally, the Sustainability stage would focus on embedding these new processes and technologies within the ministry, establishing metrics to monitor their impact and ensure continuous improvement.



Use Case: Private Sector

A manufacturing company facing increased competition and evolving market demands must innovate to remain competitive. Ibtechar's framework provides a structured approach to achieving this.

STAGE 1: AWARENESS

The Awareness stage would involve engaging leadership and employees in eye-opener workshops to highlight the importance of innovation in driving growth and competitiveness.

STAGE 2: CAPACITY

The Capacity stage would focus on building internal capabilities through training programmes on lean methodologies, digital transformation, and agile product development.

STAGE 3: CO-CREATION

The Co-creation stage would leverage open innovation challenges to crowdsource ideas for new products and services, engaging customers and external partners in the process.

STAGE 4: SUSTAINABILITY

Moving forward, the Sustainability stage would focus on integrating these new practices into the company's operations, establishing a culture of continuous improvement and data-driven decision-making.

09 Why innovation matters

Embracing a holistic approach to innovation is not just a strategic advantage; it's an imperative for organisations in Qatar to thrive in an increasingly competitive global landscape.

Organisations that fail to adapt and innovate risk being left behind. By embedding innovation into their culture and processes, organisations can unlock new possibilities, respond effectively to challenges, and seize emerging opportunities. This proactive approach is essential for achieving sustainable growth and maintaining a competitive edge.

Companies that actively promote a culture of innovation are 3.5 times more likely to outperform their peers.⁴

Research consistently demonstrates a strong correlation between innovation and positive economic and societal outcomes.

For Qatar, this translates to improved citizen outcomes through more effective public services, increased public sector capability through enhanced efficiency and responsiveness, and enhanced private sector competitiveness through increased productivity and the development of innovative products and services.

10 The road ahead

The limitations of solely relying on project-based innovation are clear: it fails to create a lasting culture of innovation within organisations.

While projects can deliver immediate results, they often fail to permeate the entire organisation, leaving behind pockets of innovation rather than a unified force.

By embracing a long-term, sustainable approach to innovation, Qatar can create a brighter future for its citizens and solidify its position as a leader in the region.

The framework we have presented in this white paper is not a complete solution in and of itself — rather, it provides the fertile soil in which the seeds of innovation can grow. It is instructive rather than prescriptive — and calls for collaboration, not compliance.

Our role is that of a facilitator, guide, and coach — helping organisations access, action, and accelerate the rich potential already available to them.

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