Innovation Relay

Purpose
Finding the time and the right group of people to confront stubborn challenges is hard, and finding the right process and spark to foster creative and productive thinking can be harder. The Institute for Healthcare Improvement has developed a framework to help organizations employ their own talent and resources and the talent of others (if they so desire) to come together and find innovative solutions to the challenges facing health and health care. We call this method an Innovation Relay.

How will my organization benefit?
At the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, we believe that bringing together a diverse group of people with a diverse set of experiences creates a dynamic learning environment that can lead to new and potentially unforeseen outcomes.

The Innovation Relay process is designed to be a bit of a “hackathon,” a dash of design workshop, and a splash of IHI’s heralded 90-Day Learning Cycle. It encourages participants to learn while doing. It builds on the instincts and creativity of the people that already exist within organizations. Teams generate and identify goals and solutions, scan and appraise their local microsystems, and prototype and test their solutions. As they navigate their way from pitches to presentations, teams will learn about innovation skills from the IHI Innovation Team.

Structure
At the heart of every successful Innovation Relay is a stubborn and unique problem that encourages creative and productive thinking by the Relay participants.

The Innovation Relay features several stages and can be modified to fit your organization and timeline. At its core, there are six main parts:

- **Challenge Definition:** Prior to the Relay, a key design challenge is selected by the host organization. IHI works closely with the host organization to define and describe this key challenge. Prospective participants are informed about the challenge and invited to participate.

- **Introduction & Pitches:** At the outset of the Relay, IHI Innovation team members explain the Relay framework and agenda to participants, we solicit volunteers to share their ideal solutions to the challenge or potential approaches to a solution. Participants then vote with their feet and form teams around one or more compelling ideas they want to contribute to over the course of the Relay. As teams form, they register a “team name” with the Relay organizers.

- **Brainswarm:** A crowd-sourced, unique exercise designed to democratically further ideation about solutions. Brainswarming is a creativity technique that we learned from the Harvard Business School that allows teams to identify available resources and refine their big picture design goals. Discussion amongst team members illuminates potential pathways that connect resources to goals.

- **Scanning:** Scanning allows Relay teams to ask “Has this been done before?” “Where?” “Why were they successful?” “Why did they fail?” “What can we do better?” It means looking briefly at the literature and reaching out to others via phone, email, or social media. Part of the scan typically involves identifying end-users and interviewing them to develop insight into their needs and desires. Scanning
enables teams to have a firm understanding of how their proposed solution can answer the design challenge at hand.

- **Prototyping:** Testing solutions is the heart of the innovation process. Teams will develop and then begin to test their mockups, prototypes, and “minimally viable products” soliciting advice from IHI experts, faculty, design leaders, lead or end-users, or senior leaders at your organization.

- **Presentations/Announcing a Winner:** Teams “pitch” their solutions to the group and a panel of judges in a predefined tight window of time (usually no more than 2-3 minutes). Feedback is provided and a winner is chosen by the panel. In addition, to supporting the winning idea, leaders can then determine if/how other ideas can be supported.

**Cost**

The cost of running an Innovation Relay is developed between the participating organization and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and based on the length of the Relay, the number of participants, and the necessary IHI resources.

For questions about pricing, please contact John Gauthier at jgauthier@ihi.org.

**About IHI:**

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), an independent not-for-profit organization based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is a leading innovator, convener, partner, and driver of results in health and health care improvement worldwide. At our core, we believe everyone should get the best care and health possible. This passionate belief fuels our mission to improve health and health care.

**Questions?**

For more information, visit ihi.org/Innovation, or contact John Gauthier at jgauthier@ihi.org or 617 301-4847