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Christmas is coming – a time for innovation?



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Given the serious bad news stories that abound at the moment, as the impact and implications of the spending review clearly begin to hit home, Christmas will be very interesting from a commercial perspective this year.

I believe that now, more than ever, organisations around the UK will be scratching their heads in order to come up with the products and services that they believe will entice the hard-earned cash from our pockets and purses.

I was listening to Sir Richard Needham (Northern Ireland and Dyson fame) speaking at a conference a couple of weeks ago. What a fascinating character! He firmly believes (and is pretty blunt in stating) that the life blood of any organisation is its ability to innovate. This made me reflect on how some organisations are successful: because it's in their DNA (e.g. Dyson), but so many organisations must now develop a capability that hasn't always been core.

For food producers, restaurants, cafes and shops, developing the capability to innovate and create products and services that the public wants is now becoming a priority. So what does it take to innovate successfully? I believe there are three overlapping ingredients that are key:

- **Technical skills and knowledge** – A good grasp of the industry, a deep understanding of the current products, services and scope for developing them.
- **Flexibility of thinking** – The ability to think in different ways, be open-minded to new possibilities, create links and see patterns that enable new ideas to spring forth.
- **Motivation** – A desire and energy to want to create new ideas or opportunities, a belief that it's business critical to do so.

It's only when all three of these ingredients come together, supported by the organisation creating the time and space to allow the innovation process to occur, will you stand the chance of creating new products or services that will give you the competitive advantage you desire.