

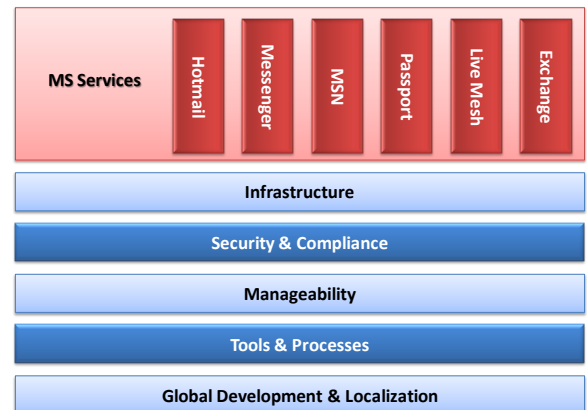


## Leveraging Innovation for Productivity and Growth

Faced with the challenge of adding over 100,000 new servers (from a base of 20,000) while deployment and operations teams were stretched to capacity just to reach the existing demands of Microsoft products and services, the GFS organization had their hands full. In addition, the organization was known for having a culture that was underperforming and not supportive of innovative activities. How could they meet their business challenges and shift their organizational attitude toward encouragement of new thinking and behavior? The GFS management team sought help...

**Lenati stepped in to create and implement an innovation program to drive a cultural shift in the Global Foundation Services organization, as well as leverage innovation to the strategic advantage of Microsoft.**

### GFS Organization



### About Lenati

Lenati is a professional services firm offering strategic methods for clients to have meaningful connection with their customers in order to elevate performance, revenue, and market share. Lenati offers a variety of solutions to help companies effectively develop products and experiences that are valuable to their customers. Based in the Pacific Northwest, Lenati is well-known for intellectual rigor, practiced expertise, and an uncanny ability to perceive and meet clients' needs.

### About GFS

The Global Foundation Services (GFS) organization at Microsoft Corporation is responsible for establishing and supporting the backend operations for over 160 Microsoft services worldwide, including Hotmail, Messenger and Passport. GFS directs the global deployment and management of networked servers. Related responsibilities include security and compliance, manageability, development, and tools and processes.

The GFS charter is to deliver online services to the world through:

- Scalable, efficient and innovative operational infrastructure;
- A common manageability platform;
- World class global development services;
- Client focused business processes and systems.



## Business Challenge

Like many organizations that experience significant growth while also trying to balance against budget and head count limitations, Global Foundation Services recognized that long-term success was dependent upon their ability to continually find ways to do things better (more effectively, faster, less expensively, etc.) Meanwhile, the organization maintained a less-than-favorable reputation for its efforts and employee attitudes. In order to keep up with demand and survive, something needed to change.

- Growth with cost cutting – Server growth was expected to increase seven-fold within a couple years, while costs were being steadily cut.
- Non-supportive, “Idea-killing” attitudes – Members of GFS were known to “kill ideas” before they could get off the ground. This behavior served as a major obstacle to new thinking, and discouraged employees from sharing their ideas at risk of being attacked and looking bad.

## The Solution

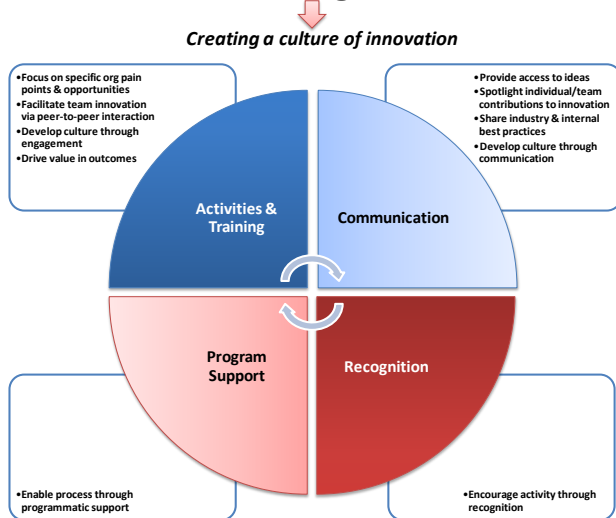
Our charge was to develop a program that would:

- Create a sustained culture of innovation across every level of our organization;
- Ensure that ideation, and eventually innovation, are ingrained in GFS culture and everyday problem solving;
- Leverage innovation to provide strategic value to Microsoft and GFS by creating efficiencies that improve customer experiences, decrease cost or reduce time to market for new services.

Over the past 18 months, Lenati has designed and implemented a multi-dimensional Innovation Program that comprises;

- Quarterly “Innovation Challenges” that provide management with an opportunity to draw on the wisdom of the organization by posing key challenges and gathering responses from GFS employees;
- “Idea Blitz” training workshops that bring together diverse groups of employees to learn idea generation and solution development techniques;
- “GFS Innovation Central” internal SharePoint website where GFS members (as well as those outside of the organization) can share and comment on ideas for how to help the organization improve, learn about the innovative things that colleagues are doing, and review relevant articles, business cases, and idea generation/creativity techniques;
- “GFS Innovation News” weekly newsletter with innovation tips, articles and GFS Spotlight features;
- A team of Innovation Champions (aka ichamps) who serve as evangelists for innovation within the org;
- The creation of a GFS Innovation Excellence Award to acknowledge the innovative efforts of employees.

## Innovation Program Framework



## The Results

Highlights of Lenati’s efforts:

- Active participation from members spanning every level of the organization;
- The submission of hundreds of ideas, many of which have been implemented or are currently in development;
- A steadily growing list of subscribers to the GFS Innovation Newsletter (including several subscribers from outside of the organization);
- Other Microsoft organizations are now looking to GFS for insight into how to successfully drive innovation.