

INNOVATION IN PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

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Innovation Gateway managed by 2degrees

With a focus on collaboration and sharing data and best practice, the Innovation Gateway is an alliance of organisations including Tesco, Heathrow, RBS, Kingfisher Unite Students, Nottingham City Council and the University of Edinburgh. The alliance has created a service, managed by 2degrees, to improve sourcing, selecting and validating technology and innovations to reduce operational costs and the environmental impact of buildings.

The Innovation Gateway operates by running two programmes in a year, with each identifying the common challenges faced by organisations and the sectors in which they operate. It explores and selects the best technologies and innovative solutions available and manages the risk of their implementation as well as the optimisation of ROI.

Sharing risk makes economic sense but also overcomes the reluctance to innovate.

An example of how the alliance works is when RBS trialed an additive called Endotherm to make its wet heating systems more efficient. After tracking 10-15 per cent energy reductions, RBS shared the information with the alliance after which Heathrow implemented the same innovations. It saw 11-16 per cent savings in three months.

Beyond cutting back operational costs in energy, water and waste, the Innovation Gateway maintains its partners will reap the rewards of improved reputation as socially and environmentally conscious organisations, while helping to promote a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy.

Best practice learning points

- Collaboration increases innovation;
- Working together reduces risks when adopting technology;
- Competition among businesses can sometimes hinder progress;
- Financial savings and reduced environmental impact can be pursued simultaneously; and
- Cross-sector sharing can shift approaches to problem-solving.



Starting position

A group of organisations successful in their own particular sectors decided to join forces to try to identify and solve some of the common challenges they face when trying to make their properties cheaper to operate and more environmentally friendly. So, the Innovation Gateway was created by partners that include Tesco, Heathrow, RBS, Kingfisher Unite Students, Nottingham City Council and the University of Edinburgh.

Rather than gather data, test best practice and implement technological solutions in isolation, in which risk of operational failure or financial losses can often be deterrents, the alliance shares partners' insights and experiences of rolling out technology.

Action taken

Managed on behalf of the Innovation Gateway's partners, 2degrees runs two separate programmes a year, with each setting out to identify and define the common challenges the partner organisations face, such as reducing operational costs derived from expenditure on energy, water and waste.

Drawing on the experience of partners where possible or carrying out independent research when not, the Innovation Gateway will then seek the most effective technologies and innovations to help overcome the identified challenges.

Connected to a growing network of innovators, the alliance selects a pilot project to solve a particular challenge. Pilot data is shared among partner organisations, which means each has access to the shared and valuable data from multiple pilot projects while only having to carry out one or two pilots of their own.

For example, RBS piloted an innovation called Endotherm, which is an additive used to increase the efficiency of wet heating systems. Based on the successes, Heathrow also implemented the innovation.

The banking group has also rolled out a Green Rewards behaviour change programme called JUMP to engage employees to be more energy efficient.

Another example is Tesco's commitment to collaborate with partners to scale the impact that their £700 million investments in energy efficiency upgrades have on other sectors and collectively identify further solutions to these persistent challenges.

Final position

So far, pilot projects have already yielded success for the partner organisation that trialed it first as well as those that subsequently implemented it on account of the results.

Consider the RBS 'Endotherm case' mentioned above, in which the banking group tracked 10-15 per cent energy reductions. RBS shared the information with Heathrow, which saw 11-16 per cent savings in three months.

The employee engagement pilot, also from RBS, has engaged 90 per cent of employees and led to 10 per cent out of hours energy reduction. Estimated savings will amount to £3 million a year after it rolled out across the entire estate.

“We all have a responsibility to reduce the impact our buildings have on the environment and our customers,” says Jo Saunders, innovation programme manager at RBS. “Through the Innovation Gateway, RBS opened its portfolio to innovators to test products that lead resource efficiency.”

The alliance has also seen that despite not occupying the same sectors, the property-related innovations transcend these divides.

“Despite the diversity of the Innovation Gateway’s partners, our challenges are surprisingly similar and it’s encouraging to know that together we can seek to more quickly overcome these,” Tim Golding, UK Property Director at Tesco, notes.

The reason to join forces was to share best practice and mitigate risk while finding the most successful solutions. This seems to be working, according to Michael Wayne Bexton, head of energy services at Nottingham City Council.

Bexton says: “Joining the Innovation Gateway has allowed us to share best practice and knowledge with like-minded top tier organisations across different sectors. The collaboration brings together environmental leaders in a unique way, taking away barriers and generating tangible outputs.”

The judges said...

The innovation gateway has huge potential to revolutionise the way we (in FM and other sectors) effectively utilise and share our skills base to drive change and respond practically to business challenges. It provides an equitable approach to knowledge and industry progression naturally, rising above competitiveness.