



Market Gravity

Innovation Insider Index 2015

Featuring the UK's Top 30 most innovative companies
Celebrating the spirit of innovation in British industry

In partnership with:



Market Gravity

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Welcome to the Innovation Insider Index 2015

About the Index

Innovation is vital to big business – and to society too. Harnessing the creative power locked inside established organisations has the potential to make all our lives better.

Many big companies say that innovation's at the top of their agenda – but is it true? We created the Market Gravity Innovation Insider Index to get the view from behind the scenes, taking the temperature of innovation across UK big business. The Index is part of a programme of events celebrating the spirit of innovation in British industry, and recognising the teams and individuals who drive change and success.

We asked Insiders from large businesses across the country to tell us how effective they think their businesses are at innovation, and whether it's truly embedded in their company culture. We approached around 20,000 influential professionals working in 18 different industries and they let us know where they're succeeding – and where they could do better.

They did this by comparing how their company stacked up against our six principles of innovation (see how those work on p6).

We want to create conversations, spark ideas and galvanise innovation within established organisations across all sectors. Our aim is to inspire teams and individuals to make a difference, innovate and help big businesses unleash winning ideas into the market.

Interested? Come and join the innovation conversation, on twitter ([@Market_Gravity](#)) and [LinkedIn](#).

Give us your views: [#innovatebig](#)



Peter Sayburn
CEO and Founding Partner
Market Gravity

How we did it

To get a real “state of the nation” for innovation in big business, we quizzed around

20,000

employees from large organisations in

18

different UK business sectors.

To make sure we saw the big picture, the Index targeted individuals across a wide range of business functions, including product managers, HR, finance and marketing. We asked our Insiders to rank their company against our **six principles of innovation**. Over

440

companies participated; those who scored highest made it into our

Top 30

leaderboard of UK innovators.

The Market Gravity principles of innovation are the key characteristics common to big players who’ve had success with innovating new products and services. See how they work on p6.

Why big business innovation matters

True innovation is a seamless mix of creativity and implementation, created to solve a human problem and create business value. Much greater than a big idea or new piece of tech, it's about bringing your ideas to life, to make everyone's lives better.

Every big company's hiding hundreds of ideas, but it's hard to harness them and get them to market. The nature of innovation is a little wild and unpredictable – not every swing will be a big hit. You need room to iterate, experiment and learn through trial and error; that's pretty different to traditional process improvement projects or 'business as usual' activities.

Big companies find it notoriously tricky to get right, but it's worth the effort; established organisations have the greatest potential to make the world better. When big businesses get behind a great new idea, the impact can be huge. Big innovations can help keep us connected to our loved ones; save us time and money; brighten up our days; provide us with energy and protect our environment. It can even improve our health and extend our lives.

Plus harnessing innovation is the only real path to enduring business success. To stay relevant to your customers and one step ahead of the competition, you must keep doing new and better things. Innovative, progressive companies can even command an 'innovation premium', perpetuated by their ability to attract and retain the best talent. So it can even result in stock market value.

That's why we're asking how the UK's businesses are doing on the innovation front. We're not judging by end results, but getting an Insider view on the real innovation culture within our companies.

Market Gravity's Six principles of innovation

These principles measure innovation in established companies. We've boiled them down from our first-hand experience of helping big business innovate; they're based on the characteristics of the most effective organisations and people we've worked with over many years and across many sectors.

They aren't an infallible formula for success, but you can adopt them to drive innovation within any business. Use them as a checklist to gauge your capacity for innovation, to challenge thinking, provoke dialogue and address known gaps.

They're the basis for the survey that underlies our Innovation Insider Index.



Customer focus

We're obsessive about our customers: they drive our innovation agenda.



Capabilities

We form productive teams, combining diverse skills and experience with clear structure and methods.



Competitive advantage

We make the most of our company's scale and assets.



Purpose

Everyone knows what we stand for, what we're working towards, and why.



Leadership

We create and maintain the best conditions for innovation: inspiration, challenge and protection.



Collaboration

Our culture supports sharing and learning, and we value the expertise and experience of other organisations.

Our Top 30 big innovators

Company	Sector
Accenture	Professional Services
Aegon	Financial Services
Airbnb	Hospitality
Allianz	Financial Services
Amazon	Retail
Apple	Consumer Electronics
Argos (Home Retail Group)	Retail
Barclays	Financial Services
BASF	Tech
BBC	Telecoms, Media, Technology (TMT)
BGI Group	Financial Services
Bloomberg	Telecoms, Media, Technology (TMT)
BT	Telecoms, Media, Technology (TMT)
Capgemini	Professional Services
Centrica	Utilities
CGI	Information and Data Services
Coutts & Co	Financial Services
Direct Line Group	Financial Services
EE	Telecoms, Media, Technology (TMT)
Guardian News and Media Group	Telecoms, Media, Technology (TMT)
Hewlett-Packard	Tech
IBM	Tech
Inmarsat	Information and Data Services
Jaguar Land Rover	Automotive
MasterCard	Financial Services
Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Ltd	Automotive
SAP	Tech
SKY	Telecoms, Media, Technology (TMT)
Toshiba	Tech
Visa	Financial Services

Our take on the Top 30

Who's treading water and who's taking the plunge

For the first time, the Market Gravity Innovation Insider Index offers a glimpse into the state and nature of innovation inside many of the UK's (and indeed Europe's) biggest businesses.

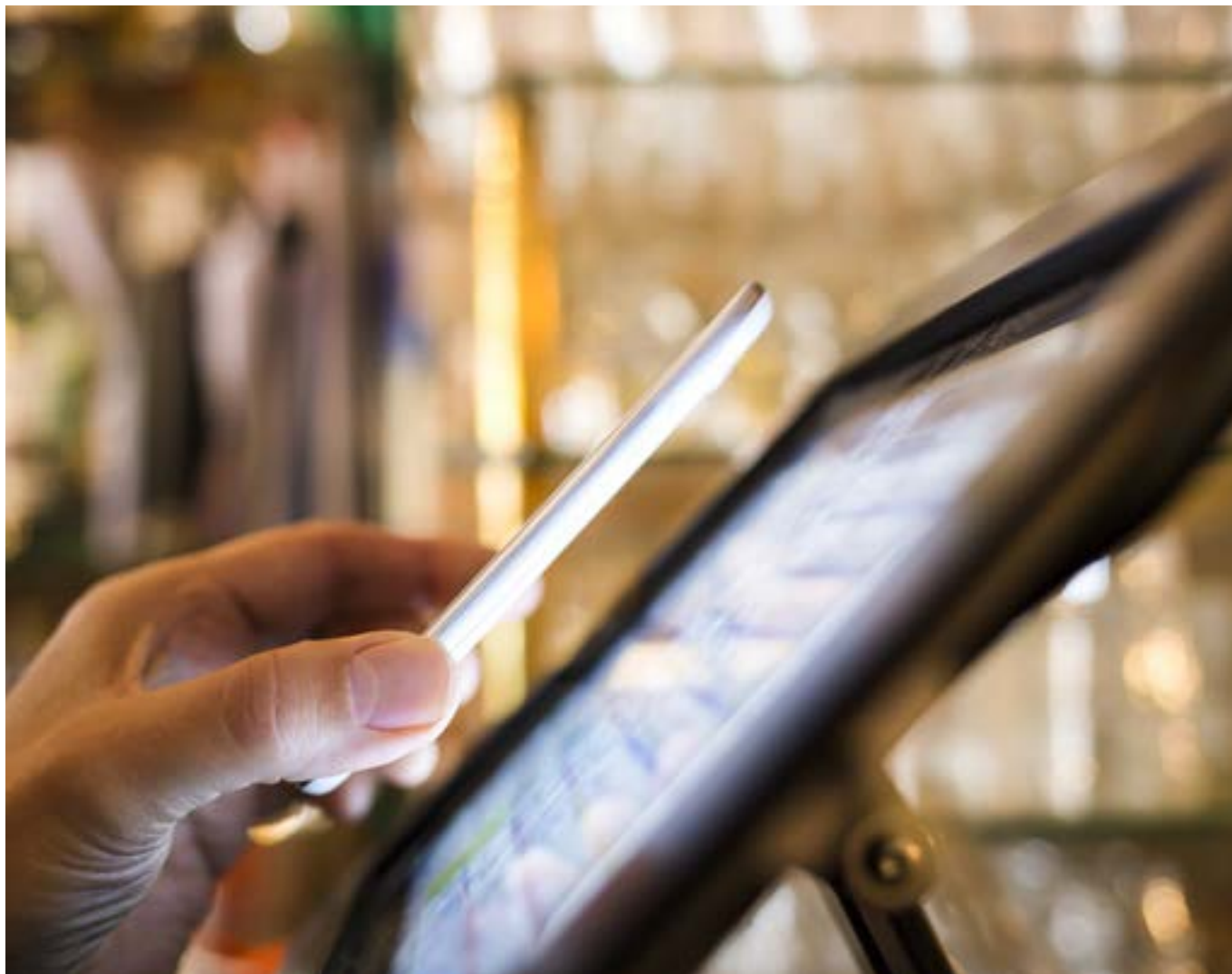
Our findings have confirmed a few commonly-held stereotypes about different sectors' approach to innovation.

In general, there are still some organisations that are slow to change, finding it a challenge to let go of compliance, defence and protecting the status quo.

But for every notable absentee, there's at least one new, inspiring challenger – up and coming or reinvigorated businesses that build innovation into their mission. They've articulated a clear vision and purpose and made it happen.

Over the next 12 months we'll be working with many of the Index participants on the strengths and challenges highlighted by their Insiders.

But for now, here are the headlines as we see them...



FinTech takes the lead

Overall, compliance rules in financial services, but some outliers seek change

We believe that most financial services companies remain focused on compliance, rather than genuine innovation – although there are notable exceptions in FinTech and other outliers where innovation is a CEO agenda.

Our extensive experience in this sector has told us that 80% of investment is focused on regulatory compliance (which is vital to this industry), rather than customer-centred innovation. It's always been a risk-averse industry, but the challenges of recent years have dampened any residual interest in market disruption; so of the innovation that we do see, it's mostly driven by cost reduction.

Only businesses led by individuals with a clear, unambiguous innovation agenda are making it

into our Top 30. Bold leadership that unlocks the resources to enable innovation, really gets noticed by Insiders. For instance, Barclays and Aegon boast coherent, digitally-led visions for the future that have shifted expectations and behaviours within their businesses.

Meanwhile, players in the transaction field are compelled to change by big competition: the entry of tech giants like Apple, and game-changing services like Bitcoin. Together with regulatory pressure on existing revenue streams, this is driving a step-change in existing payment networks.



Pursuit of luxury drives automotive

Customer experience and brand are top priorities

Jaguar Land Rover and Rolls-Royce are great examples of British manufacturing companies that are drawing on innovation to reinvent themselves as global luxury brands.

They're focusing their creative juices on changes that support a luxury brand positioning, for example, improving their customer experience rather than upgrading manufacturing processes.

Both Jaguar Land Rover and Rolls-Royce have invested heavily to ensure that their products live up to their bolder, more global brand promise. They're the only luxury brands to feature in the Top 30.

Given the UK's strong tradition in this field, we'd expect to see more global luxury brands reinventing themselves and innovating to attract the next generation by exploiting new digital service paradigms and growth markets.

One area of caution is the relatively low willingness of this sector to collaborate and embrace cross-industry ideas; a key principle for success.



TMT's like a creative powder keg

Innovation abounds under pressure from digital and new players

The Telecoms, Media, Technology (TMT) cluster has been reinventing itself since the digital revolution began – so by now they're really good at it. The converged digital focus in this sector has forced companies to innovate and reinvent themselves, giving them a certain dynamism.

Digital is a double-edged sword that must be handled carefully: both a new playground for innovative service propositions and engagement models and a threat to traditional revenue streams and models.

Traditional media businesses like the BBC and the Guardian News and Media Group have

successfully transformed themselves into digital-first organisations. They're leading innovation in format and approach and partnering with the start-up community. This openness to partnership and collaboration is attracting talent and audience alike.

SKY is continuing to use technical innovation and scale to hold market share within its own sector. It's contending with rising challenges from BT's reinvention as a digital media company and from the threat of on-demand services like Netflix, Amazon and others.



New tools shine for people-centric firms

Clients need to see value, while employees want greater purpose

If you're in a people business, it's great to stay on your toes creatively. It turns out that innovation is essential in an industry that is battling to remain relevant to clients. From management consultancy to advertising, client expectations are changing and traditional players need reinvention.

A number of large people-centred businesses have also demonstrated that innovation's important as a carrot to attract and motivate high-level talent. As this pool of talent is more mobile,

enabled and independent than ever, professional services businesses need to use innovation as a differentiator. Being on the cutting edge is highly attractive to a workforce of millennials.

Our survey proves that many of the larger firms lack clear purpose and their leaders appear unable to create the right conditions for continual innovation. Only Accenture managed category leadership within our Top 30.



Retail must avoid swimming with the tide

Target the back-end to deliver in the omni-channel age

Despite the continuing growth in digital retail, we found that Amazon and Argos (part of Home Retail Group) were the only retailers in our survey to make the Top 30. This strongly suggests that the market is simply growing to fit the appetite of consumers, rather than taking the chance to make game-changing innovations. Are most of the businesses involved just running to keep up?

Many online retailers aren't reinventing for the digital channel at the moment, but optimising for parallel channels. They've brought a lot of

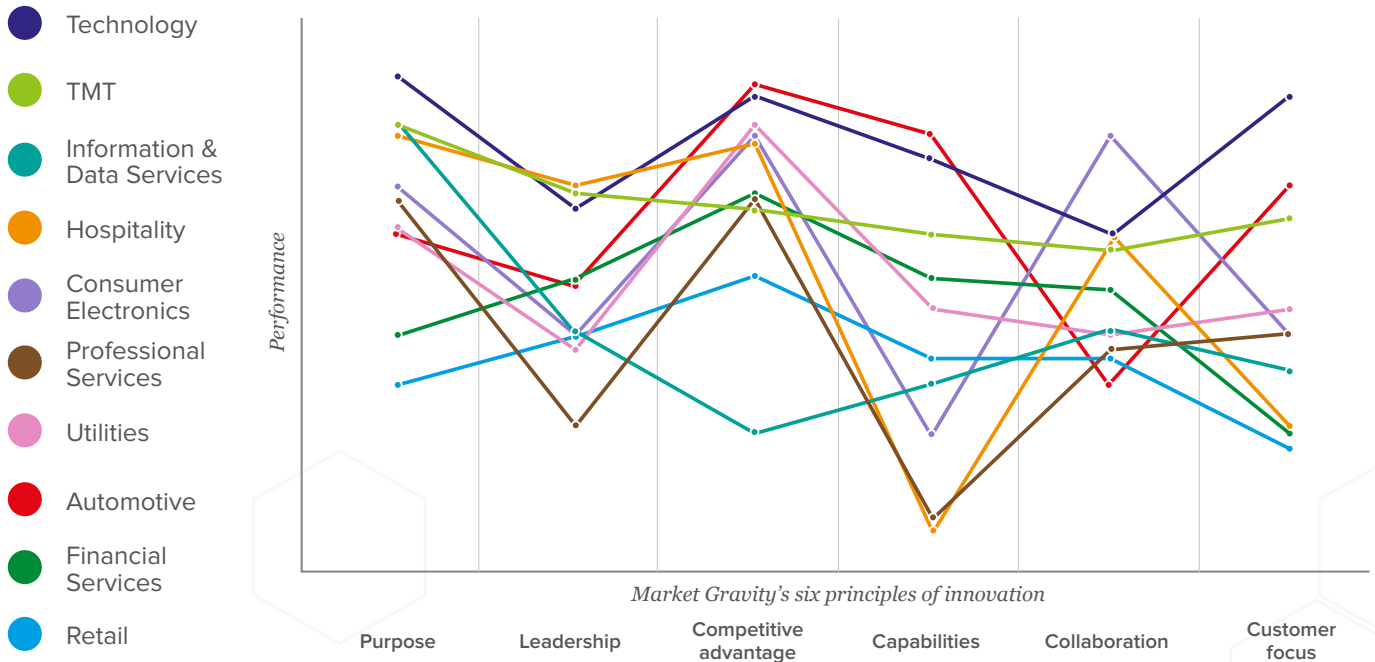
first-generation omni-channel work to market, which has delivered customer dividends – but the real battle's being fought behind the scenes right now. Supply chain management, fulfilment, CRM and service management must all be reinvented for the omni-channel age.

Amazon and Argos (HRG) are great examples of businesses that have invested in core next-gen competencies, but generally this sector underperforms its peers against our innovation principles.

Slicing by sector

How our principles play out across different industries

So which sectors are displaying the most success in innovation, according to our Insiders?
We break it down and compare industries across the UK.



The above shows how each industry represented in the Index scores against our six principles of innovation; you can also compare each sector's strengths and weaknesses and see how they scored relative to one another.

Compare and contrast: different ways to innovate

Overall, it seems clear that the two highest-scoring sectors are technology and automotive. What we find interesting is the different approaches these industries have in how they go about things. Technology companies are strong in purpose and customer focus, with leadership and collaboration

high in the mix as well...all quite expansive qualities. Meanwhile, more inward-focused principles, competitive advantage and capabilities, are the main strengths chosen by Insiders from the automotive industry.

Tech leads the charge as the strongest performing sector

This overall lead isn't surprising, given the rate of innovation in technology and the contribution that technological advancement often makes in creating new products and services. It would be even stronger if we could include the many companies that consider themselves tech businesses but are

selling in other sectors, or who are outside the "big company" scope of the Index.

The telecoms and media sectors also scored highly, catalysed by the extensive threats and opportunities created by the advent of digital.

Continued overleaf...

Slicing by sector

...continued

While tech companies scored strongly, our Insiders from consumer electronics businesses gave their companies lower marks. We suspect that they feel this way because of the pace of change and rapid cycles within this sector; with so much good innovation practice embedded in existing ways of working, Insiders don't see it as special. Other industries could certainly benefit from the lessons of design thinking, customer co-creation, acceleration labs and rapid prototyping that are prevalent in this space.

And with manufacturing increasingly outsourced, we expect the pace of change and innovation to accelerate – with new interfaces and new ways of thinking about connectivity coming from the Internet of Things, big business is reinventing traditional categories, and creating new winners and losers. Technology companies seem to be taking this situation in their stride, looking ahead and being more outwardly-mobile, with clear customer focus and collaboration skills being spotted by Insiders.

Automotive: a single-minded industry

The Index shows general low scores for Collaboration (*Our culture supports sharing and learning, and we value the expertise and experience of other organisations*) across the automotive industry. But it does score highly for two other internally-driven characteristics: Capabilities (*We easily form productive teams, combining diverse skills and experience with clear structure and methods*) and Competitive advantage (*We make the most of our company's scale and assets*).

This suggests their innovation is driven by the huge levels of in-depth expertise that's specific to their

business; it's an internally-driven approach, as it suggests that they're mainly seeking out process improvements to benefit the core business. That's great for them as it's bound to streamline and incrementally improve processes. But it does make it seem unlikely that these companies are seeking out new territories with cross-functional teams – the sort of approach that most reliably leads to disruptive new approaches, products and services.

Still, their Insiders have given them high enough scores to suggest that they're getting plenty right – they're just doing it on their own terms.

A side-note on connected principles

We spotted an interesting connection between two of our principles of innovation: Purpose (*Everyone knows what we stand for, what we're working towards, and why*) and Customer focus (*We're obsessive about our customers: they drive our innovation agenda*).

As already mentioned, technology companies scored highly on these two factors, while retail and financial services businesses scored low on both.

Could there be an intrinsic link between a strong purpose and customer focus? We think

it's plausible: a strongly defined purpose tends to centre on achieving for others, not just for the company. That's translating into a high level of customer focus – placing achievement for customers at the top of the innovation agenda.

This synergy could be another reason why the technology sector has scored highly across the board: their outward focus is energising and informing their appetite for innovation as a whole.



Our Top 5 for Purpose

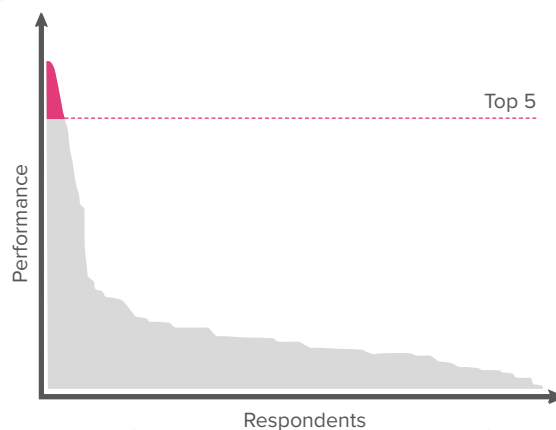
Everyone knows what we stand for, what we're working towards, and why.

Businesses that are great at innovation know why they're innovating, are confident in their mission's long-term value and align colleagues around a shared strategy with clear success measures.

Our Top 5 companies

- Accenture
- Aegon
- Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Ltd
- SKY
- Toshiba

- Other participating companies





Our Top 5 for Leadership

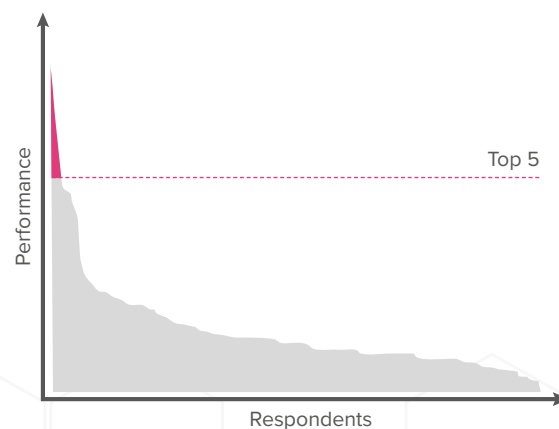
We create and maintain the best conditions for innovation: inspiration, challenge and protection.

Visible executive sponsorship is key to successful innovation initiatives. The leadership team fully understand their level of commitment and ensure early, clear and consistent communication on the role of innovation to drive internal and external support. They set expectations and back new initiatives through their own actions.

Our Top 5 companies

- Accenture
- Argos (HRG)
- Barclays
- BT
- Direct Line Group

- Other participating companies





Our Top 5 for Capabilities

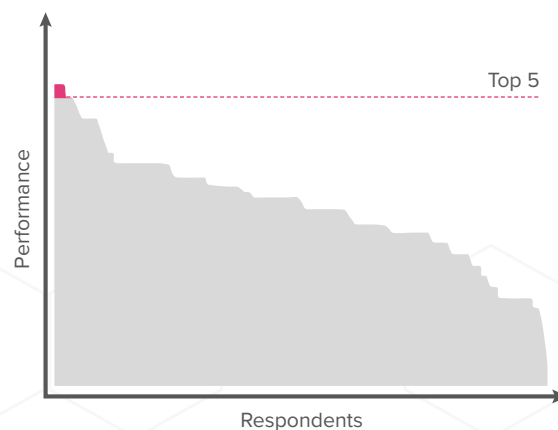
We form productive teams, combining diverse skills and experience with clear structure and methods.

A successful innovation initiative often features a small, highly motivated, diverse team that operates effectively in the right culture. It's most effective to have the right combination of skills, attitudes and experience solely focused on the initiative.

Teams embedded in the core business tend to better suit incremental innovation. Some businesses develop a company-wide innovation culture rather than giving accountability to individual teams – this works best when innovation's at the heart of that organisation.

Our Top 5 companies

- Apple
- BT
- Guardian News and Media Group
- Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Ltd
- SAP
- Other participating companies





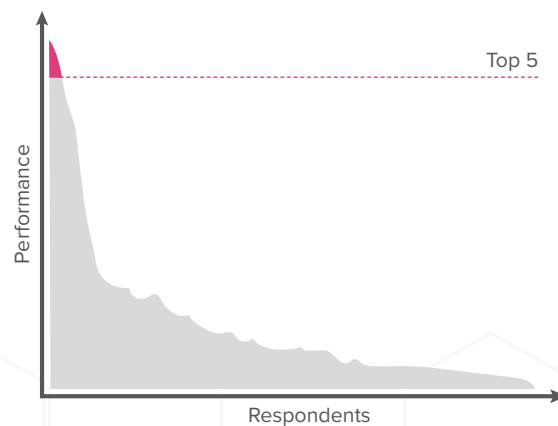
Our Top 5 for Collaboration

Our culture supports sharing and learning and we value expertise and experience from other organisations.

Innovative businesses share and validate big ideas early, with employees, partners and customers. They make new products and services tangible through early prototyping; this enforces design discipline, validates the business case and creates immense internal buy-in, momentum and excitement.

Our Top 5 companies

- Apple
 - BBC
 - Coutts & Co
 - Hewlett-Packard
 - MasterCard
-
- Other participating companies





Our Top 5 for Competitive advantage

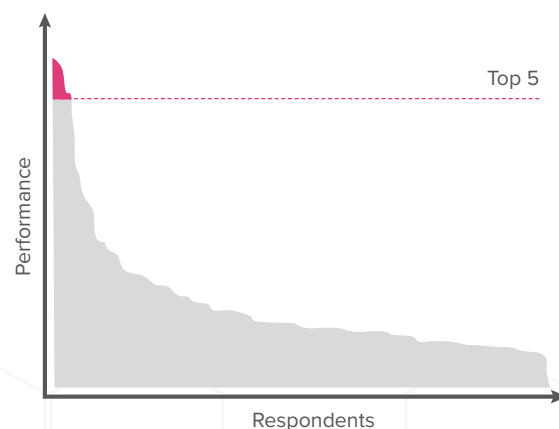
We make the most of our company's
scale and assets.

Successful corporate innovators take advantage of the fact that they're part of a bigger business. This gives them an inherent advantage over start-ups and SMEs and enables them to have a greater impact. Everyone understands how innovation drives value for the entire business.

Our Top 5 companies

- BT
- EE
- IBM
- Jaguar Land Rover
- SKY

- Other participating companies





Our Top 5 for Customer focus

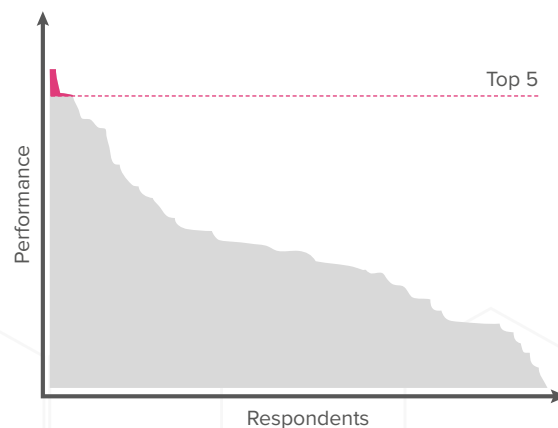
We're obsessive about our customers:
they drive our innovation agenda.

Innovative businesses know that while a great idea may address a real customer issue, it's vital to articulate that issue clearly. These businesses ensure they experience the world from a naive customer's viewpoint, to understand how their customers feel and confirm what they want. Truly understanding your customers' position can be key to disruptive insights and successful innovation.

Our Top 5 companies

- Airbnb
- Allianz
- Inmarsat
- Jaguar Land Rover
- Toshiba

- Other participating companies



Talking to the Top 30

Having created the Index to get the Inside track on big business innovation in the UK, we brought the process full circle by talking to some pack leaders about their success at innovating.

We talked to these senior figures about the reasons for their top performance. They discussed the secrets of their success and gave us some hints

on how to improve innovation in certain areas – as well as the barriers they've had to overcome.

We also got their views on being recognised from the Inside... after all, that's a true sign that innovation runs through their entire business.

See what they had to say....



Tom Bennett
Director of Technology Services, Devices and Development at EE



Mark Barnett
President of MasterCard UK and Ireland



Joe Norburn
Managing Director, Digital and Front Office Solutions, Coutts & Co



Mark Evans
Marketing Director, Direct Line Group



Neil Tinegate
Head of Digital Innovation, Argos



Stephen Crosbie
Customer Innovation Architect, Aegon



Talking to:
Tom Bennett
*Director of Technology Services,
Devices and Development at EE*



What do you think made you the strongest performer in the TMT (Telecoms, Media and Tech) sector?

We set ourselves the challenge of being the top UK performer within our sector. We encourage collaboration, and consistently work in partnerships with other major mobile brands. We open up our labs, networks and tech experience and create an environment where tech teams can really innovate together. It's not just innovation for innovation's sake – we incubate new ideas, let people try new things and then quickly move beyond, to integration and commercialisation. Putting an idea or innovation into customers' hands really gives them the 'wow' factor. We're really lucky to work in a market that loves tech – so we really try to make sure an idea works before we put it out there.

You were one of the top performing companies in 'Competitive advantage'. How do you make the most of your company's scale in innovation?

EE has two labs, in Bristol and London. The former is a 'reference' lab: our engineers there review how our existing network's performing. In London we have a 'development' lab that trials new technology. We really leverage those assets.

EE isn't a large company by some standards: the engineering team has around 1,000 employees. But we know how to leverage a large-scale company, with a relatively medium-size employee base. We're able to obtain opinions and feedback from employees quickly. The cultural mind-set of the company really helps – we're always up for a challenge.

Employees working at EE, and in mobile telecoms in general, are into change. EE's at the sharp end of that: we embrace and work with change like no other company. Our people need to see change and they 'get it' – they know how important change is, and can bring it about. When they see where we're going, they work hard and put passion into it, as they know they're at the leading edge. That joy and knowledge spreads throughout the company.

What advice would you give to other businesses that could make better use of their scale and assets?

Where innovation's concerned, I challenge businesses to never say 'control!'. Use the word 'lead', instead. It's another mindset needed to be innovative and ensure that an innovative culture runs through the business. Give up the illusion of control; it's the mindset of leading and setting the vision for yourself, your teams, your employees and your partners that counts.

What are the secrets of your success?

When we started on this journey four years ago, we were orientated towards getting 'from process to results'. We recognised that we needed to change that. We decided that one huge step was to form partnerships and work more collaboratively with other leading global brands. It's been a real change to bring our partners along. Big businesses can't innovate alone. Real innovation occurs with partners – when you create the right environment.

What are you most proud of in your business?

The talented individuals and teams who have delivered our success. They work brilliantly – we're fortunate that the best want to work at EE and do their best for the business.

What are your main innovation objectives for the year ahead?

...watch this space!

How do you feel about being recognised by your employees as one of the most innovative companies in the UK?

I'm incredibly proud for, and of, the team. We've set them challenges and they always step up and deliver. We're very pleased at how far we've come in the last four years, and we're looking forward to achieving even more in the future.



Talking to:
Mark Barnett
*President of MasterCard
UK and Ireland*



Why do you think MasterCard is one of the strongest performers against our innovation principle 'Collaboration'?

As the world's leading global payments network, a significant driver of our success has been collaboration with other successful entities, whether they be banks, retailers or parts of the public sector. Without effective collaboration with partners, we can't deliver the best safe, secure and convenient payment solutions to customers.

Secondly, the rate of advancement in payment technology is moving faster than most businesses and consumers can, or are willing to, adopt. This sets us the challenge of backing today the technologies which consumers will migrate to in the future. The best way of ensuring we stay relevant, and have the capability to offer the payment option of choice in the future, is to be technology-agnostic and to work with as many partners today as we can. Collaboration is key to this.

What advice would you give to other businesses to ensure their culture is more collaborative?

- Stay ahead of technology: get into conversations early and make sure you aren't left out
- Build relationships: make sure you partner with key players
- Be open: allow others to innovate in your ecosystem: together you can build the most efficient, economical and ubiquitous route to success

What are your main innovation objectives for the year ahead?

Our digital payment capabilities are well formed, but the next step is to develop the access points for digital payments in our customers' lives. We need to place them where they genuinely make a difference and improve the whole retail or service experience.

How do you feel about being recognised by your employees as one of the most innovative companies in the UK?

It's great news! Our people feel we are a genuine innovative force, and it's recognising that our strategy of refocusing ourselves as a technology company is working.



Talking to:
Joe Norburn
*Managing Director,
Digital and Front Office Solutions*



How do you feel about being recognized by your employees as one of the most innovative companies in the UK?

Amazed really; it's fantastic. But, we've only just started. It's great that people are recognising the small things that we have done so far, but it's only going to get better and better.

Why do you think Coutts & Co is one of the strongest performers against our innovation principle 'Collaboration'?

Coutts is a relationship-anchored business; it's been that way since 1692. Collaboration is key to any strong and longstanding relationship. The opportunity to collaborate with a client has to be earned. This is true today as it was over 300 years ago. One thing that's different is the technology available to us. We have sought to strengthen the collaboration with our clients through our digital channels and data insight: being the first private bank to pilot video calling is an example of that. We also collaborate very actively with colleagues across the rest of RBS to solve customer problems. There's a very productive and constructive challenge process right across the franchise. We are re-inventing fewer wheels and drawing on expertise, brilliant thinking and solutions from across the bank.

What advice would you give to other businesses to ensure their culture is more collaborative?

Be clear and have a purpose. Collaborating without a purpose can be worse than not collaborating at all. Next time you need that person, they may wonder what the point is. Be consciously open to the views of others. Engage people with different views and perspectives, but avoid those who drain the life-force out of a room or a discussion. Look for patterns and join the dots across the organisation. Seek to help solve the challenges of others before your own. Earn the right to engage them downstream. Be proactive in managing stakeholders – up, down, left and right...remember that stakeholders aren't just the higher-ups.

What challenges or barriers to innovation have you had to overcome?

Banks can move at 'bank speed'. Often that pace is justified; we manage people's money at the end of the day and have to get it right. But, many aspects can and must move faster than traditional bank speed. In partnership with colleagues in RBS we've done a number of things, including:

- Being clear about the problems and opportunities we're seeking to address; clarity of thought is key
- Seeking to map problems and opportunities that the wider bank is working on onto the innovation pipeline – prompted by setting up scouting networks elsewhere in the world, leveraging London as the global FinTech capital and partnering with specific existing suppliers
- Adjusting and streamlining the paperwork needed to work with third parties, who are often start-ups
- Recognising that how we execute needs to change: getting some scores on the board, making innovation tangible and encouraging a positive mindset

What are you most proud of in your business?

Our people and their endless energy, resilience and sheer determination to always do their best for the client. Cliché, but undoubtedly true.



Talking to:
Mark Evans
*Marketing Director,
Direct Line Group*



Why do you think Direct Line Group is a top performer against our innovation principle 'Leadership'?

Being recognised as a top performer against businesses nationally is a real coup for us at Direct Line Group. We want to revolutionise insurance again; this means that leadership plays a key role both as a mindset and from a commercial perspective. We work really hard to make sure everyone who works here, from contact centre colleagues based around the UK, to front of house at our HQ, understands what we're trying to achieve.

What advice would Direct Line Group give to other businesses on how to create and maintain the best conditions for innovation: inspiration, challenge and protection?

Creating the best conditions for innovation to thrive starts with culture and confidence. Culture talks to collaboration and experimentation, confidence talks to a belief that things can be improved and resilience in the face of failure. The combination of the two is incredibly powerful in fuelling progress.

What challenges or barriers to innovation have you had to overcome?

Like any business, we have had to manage a significant business transformation in recent years. What's helped us through that is having a North Star to lead the way: we're repairing consumer trust by being 'fixers:' the people who'll fix your problems in your hour of need. Delivering our brand promise from the inside out has made us a stronger business.

What are you most proud of in your business?

I am most proud of our Direct Line propositions, which are also transformational in the sector for being so explicit about what's in it for the customer. It requires an enormous amount of business alignment to deliver high performance claims, such as being able to repair damaged cars within 7 days or paying out £10 a day, or that we will dispatch lost or damaged household items within 8 hours. This is very counter-cultural for the insurance sector and appreciated by our customers.

How do you feel about being recognised by your employees as one of the most innovative companies in the UK?

We've come a long way and are thrilled to be recognised by the Innovation Insider Index, not just within our own industry but as one of the top performing businesses in UK, as we go from strength to strength.



Talking to:
Neil Tinegate
Head of Digital Innovation



Why do you think you're a top performing innovator in retail?

Argos (within the Home Retail Group) has always been an innovator, right from when we launched our unique way of shopping 40 years ago, to being one of the first retailers with an ecommerce offering, to inventing click and collect. That continues today. We're undergoing a huge digital transformation that touches every part of our business. Our colleagues have responded tremendously well to the transformation agenda and they share the vision set by our CEO and executive board. That clarity empowers colleagues, and the environment of change encourages ideas sharing and action that ultimately leads to faster and wider reaching innovation.

What advice would you give to other businesses to help drive innovation in retail?

It begins and ends with people, whether that's colleagues or customers. Of course, innovation can be about technology and bright ideas, but people make it all happen. Having a culture that encourages experimentation and learning is key. Setup for success, but don't be afraid to fail, learn and go again. And keep the customer top of mind at all times.

What challenges or barriers to innovate have you had to overcome?

The challenge is the sheer scale of change we're undertaking. However that makes it more enjoyable too, with lots of opportunities for colleagues to get involved in projects outside of their day job. It's a balance of continuing to deliver great customer experiences as we introduce ground breaking new products and services such as our digital stores and our market-leading fulfilment propositions such as same-day delivery.

What are you most proud of in your business?

The fact that we have such an ambitious transformation plan, and the fact that colleagues across the business are delivering against that plan with such energy and passion for making customer experiences even better.

How do you feel about being recognised by your employees as one of the most innovative companies in the UK?

That's fantastic to hear. It's a great accolade and one that reflects back on them. It's an exciting time at Argos, and it's great to see that our colleagues think so too.



Talking to:
Stephen Crosbie
Customer Innovation Architect



Why do you think Aegon is one of the strongest performers against our innovation principle 'Purpose'?

We've had to radically transition our business from a traditional life insurer with a focus on intermediaries, to a digital business focused on customer outcomes. We understand that more people are looking for online and mobile-friendly solutions, and we want to be the ones to help them make sense of an often confusing subject.

What advice would you give to other businesses to ensure clear 'Purpose' in their business?

Have a clear vision and continually reinforce it to ensure everyone remains focused on the strategic direction you want for the business. Try to make innovation part of your culture – it's amazing the ideas people come up with when given the chance.

What challenges or barriers to innovation have you had to overcome?

Gaining approval for ideas that are truly innovative as they are unproven in the market. To overcome this we developed prototypes and used research findings as evidence that they were likely to succeed.

Managing the expectations of our executive team was particularly challenging as we were giving them early sight of quality prototypes. Understanding why things took so long to get to market was difficult to get across.

As a FS business, there are certain regulations that we need to communicate and adhere to. It's a constant challenge to balance clean and customer-focused functionality against a backdrop of compliance and regulatory restrictions.

What are you most proud of in your business?

The transition towards a customer-centric culture has been a massive journey for a business that previously focused all its energies on intermediaries.

What are your main innovation objectives for the year ahead?

Extend what we've built to more propositions and ultimately revolutionise the customer experience for all our customers. Take on board the learnings we've made already, to keep improving.

How do you feel about being recognised by your employees as one of the most innovative companies in the UK?

Fantastic. Innovation is not something we were previously recognised for, so making the cultural shift is something that hasn't happened overnight.

More from the Top 30

“We are living in times of continual digital disruption. The past ten to 15 years have seen seismic changes to the way news is consumed and how news organisations must operate.”

At the Guardian we have embraced these changes and innovated - transforming us from the ninth-most read newspaper in the UK to one of the world's most influential online quality newspapers. Our daring and groundbreaking approach stretches beyond our journalism and into every department across the organisation.

In the last year two years alone we have launched a completely redesigned website and app; Pangaea - a global alliance of quality publishers; Guardian Labs - our in-house branded content agency, our Australia edition and much, much more. None of this would have been possible without the diverse and talented people we have working here.

I am extremely proud that we have been recognised as one of the most innovative companies in the UK.

David Pemsel
Deputy Chief Executive
Guardian News & Media Group

“Innovation is a core value of Accenture's – being curious is actively encouraged, and the ability to challenge the status quo and do things differently is recognised and rewarded.”

[What advice would you give to other businesses to improve these areas of their business?](#)

Know what you are trying to develop, be able to articulate it concisely and communicate it vigorously. Make sure you have senior level alignment and commitment to your goal and that they actively “walk the talk”. Consistency in messages, a show of intent and the follow-through of recognition all enable an organisation to embed Innovation. Senior management have to be brave, recognise risk and not be afraid to try something different. When they do this, their people will follow suit and ideas will abound.

Eimear Meredith-Jones,
The Director of the Innovation Centre
Accenture

About Market Gravity



Market Gravity

Established in 2009, Market Gravity is a specialist innovation and proposition design consultancy. We work with the world's leading companies to liberate big ideas, turning them into new, innovative services: helping to build tomorrow's economy.

Our unique combination of insight, commercial and prototyping expertise puts customers at the heart of the design process, while our hands-on method builds momentum to launch. We accelerate great ideas from Post-it™ to prototype.

We've worked with clients like Visa, Aegon, HSBC, British Gas, Boots, Post Office and Barclays to launch big ideas that include electric vehicles, next-generation financial advice, renewable energy and digital commerce.

We have offices in London, Edinburgh and New York. For our approach to big business innovation, advice, news and more, visit marketgravity.com.

To join the innovation conversation, follow us at [@Market_Gravity](https://twitter.com/Market_Gravity) and [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/market-gravity).

For questions on the Innovation Insider Index, contact Fiona Elkins at Fiona.Elkins@marketgravity.com

We're sponsoring the [National Business Awards Innovation Award](#); the National Business Awards are our partners on the 2015 Innovation Insiders Index.

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About National Business Awards



The [National Business Awards](#) are the UK's flagship awards recognising and rewarding excellence across all business sectors.

Market Gravity are sponsoring the [Innovation Award](#); the National Business Awards are Market Gravity's partners on the 2015 Innovation Insiders Index.

The 2015 awards ceremony will be on 10 November at Grosvenor House in London. Entries close on 22 May 2015.

Any company within the UK can enter, whether public, private or third sector, regardless of size or industry. The range of award categories suit a wide variety of successful organisations, from large private and public companies to thriving entrepreneurial businesses, promising start-ups and established SMEs.

Find out more and apply to enter at nationalbusinessawards.co.uk

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