



Summary Findings from the LCRIG Christmas Innovator Quiz

Introduction

In December, LCRIG's Sector Insights team launched a festive quiz: 'what polar animal matches your innovator personality type'. The primary purpose of the quiz was to gain a general insight into individual attitudes and opinions towards innovation across the sector and to further compliment and supplement the findings from the LCRIG Innovation Survey (Autumn 2024).

We received a fantastic, wide-ranging level of response to the quiz from both suppliers and Local Authorities, and that feedback has in turn provided us with more meaningful data to show how we, as individuals working within our sector, view and feel about innovation.

The quiz was simple in structure and contained a series of multiple-choice questions relating to innovation which ultimately resulted in respondents being assigned a matching polar animal archetype based on their responses. The polar animal archetypes were chosen and assigned to corresponding innovator styles based on the animals' characteristics and attributes as follows:

- Polar Bear
- Narwhale
- Snowy Owl
- Reindeer
- Greenland Shark

Respondents assigned as polar bears would be categorised as pioneer/ visionary innovators. With polar bears being the apex predator within their environment, these traits correspond with the leaders of innovation. The polar bears of our quiz were typically up to date on the latest developments within their service area and didn't let hinderances set them back. They were proactive learners and led people in collaborative discussions, fueling innovation within their teams.

Respondents assigned as narwhales were deemed to be creative and experimenter innovators. Narwhales have a unique tusk on their heads and are almost mythical, making them a perfect parallel to respondents who typically engage in more hands-on approaches and tend to not avoid the riskier things that others may be averse to, being prepared to embrace failure when required. These innovators often provide unconventional ideas and approaches whilst fostering innovation through progressive thinking.

The snowy owl corresponds with pragmatic innovators, their beady eyes matching the acute attention to detail of analytical approaches. These respondents are typically highly detail-

orientated, often spotting things others may miss. While this may mean they have a tendency to be more risk averse in certain circumstances, they nonetheless analyse issues that arise and apply methodical steps to ensure they don't happen again. Snowy owl respondents are also typically more comfortable with a research role which allows them to focus on clear visions and goals.

Respondents assigned as reindeers are deemed as followers/ risk averse innovators based on their responses. Reindeers tend to be curious but are by nature fundamentally pack animals. These respondents typically only adopt innovations when they have been thoroughly tried and tested, with limited associated risk. Their approach to innovation is primarily centered around discussions with other professionals in order to foster innovation and work around barriers together.

The Greenland shark corresponds with disruptive/ conservative innovators. The Greenland shark is the longest living vertebrae in the world, living for around 400 years due to their slow metabolism, which slows movement, growth, and ageing. This reflects disruptive and conservative innovators who tend to adapt slowly to new innovations and feel reluctant to innovate unless completely necessary. Respondents with these traits typically follow traditional methods in order to overcome barriers, favour reduced associated risks and focus on tried and tested innovations.

RESULTS

The quiz began by asking respondents what their first course of action would be when faced with a problem, with choices including thinking outside of the box, analysing the problem, seeking advice, testing unconventional solutions, and following traditional methods to solve the problem. The results of which can be illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: First Steps in Approaching a Problem

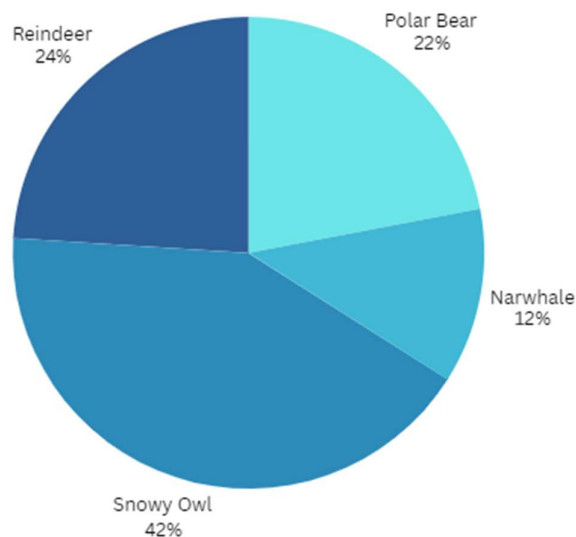
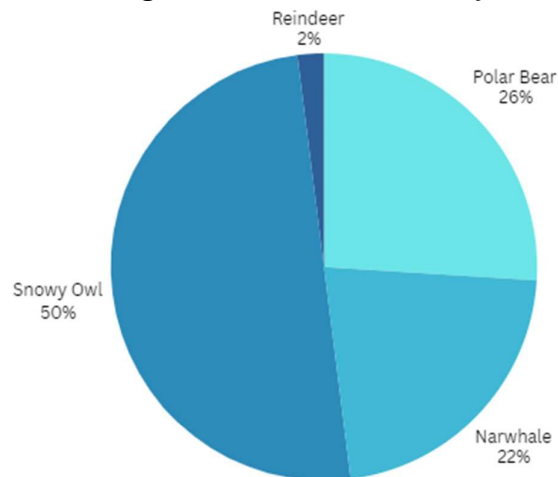


Figure 1 indicates that a significant proportion of respondents (42%) tend to adopt a more analytical approach when faced with a problem, analysing the problem in detail and exploring all possible solutions first. This was followed by 24% of respondents who tend to seek advice from others who have faced similar problems, adopting those proven approaches to follow. These results taken together suggest that, as a sector, we do not generally rush our decisions and prefer to think logically through all associated risks, which the more pioneering “polar bears” may overlook. It highlights the significance of risk in relation to innovation across the sector and shows that, even at the level of individuals, a tendency towards conservative approaches prevails. However, the result is nonetheless indicative of a common ambition to innovate, with no individual respondents opting to stick with traditional methods instead of innovating.

We also asked respondents how they felt they handled shortcomings or setbacks within their projects, the results of which were comparable to findings from the previous question.

Figure 2: Approaches in Handling Setbacks or Failure in Projects



The results from this question also highlighted that the majority of respondents (50%) corresponded with the snowy owl archetype – innovators who undertake analysis to understand what went wrong in order to make the necessary adjustments to improve accordingly. This was followed by the pioneer/ visionary approach of the polar bear, as 26% of respondents suggested they would opt to learn from their previous mistakes and persist in order to achieve their project’s goals, whilst not letting the risk of further failure or previous failures deter them. Indeed, taken as a whole, the results showed that 98% of respondents opted for choices that persevere through the failure and learn from the mistakes made, signifying the sector’s general view that failure should not simply be viewed as failure, but as an opportunity for learning.

The quiz also enquired what respondents’ preferences were in the context of the exploration of new ideas. Options ranged from experimentation through a hands-on approach, to discussions with other professionals, and from collaborative exploration in group environments through to reflections and controlled experimentation. The results are presented in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Preferences for the Exploration of New Ideas

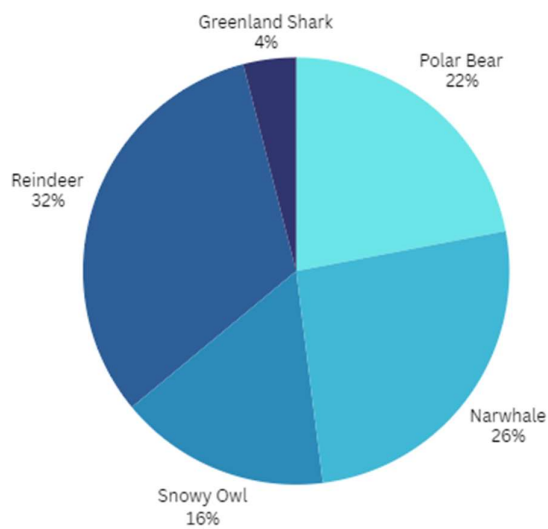


Figure 3 above shows the range of results in relation to preferences for the exploration of new ideas. From this we can infer that the majority of respondents (55%) tend towards the polar bear or reindeer approaches of discussion and working with others in group environments. We also found that a significant proportion of respondents (36%) favour a more conversational and discussion-based brainstormer role within a team setting, which further acknowledges the sector’s general preference for working together, rather than individually.

We were also interested in understanding how respondents stayed up to speed with innovation across the industry, whether through reading publications or attending conferences/ workshops, or through targeting learning with a selective focus on tested technologies. The results of this were significant, as shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Preferred Ways of Staying up to Speed with Industry Innovations

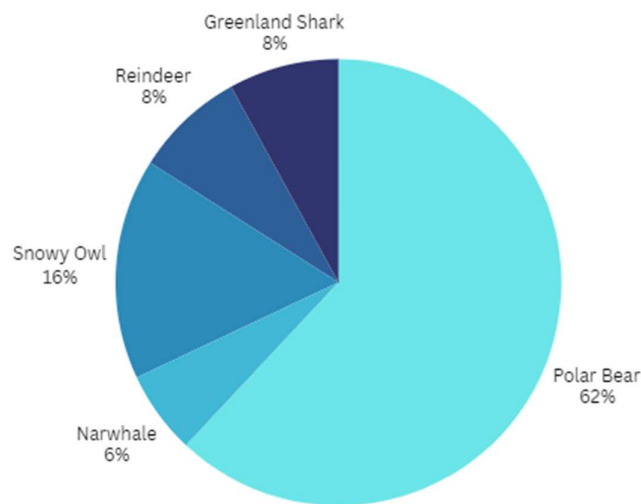


Figure 4 demonstrates that the majority of respondents (62%) opted for the choice that corresponded most closely with the polar bear archetype - the visionary / pioneer innovator. This highlights that most people prefer to engage with the sector at conferences / workshops / webinars in search of access to cutting-edge technologies. This was followed by 16% of respondents who preferred to read publications and reports on new technologies, aligning them to the more analytical snowy owl innovator approach. We also found that most respondents felt their motivation was grounded in the exploration of new technologies or methodologies and solving specific problems or challenges (32%). This, in combination with the result above, highlights the general desire of individuals to innovate, with the majority of respondents preferring to actively engage with the wider sector to explore new technologies collaboratively and to solve common problems or challenges together.

Through the quiz feedback we were also able to determine what respondents felt was the most important aspect of work that helps to foster innovation.

Figure 5: The Most Important Factor of Work that Best Fosters Innovation

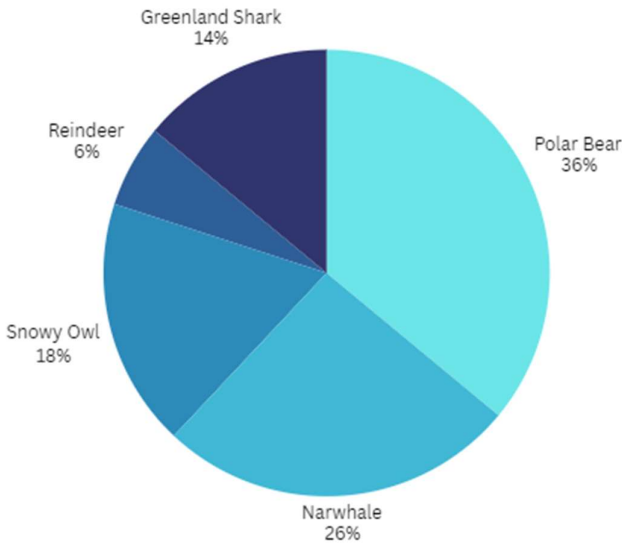


Figure 5 shows that a significant proportion of respondents (36%) opted for ‘a collaborative environment’ as the most important factor in fostering innovation, with a close second being the ‘encouragement of experimentation’ (26%). These two options correspond with pioneer / visionary and creative / experimenter innovators (polar bears and narwhales), and suggests that most individuals feel that a space where discussions can flow freely and where new and unique ideas can be formulated is vital to fostering innovation.

At the end of the quiz, respondents were assigned a polar animal that best reflected their innovation style based on the selection of answers they had provided. The results of this are shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Final Results from the Innovator Quiz

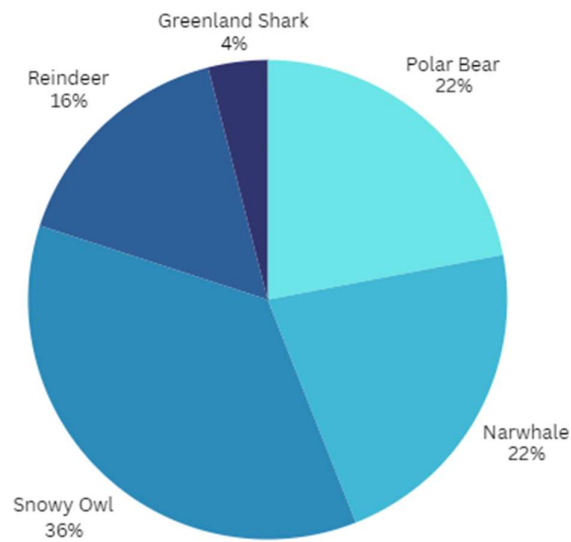


Figure 6 shows that the largest proportion of respondents (36%) were categorised as analytical / pragmatic innovators (snowy owls). Behind this were the pioneers / visionary innovators (polar bears) and creative/ experimental innovators (narwhales) with 22% of respondents each. These results, taken together, show that, overall, a significant percentage of respondents (80%) are leading the way and innovating as best they can and, furthermore, that while these different personality types work differently to each other, at varying levels they can be described as being determined, progressive, unfaltering in the face of failure, and well-engaged with innovative discussions in some form within the sector.

KEY FINDINGS

This quiz found that a majority of respondents are leading innovation through varying styles and that the largest proportion of respondents from across the sector tended towards an analytical, pragmatic and considered innovation approach, investigating all possible outcomes and resisting the temptation to jump into any scenarios which could result in a “failed” trial or innovation. Nonetheless, most innovators see setbacks or shortcomings as opportunities to learn from what went wrong and to make adjustments accordingly in order to ensure that the same mistake is not repeated.

The prevalence of the analytical / pragmatic innovator also highlights that, while individuals may be more progressive than organisational constraints allow, there is nonetheless a tendency to be risk averse in many circumstances.

While the presentation of these quiz results does not differentiate between local authority and supply chain responses, consistency across the answers would suggest that the two generally share similar views and opinions on innovation. From the feedback received we can identify a common desire to innovate, with results suggesting that many respondents do not generally view failure as an ending, but rather as a temporary pause, where learning can take place before progressing towards achieving end goals more effectively.

A strong sense of the criticality of collaboration also emerges consistently throughout the quiz responses, whether that be in order to keep up to date with industry trends, to creating innovative environments, or to collaboratively solve problems that arise – all of these were widely perceived as beneficial and came through strongly in the feedback received.

At LCRIG we host industry events, webinars, roundtables and working groups in order to enable and facilitate collaborative environments which work to foster innovation, including the Innovation and Learning Festival, where suppliers and local authorities can engage with one another collaboratively, explore and discuss cutting-edge innovations and share their experiences... We hope to see you there in July!