

Title What makes R&D successful - a practitioner's perspective
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Abstract

This paper presents a practitioner's perspective on what makes R&D successful. It focuses on applied R&D where the target customers are the commercial businesses in horticulture supply chains. R&D is successful when the information generated or technology developed is used by the customer to benefit them and the investors achieve an acceptable return on their investment.

The key elements for success are: (1) project objectives are relevant to the target customers and address a defined need; (2) the project team has the necessary skills or linkages to other providers required to plan, implement, evaluate and manage the project; (3) the customers are engaged in the process of discovery, learning and testing of new ideas and technology; (4) the information generated is effectively communicated to the customers and they increase their capacity to improve through gaining knowledge and skills; (5) the customers achieve commercial outcomes that benefit their business; and (6) desired outcomes are achieved for the R&D investors and the return on their investment is acceptable.

In a recent survey of innovative supply chain businesses and service providers throughout Australia, current R&D was assessed as not delivering commercial outcomes, too focussed on straight science, too long in duration, and industry funded R&D didn't meet their needs and was too focussed on growers. A common weakness in R&D is the lack of an effective extension plan. For extension to be effective, activities must be planned and integrated into the project and not just added at the end.

The principles of supply chain management can be used to improve the delivery of R&D. R&D providers are members of an information supply chain. Their end customer is the commercial businesses marketing horticulture products and their partners are other service providers who are generating and supplying information and technology to increase the capacity of the commercial businesses to improve. A successful R&D supply chain delivers value and satisfaction to the end customer and benefits for all members of the R&D chain.