

INNOVATIONS

There has to be

A better way

Or instead of

Better way

Should it be

Way better?

Innovations enable us to leap forward.

Individually and as a collective society. Solving problems of the past by reimagining the present to create a greater future.

Innovate Where It Matters

Human beings are wonderfully complex.

Full of contradictions.

We want to belong. Have things in common with others. Not feel like the odd one out.

Yet we want to be an individual. Be unique. Stand out.

Like most contradictions, it makes sense because it is contextual. We want to belong when we are in need of company. We want to stand out when there is a choice to be made.

Apply the same principle to your strategic plan.

Not all of the plan should be business as usual. Otherwise it would not be much of a strategy. Simply replicating what has already been done.

Likewise not all of your strategy should be business as unusual. Otherwise it would not be much of a plan. Making no use of experience gained.

Parity provides market relevance. From fulfilling a need to solving a problem – something has to provide your customers with something they have already proven to value, to attract and maintain their interest.

Differentiation provides competitive advantage. From lower pricing to more features – something has to provide your customers with greater value to win and retain their loyalty.

Think in New Ways

Innovative thinkers instinctively think differently to the vast majority.

If they did not, they quite simply would not be innovative.

While their thought patterns are naturally unusual, any of us can train our brain to think in innovative ways. The key is to use provocations to spark our brain to create new synaptic connections.

Strategy in Action

THINKING INNOVATIVELY

Structured creative thinking techniques can be used to spark your thought patterns in innovative new directions. While the idea of structured creativity might appear to be a contradiction, the reality is that the minds of creative thinkers follow a surprisingly disciplined process.

Rather than taking things at face value, they examine it from a diverse range of angles. Searching for new possibilities. Waiting for inspiration to strike.

Just like using a street sign as the starting point to remind yourself to try a new route to your destination, creative thinking techniques divert your brain in new directions.

Pause for a moment and focus your thinking by writing down a challenge in single sentence. It could be a high-value challenge facing your organisation or in other areas of your life. Alternatively it might be a relatively incidental problem just to experiment with the innovation process.

A variety of acronyms can be used to remember different techniques, from the classic SCAMPER¹ to modern evolutions such as SCRAMS:

- *Simplify* – What might we remove to simplify?
- *Combine* – What elements might be combined in a new way?
- *Reverse* – What might be approached in reverse?
- *Adapt* – What existing parts might be adapted?
- *Modify* – What other modifications might be made?
- *Substitute* – What parts might be substituted?

For example if the challenge was to make a presentation more compelling, your default approach might be to add extra slides and say more when presenting. While an innovative presenter might say less while asking questions to engage the audience and remove slides by using thought-provoking images to focus the room on key points of impact.

You can see that these ideas are sparked by key phrases such as ‘simplify’ by removing and ‘substituting’ telling for asking...

So what do you think of that?

Create Unexpected Value

It is easy to have unexpected ideas.

Green striped oranges.

See. That was not difficult. Just put some random words together in a way that does not really make sense.

While that might be creative, it is not innovative. Innovative ideas do not just surprise. They provide significant value. In a unique way.

Matching almost unimaginable ideas to very real problems.

Green striped oranges that are easier to peel.

Now we might be getting there. Peeling an orange is a real problem.² Which green stripes just might be able to solve.

How? Collaboration is a vital aspect of innovation. So rather than propose a solution myself, I will leave you to explore for yourself.

Let your mind wander.

Then return whenever you are ready to continue on...

Just as nature inspired the invention of Velcro,³ perhaps in this case another association inspired innovative possibilities. Thinking about a diverse range of other things that have ‘stripes’ that help with ‘peeling.’ (See what I did there? The quote marks around the words give your mind extra permission to think laterally).

Unless of course you do not like oranges.

Or prefer to slice rather than peel.

In other words, if the opportunity to innovate does not appeal.*

** I could add pun not intended. However, given this is a book where I had every opportunity to delete the questionably appealing closing thought, it clearly is now intended. In my defence it was never intended at the start of the section, when I wrote the sentence ‘Green striped oranges’ as a spontaneously random thought – without even an orange in sight. Becoming an innovation solution looking for a problem that then evolved further, by considering common challenges with oranges. With the real problem being that while oranges are not designed for rhymes, they are designed for puns. Just as well innovation depends on risking failure.*

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Innovation enables individuals and society to leap forward.
- Innovate to differentiate in some areas while providing parity elsewhere.
- Innovative thinkers' brains follow different thought patterns.
- Creative thinking techniques can enable everyone to think innovatively.
- Innovative ideas provide significant value as well as being unique.