

## What's Your Thinking Style?

Some people love to start new projects but run out of steam before they're finished. Others love to bring order out of chaos and they enjoy the feeling of completion that comes with a job well done. Some people love to present new ideas and help people see connections in new ways. Others love to tinker with concepts and gadgets, taking them apart and putting them back together again.

Each of us has our own unique thinking style. Understanding how we think can help us build on our strengths and know when we need to build partnerships with others to fill in our gaps. Having a preferred thinking style does not mean that we can't use the other thinking styles. We often become very proficient at developing skills in areas that do not represent our naturally preferred style. However, using our preferred thinking style generally energizes us, whereas using the other styles may drain our energy or be more difficult to sustain over time.

Understanding the thinking styles of others can help us work more productively on teams. When we understand the importance and contribution of each thinking style, we can deliberately create diversity on our project teams. Research has shown that project teams comprising diverse thinking styles create better results faster.

There are many great thinking style assessment tools. One that we like a lot is the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI). Taking the full assessment is most helpful, but you can quickly gather clues about your thinking styles by asking yourself or others two simple questions that reflect different mindsets that influence your outlook on innovation. (Again, this is about what energizes you, not what skills or proficiencies you have developed.)



**Start**

The first question addresses your timeframe mindset: start (present) or finish (future)? The figure to the left represents the two options.

**Question:** *Are you more energized when you are starting a new project or when you are organizing and completing an ongoing project?*



**Finish**

The second question involves your challenge mindset: fix it or sell it? The top figure on the next page represents those two choices.

**Question:** *Are you more energized when you are sharing, presenting, or selling concepts or when you are researching, analyzing, or refining concepts?*

These two questions can be mapped into a quadrant (see the bottom figure on the next page) to help you understand your own thinking style and the thinking styles of others.

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## What's Your Thinking Style?

Identifying where you fall on the spectrum for each question will determine which quadrant(s) represents your preferred thinking style. So, if you said you prefer to finish projects and fix problems, your preferred thinking style would wind up in the green "organizing" box.

The following descriptions are brief overviews to help you understand the different thinking styles. Remember: these are descriptions of what *energizes* you, not descriptions of your skills. Thinking styles are defined in terms of color as a match to the colorized version of the thinking styles graphic that appears on the CD.



- ♦ **Blue Thinkers (Problem Solving)** are always looking for problems to solve. They like to deal with facts and quantitative data. They tend to be more objective and logical than are Yellow Thinkers and more future oriented than Green Thinkers. *Strength:* problem solving. *Weakness:* process and empathetic communication.

- ♦ **Green Thinkers (Organizing)** love bringing order out of chaos and making processes better. They like to deal with objects and reality and tend to be more practical and concrete than Red Thinkers and better at finishing tasks than Yellow Thinkers. *Strength:* order and process. *Weakness:* knowing when to let go and how to communicate benefits.

<b><i>Problem Solving</i></b>	<b>Start</b>	<b><i>Exploring</i></b>
<b>Fix It</b>		<b>Sell It</b>
<b><i>Organizing</i></b>	<b>Finish</b>	<b><i>Teaching</i></b>

*Adapted from the Whole Brain Model, copyright held by the Ned Hermann Group, Inc.*

- ♦ **Red Thinkers (Teaching)** thrive on sharing and presenting information in a way that leads to a natural close of a deal or a project. They are more focused on sharing current projects and information with the world than are Green Thinkers and less interested in developing new concepts than Yellow Thinkers. *Strength:* collaborative selling. *Weakness:* bulletproofing concepts and logical problem solving.
- ♦ **Yellow Thinkers (Exploring)** love finding new possibilities and exploring the world. They tend to see the big picture and synthesize information but find it more difficult to

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handle final details than do the Red Thinkers and are more apt to overlook important facts or flaws than are the Blue Thinkers. *Strength*: embracing change. *Weakness*: too much shooting from the hip and not enough follow-up.

**Additional Resources**

- ♦ **Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument**: Originally developed by Ned Herrmann, the HBDI is one of the oldest and most validated assessment tools available. For more information, go to <http://www.hbdi.com>.
  - ♦ **Diversity Game**: Ted Coulson and Alison Strickland, with Applied Creativity, have developed a fun group activity based on the HBDI. Information is available at [http://www.appliedcreativityinc.com/book\\_diversity.html](http://www.appliedcreativityinc.com/book_diversity.html).
  - ♦ **Team Dimensions Profile** (formerly Innovate with C.A.R.E): This profile identifies the natural team roles of different thinking styles: creator, advancer, refiner, and executor. Visit this site for more information: <http://www.corexcel.com/html/care.desc.htm>.
  - ♦ **Kirton Adaptor-Innovator (KAI)**: This assessment of creativity style developed by Michael Kirton is based on a model that identifies people as having a natural tendency toward either adaptation or innovation. If you like to use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), take a look at the following site for a good article that matches the MBTI with the KAI: <http://www.tri-network.com/articles/kaimbti.html>.
  - ♦ **Innovation Styles**: This profile explores innovation styles in terms of Visioning, Exploring, Experimenting, and Modifying. It is an online assessment and that makes it easy to administer. A unique aspect of this system is that it relates creativity tools to the different styles. For more information: <http://www.creativeadvantage.com>.
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For many of us the joy of metaphor was squashed by a fourth-grade English teacher who kept harping (and grading us!) on the difference between metaphor and simile. Well, we're adults now and we can stop thinking about the trivial stuff so we are using "metaphor" as the general term. We think by making connections, linking one thing to another in a way that reveals to us the essence of each.

Research shows that we think in metaphors and that finding a metaphor for something is how we begin to truly perceive it. Try to describe something new to someone who can't see what you're describing. Listen for how quickly you start to say "It's like a . . ." Until you find the metaphor, the person you're describing something to can't see it.

The following bulleted items are exercises in metaphorical thinking. Before beginning any of them, relax and prepare to have fun!

- ♦ Think about your life—What's it like? Perhaps it's most like an ocean, a kaleidoscope, a fine wine, or a jigsaw puzzle with too many pieces and no picture to guide you?
- ♦ Pick any two objects in the room and start to think about one by thinking of the qualities of the other. Suppose you looked at a book and your telephone, and you wanted to know more about your telephone by thinking about the qualities of the book. The book is made of paper covered with ink. The book is easily disposed of after use but sometimes it takes on great value because of its content or rareness. If you were trying to improve the phone, these qualities of the book might suggest improvements such as disposable phones, replaceable phone "coverplates," or phones that become collector's items. This short exercise may not have produced highly original ideas but they are different from what you might have thought of by just focusing on the phone.
- ♦ Think of a problem you have or a situation you would like to change, and pick an image as a metaphor for how you feel about the problem or situation. Think through the qualities of the metaphor you picked and see how it relates to your situation. See if thinking of it this way brings you any insights.
- ♦ When you come to a new situation, ask "What is this like?" See if you can find a connection that will help you think more deeply about the situation.
- ♦ When you start a new project, think of a metaphor for the outcome you would like to achieve. This is especially powerful if your group can come up with a metaphor. Find an image that captures the sense of the metaphor and put it up where everyone can see it.

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Slide 11-1



*Through a story, life invites us to come inside as a participant.* — Stephen Denning

In 1997 Stephen Denning was frustrated in his efforts to create a knowledge management system to help the World Bank share information globally. He had made numerous presentations with impeccably logical charts and graphs. His audiences routinely nodded their heads “yes” but did nothing. Then he heard the following 29-word story from a co-worker:

*In June, 1995 a health worker in Kamana, Zambia, logged onto the Centers for Disease Control Website and got the answer to a question on how to treat malaria.*

Denning began to tell this story as part of his presentations, and the response of his listeners changed. They began to see the future and the possibilities for what he was proposing. In his book *The Springboard*, he describes these stories as “less a vehicle for communication of large amounts of information and more a tiny fuse that ignites a new story in the listeners’ minds, which establishes new connections and patterns in the listeners’ existing information, attitudes and perceptions.”

Springboard stories are carefully crafted to ignite new action. They free the imagination and invite the listener to see herself or himself in a better future. They build a sense of confidence and a mindset of action.

Here are the seven basic principles for these gem-like stories:

1. The story must have a beginning, middle, and end that is relevant to the listeners.
2. It must be highly compressed—remember, the original springboard story was only 29 words long.
3. It must have a hero, a person who accomplished something noteworthy.
4. There must be a surprising element. The story should shock the listener out of his or her complacency, shake up the listener’s model of reality.
5. It must stimulate an “of course!” reaction; that is, when the surprise is delivered, the listener should see the obvious path to the future.
6. It must illustrate the change process desired, be relatively recent, and “pretty much” true.
7. It must have a happy ending.

For more information about springboard stories, visit Denning’s Website, [www.stevedenning.com](http://www.stevedenning.com).

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A great question can unravel a mystery like a kitten batting a ball of twine. Finding those great questions that open minds and the secrets of the universe is a learned skill based on understanding the purposes of the questions and on practice.

Here are four purposes and 20 questions. You'll probably find other great questions as you begin to practice your questioning skills.

- ♦ **Purpose #1. Open the Future.** Ask questions that open up thought, imagination, and conversation about future possibilities.
- ♦ **Purpose #2. Reveal New Territory.** Ask questions that take us somewhere...to new information, people, resources, ideas, or perspectives.
- ♦ **Purpose #3. Fill In the Blanks.** Ask questions that expose thinking gaps.
- ♦ **Purpose #4. Find the Heart.** Ask questions that explore emotional connections.

***Questions for Purpose #1, Future***

1. What is the hole in the universe that is waiting to be filled?
2. What would make customers (internal or external) say "Wow!"?
3. If we had a magic wand and could choose to make anything happen, what would it be?
4. Wouldn't it be great if we...? Or, Wouldn't it be awful if...?
5. What is the world our hearts long for?
6. Two years from now, if we were celebrating our success, what would have happened?

***Questions for Purpose #2, New Territory***

7. How might we find new information about the issue?
8. If we could change one thing about this, what would it be?
9. What person, living or dead, would have a completely different perspective or new information on this project?
10. What is the absolute core, the most basic element of this issue? Or, what absolutely can't be changed?
11. What resources might we be overlooking?
12. With whom could we form partnerships to become more effective?
13. How might we make it [*better, bigger, faster, smaller, more fun*]?

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***Questions for Purpose #3, Filling In the Blanks***

- 14. What assumptions are we making? Or, what are we not giving ourselves permission to do? Or, what rules have we never questioned?
- 15. How is the world changing?
- 16. What are our blindspots?
- 17. What is unfinished about this?

***Questions for Purpose #4, Heart***

- 18. What will we do with our one wild and precious life?
  - 19. What do we personally want from participation in this project? Or, what is our passionate purpose?
  - 20. What is it about this project that wakes us up in the morning filled with excitement?
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## Breakthrough Generator Matrix

Innovation may seem like a mysterious process but there are techniques that help simplify it. The matrix below encourages you to think about your product or service from your customers' perspective, specifically considering the benefits most important to them.

To use the matrix, pick one of the primary benefits in column 1 and a secondary benefit from column 2. Then put them together into a "How might we...?" statement. For instance, "How might we improve our packaging by making it more friendly?" Or, "How might we justify a higher price by adding more information or an educational component?" You can also combine two primary benefits or two secondary benefits. "How might we improve our packaging by making it more dependable?" Or, "How might we improve the image of our service by including stories?"

Then pick an action and apply it to the statement. For instance, take Substitute as the action: "What could we substitute on our packaging to make it more friendly?" Or take Partner as the action: "Who could we partner with to justify a higher price by adding more information and an educational component?"

Use the matrix to develop several intriguing questions before beginning the process of idea generation. Pick the one question that has the most energy around it and begin to develop ideas about how to achieve it.

### Breakthrough Generator Matrix

PRIMARY BENEFITS	SECONDARY BENEFITS	ACTION
Size	Image/Status	Add
Speed	Information/Education	Subtract
Convenience	Social connection	Rearrange
Durability	Texture	Outsource
Fuel Efficiency	Shape	Minimize/Maximize
Safety	Emotion	Standardize
Quality	Nostalgia	Individualize
Price	Smell	Extend
Dependability	Color	Combine
Ease of use	Excitement	Substitute

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*Handout 11-5, continued*

***Breakthrough Generator Matrix***

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**Breakthrough Generator Matrix (continued)**

PRIMARY BENEFITS	SECONDARY BENEFITS	ACTION
Distribution	Beauty	Adapt
Fun	Stories	Modify
Experience	Interactivity	Reverse
Packaging	Flexibility	Use in a new way
Variety of choice	Friendliness	Partner

**Better Brainstorming Guidelines**

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If you want more and better ideas, post and review these guidelines for brainstorming at the beginning of a session. Studies show that this simple step can improve results by 50 percent, giving you more and better ideas. The most important guideline happens before you walk into the room—Deliberate Diversity; that is, make sure you have a diverse mix of thinking styles, backgrounds, perspectives, and skills represented in your brainstorming group.

- ♦ **Judge Later.** During the idea-generation process there should be no judgment or discussion—not even groans, frowns, or “great idea!” remarks. Just keep pumping out the ideas and go for quantity, not quality. The judging process will come later.
- ♦ **Avoid Discussion.** Avoid stories, discussions, and elaborations on how the idea could be done or how great it might be. Just keep generating ideas.
- ♦ **Capture Ideas.** Have someone record every idea expressed, have each person write her or his ideas on sticky notes (one idea per sheet), or employ some other capture process.
- ♦ **Be Specific.** Every idea should be specific and actionable—no generalities such as “improve communication.” Each idea should include a noun and a verb, such as “distribute a weekly newsletter.”
- ♦ **Build.** Build on other people’s ideas; make them bigger, smaller, or a different color, or turn them inside out. Say, “Yes, and....” For instance, “Yes, and we could distribute it by email or in payroll envelopes.”
- ♦ **Participate.** Ideas come from anywhere and everywhere. The best idea may be in the mind of someone who has never, ever volunteered an idea before so it’s important for everyone to contribute all of their ideas.
- ♦ **Set Time Limit.** Set a time limit for generating ideas, preferably not more than 30–45 minutes. At the end of this time, take a short break and assess where you are.
- ♦ **Number Your Ideas.** IDEO, the award-winning international corporate design firm, believes that numbering ideas stimulates the flow of ideas. In its opinion, 100 ideas per hour indicates a good, fluid brainstorming session.

Brainwriting is one of the simplest idea-generation techniques and often creates some breakthrough ideas as people build on the ideas of others. It works best with small groups of five to nine people and two of the three worksheets provided here include stimulator words to make it an even more powerful tool. Here are the guidelines:

**Reminders:**

1. Review the issue or purpose for the session.
2. Develop in advance the criteria for success.
3. Work silently (discussion will follow the ideation time).
4. Be specific. Every idea should have a subject and a verb; for example, "create a weekly newsletter."
5. Don't judge ideas. Quantity counts.
6. Build on ideas, reverse them, and turn them inside out or upside down.

**Generating Ideas:**

1. Print out a worksheet for each person and distribute them to everyone participating in the session.
2. Each person writes one idea in each of the three boxes of one line.
3. When a person has filled in one line of three boxes, he or she puts the sheet in the center of the group's table and takes a new worksheet from those in the center of the table.
4. Each person adds three more ideas to each sheet taken, building on ideas where appropriate or just adding new ideas as they occur.
5. Allow 20-30 minutes or stop when it's obvious that energy is lagging.

**Processing Ideas:** *(With more than nine people, break into subgroups.)*

1. Establish or review criteria for success.
2. Each person takes one sheet and marks an "X" beside the ideas that are interesting.
3. Participants exchange sheets and mark interesting ideas, repeating the exchange until everyone has seen three sheets. Ask participants to hold on to the third sheet they process.

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4. From the worksheet she or he is holding, each person reads the ideas that have three Xs, then the ones with 2 Xs, and then those with a single X.
5. Look for any “orphan” ideas—those for which someone has a lot of passion around but that no one considered interesting.
6. Cut the ideas apart and tape or glue the ideas that received votes onto index cards.
7. Tape the index cards onto flipchart sheets in order of priorities—3 Xs together on one sheet, 2 Xs on another sheet, and so on. Have everyone walk around and reread the ideas. Begin a discussion about which ideas are best and ways to make them even stronger.

**Judging Ideas:**

1. Review the criteria again.
2. Use the process presented in Handout 11-9: Quadrant Collaboration to create a quadrant to help you map the ideas generated against two important criteria.
3. Use Handout 11-14: Dot Voting with a Difference to select one or two ideas to develop further.

**BRAINWRITING WORKSHEETS**

On the following pages you will find three Brainwriting Worksheets, with directions for use. Choose whichever worksheet best fits your situation. The first one is the Basic Brainwriting Worksheet. It has empty cells for participants to fill. The second sheet is the Brainwriting Worksheet with Random Words. The third one is the Brainwriting Worksheet with SCAMPER Plus.

## Basic Brainwriting Worksheet

*Instructions:* Take one worksheet and enter three ideas, one in each box on a horizontal line. Then put this sheet in the center of the table. Take a different worksheet from the table and enter three new ideas horizontally. If you start to run out of ideas, build on the ideas already on the sheet.


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## Brainwriting Worksheet with Random Words

*Instructions:* Take one worksheet and enter three ideas, one in each box on a horizontal line. Then, put that sheet in the center of the table, take a different sheet from the table, and enter three new ideas. Use the words in the box to stimulate ideas—or ignore them if you're on a roll. If you start to run out of ideas, build on the ideas already on the sheet.

Speed	Convenience	Color
Communication	Love	Partnership
Size	Fun	Star
Door	Beauty	Excitement
Water	Durability	Texture

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## Brainwriting Worksheet with SCAMPER\* Plus

*Instructions:* take one worksheet and enter three ideas, one in each box on a horizontal line. Then put that sheet in the center of the table, take a different sheet, and enter three new ideas. Use the words in the box to stimulate ideas, or ignore them if you're on a roll. If you start to run out of ideas, build on the ideas already on the sheet.

Subtract	Combine	Adapt
Partner	Extend	Reverse
Rearrange	Standardize	Add
Minimize	Individualize	Substitute
Enlarge	Colorize	Beautify
Simplify	Magnify	Eliminate

*\*SCAMPER is a term and process developed by Michael Michalko building on earlier work by Alex Osborn. Michalko's terms included Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put (to another use), Eliminate, Reverse.*

When you are trying to make a decision or choose among many options, it helps to have a structured method of looking at the entire system surrounding the decision. The first step is to consider which factors affect and are affected by the decision. Every situation is different and will include unique factors.

The list below offers a few major factors with sample questions for each. Be certain to consider every problem or opportunity separately and make sure you are looking at each important factor.

You may not have time to consider each factor in depth or to complete the worksheet provided here, but at least scan the worksheet.

### Major Factors and Pertinent Questions

- ♦ **People:** Who will it affect? Who needs to be involved or informed? Who has information that might be critical? Who could sabotage the project? Whose availability is critical?
- ♦ **Resources:** What resources are critical to success? What might make critical resources unavailable? What new resources will be needed?
- ♦ **Timing:** What deadlines are critical to success? What calendar events might affect the schedule? Whose availability is critical? What potential delays might throw off the entire project?
- ♦ **Customers:** What is critically important to customers? What are they emotionally attached to? What features are they willing to live without?
- ♦ **Trends:** What new technologies, demographics, government regulations, or economic changes might affect this project?
- ♦ **Competitors:** What are the competitors doing? What new competitors are developing?
- ♦ **Use:** How will it be used? Are there any hazardous materials involved? Could someone be injured in the use? Is it comfortable?
- ♦ **Convenience:** What would make it more user friendly? Will customers be able to obtain it easily? How will it be serviced and supported?
- ♦ **Environment:** How will it affect the environment? How will it affect the local community?

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## Think 360 Worksheet

Instructions: Use this worksheet to describe the system that surrounds the decision you are making. Consider the factors and questions carefully and address those that are appropriate for your situation. Space is provided for as many as three answers to each question. Add your own questions as needed.

FACTORS AND QUESTIONS	ANSWER #1	ANSWER #2	ANSWER #3
<b>People</b>			
Who will it affect? (individuals, groups, departments, and so forth)			
Who needs to be involved or informed?			
Who has information that might be critical?			
Who could sabotage the project?			
Whose availability is critical?			
Who will make the decision?			
<b>Resources</b>			
What resources are critical to success?			
What might make critical resources unavailable?			
What new resources might be needed?			
Where can it be made most effectively?			

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*Think 360 Worksheet, continued*

FACTORS AND QUESTIONS	ANSWER #1	ANSWER #2	ANSWER #3
<b>Timing</b>			
What deadlines are critical to success?			
What calendar events might affect the schedule?			
What potential delays might throw off the entire project?			
What are the "go/no-go" points?			
<b>Customers</b>			
What is critically important to customers?			
What changes in customer needs and wants might affect the project?			
How will customers know about the change?			
<b>Trends</b>			
What new technology might affect the project?			
What demographics might affect the project?			
What government regulations might affect the project?			

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*Think 360 Worksheet, continued*

FACTORS AND QUESTIONS	ANSWER #1	ANSWER #2	ANSWER #3
What changes in the economy might affect the project?			
<b>Competitors</b>			
What are the competitors doing?			
What new competitors are developing?			
<b>Use</b>			
How will it be used?			
Are there any hazardous materials involved?			
Is it comfortable?			
<b>Convenience</b>			
What would make it more user friendly?			
Will customers be able to obtain it easily?			
How will it be serviced and supported?			

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Think 360 Worksheet, continued

FACTORS AND QUESTIONS	ANSWER #1	ANSWER #2	ANSWER #3
Environment			
How will it affect the environment?			
How will it affect the local community?			

**Quadrant Collaboration**

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After you've generated a ton of ideas, what do you do with them? The one thing you *don't* want to do is send all of those sticky notes off with someone assigned to type up a report.

Quadrant Collaboration can bring order out of chaos and give you a running start on knowing which ideas should be implemented and in what order.

Here are the seven steps of Quadrant Collaboration:

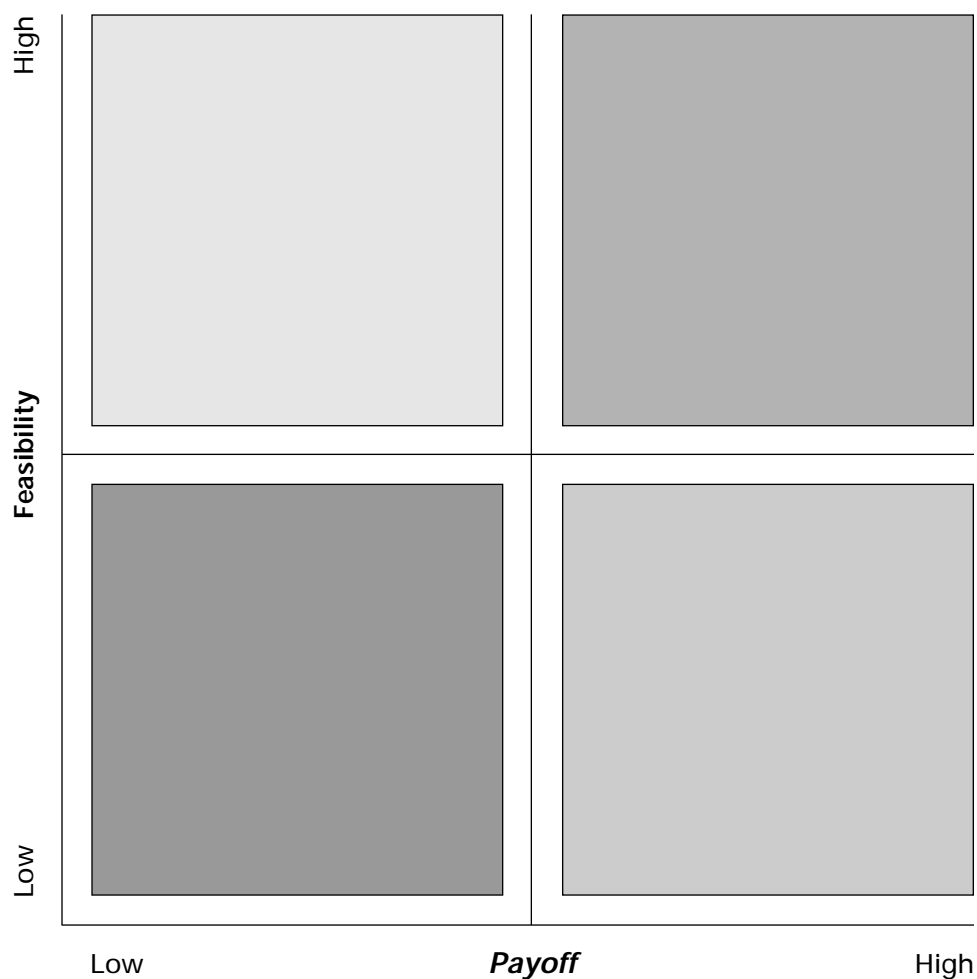
1. **Pick Major Criteria.** Think about two criteria for judging your ideas. Two common ones are "Feasibility" and "Payoff."

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*Tool 11-1*

**Quadrant Chart Example**

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2. **Draw the Quadrants.** On a flipchart pad draw a square and divide it into quadrants by inserting two perpendicular axes. Label the vertical axis "Feasibility" with "Low" at the bottom and "High" at the top. Label the horizontal axis "Payoff" with "Low" at the left and "High" at the right. (See Tool 11-1.)

You can experiment with other terms for the axes. "Feasibility" might be changed to "Implementation Time" or "Effort" or "Cost." "Payoff" might be changed to "Excitement" or "Value" or "Potential."

3. **Use Faux Facts.** Have everyone agree that you're just going to use the tool to do a rough-order evaluation of the idea. This is not the time for analysis and science or for lengthy debate. Thinking of this evaluation as "faux facts" with analysis to come later helps people make judgments more quickly.
  4. **Position the Ideas.** As rapidly as possible, put the ideas on the quadrants in a way that reflects the general agreement of the group. If there are too many ideas to put on the chart, have each individual pick their five favorite ideas and put them up.
  5. **Reflect.** Tell everyone to step back and think about where the ideas wound up on the chart and make any final adjustments.
  6. **Determine Needs.** Talk about each quadrant in relationship to your specific situation. If you need a quick success, you want the easiest idea with the highest payoff. If you're looking for your next-generation success, you want the highest payoff that appears to be at least potentially doable.
  7. **Select Ideas.** Identify the ideas with the highest level of excitement and take those ideas into the next level of project planning.
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<p>Have a "Failure Party" at which people share their worst idea or biggest failure. Encourage management participation. Make it fun.</p> <hr/> <p>Print out the Innovation-DNA Framework of Principles and post it prominently where it will remind others of innovation. Make sure it's in all meeting rooms.</p> <hr/> <p>Stimulate conversations around innovation in meetings, in the halls, wherever you can.</p> <hr/> <p>Create your own email list of people who understand how important innovation is. Email them short, interesting articles or stories to sustain their interest.</p> <hr/> <p>Model innovation. Make sure people see you taking on new challenges, making mistakes, honoring ideas, being collaborative, and taking time to learn the lessons from the projects you finish.</p>	<p>Make your office an innovation magnet. Make it colorful and fun with books, tapes, toys, and models or graphic representations of projects. (Chocolate helps, too!)</p> <hr/> <p>Start an innovation group and talk about how you can spread innovation to the tipping point!</p> <hr/> <p>Pick a book about creativity and start an innovation book club.</p> <hr/> <p>Ask some of your co-workers how they define innovation and then talk about what gets in your way of doing it.</p> <hr/> <p>Send an innovation article to your boss and ask if you can meet to talk about it.</p> <hr/> <p>Start an innovation book shelf in your office. Invite people to borrow the books. (Be prepared to lose them.)</p> <hr/> <p>Share articles and stories about what innovation looks like in your own organization and in other organizations.</p>	<p>At every meeting ask, "Are we being innovative?" Or, "Is there a better way to do this?"</p> <hr/> <p>Always ask, "What else could we do?" when thinking about projects or problems.</p> <hr/> <p>Always ask, "Does this support our vision? Does this create value for our customers?" when thinking about projects.</p> <hr/> <p>Share examples of innovative ideas related to your business and get innovators on the same page.</p> <hr/> <p>In a meeting, carve out a "total agreement" time, at which point all ideas must be agreed with and built on to find the "greatness" in them. No negativity allowed!</p> <hr/> <p>Make a provocative poster that reads, "Rumor has it that our competitors are making time for innovation."</p> <hr/> <p>Send an email with the start of a storyline about a success in the organization and have people add to it.</p>
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<p>Hold a “dump old ideas” brown-bag lunch. Ask, “What’s one thing we can stop doing so we have more time for innovation?” Then determine how actions can be taken on the best ideas.</p> <hr/> <p>Ask employees to create a “Perfect World” wall graphic. Use it to stimulate conversation about how to make the work environment a more perfect world.</p> <hr/> <p>Produce an Innovation Fair at which people create posters or displays of innovation projects that have been completed or that they are working on and would like help with.</p> <hr/> <p>Declare a “Purple-Idea Day” during which people generate really far-out ideas. Or declare a “Red-Idea Day” for those ideas that are too hot to handle. Carry the color scheme throughout. When ideas are gathered, you might publish the “Purple Sheet” or the “Red News” to management.</p>	<p>Form Idea Teams—groups that meet for one coffee break each week to generate ideas on specified topics. (This might also be a way to get people to work with people outside their normal work group.)</p> <hr/> <p>Hold an Innovation Story Hour during which people tell stories of innovation processes they’ve been involved in. Identify the principles behind these stories and talk about how to create an environment that supports innovation.</p> <hr/> <p>Hold a “What Could We Do to <i>Prevent</i> Creativity and Innovation?” brainstorming session. Then do the opposite.</p> <hr/> <p>Create an idea gift exchange. It’s always easier to solve someone else’s problem. Have people generate ideas for each other’s opportunities, projects, or problems.</p>	<p>Hold a “Reality Show Idea Fair” during which employees put on performances and demonstrations of how their ideas would work in real life.</p> <hr/> <p>Show an innovation video on Friday afternoon, complete with popcorn and sodas. Discuss the video afterward.</p> <hr/> <p>Identify some successful innovators in the organization or from the community and ask them to make a presentation about innovation at a brown-bag lunch.</p> <hr/> <p>Create a “Featured Customer” series of brown-bag lunches to help people understand customers more fully. Ask customers or people who have regular and close contact with them to make the presentations.</p> <hr/> <p>Create an innovation Website and publish stories of success and failure from articles and books, and publish internal and external examples of best practices.</p>
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<p>Invite people to join a Trend Search. Have them spend two weeks looking at everything they can find—magazines, books, papers, movies, the Web—and talking to people about what’s new in the world. Ask them to come together and discuss their findings at the end of the two weeks.</p>	<p>Cross-fertilize by forming triads across business units or departments and talking about problems and opportunities to see what new thinking arises.</p> <hr/> <p>Become more familiar with company strategy. Arrange an open session and ask a senior executive to discuss strategy and how it relates to innovation.</p>	<p>Identify subject matter experts who are visiting the organization and ask them to make presentations on their areas of interest at sessions open to everyone.</p>
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## **Innovation Criteria Grid**

When an organization becomes adept at identifying possibilities and generating new ideas, the challenge shifts to evaluating those possibilities and ideas. This often turns out to be the most confounding aspect of the innovation process. Too often, people fall in love with ideas or potential projects, or they respond to a need of the moment and launch the wrong project at the wrong time.

Many experts say that 90 percent of all projects fail, most because they should not have begun in the first place. The Innovation Criteria Grid helps you think through the evaluation process to make sure you're working with concepts that have a reasonable chance of succeeding.

Setting evaluation criteria is critical to prioritizing possibilities. However, criteria differ depending on the project type, the organization's objectives, and the market. For example, the criteria for a project designed to cut costs differ from those of a radical innovation project. So first you must categorize the project. The Innovation Criteria Grid offers three basic categories of innovation based on the intended outcome:

1. **Transform.** This category includes new products, services, or processes that dramatically change everything, including the target market and value proposition. *Example:* cell phones.
2. **Evolve.** These possibilities can lead to distinctly new and better products, services, or processes and should create new value for customers and the organization. *Example:* wireless Internet access for cell phones or video phones.
3. **Improve.** These projects are designed to cut costs, improve what already exists, or extend current product or service lines. *Example:* customizable cell phone facecovers.

When you have identified the category of the innovation you are seeking, go to the Criteria Grid that is related to that category and rate each factor. What's important about the grid process is that it demands thinking about specific factors for success. This can be done individually by each team member. Teams should then gather and discuss the ratings given. Or the group might discuss each factor to arrive at a consensus rating. The purpose of the grid is to stimulate a broad conversation about the risks and rewards of the project. Each grid presented here includes two blank lines so that you can add criteria that are appropriate for your specific possibility.

The Innovation Criteria Grid ratings are not intended to be "go/no go" decision points. They should stimulate conversation about how to overcome weak points and how to provide a rough gauge of the relative strengths of competing projects.

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Here are the steps for using the Innovation Criteria Grid:

1. **Identify criteria.** Internal process criteria will differ from criteria for new products or services to be sold to customers. Make the criteria relevant to the project.
2. **Create an appropriate criteria grid form.** Examples are given in this handout, but you should adapt the grid to your own specific situation.
3. **Rate each criterion,** either individually or as a group.
4. **Discuss** ways to improve weak factors.
5. **Compare competing projects.** On the next several pages we've provided examples of grids for each category of innovation—transformative, evolutionary, and improvement-oriented. They're intended to get you started on creating a grid that suits your unique project or concept.

Again, remember that the purpose of this exercise is not to make a go/no go decision, but to make the concept stronger. If you were just starting to develop a concept, this evaluation might stimulate conversation about sharing risk through alliances and thinking more about the value to customers and how it would benefit various types of users.

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## Example of a Transform Innovation Criteria Grid

Transform Innovation: New products, services, or processes that dramatically change everything including the value proposition.

Instructions: The criteria are listed in the first column of the grid. The possible ratings (1–5) are defined in the next five columns. Select the rating that best describes your concept for each criterion and write it in the last column.

CRITERION	1	2	3	4	5	RATING
New market	No; current market only	Some expansion potential	Small segment of new market	Major segment of new market	Completely new, large market	
Uniqueness	Many similar options	A few similar options	Somewhat unique	Unique in many ways	Nothing like it in the market	
Transformative benefits *	Little improvement	Some improvement in one benefit	Definite improvement in one benefit	Dramatic improvement in one benefit	Dramatic improvement in one benefit	
Value for customer	Little or no new value	Some new value	Visible increase in value	Significant increase in value	Wow!	
Value for organization	Hard to identify value	New capacities	Offers entry to new market	Major player in large market	Own a huge, new, profitable market	
Fits strategy	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Closely	Expands strategy	
Probability of success	High probability of failure	Long shot	50–50	Probable success	Looks like a sure thing	

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Example of a Transform Innovation Criteria Grid, continued

Transform Innovation: New products, services, or processes that dramatically change everything including the value proposition.

Instructions: The criteria are listed in the first column of the grid. The possible ratings (1–5) are defined in the next five columns. Select the rating that best describes your concept for each criterion and write it in the last column.

CRITERION	1	2	3	4	5	RATING
Investment risk	We're betting the farm	Would crowd out most other possibilities	Major capital budget item	Within business-unit approval guidelines	Cheap; no-brainer	
Ready availability of know-how	Not at all	Uncertain	Maybe	Probably	Definitely	
Partner/alliance possibilities	None	Perhaps	Some	Probably	Definitely	

\*Radical innovations generally offer dramatic improvements in one or more transformative benefits, such as size, speed, convenience, durability, fuel efficiency, safety, quality, price, dependability, ease of use, distribution, or fun.

Note: Review the criteria from the Improvement-oriented Innovation Criteria Grid and add to this grid any that are appropriate for this project.

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## Example of an Evolve Innovation Criteria Grid

Evolve Innovation: Distinctly new and better products, services, or processes that create value.

Instructions: The criteria are listed in the first column of the grid. The possible ratings (1–5) are defined in the next five columns. Select the rating that best describes your concept for each criterion and write it in the last column.

CRITERION	1	2	3	4	5	RATING
Uniqueness	Many similar options	A few similar options	Somewhat unique	Unique in many ways	Nothing similar in the market	
Market potential	None	Small	Average	Large	Huge	
Fits strategy	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Closely	Completely	
Value for customer	None	Some	Average	Significant	High	
Value for organization	None	Some	Average	Significant	High	
Simplicity of concept	Complex and arcane	High level of education required	Some education required	Understandable by most people	Easily understood by all	
Implementation difficulty	Extremely difficult	Very difficult	Moderately difficult	Somewhat easy	Easy	
Implementation speed	Far in the future	Lengthy	Moderate	Fairly quick	Almost instant	

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Example of an Evolve Innovation Criteria Grid, continued

Evolve Innovation: Distinctly new and better products, services, or processes that create value.

Instructions: The criteria are listed in the first column of the grid. The possible ratings (1–5) are defined in the next five columns. Select the rating that best describes your concept for each criterion and write it in the last column.

CRITERION	1	2	3	4	5	RATING
Implementation cost	Budget breaker	Would put all eggs in this basket	Major expense that requires many approvals	Within approval guidelines of business unit	Cheap; no-brainer	
Ready availability of know-how	Not at all	Uncertain	Maybe	Probably	Definitely	

Note: Review the criteria from the Improvement-oriented Innovation Criteria Grid and add to this grid any that are appropriate for this project.

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## Example of an Improve Innovation Criteria Grid

Improve Innovation: Improvements in what already exists, cost cutting, or line extensions.

Instructions: The criteria are listed in the first column of the grid. The possible ratings (1–5) are defined in the next five columns. Select the rating that best describes your concept for each criterion and write it in the last column.

CRITERIA	1	2	3	4	5	RATING
Implementation difficulty	Extremely difficult	Very difficult	Moderately difficult	Somewhat easy	Easy	
Implementation speed	Far in the future	Lengthy	Moderate	Fairly quick	Almost instant	
Saves money	None	Some	Moderate amount	Significant amount	Big money	
Return-on-investment	Significantly below threshold	Somewhat below threshold	Meets threshold	Somewhat above threshold	Significantly above threshold	
Easily understood	New capabilities needed	Lots of training needed	Some training needed	Some review needed	Yes	
Fits strategy	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Pretty well	Completely	
New resources required	Lots and expensive	Significant amount	Some	Not many	None	
Compatible with current systems and initiatives	No	Significant adjustments required	Moderate adjustments required	Minor adjustments required	Yes	

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Example of an Improve Innovation Criteria Grid, continued

Improve Innovation: Improvements in what already exists, cost cutting, or line extensions.

Instructions: The criteria are listed in the first column of the grid. The possible ratings (1–5) are defined in the next five columns. Select the rating that best describes your concept for each criterion and write it in the last column.

CRITERIA	1	2	3	4	5	RATING
Speeds up processes	No	Some	Moderately	Significantly	Extremely	
Meets legal and ethical requirements	No	Many problems to fix	Some problems to fix	Problems easily fixed	Yes	
Easily managed	Many complications and unknowns	Highly complex	Significant uncertainties	Some uncertainties	Piece of cake	
Fits culture	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Mostly	Yes	
Environmentally sound	Probably not	With more work and money	Some problems to fix	Problems easily fixed	Yes	
Ready availability of know-how	Not at all	Uncertain	Maybe	Probably	Definitely	

## Contemplation Matrix

Sharing ideas, insights, and lessons learned is a fundamental skill for innovation organizations, but it may be the hardest skill to develop and maintain. The pressure to deliver more with less makes people loath to stop and collect information so that it can be shared. Additionally, few organizations actually recognize or reward the effort of collecting and sharing information.

But there are some exceptions. For example, the Neenan Company, a unique and innovative construction firm in Fort Collins, Colorado, has as part of its employee evaluation program a requirement for a Learning and Sharing Contract. Annually employees commit to what they are going to learn and what they are willing to teach during the year.

There are many different types of information that should be shared and many ways to share it. The Contemplation Matrix offers you a tool for thinking of ways to promote contemplation that work specifically for your organization.

### Contemplation Criteria

For a contemplation process to work well it should meet the following three simple criteria. It should be

1. **Open.** As many people as reasonable and possible should have access to the information offered, both in submitting it and in accessing it.
2. **Relevant.** The information should be fresh, pertinent, and not readily available in standard places.
3. **Modifiable.** Because new information has a way of changing, it should be easy to amend as new data are processed.

Use the Contemplation Matrix Worksheet included here to generate ideas for collecting and sharing information. For each type of information enumerated vertically in the left-hand column, think of ways you could use the transmission mechanisms described at the tops of the other columns. List as many as possible in each area. Try to use the lowest possible level of technology in the beginning. One very effective contemplation process involves creating communities of practice that meet on a regular basis to share learnings and new information.

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Contemplation Matrix Worksheet

Instructions: Use this matrix to record ways you could share the types of information listed in the left-hand column by using the transmission methods described across the tops of the other columns.

TYPE OF INFORMATION TO COLLECT/SHARE	EMAIL OR WEBSITE	IN-PERSON MEETINGS OR TRAININGS	TELEPHONE CONFERENCE OR VOICE MAIL	DATABASE SYSTEMS— KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT OR IDEA MANAGEMENT	VIDEO, CD, GRAFFITI WALLS, OR OTHER
Project lessons					
Insights					
Concerns					
Ideas					
Tools and techniques					
New data regarding customers, competitors, supplies, trends, technologies					
Competitor information					

Creativity can seem like magic...and it is...but it also can be clarified by understanding its underlying phases and principles and by grasping one very important rule.

### **Two Phases of Creativity**

The two phases of creativity are *divergence* and *convergence*. Divergence is the stimulation of new thinking by diversifying and exploring. Convergence involves refining and choosing the best possibilities. Each phase has a series of five operating principles that happen to fit neatly into the mnemonic device *SWAMI SOARS!* (If you hate clever mnemonics, feel free to ignore it.)

### **One Rule of Creativity**

*Separate the two phases.* Trying to diverge and converge at the same time makes people crazy and sucks the juice out of the creative process, leaving you with pale, lifeless ideas.

### **Divergence Processes: SWAMI**

Although there are hundreds of divergence techniques, they basically relate to five simple processes. When you understand these processes you can easily add to your divergence toolkit without feeling overwhelmed.

The job of all divergence tools is to stimulate new thinking. Here are the five basic action processes (stated as verbs) inherent in all these tools:

1. **Suppose.** Putting yourself in imaginary situations switches on new ways of thinking. For example, if you were from Mars, what would this problem look like? If you were six years old or three feet tall, what would the future look like to you? If you could smash all the assumptions around this issue, what would happen? A useful tool for this process is creating "future stories" in which you think of headlines that you would like to see and then make up a story about how those headlines came to be.
2. **Wander.** Wandering through new territory with an open mind scoops up new connections and links. For instance, you can wander through hardware or antique stores, new magazines or conferences, random images or analogies from nature. A helpful tool here is to use random images taken from magazines and other sources, photographs, or postcards to stimulate thinking about whatever issue you are working on.
3. **Associate.** Deliberately create new links between objects, ideas, events, people, or processes. As you link things together that normally are not connected, you begin to see new relationships and new possibilities. Metaphorical thinking is a helpful tool here because you use the qualities of one object to think about another. For instance, if you're trying to create better customer service, you might think about the qualities

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of a rubber ball...it's round and smooth, it bounces and is resilient, it isn't easily damaged, and it's fun to play with. Then you would examine each of those qualities to see what ideas they might stimulate around customer service.

4. **Morph.** Change various aspects of the situation; make the familiar strange and the strange familiar. Brainwriting is a very simple tool for incorporating the process of morphing and building on other ideas. The Brainwriting worksheet has six rows and three columns of empty boxes. Each person in the brainstorming session writes three ideas in one row of boxes on one worksheet and then passes the sheet to another person. Everyone can read the ideas of others and build on them or use them to stimulate new ideas. The exercise is repeated until all the sheets are filled. (See Handout 11-7 for BrainwritingPlus worksheets.)
5. **Inquire.** Questions create openings. A great question can unravel a mystery like a kitten batting a ball of twine. Finding those great questions that open minds and the secrets of the universe is a learned skill based on some simple principles and practice. One of the best questions to use to open up new possibilities is "Wouldn't it be great if...?" Try opening a brainstorming session by having everyone think of 10 ways to complete that question.

### **Convergence Processes: SOARS**

There are almost as many convergence techniques as there are divergence ones, but again they relate to five basic processes. Convergence tools make sense of what is often an overwhelming number of possibilities, and narrow the range of choices in order to make an intelligent decision. Here are the five action processes (again stated as verbs) to which all convergence tools relate :

1. **Sort.** To make sense of what is often hundreds of possibilities, group them into meaningful categories. Categories might be related to time, feasibility, market demand, availability of resources, type of possibility, or any other category that would bring order out of the chaos. A simple tool is a three-color sort using the widely understood color coding of green-yellow-red. In this tool green represents ideas that clearly fit with your criteria, yellow is for ideas that have some fit but probably need further thought, and red identifies ideas that do not fit the criteria.
2. **Order.** Possibilities within viable categories can be ranked against preestablished criteria to create an order of preference. Using a simple quadrant chart incorporating two important criteria (such as cost and doability) is a powerful way to see which ideas best fit the criteria.

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3. **Adapt.** When likely possibilities have been identified they can be expanded and adapted to create even better ideas. Take Away is one simple tool for adapting ideas. To use the tool, identify critical components of an idea and then take one component away and see what you would have to do if that component wasn't available or didn't exist. For example, if you didn't have access to electricity you might start thinking about phones that didn't have to be plugged in.
4. **Refine.** The weak spots and potential failure points need to be identified for all likely possibilities, and then the ideas must be bullet-proofed. To bullet-proof an idea, first think of all the ways it could fail or what external events might create a disaster or who might say "no." Then begin to brainstorm ways to avoid possible problems.
5. **Select.** Ideas are only ideas until they are implemented, but implementation requires that someone take ownership. Getting the right people to take ownership of the idea is a critical piece of the process. Dot Voting is one of the easiest techniques for selecting ideas. Make all of the choices available and give each participant in the process a certain number of dots to vote. If you have established the criteria in advance this process can be very effective for selecting the best ideas and getting buy-in from people as they see that certain concepts match the criteria more than others. (See Handout 11–14 for more information.)

Imagine this situation: You've been in an ideation session for half a day and the walls of the room are covered with hundreds of sticky notes. You know that most of the ideas are just fodder, but within this chaos there are undoubtedly some gems. How do you make a decision? One of the easiest and most acceptable ways is dot voting, but there's one step that most people miss—the step that makes this a far more powerful process—identifying criteria. Here's how dot voting with a difference works:

- Step 1. Step back from the ideas** and take a clean piece of flipchart paper.
  - Step 2. Identify criteria.** Brainstorm the criteria for evaluating an idea or solution. You might say, "A good idea or solution would have the following characteristics:...." Perhaps there's a budget constraint or a time deadline; maybe specific materials are needed or it has to appeal to a certain person or group of customers; possibly it has to be no bigger than a deck of cards, or ...well, you get the idea.
  - Step 3. Prioritize.** When you have the list of criteria (which probably won't be more than 5 to 10 items), try to reach consensus on the priority of the criteria. If this is too difficult you may need to dot-vote the criteria, according to the process in the next step.
  - Step 4. Vote.** Now that everyone has the decision criteria in mind, have them use a colored marker that will show up easily and give them three to five votes each. People mark their votes by making a visible dot on whatever ideas they choose.
  - Step 5. Rearrange the ideas** so that those with the dots are grouped together, ranked from most dots to least.
  - Step 6. Discuss.** Talk about the idea(s) that received the most votes and see if there is a general level of comfort with taking one or more of those ideas to the next step.
  - Step 7. Recognize orphans.** Before ending the session ask everyone to review the undotted ideas one more time to see if there are any "orphans" there that someone thinks should be given a home somewhere.
  - Step 8. Plan next steps.** Decide what should happen next and how to capture the ideas so you can throw away the mountain of sticky notes.
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*Dimensions of the InnovationDNA Model*

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The InnovationDNA model presents a framework of the principles needed to create an “innovation organization.”

- ♦ **Context**—*formed by the interactions between the organization and the outside world.* Nothing so important as organizational innovation happens in a vacuum. Although it is obvious that customers, suppliers, competitors, and the economy affect us daily, we also periodically interact with government, world events, communities, and families. All of these interactions form the context for all business activities, including innovation.
  - ♦ **Culture**—*the backdrop for all the activities of an organization and the “playing field” for innovation.* Whereas innovation is “for the sake of” creating value for customers or a lofty vision, the organization must be fertile for the seeds of ideas and solutions to grow. An environment that is empowering and flexible, that welcomes ideas and tolerates risk, that celebrates success, fosters synergy, and encourages fun is crucial. Creating such a climate also may be the biggest challenge facing any organization that wishes to be more innovative. We see four main components of an organization's culture that provide the climate for innovation to occur. Those components are leadership, people, basic values, and innovation values.
1. **Leadership**—*the ability to see the possibilities of the future.* Strategies are put into place because leaders can envision a bright future and identify opportunities that can pave the path to success. Engaging the hearts of people and providing the necessary support are necessary to make the vision a reality.
  2. **People**—*the heart and soul of innovation.* Nothing happens without people. Every organization has a “personality” that comes from its collective and shared beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors and from the relationships among its people.
  3. **Basic Values**—*heartfelt principles that define an organization.* Basic values, such as learning, commitment, inclusiveness, and contribution, are the kinds of principles that help an organization hold its shape in the frantic pace of global business. They are the backbone for decisions and the foundation for shaping strategic alliances.
  4. **Innovation Values**—*what makes the impossible possible.* Beyond basic values there are some drivers that can transform the mundane into the compelling and an ordinary project into a stellar new business. Freedom, intuition, and synergy are just a few of the ideals that create the magic in innovative organizations.

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- ♦ **Entryways to Innovation . . . Ideas, Change, Passion, and Trends**—*the impetus to rock the boat.*
- ♦ **Outcomes of Innovation . . . Renewal, Change, Reinvention, and Trends**—*fuel for the next cycle.*

### **The Operational Elements of the Innovation DNA—a Roadmap**

It is useful to view the operational elements depicted on the helix as a roadmap, beginning at the bottom portal and moving upward. Here are brief descriptions of the model's concepts.

- ♦ **Challenge**—Innovating, by definition, means doing things differently, exploring new territory, and taking risks. However, there has to be a reason for rocking the boat, and that reason is the *vision* of what could be . . . the challenge. The bigger the challenge and the commitment to it, the more energy the innovation efforts will have. Whether it is today's survival or a lofty vision that benefits all of humankind, superb innovation is driven by challenges that touch people's hearts.
- ♦ **Customer Focus**—All innovation should be focused on creating *value* for the customer, whether that customer is internal or external. Interacting with customers and understanding their needs are the best means of stimulating new possibilities and the motivation for implementing them. A constant, almost involuntary, stream of ideas and innovation is created when everyone in an organization can identify with their customer(s).
- ♦ **Creativity**—Everything starts from an idea, and the best way to get a great idea is to generate a lot of possibilities. Although every person is creative by nature, the skill to develop a lot of ideas and to connect diverse concepts can be enhanced through training and exercise. It is up to leadership to foster a climate that encourages “blue-sky” thinking and to offer direction and *stimuli* to spur creativity. It is up to individuals to embrace challenges and give themselves permission to push the boundaries of their thinking.
- ♦ **Communication**—Open communication of information, ideas, and feelings is the lifeblood of innovation. Both infrastructure and advocacy must exist in an organizational system to promote the free flow of information. Leadership must model the practices and behaviors that will encourage the sharing of information and, more critical, the sharing of thinking. Organizations that restrict communication and fail to “think together” risk disaster.
- ♦ **Collaboration**—Innovation is a group process. It feeds on interaction, information, and the power of *teams*. It is stifled by restrictive structures, policies, and practices, as well as incentive systems that reward only individual efforts. Multilevel and cross-functional project and ad hoc teams bring diversity—the broadest perspectives, the most ideas, and the greatest abilities to implement—to any innovation effort.

- ♦ **Completion**—Moving new ideas forward into reality means crossing the threshold from creativity to innovation, and the exploration or experimentation with a variety of alternatives will yield superior outcomes. Innovations result from projects that are successfully realized through excellent, defined processes and strong implementation skills—decision making, delegating, scheduling, monitoring, and feedback. And when projects are completed, they should be celebrated.
- ♦ **Contemplation**—Making objective *assessments* of the outcomes and costs of new projects is essential. Gleaning the *lessons learned* from both fruitful and failed projects adds muscle to the cycle of success. This practice of review and integration is perhaps the most neglected component of innovation. When adopted in a disciplined approach, it adds invaluable to organization wisdom.

**Perform Self-Assessment:** Read each competency and mark an "A" in the column that reflects the knowledge/behavior you currently demonstrate.

**Identify Goal:** Next, review each item and mark a "B" in the column that is your goal for future competency.

**Define Gap:** Draw a line between A and B on each item to illustrate the competency gap.

**Select Action:** Using the PIC Personal Action Worksheet (Handout 11-17), select two to three items that you would like to improve on and create your learning plan.

**Reassess Yourself:** Assess your progress monthly.

#### Rating Key

- ♦ **Unknowning:** This is new thinking to me.
- ♦ **Novice:** I understand and practice this behavior about 10 percent of the time.
- ♦ **Advanced Beginner:** I'm getting the hang of it and practice this behavior 10-25 percent of the time.
- ♦ **Competent:** I really get it and demonstrate this behavior 25-50 percent of the time.
- ♦ **Proficient:** I model this behavior more than 50 percent of the time and am beginning to mentor others.
- ♦ **Master:** I embody this behavior more than 90 percent of the time and am evolving higher standards.

Handout 11–16, continued

PIC Gap Analysis

	ADVANCED					MASTER
	UNKNOWN	NOVICE	BEGINNER	COMPETENT	PROFICIENT	
<b>A. Commits to the exploration and development of new possibilities</b>						
1. Looks for “a better way” and challenges the conventional						
2. Actively explores uncharted territory						
3. Embraces diversity as a vital source of new perspectives and possibilities						
4. Facilitates development of ideas into project plans						
<b>B. Seeks out and creates new connections between unrelated concepts</b>						
5. Regularly reads the world for new trends, technologies, ideas, and information						
6. Thinks with the whole brain and all the senses						
7. Remains open-minded and searches for opposites, anomalies, and outliers						
8. Finds or creates new combinations and synergies						

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Handout 11–16, continued

PIC Gap Analysis

	ADVANCED					MASTER
	UNKNOWN	NOVICE	BEGINNER	COMPETENT	PROFICIENT	
C. Commits to the creation of customer value						
9. Understands customer needs, goals, and paradigms						
10. Understands the strategic context and aims for win-win situations						
11. Strives to deliver more with less, and to do it elegantly						
D. Integrates the specific business focus with the process of innovation						
12. Understands the current art, science, and language of the business area						
13. Knows the background and context well enough to recognize ideas that are innovations						
14. Masters the basic tools and methods in the area of exploration						
15. Understands the system of innovation and allows time for each step of the process						
E. Builds alignment around new possibilities						
16. Paints the WOW picture of the future						
17. Relates new ideas to existing business strategies and objectives						
18. Speaks to the styles and concerns of each stakeholder						
19. Honors ideas regardless of origin						
F. Cultivates genuine relationships						
20. Builds trust implicitly and explicitly						

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Handout 11-16, continued

**PIC Gap Analysis**

	ADVANCED			
	UNKNOWN	NOVICE	BEGINNER	MASTER
21. Respects rights and opinions of others				
22. Expresses appreciation and honest concerns				
23. Values the intent and context of a relationship				
<b>G. Embraces appropriate risk taking</b>				
24. Takes calculated and appropriate risks to advance ideas				
25. Is able to predict and track existing and emerging risks				
26. Finds ways to ameliorate risks				
27. Communicates risks appropriately				
<b>H. Manages innovation projects effectively</b>				
28. Employs tools, processes, and techniques flexibly and effectively				
29. Honors and manages requests, offers, and promises				
30. Focuses on the germane issues and juggles priorities				
31. Scans the business climate to optimize timing for actions				
32. Guides effective decision making				
33. Elicits the agreement of "done"				

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Handout 11-16, continued

PIC Gap Analysis

	ADVANCED				
	UNKNOWNING	NOVICE	BEGINNER	COMPETENT	PROFICIENT
I. Learns relentlessly					
34. Cultivates an internal state of curiosity					
35. Seeks information and feedback; actively asks questions					
36. Assesses failures and successes to find lessons					
37. Challenges own assumptions					
38. Acknowledges other world views					

PIC Personal Action Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Step 1: Select two to three Personal Innovation Competencies to build on and record them here.

Step 2: Choose one to three tools to learn or practices and behaviors to adopt; record them here.

Step 3: Choose your metrics for determining progress and success; record metrics and monthly goals.

Step 4: Monitor your progress monthly.

Competency #1: \_\_\_\_\_

IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY	METRIC	START		MONTH 1 GOAL	OUTCOME	MONTH 2 GOAL	OUTCOME	MONTH 3 GOAL	OUTCOME
		DATE							





**Category A—Commits to the exploration and development of new possibilities**

**Step 1:** *Have someone read aloud the following background of this category. (If in pairs, you may prefer to read silently together.)*

The first competency for innovation is defined by openness, exploration, and the abilities to envision and promote new possibilities. By its very nature innovation seeks a better way. Innovators are like explorers: They push forward into uncharted territory, sometimes just to find out what's there. They open themselves to ideas that are unfamiliar and perhaps disconcerting.

Innovation is as much a mindset as it is tools and techniques. The mindset of innovation is to look for new and better solutions. Instead of stopping at the first right answer, innovators continue to ask "How else could we do this?" or "What would make it even better?"

Deliberately exploring uncharted territory can be as simple as reading magazines and newspapers outside of your normal realm of interest; talking to people with different perspectives and backgrounds; attending conferences on topics you are completely unfamiliar with; and traveling through new countries, neighborhoods or markets. Being inquisitive, discovering what you *don't* know and stimulating others' thinking are all hallmarks of an innovator.

Master innovators are also leaders. They help those around them to envision new possibilities and frontiers, thereby engaging their hearts and minds for the pursuit of innovation.

**Step 2:** *Discuss the following questions, one for each of the four behaviors that characterize this competency. Take turns capturing the key points discussed for each question because you will be asked to present these points to the larger group.*

- ♦ **Behavior 1. Looking for a better way; challenging convention:** In your organization what are the ways that people can challenge the status quo? How are ideas for a "better way" most productively channeled?
- ♦ **Behavior 2. Actively exploring uncharted territory:** What would be uncharted territory for your organization? What are ways that new frontiers could be discovered and explored?
- ♦ **Behavior 3. Embracing diversity:** What kinds of diversity exist in your organization. How might they be tapped for ideas?
- ♦ **Behavior 4. Facilitating new challenges:** What was a challenge put forth in your organization that captured your interest and spurred your imagination? What kind of challenge could you offer to stimulate others' energies?

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**Category B: Seeks out and creates new connections between unrelated concepts**

**Step 1:** Have someone read aloud the following background of this category. (If in pairs, you may prefer to read silently together.)

There will always be original ideas generated and new technologies developed, but most money is made by improving ideas and finding new combinations of previously unrelated concepts. This is the essence of creative thinking. The keys to discovering these recombinations include constant scanning of what's going on in the world, using whole-brain thinking, investigating anomalies, and experimenting.

Innovation includes a process of opening up to the world, allowing new information from a wide variety of sources to mix and form new patterns. To allow this free flow of information we need to understand our own thinking style, how others think, and ways to stimulate creativity that maximize our exploration of new data and insights.

As we actively scan the world, we are looking for new patterns; things that look out of place; activities occurring on the fringe of different fields; and shifts in values, moral attitudes, and interests. We can playfully combine and recombine these shifting sands of change to make new connections and find synergies.

**Step 2:** Discuss the following questions, one for each of the four behaviors that characterize this competency. Take turns capturing the key points discussed for each question because you will be asked to present these points to the larger group.

- ♦ **Behavior 1. Reading the world:** Where can you find information about new trends or technologies? How can your organization digest and use this information?
- ♦ **Behavior 2. Using the whole brain and all the senses:** What words would you use to characterize how you receive and process information—are you good at analysis or synthesis of data, at organizing or intuiting?
- ♦ **Behavior 3. Searching for anomalies:** What are some things you've noticed lately that are inconsistent with the past? How might they change the course of your organization?
- ♦ **Behavior 4. Creating new combinations and synergies:** Think of two very different ideas that you've heard of recently. Try combining them—what new directions do you see?

**Category C: Commits to the creation of customer value**

**Step 1:** Have someone read aloud the following background of this category. (If in pairs, you may prefer to read silently together.)

The focal point of innovation is the customer, whether internal or external. Successful innovators dig deep to understand their customer's or user's most profound concerns. It is the intersection of customer needs and concerns with your organization's strategy and goals that allows for the solutions that customers value.

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Innovation is people creating value by implementing new ideas. The focus on creating value distinguishes innovation from the empty process of being creative simply for the sake of creating something new. The internal or external customer and what we perceive he or she needs are the compass of innovation.

Value is determined by the customer. The innovative process is collaborative and works within a strategic context to provide valuable solutions for all stakeholders. It is also a synergistic process that finds ways to deliver results that exceed customer expectations.

**Step 2:** *Discuss the following questions, one for each of the three behaviors that characterize this competency. Take turns capturing the key points discussed for each question because you will be asked to present these points to the larger group.*

- ◆ **Behavior 1. Understanding customers:** How can you learn more about and better understand your internal and external customers?
- ◆ **Behavior 2. Understanding strategy and win-win:** What are ways to achieve your organization's goals that will allow you and your internal and external customers to win?
- ◆ **Behavior 3. Doing more with less to exceed customer expectations:** In what ways could you create more by doing less and yet delight your customers (internal or external)?

**Category D:** *Integrates business focus with the process of innovation*

**Step 1:** *Have someone read aloud the following background of this category. (If in pairs, you may prefer to read silently together.)*

Great innovators are also good business people. They keep pace with their industry and are aware of what others are doing. They are masters of the tools, methods, and practices that represent their industry standard, and they are skillful at the process of innovation. Part of innovation is constantly sharpening of business acumen and expertise in one's own field. The other part is mastery of the practices and tools of innovation.

Ideas often show up unexpectedly and so there is a tendency to believe that creative thinking is uncontrollable. Although it cannot truly be "controlled," it can be enhanced and strengthened. The formula is reliable:

*Passionate Focus + Abundant Information + Diverse Thinkers  
+ Idea Stimulators = A Wealth of Ideas*

Innovation takes time and involves a rigorous process. It takes time to align around a challenge, gather information, and think together. It takes discipline to reflect on and refine ideas, work collaboratively to implement them, and learn lessons along the way. It's a process that involves the hearts and minds of many people. There is no magic "innovation" machine that pops out breakthrough solutions complete with nice, neat, cost-justified printouts at the end.

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**Step 2:** Discuss the following questions, one for each of the four behaviors that characterize this competency. Take turns capturing the key points discussed for each question because you will be asked to present these points to the larger group.

- ♦ **Behavior 1. Understanding the states of the art and science of the field:** What are the ways you stay current in your functional field and your industry?
- ♦ **Behavior 2. Being able to recognize what is novel or innovative in your field or industry:** What are some recent innovations in your industry or functional field and how have they affected your thinking?
- ♦ **Behavior 3. Mastering the tools and methodologies of your field or industry:** What tools and skills would help you become an innovation master in your field or industry?
- ♦ **Behavior 4. Understanding and executing the innovation process:** With your skills and talents, what parts of the innovation process should you focus on to become a master innovator?

**Category E: Builds alignment around new possibilities**

**Step 1:** Have someone read aloud the following background of this category. (If in pairs, you may prefer to read silently together.)

Innovation starts with an idea, and ideas need champions to nurture and promote them. Competent innovators understand stakeholder concerns and can connect the dots between vision and the ideas that will enable the vision. They paint compelling pictures of the future, embrace the ideas of others, and facilitate communication and alignment around ideas and actions.

New ideas seldom sell themselves into implementation. Even the Post-It! almost died many times along the way and only became a mega-hit because of the persistence and passion of many people who saw its potential.

It's critical to understand the deep concerns of your audience and to speak their language. If you are presenting an idea to a group of engineers, it should look dramatically different than a presentation to an ad agency.

Innovators know that ideas can come from the most unlikely places so they listen carefully to ideas even when they are presented in an unfamiliar or inelegant fashion. They rigorously resist the "Not Invented Here" syndrome.

**Step 2:** Discuss the following questions, one for each of the four behaviors that characterize this competency. Take turns capturing the key points discussed for each question because you will be asked to present these points to the larger group.

- ♦ **Behavior 1. Painting the WOW picture:** What are some elements of a future picture that would wow people in your organization?

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- ♦ **Behavior 2. Connecting ideas and strategy:** What strategies in your organization may require new ideas for successful execution?
- ♦ **Behavior 3. Addressing stakeholders' concerns and styles:** How do you learn about the concerns of all the stakeholders?
- ♦ **Behavior 4. Welcoming and honoring ideas:** What are ways to ensure that everyone's ideas are solicited and acknowledged?

**Category F: Cultivates genuine relationships**

**Step 1:** Have someone read aloud the following background of this category. (If in pairs, you may prefer to read silently together.)

Innovation requires trust and collaboration because no idea can flourish without a team effort. To be an effective collaborator you must honor others' opinions and be sincere, reliable, and compassionately honest. Building productive relationships with colleagues is hard work, but it is the foundation for tremendous success and fulfillment.

Innovation is a risky adventure, one people do not take lightly. Successful innovators must know whether they can trust the system not to punish them for taking appropriate risks. They must also trust colleagues not to ridicule them for half-baked or seemingly silly ideas. The more fear is removed from an organization, the more people will feel free to open up, share ideas, and try new things. Although not all relationships are equal, among teammates who develop a high level of trust there is opportunity for superior collaboration and remarkable outcomes.

Beyond trust, collaborative relationships require respect—for the opinions and concerns of everyone. Some of the best ideas may come from the most unlikely sources throughout the organization. And without the bedrock of relationships that are grounded in honesty, sincere appreciation, and respect for each other's boundaries, serious insights and deep concerns may never come to light.

**Step 2:** Discuss the following questions, one for each of the four behaviors that characterize this competency. Take turns capturing the key points discussed for each question because you will be asked to present these points to the larger group.

- ♦ **Behavior 1. Building trust:** In what ways do people build trust between and among themselves? What are some of the causes of distrust among co-workers?
- ♦ **Behavior 2. Respecting others:** How do people in your organization demonstrate that they honor differing perspectives or minority opinions?
- ♦ **Behavior 3. Expressing appreciation and honest concerns:** If you had a serious concern today, how would you go about making it known and what is your expectation of the response?
- ♦ **Behavior 4. Valuing relationship intent and context:** How would you describe the different kinds of relationships you have with various people in the organization?

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**Category G: Embraces appropriate risk taking**

**Step 1:** Have someone read aloud the following background of this category. (If in pairs, you may prefer to read silently together.)

Because innovation, by definition, is doing something that has not been done before, its success is uncertain. Therefore, risk is a requirement of innovation. Many organizations have been risk averse for decades, and now people are being asked to take risks in order to innovate. It's a tricky transition. Organizations that punish people who support the wrong idea will soon find the flow of ideas drying up. Likewise, people who never stick their necks out for new ideas may find themselves in pale and lackluster careers.

Knowing the difference between calculated risk and risky business is paramount in innovation. Learning how to advance ideas appropriately can mitigate but not eliminate the risk involved. Many ideas embody risk—some in the mere advancement, others in the execution.

The first step is to understand what the risk represents to stakeholders—is it loss of revenue or profit, is it retribution or the loss of career advancement, is it the danger of bankruptcy? Weighing the risk against potential rewards is the daily work of some financial heads in your organization. In an open environment innovators and their managers can work collaboratively to predict, track, and manage the risks that innovation presents.

**Step 2:** Discuss the following questions, one for each of the four behaviors that characterize this competency. Take turns capturing the key points discussed for each question because you will be asked to present these points to the larger group.

- ♦ **Behavior 1. Taking calculated and appropriate risks to advance ideas:** Can you describe a situation in which someone in the organization took a calculated risk and succeeded? How was the risk managed?
- ♦ **Behavior 2. Predicting and tracking risk:** Can you think of a current project or initiative in the organization and can you identify some of its risks to stakeholders?
- ♦ **Behavior 3. Relieving or reducing risk:** Using the current project or initiative you described in the previous question, what are ways the stakeholders' risks could be managed?
- ♦ **Behavior 4. Effectively communicating about risk:** In this organization what are the most effective ways to communicate information and beliefs about risk and risk management?

**Category H: Effectively manages innovation projects**

**Step 1:** Have someone read aloud the following background of this category. (If in pairs, you may prefer to read silently together.)

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Projects must often adjust over time with the changing business and economic climate. By definition, innovation projects should be flexible and follow the value chain. Effective innovators pay close attention to managing promises, juggling priorities, making decisions, and timing for actions. They leverage tools, processes, and methodologies in a conscious fashion to reach intended results.

Most successful organizations are competent in general project management, but the understanding of how to manage an *innovation* project is not always as clear. Innovation project managers must be excellent collaborators, facilitators, and synthesizers. They manage projects and the innovation *process* and help build relationships among team members. They pay attention to timing through continual scanning of the business climate and understanding of the big picture and the concerns of stakeholders.

Master innovators develop criteria in advance and make decisions in a disciplined manner. They establish metrics, track progress, and maintain timely communication with all of the people concerned, adjusting course and actions as needed. When the end is recognized, they celebrate completion, regardless of the project's outcome.

**Step 2:** *Discuss the following questions, one for each of the six behaviors that characterize this competency. Take turns capturing the key points discussed for each question because you will be asked to present these points to the larger group.*

- ♦ **Behavior 1. Employing tools, processes, and techniques effectively:** What tools, processes, or techniques are available in your organization to support innovation projects?
- ♦ **Behavior 2. Managing promises and priorities:** What are the key factors in effectively managing your promises or the requests made of you?
- ♦ **Behavior 3. Optimizing the timing of actions:** What are ways to determine the best timing for the implementation of new ideas?
- ♦ **Behavior 4. Guiding effective decisions:** Thinking of a decision that needs to be made soon, what are some criteria that, if applied, would lead to a sound and culturally appropriate decision?
- ♦ **Behavior 5. Monitoring progress and communicating with stakeholders:** Who might be the stakeholders for big ideas in your functional area and what metrics would those stakeholders want?
- ♦ **Behavior 6. Celebrating completion:** What are some ways to celebrate or acknowledge failure appropriately?

**Category I: Learns relentlessly**

**Step 1:** *Have someone read aloud the following background of this category. (If in pairs, you may prefer to read silently together.)*



Master innovators are curious—their endless search for what, how, and why fuels new ideas and vast possibilities. Successful innovation often requires much experimentation and leaves many failures in its wake. Innovators who seek feedback, examine the reasons behind success or failure, and challenge their own assumptions will find themselves constantly propelled forward.

Learning is an itch that is scratched by new information and new understanding. Feeding our curiosity creates a constant flow of new information that stimulates new patterns and understandings. Posing stimulating questions is a common trait of people who become experts at innovation.

Innovation projects can yield enormous knowledge for the organization if lessons are captured and shared widely—whether the project was deemed a success or a failure. Creating a forum for learning, asking questions, and giving and getting feedback is one vehicle for gaining organizational wisdom.

Breaking out of our own world view to accept other perspectives requires that we continually acknowledge and challenge our own assumptions and the assumptions of the organization. It is this constant search for data, insight, and meaning that keeps innovators on the leading edge.

**Step 2:** *Discuss the following questions, one for each of the five behaviors that characterize this competency. Take turns capturing the key points discussed for each question because you will be asked to present these points to the larger group.*

- ♦ **Behavior 1. Cultivating a state of curiosity:** What are you curious about? How might you cultivate similar curiosity in other things?
  - ♦ **Behavior 2. Asking questions for information and feedback:** What kinds of questions could you ask, and of whom, that would help you spark ideas for innovation?
  - ♦ **Behavior 3. Gleaning lessons from failure and success:** What vehicles are currently used to gather and share lessons from projects or initiatives? What are other methods that might be effective in this organization?
  - ♦ **Behavior 4. Challenging assumptions:** What are some assumptions you hold that may be limiting your thinking or even your career?
  - ♦ **Behavior 5. Acknowledging other world views:** Thinking of someone you respect whose perspective on an important topic is very different from yours, how has this other perspective influenced your thinking?
-

***Category A—Commits to the exploration and development of new possibilities***

The first competency for innovation is defined by openness, exploration, and the abilities to envision and promote new possibilities. By its very nature innovation seeks a better way. Innovators are like explorers: They push forward into uncharted territory, sometimes just to find out what's there. They open themselves to ideas that are unfamiliar and perhaps disconcerting.

Innovation is as much a mindset as it is tools and techniques. The mindset of innovation is to look for new and better solutions. Instead of stopping at the first right answer, innovators continue to ask "How else could we do this?" or "What would make it even better?"

Deliberately exploring uncharted territory can be as simple as reading magazines and newspapers outside of your normal realm of interest; talking to people with different perspectives and backgrounds; attending conferences on topics you are completely unfamiliar with; and traveling through new countries, neighborhoods or markets. Being inquisitive, discovering what you *don't* know and stimulating others' thinking are all hallmarks of an innovator.

Master innovators are also leaders. They help those around them to envision new possibilities and frontiers, thereby engaging their hearts and minds for the pursuit of innovation.

**Some ways to build these competencies:**

- ♦ Read publications that present a broad view of the world.
- ♦ Attend conferences or workshops that are outside your field or function.
- ♦ Join an organization that thinks about the future.
- ♦ Create a list of stimulating questions.
- ♦ Create a forum for exploring unconventional ideas.
- ♦ Create a practice for challenging assumptions regularly.
- ♦ Join an organization that will stimulate your thinking and expand your horizons.
- ♦ Find ways to think with visionaries.

These are generic ideas—can you think of any more? How can you personalize these ideas?

***Category B: Seeks out and creates new connections between unrelated concepts***

There will always be original ideas generated and new technologies developed, but most money is made by improving ideas and finding new combinations of previously unrelated concepts. This is the essence of creative thinking. The keys to discovering these recombinations include constant scanning of what's going on in the world, using whole-brain thinking, investigating anomalies, and experimenting.

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## ***The Personal Innovation Competencies***

Innovation includes a process of opening up to the world, allowing new information from a wide variety of sources to mix and form new patterns. To allow this free flow of information we need to understand our own thinking style, how others think, and ways to stimulate creativity that maximize our exploration of new data and insights.

As we actively scan the world, we are looking for new patterns, things that look out of place, activities occurring on the fringe of different fields, and shifts in values, moral attitudes, and interests. We can playfully combine and recombine these shifting sands of change to make new connections and find synergies.

### **Some ways to build these competencies:**

- ♦ Keep up with current events—social, political, economic, and scientific.
- ♦ Read professional publications and your industry's periodicals.
- ♦ Discover your preferred thinking style to help you determine how you best process information and how you do your best thinking.
- ♦ Create a practice to look for anomalies or outliers that could spur innovation.
- ♦ Study the perimeters of your industry for opportunities that are far from the mainstream.
- ♦ Practice putting together unrelated concepts to see what results.
- ♦ Learn some creative thinking tools that will help to combine unlikely concepts.

These are generic ideas—can you think of any more? How can you personalize these ideas?

### ***Category C: Commits to the creation of customer value***

The focal point of innovation is the customer, whether internal or external. Successful innovators dig deep to understand their customer's or user's most profound concerns. It is the intersection of customer needs and concerns with your organization's strategy and goals that allows for the solutions that customers value.

Innovation is people creating value by implementing new ideas. The focus on creating value distinguishes innovation from the empty process of being creative simply for the sake of creating something new. The internal or external customer and what we perceive he or she needs are the compass of innovation.

Value is determined by the customer. The innovative process is collaborative and works within a strategic context to provide valuable solutions for all stakeholders. It is also a synergistic process that finds ways to deliver results that exceed customer expectations.

### **Some ways to build these competencies:**

- ♦ Create ways to observe customers.
- ♦ Create ways to talk to customers about their needs and expectations.
- ♦ Gather and study available information about your customers.

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### ***The Personal Innovation Competencies***

- ♦ Get to know a handful of customers and cultivate meaningful relationships.
- ♦ Talk to managers about your organizational strategy and how your and your function fits in it.
- ♦ Talk to stakeholders about their objectives.

These are generic ideas—can you think of any more? How can you personalize these ideas?

#### ***Category D: Integrates business focus with the process of innovation***

Great innovators are also good business people. They keep pace with their industry and are aware of what others are doing. They are masters of the tools, methods, and practices that represent their industry standard, and they are skillful at the process of innovation. Part of innovation is constant sharpening of business acumen and expertise in one's own field. The other part is mastery of the practices and tools of innovation.

Ideas often show up unexpectedly and so there is a tendency to believe that creative thinking is uncontrollable. Although it cannot truly be “controlled,” it can be enhanced and strengthened. The formula is reliable:

*Passionate Focus + Abundant Information + Diverse Thinkers  
+ Idea Stimulators = A Wealth of Ideas*

Innovation takes time and involves a rigorous process. It takes time to align around a challenge, gather information, and think together. It takes discipline to reflect on and refine ideas, work collaboratively to implement them, and learn lessons along the way. It's a process that involves the hearts and minds of many people. There is no magic innovation machine that pops out breakthrough solutions complete with nice, neat, cost-justified printouts at the end.

#### **Some ways to build these competencies:**

- ♦ Attend your industry conferences.
- ♦ Read your industry journals.
- ♦ Research the history of your company and the industry.
- ♦ Become more familiar with your organization's strategic thinking process.
- ♦ Create an inventory of tools, methodologies, processes, and practices of your industry and profession.
- ♦ Research the innovation processes used by other organizations and industries.

These are generic ideas—can you think of any more? How can you personalize these ideas?

***Category E: Builds alignment around new possibilities***

Innovation starts with an idea, and ideas need champions to nurture and promote them. Competent innovators understand stakeholder concerns and can connect the dots between vision and the ideas that will enable the vision. They paint compelling pictures of the future, embrace the ideas of others, and facilitate communication and alignment around ideas and actions.

New ideas seldom sell themselves into implementation. Even the Post-It! almost died many times along the way and only became a mega-hit because of the persistence and passion of many people who saw its potential.

It's critical to understand the deep concerns of your audience and to speak their language. If you are presenting an idea to a group of engineers, it should look dramatically different than a presentation to an ad agency.

Innovators know that ideas can come from the most unlikely places so they listen carefully to ideas even when they are presented in an unfamiliar or inelegant fashion. They rigorously resist the "Not Invented Here" syndrome.

**Some ways to build these competencies:**

- ◆ Practice creating compelling stories.
- ◆ Interview organizational stakeholders to understand their objectives and underlying concerns.
- ◆ Review your company's most recent strategy document and determine how your role contributes to it.
- ◆ Look for hidden opportunities in your company strategy or industry.
- ◆ Seek ideas from colleagues.

These are generic ideas—can you think of any more? How can you personalize these ideas?

***Category F: Cultivates genuine relationships***

Innovation requires trust and collaboration because no idea can flourish without a team effort. To be an effective collaborator you must honor others' opinions and be sincere, reliable, and compassionately honest. Building productive relationships with colleagues is hard work, but it is the foundation for tremendous success and fulfillment.

Innovation is a risky adventure, one people do not take lightly. Successful innovators must know whether they can trust the system not to punish them for taking appropriate risks. They must also trust colleagues not to ridicule them for half-baked or seemingly silly ideas. The more fear is removed from an organization, the more people will feel free to open up, share ideas, and try new things. Although not all relationships are equal, among teammates who develop a high level of trust there is opportunity for superior collaboration and remarkable outcomes.

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## ***The Personal Innovation Competencies***

Beyond trust, collaborative relationships require respect—for the opinions and concerns of everyone. Some of the best ideas may come from the most unlikely sources throughout the organization. And without the bedrock of relationships that are grounded in honesty, sincere appreciation, and respect for each other's boundaries, serious insights and deep concerns may never come to light.

### **Some ways to build these competencies:**

- ◆ Create a “scorecard” for your reliability.
- ◆ Make or take time to cultivate relationships with your co-workers.
- ◆ Practice listening more attentively.
- ◆ Practice expressing appreciation to friends and co-workers.
- ◆ Practice expressing your concerns and grounding your assessments.
- ◆ Take stock of your relationships and what you give and receive from them.

These are generic ideas—can you think of any more? How can you personalize these ideas?

### ***Category G: Embraces appropriate risk taking***

Because innovation, by definition, is doing something that has not been done before, its success is uncertain. Therefore, risk is a requirement of innovation. Many organizations have been risk averse for decades, and now people are being asked to take risks in order to innovate. It's a tricky transition. Organizations that punish people who support the wrong idea will soon find the flow of ideas drying up. Likewise, people who never stick their necks out for new ideas may find their careers will be pale and lackluster.

Knowing the difference between calculated risk and risky business is paramount in innovation. Learning how to advance ideas appropriately can mitigate but not eliminate the risk involved. Many ideas embody risk—some in the mere advancement, others in the execution.

The first step is to understand what the risk represents to stakeholders—is it loss of revenue or profit, is it retribution or the loss of career advancement, is it the danger of bankruptcy? Weighing the risk against potential rewards is the daily work of some financial heads in your organization. In an open environment innovators and their managers can work collaboratively to predict, track, and manage the risks that innovation presents.

### **Some ways to build these competencies:**

- ◆ Create a methodology for understanding risks to stakeholders.
- ◆ Study the risk/reward models that are used in your industry and elsewhere.
- ◆ Interview other innovators about their experiences managing risk.

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## ***The Personal Innovation Competencies***

- ♦ Create a communication plan to address risk with stakeholders.
- ♦ Find out top management's view on risk taking for innovation.

These are generic ideas—can you think of any more? How can you personalize these ideas?

### ***Category H: Effectively manages innovation projects***

Projects must often adjust over time with the changing business and economic climate. By definition, innovation projects should be flexible and follow the value chain. Effective innovators pay close attention to managing promises, juggling priorities, making decisions, and timing for actions. They leverage tools, processes, and methodologies in a conscious fashion to reach intended results.

Most successful organizations are competent in general project management, but the understanding of how to manage an *innovation* project is not always as clear. Innovation project managers must be excellent collaborators, facilitators, and synthesizers. They manage projects and the innovation *process* and help build relationships among team members. They pay attention to timing through continual scanning of the business climate and understanding of the big picture and the concerns of stakeholders.

Master innovators develop criteria in advance and make decisions in a disciplined manner. They establish metrics, track progress, and maintain timely communication with all of the people concerned, adjusting course and actions as needed. When the end is recognized, they celebrate completion, regardless of the project's outcome.

#### **Some ways to build these competencies:**

- ♦ Get training in project management.
- ♦ Determine the differences between routine projects and innovation projects.
- ♦ Create a decision-making model.
- ♦ Create an inventory of tools, processes, and methodologies around innovation.
- ♦ Generate ideas on celebrating both success and failure.

These are generic ideas—can you think of any more? How can you personalize these ideas?

### ***Category I: Learns relentlessly***

Master innovators are curious—their endless search for what, how, and why fuels new ideas and vast possibilities. Successful innovation often requires much experimentation and leaves many failures in its wake. Innovators who seek feedback, examine the reasons behind success or failure, and challenge their own assumptions will find themselves constantly propelled forward.

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***The Personal Innovation Competencies***

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Learning is an itch that is scratched by new information and new understanding. Feeding our curiosity creates a constant flow of new information that stimulates new patterns and understandings. Posing stimulating questions is a common trait of people who become experts at innovation.

Innovation projects can yield enormous knowledge for the organization if lessons are captured and shared widely—whether the project was deemed a success or a failure. Creating a forum for learning, asking questions, and giving and getting feedback is one vehicle for gaining organizational wisdom.

Breaking out of our own world view to accept other perspectives requires that we continually acknowledge and challenge our own assumptions and the assumptions of the organization. It is this constant search for data, insight, and meaning that keeps innovators on the leading edge.

**Here are some ways to build these competencies:**

- ♦ Create a daily practice to help yourself be curious and ask questions.
- ♦ Develop a format to conduct “post mortems” on projects to glean lessons learned.
- ♦ Create lists of questions that are applicable in recurring situations.
- ♦ Determine the assumptions under which you operate and begin questioning them.
- ♦ Search for people who are likely to have world views that are very different from yours.

These are generic ideas—can you think of any more? How can you personalize these ideas?



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