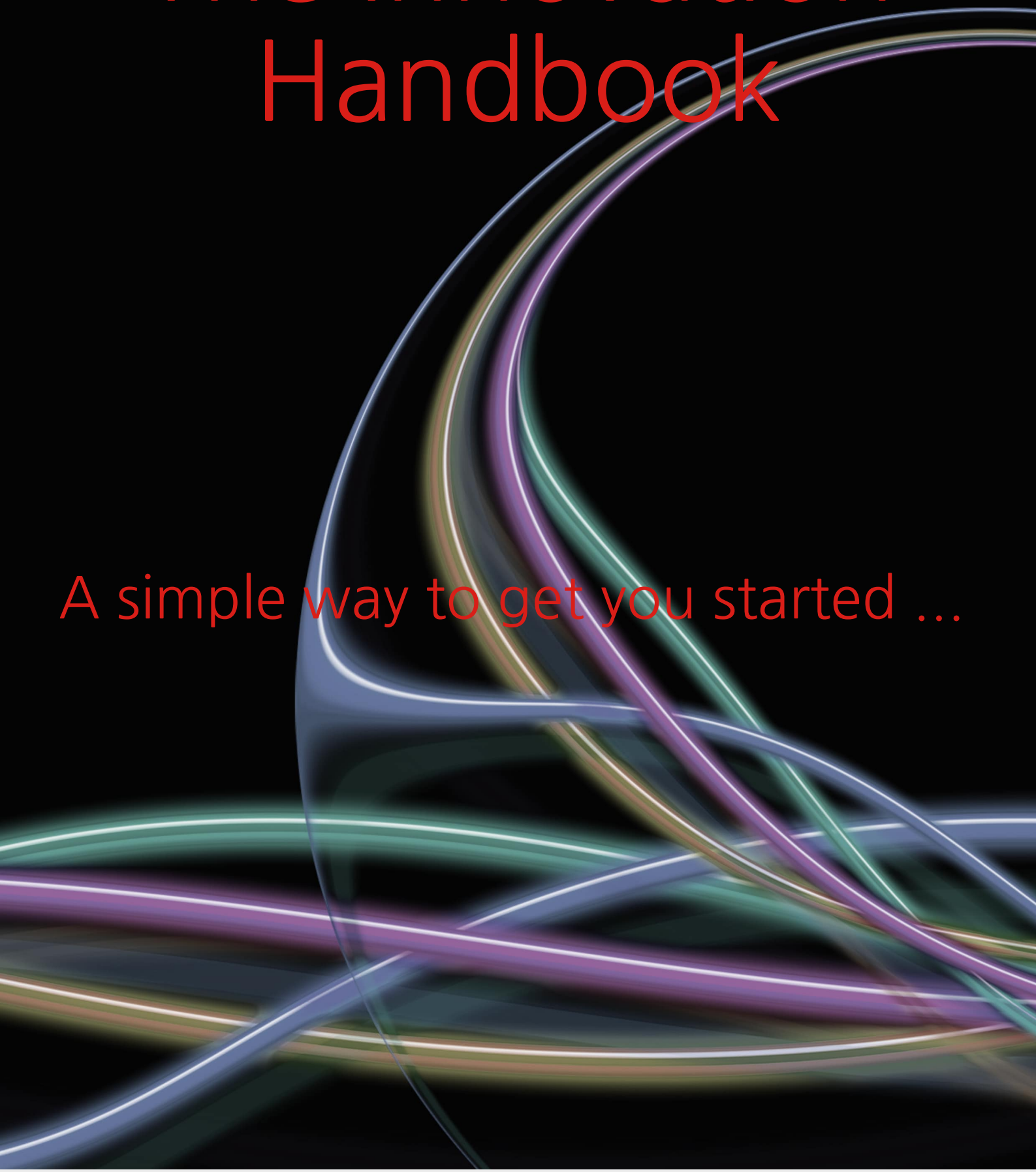
The Innovation Handbook



A simple way to get you started ...

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About The Author

Derek Cheshire spent a number of years working in the Software and Telecommunications industries, asking searching questions and being told 'that's the way we have always done things around here'.

Not satisfied with the answers, Derek obtained an MBA from the Open University Business School and instantly began to apply one of the course modules 'Creativity, Innovation and Change'.

Since then Derek has created a unique innovation model that allows direct innovation measurement and encourages a holistic approach to Innovation. He actively champions the use of creativity as a serious business tool to allow companies to realise their full potential and create the products and services that their customers want. His work encompasses consultancy, idea generation, creativity workshops and facilitating continuous innovation.

Derek is an accomplished speaker and has compiled a long list of blog articles including *Innovation – How long is a piece of string?*, *Taking the In out of Innovation* and *How To Generate 20 New Business Ideas Over Coffee*. One of his papers has been published by the **ICFAI University Press** in India as part of a reference book *Ideas, Creativity and Innovation*. He has also written a manifesto for the **Change This** organisation entitled *Slow Innovation – a savoury way to success*. Derek's article on predicting the future *Predicting the future and focusing your innovation program* was also published in October 2008 in the **Asia Pacific Tech Monitor**, a **United Nations** online journal. His articles appear both online and in diverse places such as the **Hindustan Times.**

Derek is a member of the mastermind group for the Design Interaction course at the Royal College of Art and Design in The Hague, speaking at their *2007 Mastermundo* event and recently took part in the **CNBC programme** *The Business of Innovation*.

Innovation - The Beginning

Before you read any further, please note that this is not a comprehensive guide. Please use it as a checklist, blueprint or a means of working out what stage you are at or a springboard for asking further questions. Now read on ...

Innovation has become a buzzword, uttered alongside such catch-phrases as competitive advantage, sustainable development, the connected knowledge economy, globalisation, convergence, digitisation, moving at the speed of thought. There are three distinct models that are being widely publicised but of course these can be mixed.

1. Acceleration - The future will be a continuation of the recent past, only much faster
2. Chaos - The future will be utterly unlike the past, driven by radically new and discontinuous events
3. Evolutionary - The future will be, like the past, a continuous series of mostly predictable changes

All of the above may be right or wrong, but who cares? The question is really concerned with whether or not Innovation describes the outputs or the processes by which those outputs are produced. Personally I believe in the latter, as any Innovation framework can then cope with radical or incremental Innovation.

So if Innovation is a framework, what does it consist of? Well the pseudo equation below hints at the important elements but basically we are looking at a combination of new ideas, existing knowledge, and a framework that helps us to manage everything. This in turn leads to the conclusion that Innovation is not the preserve of R & D departments, high technology start-up companies or PhD students. It can be applied to companies and organisations of any size, operating in any business sector, in any country.

You can therefore apply innovation concepts to products, services or processes as Innovation is essentially a strategy that relies entirely on human beings. Furthermore, Innovation does not hide in a Marketing department or a laboratory, it is a holistic function with input from everywhere.

Think of your organisation as an Innovation machine with employees as components (rather like a car engine). They all have a part to play, no matter how big or small (whether they work in the boardroom or sweep the factory floor).

But why do we need Innovation, even if we are already successful? Recent world events such as terrorist attacks, recession and the banking crisis have shown us that foresight, flexibility, adaptability and the ability to find new solutions to the problems we find ourselves in are the key, not only to beating our competitors, but to survival. All of these desirable characteristics are built into a holistic innovation model.

The use of Creativity as a business tool provides not only new ideas, but new viewpoints on our business problems and potentially new ways of solving them whilst the re-use and publication of existing knowledge (and organisational learning) help us to avoid reinventing the wheel and provide us with useful business intelligence. More importantly, the frameworks that we put in place lead to better (strategic) decision making, enhanced intrinsic motivation and better communication to name a few. In short, Innovation enhances our competitiveness and sustainability.

Those puzzled by the concept of pinning the future of their organisation on such an abstract concept will also probably be asking themselves the following questions:

- Is there a way of (easily) communicating these ideas?
- Can I start small and then roll Innovation out across my organisation?
- Can Innovation be measured?
- Can Innovation be managed?
- Can I still use all of my Leadership and Management ideas and tools?

The answer to all of the above questions is YES!

An Equation for Innovation

$$I = \alpha \times F(C,K)^{n}$$

The above represents a pseudo equation to allow the understanding of the Innovation process. The variables are defined as:

- **I** Innovation output
- **α** Need or willingness to embrace Innovation
- **C** Creativity, either on a personal or organisational level
- **K** Existing Knowledge or know how at personal or organisational level
- **n** The effectiveness or maturity of the innovation framework(s) put in place

In plain language, the equation states that innovation is a function of creativity (the way we generate new ideas) and know how (the things that we already know about). The more effective and mature the processes we have are, the greater the contribution to our businesses. If there is no need or desire to innovate then Innovation does not occur on its own.

At this point there may well be readers who are disagreeing and arguing about getting things into production as well as science and technology transfer. The methods of getting things into production are simply knowledge, some we already have, some we need to create as part of our innovation process.

There will also be those who worry about 'creatives doing their own thing' and issues surrounding HR and Quality. These are all catered for in the equation within the process variable **n**. What the equation is telling us is that to be successful in innovation we need everyone to play their part: HR, Finance, Quality, Strategists, Research and Production.

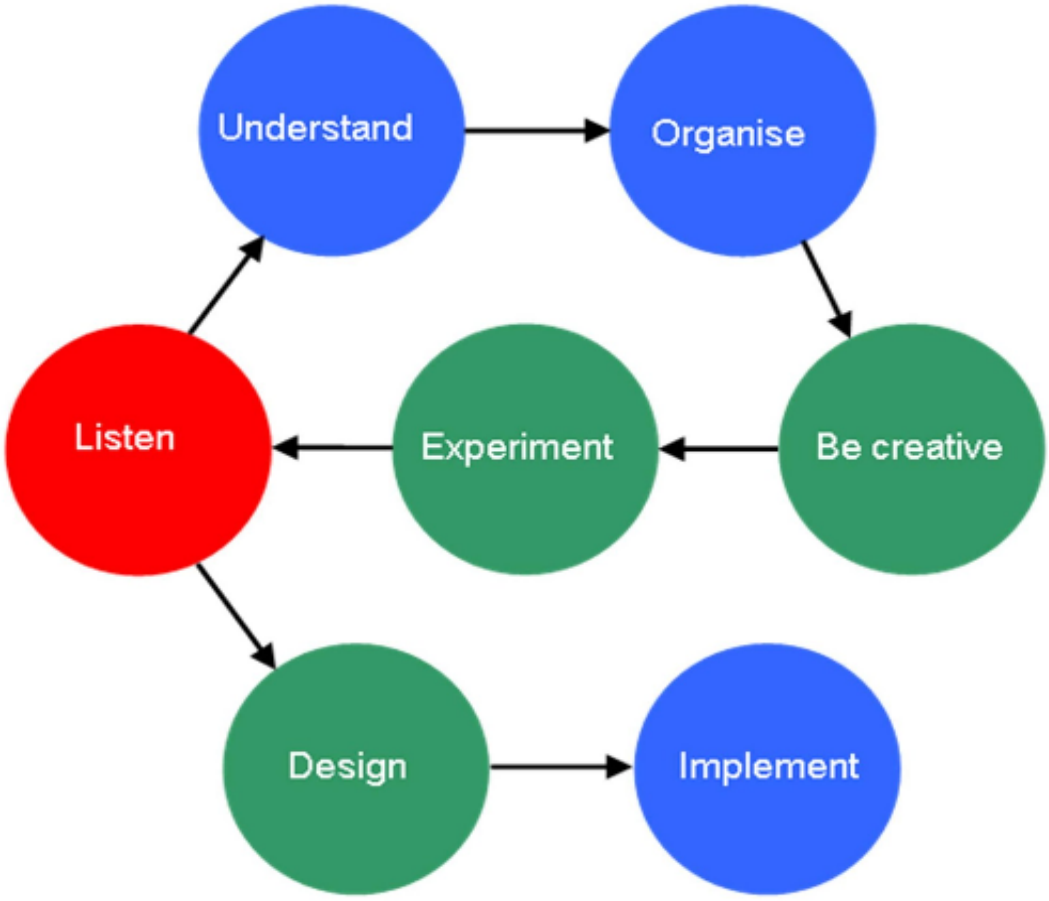
The above equation can help to show people and departments/functions how they contribute to Innovation overall through their everyday job function. In addition, every employee can come up with ideas or assist in capturing or spreading knowledge. The trick is to make sure that relevant frameworks are put in place.

By splitting Innovation into components we also have the opportunity to measure it directly. Many organisations make changes and then wait for their Key Performance Indicators to change which can take some time and in a rapidly changing economic climate this may be too long. We can thus look at various 'soft' factors which give a good indication of whether what we are doing is going to work. This is rather like checking on water pressure instead of waiting for water to dribble out of the end of a pipe.

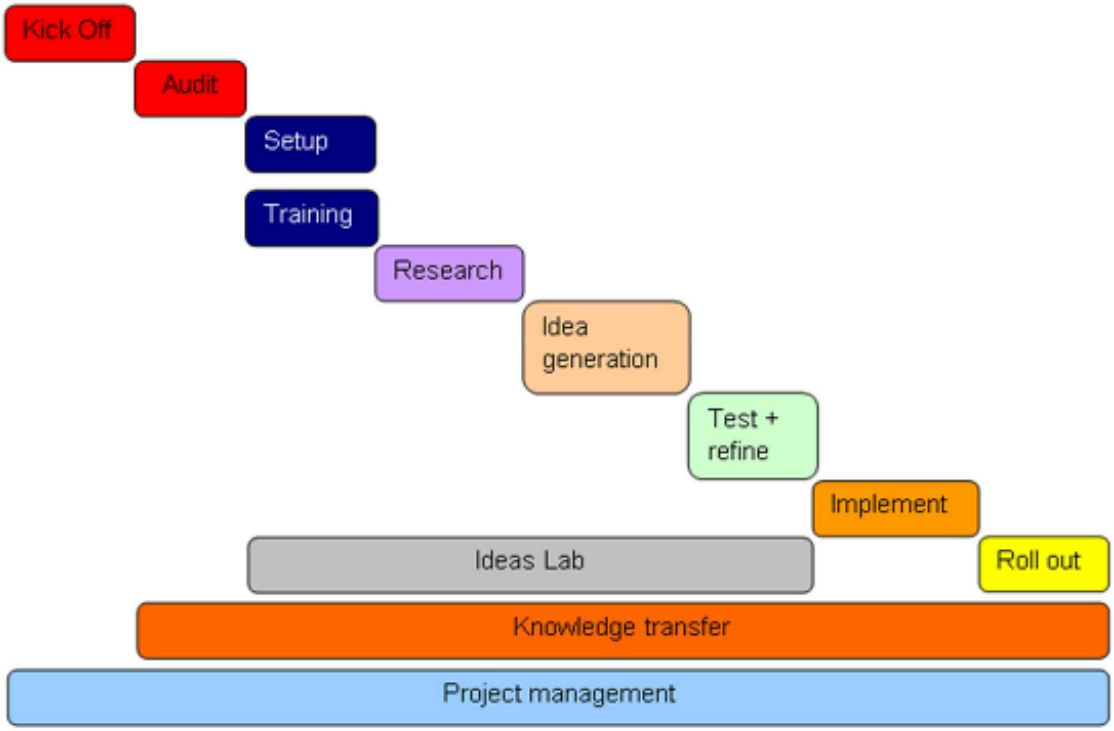
Given that Innovation can be measured, then it follows we can also manage it in much the same way as we manage existing projects and programmes (using the same tools). In fact, the measurement of Innovation means that it can reported on alongside other aspects of an organisation using Management Accounting procedures. It is thus an addition to, not a replacement for, your management processes.

A Top Level Innovation Methodology

The diagram below shows a generic flow for coming up with ideas and implementing them. This is what actually happens in our offices and factories. We are prompted into action as a result of listening to our environment, we make sense of it and then plan some action. This leads us to a creative process where we generate and refine ideas, test them and finally design and implement our finished product, service or process.



In order for this to be taken seriously at a high level we need to show the other activities that must take place along with any time lines to indicate time scales, dependencies and parallel activities. The diagram on the following page and accompanying text describes such a process or methodology in greater detail. Note that at this stage we are still only concerned with working within a business and the context is a new innovation project or programme, we have not yet considered making innovation into an integral part of an organisation's culture.



The above diagram shows the common phases of an innovation programme as a timeline. The phases shown are described briefly in the following subsections.

Kick Off - This is simply the formal start to the innovation programme and should ideally show the support of key sponsors and stakeholders (senior management), communicate objectives to those involved, lay down ground rules etc. The means by which this is done is crucial and depends on many factors. In line with the concept of innovation, it is suggested that the traditional rallying call to 'the troops' is not appropriate here.

Audit - In order to ensure that scarce resources are targeted and to identify developmental activities for the future, an audit of the innovation capacity of the organisation should be carried out here. If this is coupled with another audit after a reasonable period of time then the effect of the programme can be assessed directly independently of financial performance indicators. The Innovation Toolkit is ideal for this.

Ideas Lab - This is actually composed of several smaller activities but is shown as one since it lends itself to a separate module that can easily be delivered either internally or externally by outside agencies. The training and idea generation typically take a couple of days with refining and testing being taken offline or worked on at a later date.

Setup - Here, organisations need to be addressing the infrastructure requirements of the programme i.e. accommodation (a separate house of ideas?), additional resources and materials, appropriate research tools, prototyping, design and manufacturing facilities.

Initial Training - The exact nature of this depends on your organisation but any developmental activities should cover both convergent and divergent techniques, techniques other than traditional brainstorming, nominal group techniques and some slightly weird techniques that people can experiment with over the duration of the training. Apart from direct instruction, a series of technique cards should be produced and made available.

Research - There is no fixed scope for this although the following should at least be covered:

Trend spotting, customer surveys, distributor surveys, worker surveys, input from professionals (doctors, engineers E. Whatever is appropriate).

The idea is to spot trends, find gaps for new products or improvements, make use of legislative changes or changes in working practices etc.

Idea Generation - Using the output from the training activities and the material generated during the research activity, the left/right brain model can be put into use to generate a large number of ideas. In a full blown programme one might reasonably expect 1500 or so crazy ideas to be generated which in turn will be whittled down to 150 or so ideas worth recording and progressing with. A 2 day workshop may generate only about one third as many.

Test & Refine - Here, we are typically making prototypes, testing services and creating focus groups as well as feeding back information to sponsors. The activities depend very much on the nature of your business but the output should feed directly into the implementation phase. If you are creating a new product then you need a design, drawings, manufacturing details etc.

Implement - Once again this depends on the exact nature of your business but if you have a new product then you should have plans for sales and marketing, manufacturing, distribution and logistics etc.

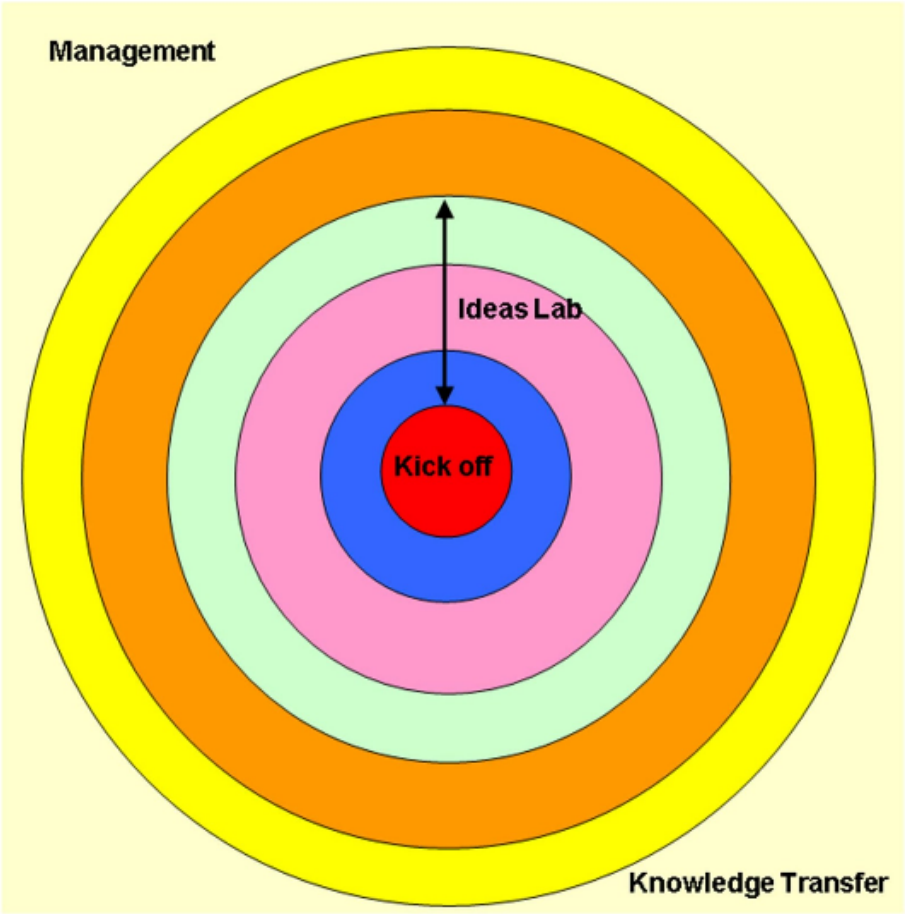
Roll Out - This will see your new ideas actually going into the marketplace. A key component is to have built in learning as there are bound to be improvements that can be made (not just about your product but about the process itself).

Knowledge Transfer - Ideally, such an activity should be continuous but in reality you will have been too busy to get stuck into this. Mechanisms should be put in place to capture learning points in as many different ways as possible (both formal and informal). As this is a one off project then a method of transferring knowledge to other people in the organisation needs to be put in place (briefings, demonstrations, storytelling, videos are all good methods).

Project Management - An ongoing activity that needs very little explanation in the main, however, any project manager must be fully aware of the innovation process and the subtleties of managing a diverse group of people and living with a great deal of ambiguity. There will also be pressure to perform when sponsors apparently see nothing happening.

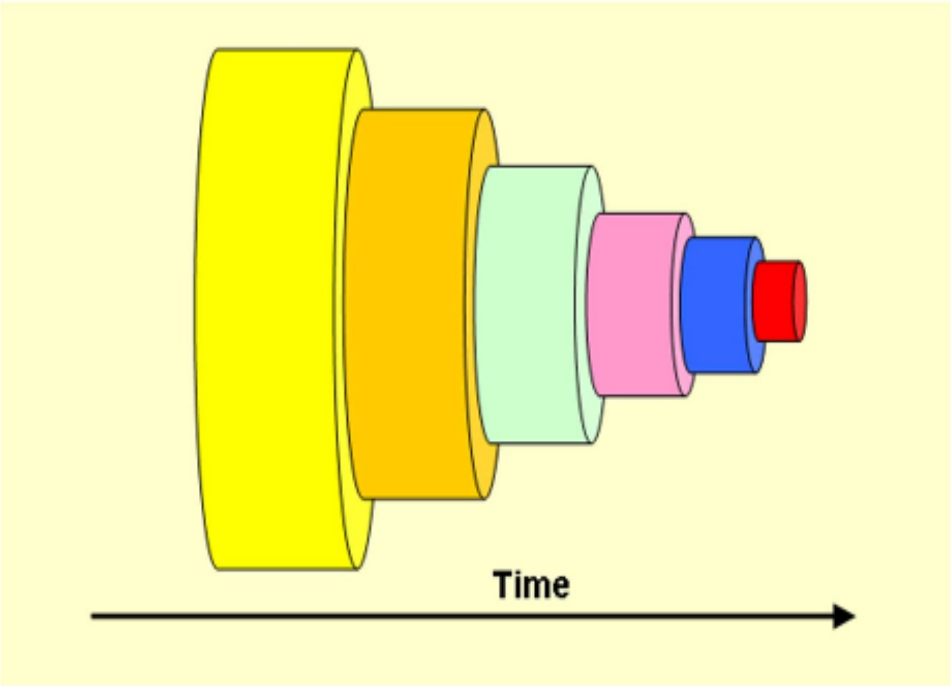
Continuous Innovation

The previous section described an outline methodology for an innovation project or programme. But what happens when we wish to keep going, to innovate constantly? Our timeline of activities changes but the activities themselves remain pretty much the same as is shown below except for the fact that they all loop back on themselves i.e. they are all now continuous.



The only activities that do not form part of this arrangement are the knowledge transfer and management activities as they now form part of the environment. The initial 'kick off' activity also takes on a slightly new meaning as it implies that new initiatives are started at the centre i.e. bottom up in the traditional hierarchical organisation.

This is not quite the whole picture, as it only shows relationships between processes. Now imagine the whole picture turned on its side so that you are looking at the side of a disk or coin.



If this now moves sideways to represent the passage of time, we have a series of concentric cylinders to represent continuous activity in each area. The actual passage of a single project is in fact a corkscrew. Now try and imagine that all of these cylinders or corkscrews are moving at different rates and are all in existence at once. Maybe more are being added as you think about this! This neatly illustrates the organised chaos that is innovation and the complexities that must be considered when managing it.

Regional Innovation

This section is included for the benefit of those who work in regional or national government and who might be concerned with creating Innovation policies. The concepts previously described are still valid but some phases of the generic Innovation model have a slightly different meaning.

It does not make sense to talk about regional or countrywide innovation in terms of anything other than continuous innovation since governments are unlikely to fund programmes that will not deliver long term economic benefits. To deliver innovation on a regional basis we will consider the continuous innovation model previously described, highlighting the different activities that must take place at each stage.

Time

Kick Off - As before, this is the formal start to the innovation programme and should ideally show the support of key sponsors and stakeholders (senior officials, trade associations, manufacturing groups etc), communicate objectives to those involved, lay down ground rules etc. A regional strategy should be created, setting out clear objectives but with the understanding that this is a living document which can (and should) be updated as the learning process continues. The communication of objectives is key as the power of external stakeholders will be considerable. A simple announcement in the press will not do.

Audit - In order to ensure that scarce resources are targeted and to identify developmental activities for the future, an audit of the innovation capacity of the region should be carried out here. If this is coupled with another audit after a reasonable period of time then the effect of the programme can be assessed directly independently of financial performance indicators. The Innovation Toolkit is ideal for this.

Unlike company audits, it is essential to capture significant amounts of demographic information so that any initiatives can target geographical regions, industry sectors, socio-economic groupings etc.

Key findings will need to be fed back into the regional strategy immediately.

Ideas Lab - The grouping of smaller phases under this title is not quite so helpful and it is perhaps more sensible to think of these five small phases as an 'incubation activity'. Also the timescales will be considerably long than when working with an individual company.

Setup - Here, regional and local government must address the infrastructure requirements of the programme i.e. accommodation (for incubating businesses, action learning groups etc), administrative functions (website, databases, event planning etc), additional resources and materials, create links with stakeholders such as academic institutions, trade associations, industry sector representatives, unions.

Initial Training - Although we are now concerned with a regional strategy, we need to understand that we are trying to help businesses understand how to innovate. Here, a business innovation methodology needs to be taught to, and experienced by representatives of stakeholders as well as local trainers and consultants. Facilitation skills for use within action learning groups are vitally important here.

In tandem with this, there needs to be a period of leadership and management education to prepare people for the experiences that they are about to have. There should also be plenty of support in the form of business mentoring, publications, seminars etc.

This is also a good time to be gathering information about future training requirements for future phases of strategy implementation.

Research - There is no fixed scope for this although the following should at least be covered:

Trend spotting, customer surveys, distributor surveys, worker surveys, input from professionals (doctors, engineers E. Whatever is appropriate). Such trend spotting will probably look further afield. For company innovation programmes we might look at local or national markets but for regional programmes we are looking nationally, and globally.

The idea is to spot trends, find gaps for new products or improvements, make use of legislative changes, changes in working practices, exploit raw materials and expertise or event identify skills shortages. This may very well lead to clustering of industries that have either similar or complementary interests.

Idea Generation - Cluster groups should be encouraged to participate in activities that can lead to new ideas and the sharing of best practice. Depending on the country and/or region there may well be cultural issues here to do with sharing.

There may very well be ideas that spawn products or services involving collaboration but it is more likely that ideas will be related to infrastructure and support requirements. It is thus important that all such information is recorded and transparency is key.

Test & Refine - Instead of a product or service, we are concerned with the delivery of innovation, thus we have a product already. We are dealing with the creation of a service that delivers this product to all sectors within the regional economy. Those involved in the process will create their own ideas and terminology, but expect action learning groups, knowledge transfer partnerships, cultural change initiatives and infrastructure projects (broadband, planning, power etc) to be on the list. Any such ideas must be well thought out as implementation is likely to be a costly exercise.

Implement - At this stage, implementation is unknown; all you know is who the stakeholders are likely to be and what the desired outcomes are. This is a bit like a brand new manufacturing line waiting to create a new product. They know what they have to do but not how to do it yet. Stakeholders can be briefed in advance and should be kept informed during all of the phases anyway.

Roll Out - This must be phased if a region or country is being considered. It is also the region why cascading any methodology from 'experts' to other trainers and facilitators is important. It helps to speed up roll out and gives ownership to the new methodology. 5.6 Knowledge Transfer

Regular action learning groups can help to ensure that knowledge is transferred both between stakeholders and to the sponsoring bodies. Product and process specific knowledge can also be transferred locally with industry-academic partnerships and between participants in clusters.

Project Management - This is an extremely important activity, which in many cases, is given to just one person. They then spend their time in meetings and lose contact with the innovation project. It is suggested that a multidisciplinary team is created that may have had the 'company innovation experience' and who will be familiar with the pressures and ambiguity that exist. Other than that, this is still a project management exercise although attention should be paid to the following:

- Ensuring sustainability of initiatives
- Ensuring transferability of skills and initiatives
- Transparency of planning and funding issues
- Communications (press releases, events)
- Funding (sufficient but not wasteful)
- Timescales - things will happen immediately but a full cycle may take 3 - 5 years

Timescales

This has been briefly mentioned above and without detailed knowledge of the type of innovation project being considered this is a hugely difficult question to answer. As a rough guide, allow up to 12 months for company programme to go through one cycle and introduce new products or services. A regional programme will take 3 – 5 years to demonstrate significant benefits throughout, although there will be noticeable changes in particular sectors or attitudes much earlier than that, again 12 months would be an appropriate timescale.

Leadership and Management

So far, I have talked about the things which can be done specifically TO the organisation as a whole. I have also stressed the fact that any organisation adopting Innovation can retain much of its Management and Management Accounting tools. But what about Leadership and Management itself?

Hopefully, those in senior positions in your organisation will be the best at what they do and will have a very powerful management toolbox at their disposal. This toolbox is likely, however, to contain traditional tools. In order to embrace Innovation fully, this toolset must be supplemented. That is not to say that you should expect your senior management to suddenly start playing with toys, or painting their offices bright orange but Leaders and Managers must be able to think differently about developing strategy, solving issues, decision making, communicating, assessing risk, looking into the future and living with a certain degree of ambiguity.

This will require a change in attitude and the learning of new skills. The most important of these will be to actually pick the right tools from within their newly expanded toolbox. Only if your Leaders and Managers fail to cope with this new vision of the future will you have to consider changing them.

Culture and Infrastructure

Governments and most businesses will readily understand the term ‘infrastructure’. It is a collective term for roads, railways, airports, ports, telecommunications networks, supply pipelines etc.It is all to do with movement and these networks are all ‘hard’ i.e. they are made out of steel, concrete and copper and they can all be touched.

These networks all have one other common characteristic, whatever flows through them are rigidly controlled. Sometimes in straight lines and some times curves but always controlled by a boundary of concrete, steel, copper or some other tangible resource.

So what has this got to do with my organisation you may ask? One of the keys to the success of modern businesses, and the way to beat the current recession is Innovation. This in turn depends greatly on assets that are intangible, we cannot touch them. These include creativity, know how, intuition and cultural issues to name but a few. Many wouldidentify these as ‘social’ or ‘human’ capital. The exact terminology is irrelevant; it is the ideas and knowledge of individuals that is important which can be enhanced by interaction. It is also independent of work so the term ‘social’ means inclusive rather than outside of the workplace.

To innovate successfully, these things too must move around both our businesses and our societies. Attempts have often been made in the past to codify these ideas, transmit them to another place and then try and extract both the message and the meaning of what has been received. Try having an email exchange with an angry colleague and you will understand the problems.

When we innovate, we also want things to travel in ways that are not constrained by boundaries and which certainly do not travel in straight lines. Just like the ripples on a pond we might wish some things to be broadcast, such as company culture. And like a networked computer system we will need some sort of storage and perhaps some form of maintenance function to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

When thinking of communicating within a corporate environment we often think of sending things out (pushing) or receiving from others (pulling). What about when things just sort of slosh about, and proceed at their own pace or when disruptive events occur and we need a system that repairs itself? We need a new type of network, one that is invisible and which connects everybody to everyone else. It must allow meaning, intuition, creativity and emotion to flow with no bottlenecks and no burst pipes. What we need therefore is the right sort of 'network' – a Soft Infrastructure.

Based on concepts such as coaching, action learning and knowledge agents this might be somewhat strange, but it is all possible. Can we afford not to install such networks in our organisations or perhaps in society in general?

Many Innovators or sponsors of Innovation will be keen to extol the virtues of traditional 'hard' networks such as broadband, telephone etc. It is clear that 'soft' networks will work on their own and that their working can be enhanced by technology but it is clear that technology on its own cannot do the job so why spend money on copper and fibre when the components of the soft networks, people, are already in place? In the current economic crisis now is the right time to make the right connections.

This is also where local cultural issues come into play. In many developing countries, social structures tend to enhance the 'sloshing around' of ideas and knowledge previously mentioned. Also cultures where storytelling is still widely used have an advantage. Those in developing countries may lack the advantage of investment but they are already familiar with the social and cultural concepts that underpin Innovation. Furthermore, the education systems of developing countries have not sought to eradicate the natural creativity of young people.

Think of Innovation as a 'human race'. Those in developed countries have a head start by virtue of investment and existing technology and know how whilst those in developing countries have the potential to 'run faster'. The key is to work out what sort of competitor your organisation (or country) is.

Buying Creativity or Innovation

Here I refer simply to ‘consultancy’ although I am talking about all providers whether they act as consultants, trainers or facilitators. There are many factors which contribute to an effective working relationship between consultants and clients. It is crucial that a purchaser of consultancy understands what they aim to achieve from the outset. At the start of a project it is highly likely that there will be no objectives, and even when they are defined, a client will often be puzzled by the strange terminology that providers might be tempted to use.

At this point I urge purchasers to ask about the things that they are not clear about. This might not clarify everything but you will establish that the consultant knows their subject matter thoroughly. This can be critical where a trainer might be employed instead of a facilitator.

The ultimate success of a consulting project is determined long before you've talked to an actual consultant, and depends on the extent to which you have been able to identify and agree the precise reasons why you're hiring consultants. In most organisations, managers think about these reasons in terms of what they expect the consultants to do, not in relation to the underlying role they're expecting the consultants to play. Nor do they consider how their expectations match the prevailing market conditions. What kind of client are you? How can you assess the risk of developing a unique approach? Are the issues you face new ones, or are you trying to catch up with your competitors?

Why use consultants?

For some reason, and I’m sure there is research somewhere on this topic, it is impossible for an organisation to kick-start their own creativity or innovation programme. Many have started and attempted to devise some sort of change programme, workshops or new processes but all fail soon afterwards. What seems to be needed is an external kick (in the right place) that mobilises the internal resources of the business.

A simple way to get you started ...

For many organisations, the resources and skills required exist within the business as it currently is. There is no need to recruit, or spend many hundreds of thousands of pounds on getting very expensive consultants to do the work for you. All you need is some external help with a plan, some training and development, facilitation and knowledge transfer before continuing on your own. It is likely that you organisation will not have the capability to keep abreast of the world of creativity and innovation so a regular 'top up' might be needed. But be wary of long term dependency on any outside agent.

Probably the single most important reason for hiring consultants is to bring in people with a particular set of skills. The more specialised a consultant is in his or her field, the more valuable they are to you. Specialist know-how usually falls into two categories. First, there's 'industry-specific skills' – you need people who are experts in your sector.

Second, there's what you could call 'issue-specific skills', which is where you need people who are experts in a particular issue – it may be a problem or an opportunity.

But there are times when you simply need help – bright, energetic people who are well-informed, who can help you get a new initiative up and running at a time when it's proving difficult to free up your own internal resources. You're quite definitely not looking for specialists here. You need the consultants to be very flexible – rolling up their sleeves and doing whatever it takes to get the job done – and that's something that requires a broad base of knowledge, rather than in-depth expertise in just one or two areas. It is this third category that your creativity or innovation consultant should fall. Going back to the premise that the client is the person with intimate knowledge of their business and their market, the final ingredient is the ability to make things happen (i.e. know where to aim the kick).

Even in the smallest organisations, managers find it difficult to stand back and analyse what's happening. Opportunities are missed, and threats are ignored. Even where time is allowed for such reflection, how can you ensure that you're seeing what matters most to the organisation, not just what matters most to you as an individual? Outsiders, like consultants, can provide you with an invaluable perspective because they're looking at your organisation with new eyes.

There are also occasions when you want access – not so much to an outside view, or new data – but to creative thinking, when you want someone to sit down with your organisation and devise an innovative approach. It may be that you and everyone in your industry face a similar threat – for example, the appearance of new, potentially disruptive technology. All your competitors may have adopted the same stance, but you may be looking for a different approach, one that takes the problem and converts it into an opportunity for you to differentiate yourself.

Running a creativity project/programme

The following guidelines provide a useful framework for the management of creativity:

- Build in the expected outputs from the project and all budgetary and time constraints
- Flag up problems or uncertainties early on with the project early on so that remedial action can be taken. There will be more of these than usual.
- Hold regular reviews on the progress and delivery. Ensure that progress is always being made but do not get heavy handed. Remember your employees are involved also!
- Where necessary and agreed, provide staff, facilities and information promptly. At the end of the project both parties should undertake a joint project review to see what has been learned. If knowledge transfer is not complete then now is the time to rectify this.

Choosing the right consultant

Many clients rely on word-of-mouth recommendations when selecting a consultant. This is often the way to go when running a creativity project since it depends heavily on trust and communications.

The guidelines below show the steps that might be taken in selecting a consultant:

- Create as full a brief as is possible
- Conduct a discussion with your potential consultant and get to know as much about their proposed intervention as you can. Where does their expertise lie in terms of consultancy, facilitation and training and why are they using all these strange techniques?
- Knowledge of their track record is useful but what is more important is assessing the potential in this particular case. A track record is not so useful when you are trying to achieve something different!
- Create an efficient but not too restrictive reporting mechanism
- Make sure that there is an identified way to transfer knowledge to you
- Make sure that at the end of the project there is no lasting dependency
- Do not make a choice on price alone, often in the cases of creativity and innovation it is the cost of not taking a course of action that must be considered

How you approach these steps is determined by the level of formality you require, and the level of client-consultant interaction you envisage. Each approach has its particular strengths and weaknesses, and needs to be evaluated on an organisation-by-organisation, and project-by-project, basis. Some organisations, and most public sector clients, have a more formalised approach to the purchase of consultancy.

There are many people trading as consultants including some 'crossover' consultants who have moved from the arts. Their interventions tend to be aimed purely at HR i.e. team building, leadership and motivation. Whilst they are useful they are not concerned with the process of using creativity as a tool for improving the whole of your business. Also you should try to make some sort of measurement so that you know how much of an impact your consultant has made. I have my own tool for doing this (Please get in touch if you would like to know more) which looks at both creativity and innovation from a 'soft skills' point of view. Your chosen consultant should have a similar methodology available to them.