

101 LESSONS FOR INNOVATORS

CONTENTS

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

INNOVATE LIKE AN EXPLORER

- 01 What Is Innovation?
- 02 Urgency led to Magellan to the West
- 03 Columbus Had the Courage to Lose
Sight of the Shore
- 04 Preparation Brought Amundsen
to Reach the South Pole First
- 05 Being First on Everest Is All About
Teamwork
- 06 The Apollo program Was One Big
Experiment
- 07 Ten Innovation Lessons From Famous
Explorers
- 08 When Should You Not Innovate?
Personal Reflection

INNOVATION MINDSET

- 09 Operational Excellence Alone Will
Kill You
- 10 Why Most Managers Fear Innovation
- 11 Improving Is a Step. Innovation Is
a Jump.
- 12 Create a Shared Vision of the Future
- 13 How to Get Rid of Old Ideas
- 14 Being Bored Makes You Innovative
- 15 Are You Really an Innovator?
- 16 Innovation Is of All Ages
- 17 Seven NO's Real Innovators Never
Accept
- 18 Successful Innovation Is a Matter
of Willpower
- 19 Innovation Magic Occurs Outside
Your Comfort Zone
- 20 Five Simple Exercises to Break Your
Patterns
- 21 Three Habits to Help You Get Big Ideas
- 22 Innovation Failure Is a Badge of Honour
- 23 Tradition Can Help You Boost Innovation
- 24 The Most Important Quality of an
Innovator
- 25 Innovators Are Equilibrists
- 26 Five Provocative Questions to Change
the Mindset
- 27 The Journey to an Innovative
Corporate Culture
Personal Reflection

ORGANISING INNOVATION

- 28 Fifty Dinosaur Products and How to Stay Off that List
- 29 Big Corporates: Stop Frustrating Innovators
- 30 Do You Hate Innovation Steering Committees, Too?
- 31 It's not I-nnovation. It's We-nnovation
- 32 Should We Have an Innovation Department?
- 33 The Perfect Innovation Team
- 34 How to Get Spontaneous Big Ideas Funded?
- 35 Nine Innovation Secrets of Successful Creative Teams
- 36 The Best Innovators Are Need Seekers
- 37 Free Employees to Work on Big Ideas
- 38 The Ideal Innovation Manager: an Insider or Outsider?
- 39 Be an Innovator in Six Steps
Personal Reflection

STARTING INNOVATION

- 40 Six Rookie Mistakes in Innovation
- 41 Depressing Facts on Innovation
- 42 Why Do Incremental Innovations Dominate?
- 43 Ten Problems Launching Innovation
- 44 Create Momentum by Making People Nervous
- 45 How Do You Pick the Right Moment to Innovate?
- 46 It's Not Always Wise to Start Innovation with an Idea
- 47 Workplace Politics Kills Innovation
- 48 How Can You Focus Innovation?
- 49 How to Understand Customers Deeply for Innovation?
- 50 Create an IKEA-Effect
- 51 The Main Reasons Start-ups Fail
- 52 How to Convince Your Conservative Boss to Innovate?
- 53 Ten Activities to Guide You Through the Innovation Maze
- 54 Start Innovation by Asking 'What If?'
- 55 Be Innovative and Act Conservative
- 56 The Technology Route to Starting Innovation
- 57 How to Create a Convincing New Business Case
- 58 Ten Ways to Reduce Innovation Failures
Personal Reflection

IDEATING

- 59 Top Nine Eureka Moments
- 60 Great Ideas Have the X-factor
- 61 How Customers Lead You to Big Ideas
- 62 Twenty-eight Idea Killers
- 63 Seven Ways to Prevent Your Idea from Being Killed
- 64 The Tesla of Bikes Got a Brilliant Idea
- 65 How Can You Get 1414 New Ideas in a Brainstorm?
- 66 Choosing the Right Idea
- 67 How to Create a New Business Model
- 68 Big Ideas are Relevant, Feasible, and Viable
- 69 Big Companies should Operate Start-Ups, too
- 70 Five Tips to Get Great Ideas Accepted
- 71 The Best Way to Protect Your Idea
Personal Reflection

IMPLEMENTING INNOVATION

- 72 World Famous Innovation Failures
- 73 Why Experimenting Is Crucial in Innovation
- 74 Test Innovations Like Tesla
- 75 How The Hippo Water Roller Impacts Lives in Africa
- 76 Zumba's Success: Two Simple Innovation Rules
- 77 How The Trash-Eating WasteShark Cleans the Water
- 78 The Freemium Journey of Spotify
- 79 How Inside-the-Box Innovations Saved LEGO
- 80 Start-Up Turns Plants into Batteries
- 81 Airbnb Took Off When They Really Understood Their Customer Needs
- 82 What Can You Learn from the Story of the First Invisible Bicycle Helmet?
- 83 The origin of 'Liter of Light'
- 84 The Google Glass Experiment
- 85 How to Upscale a Radical Initiative
Personal Reflection

01 WHAT IS INNOVATION?

Let's clarify what I mean by innovation as the term has been defined in so many ways.

Be aware I like to oversimplify it to make it clear for anyone – and not only for business professionals. In my view, innovation is 'doing new things or doing things in a new way'. Let me exemplify the three keywords in this definition.

New: Innovation comes from the Latin word *innovat*, which means to renew or alter. The combination of *in* and *novare* suggests, 'to come up with something entirely new'.¹ The question is, new for whom? In my view, a product or service is only new when the (internal) customer perceives it as new.

Things: Innovation can appear in many forms. People associate innovation with new technological inventions. But it can also be services, business models, markets, processes, customer experiences, ways

of organizing yourself, etcetera. In this way, the meaning of innovation applies to companies, healthcare institutions, non-profit organizations, and even governmental organisations.

Doing: Innovation has a concrete outcome and it is only successful when it is adopted by customers, (internal) users, clients, or whatever you may call them. Effective innovators, therefore, have a process in place to transform ideas into concrete outcomes. Be sure to use one.

My own favourite definition of innovation comes from Lewis Duncan: 'Innovation is the ability to convert ideas into invoices.'

¹ Max McKeown, *The Innovation Book*, Pearson, Harlow, United Kingdom, 2014, p. xxix.



15

ARE YOU REALLY AN INNOVATOR?

It is highly fashionable to call yourself an innovator these days. It makes me wonder how it's possible, with all these innovators around, that our world isn't much more innovative than it is. Six out of seven (so-called) innovative ideas never even reach the market. Would this happen when so many of us are real innovators? Wikipedia defines an **innovator** in a general sense, as a person who is one of the first to introduce into reality something better than before. Based on this definition and my personal experience meeting real innovators, I invite you to answer the following five questions to check if you are really an innovator:

1. Are you curious and able to come up with original ideas while the rest is stuck in creativity?
2. Do you have the courage to take real risks in everyday life with your career, reputation, and money?
3. Are other people prepared to follow you when you take them on a path no one ever took before?
4. Do you change your mind and pivot your idea when it doesn't work and is proven wrong?
5. Do you persist and make your idea become a reality, even when everybody tells you it can't be done and you failed the first seven times?

A real innovator is a curious, creative, courageous, convincing, persistent, open-minded human being. Are you?

23 TRADITION CAN HELP YOU BOOST INNOVATION

'Without tradition no innovation. Without innovation no tradition.' This saying popped into my mind when I was reflecting on my first visit to Russia. There I saw how traditional Russian lifestyle blends with modern, trendy Moscow. And I remembered there from my early working days how historical breakthroughs of a company can help it innovate today.

All companies once started small and innovative. As companies grow older, though, they tend to become more risk-averse. Entrepreneurs leave and managers come in. All the bureaucratic processes and policies put in place become impediments to innovation. This is not an immediate problem, not until the rate of change outside the company drastically outpaces the rate of change inside. Then 'a big old tanker'

will realize it has to innovate. As innovation facilitator, I learned that challenging company traditions, respectfully, increases the acceptance of innovation. Violating traditions leads to resistance.

So how do you get traditionalists to be more innovative? Every company was once a rule-breaker. I advise you as innovator to go far back in time to find some great innovative cases in the history of your own company, when the big old tanker still was a speedboat. Look into the company archives and talk to 'the old guys' at work and ask them about 'how they broke the rules' in the old days.

The first company where I worked, as a junior product manager, was Honig, in The Netherlands. It started in 1867 and is a familiar producer of dried food products,

like pasta, soups, and cake mixes. Once started as an entrepreneurial family company, 120 years later it became a rather large, conservative working company. The former speedboat was then a big tanker in a huge fleet and consequently lost a lot of innovation speed. Honig was the market leader in a lot of product categories and was focused on maintaining the equilibrium. How would they be able to create momentum for innovation?

In the company archives, I found that Honig, in fact, was the creator of the market for dried soups in The Netherlands. The first package of dried soup was called Honig's Vermicellisoep and was introduced in 1930. Luckily, in those days, it was not known in The Netherlands that in Italian vermicelli means little worms. The story of 'How Honig

Created a Totally New Market' in 1930 helped me as a marketer sixty years later to create new momentum for innovation. As soon as the naysayers at Honig heard the story that innovation was part of their tradition, they were personally touched and became supporters of new initiatives.

Can tradition help you boost innovation? Yes. Go out there and talk to 'the old guys' and dig into your archives. I am pretty sure you will come up with some great stories of breakthrough innovations buried in the history of your organization. Find them and tell their stories. It really helps in creating momentum for new breakthroughs.

PERSONAL

**DO YOU HAVE
TO TAKE
IN EVERYDAY
CAREER,**

REFLECTION

**THE COURAGE
REAL RISKS
LIFE WITH YOUR
REPUTATION
AND MONEY?**



37 THE IDEAL INNOVATION MANAGER: AN INSIDER OR OUTSIDER?

One of my clients – a family-owned building materials supplier producing concrete – wanted to innovate. First, we started a structured ideation journey with a multidisciplinary team to come up with appealing new ideas. During this journey, the CEO said they wanted to hire an innovation manager to transform their ideas into concrete products and services. He asked me if I knew an experienced outsider.

I had my doubts if an outsider would be the best choice. As the building supplies sector is so conservative, there are hardly any innovation professionals available. Secondly, their corporate culture was so closed that it would take an outsider ages to become 'one of the guys'. The last point is essential: an innovation manager can't innovate a company alone. He or she has to have great facilitation capabilities to grow a culture for innovation.

So, I advised them to appoint an internal guy, their marketing manager at that time. He was closely connected to the ideation process, a very friendly guy, and a real professional. And he just got practical training in innovation. It worked out wonderfully. With great internal support the company launched five innovative concepts over the last four years and are now leading innovation in their sector.

When you are looking for the ideal innovation manager, my tip is to look inside your organisation first.

40-58

**STARTING
INNOVATION**

73 WHY EXPERIMENTING IS CRUCIAL IN INNOVATION

What's the worst possible nightmare you could have as an innovator? It's launching an innovation nobody wants, making it an instant failure. The sooner you know your innovation is attractive and you are able show it to be so, the better. This does not mean rushing an immature/ valueless prototype, but rather strategic experimenting. Did you know that the inventor James Dyson had made 5,127 prototypes of his famous Dual Cyclone bag-less vacuum cleaner before settling on the model that would make him a billionaire?

Experimenting means testing your new concept to learn if it really delivers value to your customer and if the business model you came up with is valid. By doing so, you validate the future business potential of your new concept. The goal of experimentation at the start of innovation is simply to learn and improve. I totally agree with Reid Hoffman, founder of LinkedIn who said, 'If you are not embarrassed by the first version of your product, you've launched too late.'

The more realistic your experiment is, the more you will learn and the better you can assess the validity and attractiveness of your new concept.



96 THE CHALLENGE IS TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON A GREAT IDEA

Richard Branson dropped out of school at age sixteen, a decision that ultimately led to the creation of Virgin Records. He expanded his entrepreneurial ventures beyond music to other sectors, including the space-tourism venture Virgin Galactic, making him a billionaire. The Virgin Group holds more than three hundred fifty companies in thirty-five countries around the world, with nearly seventy thousand employees.

Branson embraces breakthrough technology. In 2004, he started Virgin Galactic to develop and operate a new generation of space vehicles to open outer-space to everyone. Virgin Galactic's SpaceShipTwo Unity is designed to fly six paying passengers and two pilots to suborbital space and back for \$250,000 a ticket. And in 2017, Virgin Group invested in Hyperloop One to commercialize Hyperloop in moving

passengers and/or cargo at airline speeds at a fraction of the cost of air travel – a service introduced and named by Elon Musk in August 2013.

Of course, Richard Branson has been involved in many failed business projects too, like Virgin Cola, Virgin Cars, Virgin Publishing, Virgin Clothing, and Virgin Brides.

Richard Branson wrote in his autobiography, 'My interest in life comes from setting myself huge, apparently unachievable challenges and trying to rise above them ... from the perspective of wanting to live life to the full, I felt that I had to attempt it.'

The lesson for innovators from Richard Branson is, 'The challenge is to follow through on a great idea.'