INNOVATION AND TEAM CREATIVITY CATALYSTS

CHAPTER 1

When respondents in a Hewlett-Packard (HP) global survey were asked for innovations that their organisations had implemented, the answers were diverse: an imaging system; creation of social/e-commerce channels; efficient automation of the source-to-pay process; immuno-oncology treatment; a conference room booking system; improved process/software; introduction of collaboration platforms; new processes to drive IT; an online application system; patient-specific technologies; insurance for voluntary non-profits; and using design thinking. The recent innovations were delivered through internal, collaborative and partnership sources for the benefit of business, teams, industry and society.[1]

INTRODUCTION

Innovation exists in various forms in different organisations. Over ninety per cent of respondents in the HP survey indicated that innovation is vital to an organisation's competitiveness, success and survival. Yet a majority of respondents felt their organisations had achieved only some innovation and needed to work harder at it. What seems to be obstructing innovation? Is it due to lack of creativity within organisations? What facilitates innovation? This introductory chapter will briefly explore creativity and innovation and how my concept of team creativity catalysts can help facilitate innovation capability.

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

The words *creativity* and *innovation* have been bandied around but do they mean the same thing? There are numerous definitions of each (see Appendix A for my in-depth review of creativity literature as part of empirical research) but the simplest distinction is that creativity is about producing novel and useful ideas

while innovation is the successful implementation of these ideas.[2] This does not mean that creativity is absent during the implementation stage, as creativity is required during concept development as well as implementation.[3]

More than 1500 chief executive officers from sixty countries across thirty-three industries also stated that creativity is the most crucial factor for future success, even more important than vision, integrity, management discipline and rigour.[4]

BARRIERS TO INNOVATION

So why are few companies world-class or even high achievers at innovation? The HP study indicated that only six per cent of organisations are world-class innovators while another study reported that only seven per cent are innovation leaders.[5]

An analysis of four recent reports reveals that the core barriers to innovation are resources (funding, talent, knowledge, inaccurate measures, company size), leadership (strategy, priority, communication, investment) and culture (risk averse, silos, innovation time, bureaucracy, traditions, not listening).

Respondents in the HP study cited the following barriers to innovation: lack of internal resources, higher priority issues, unwillingness to take risk, bureaucracy, lack of funding, absence of leadership to drive innovation and lack of talent.[6]

A report by the IESE Business School in Spain revealed these barriers to innovation: the absence of a well-communicated innovation strategy as well as insufficient understanding of the external environment.[7]

An IBM report indicated that barriers to innovation include inaccurate measures on innovation's return on investment, lack of funding, risk avoidance, 'siloing' and time commitments.[8]

A Fast Company innovation event surfaced ten innovation barriers: closed-mindedness, traditions that hamper vision, jealousy or 'not invented here' syndrome, lack of money, generational gap among workers, poor communication to present great ideas, company size, no refresher education or training, lack of thought leadership and resources.[9]

What are the solutions to overcoming barriers to innovation? The reports suggested having an innovation culture, such as at the leadership level, and having a clear view of world-class best practices; having innovation as a corporate value; being open to other ideas internally and externally; and having a spectrum of ideas for breakthrough innovations.

TEAM CREATIVITY CATALYSTS

These solutions to achieve more innovation success resonate with my theory of team creativity catalysts. I developed this theory through training working adults in Synectics team creativity techniques (see Chapter 7 on Synectics), facilitating innovation workshops, participant feedback and empirical research.

My team creativity catalysts cover four integrated dimensions, all aligned with industry solutions to overcome barriers to innovation: Mastery Modelling, Intensive Immersion, Group Germination and Mind Netting. Mastery Modelling is having a view of world-class best practices; Intensive Immersion is like having an empowered innovation culture; Group Germination is akin to openness to internal and external ideas; and Mind Netting is similar to having a spectrum of ideas.

Mastery Modelling

This is where participants learn benchmarks, models or visions of mastery. The benchmarks are identified, demonstrated, visually displayed and discussed, so they become 'anchored' in the minds of participants from the very beginning, during group sessions, and during sharing of learning after training or workshops.

Intensive Immersion

This is where participants are empowered and motivated to fully immerse themselves in the team creativity process to find creative solutions for their tasks. This immersion enables participants to openly and proactively facilitate training or workshop sessions, to explore, experiment, review and learn. Intensive Immersion leads to practised perfection where participants experientially change their mindsets, creative confidence and creative competence.

Group Germination

This is where team members help one another to germinate their thinking and learning, with faster 'germinated' or 'nourished' experienced learners helping to 'germinate' or 'nourish' others through roles of facilitator, task owner or idea contributor. Creative solutions also germinate faster through constant camaraderie and playful productivity in the group.

Mind Netting

This is where teams 'net' or harvest the diverse experiences, thoughts and ideas through 'baits' such as personal metaphors, learning metaphors, listening for connections, multidimensional mind mapping, different creative thinking

techniques, seemingly unconnected wacky playful activities and unrelated creative connections.

MIGN

I refer to the team creativity catalysts as MIGN (pronounced *mine*): Modelling, Immersion, Germination and Netting. The MIGN creativity catalysts fit into physical, self-actualising, emotional and mental dimensions. The physical dimension of observing and benchmarking best practices is related to Mastery Modelling. The self-actualising dimension is about empowered exploration to achieve one's personal best. The emotional dimension of individual self-concept and group dynamics is akin to Group Germination. The mental dimension is a natural connection to Mind Netting. See Table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1 Typology of creativity catalysts and related dimensions

Physical dimension Mastery Modelling	Emotional dimension Group Germination
Self-actualising dimension Intensive Immersion	Mental dimension Mind Netting

The four dimensions are interconnected. Mastery Modelling is setting the benchmark or vision for the team. Intensive Immersion is mission-driven empowerment of the team to work towards the mastery benchmark and reflect on different perspectives to improve along the vision journey. Group Germination is strategic collaboration with diverse internal and external resources to accelerate achievement. Mind Netting is harvesting creative ideas from diverse groups through different creative 'baits'. Since diverse people have different perspectives, the netted harvest of these various thoughts often leads to amazement, paradigm shifts, more self-confidence and accelerated innovation.

The MIGN catalysts also align with the popular 4Ps of creativity—product, place, person and process. Mastery Modelling is like the 'product' of novel and feasible solutions. Intensive Immersion aligns with the 'place' of an innovation environment. Group Germination ties in with the 'person' element. Mind Netting is similar to the 'process' of creative thinking.

The MIGN creativity catalysts could be applied singly, collectively or in a different order. We now look at examples of situations they can be used in: individual applications, team bonding, team creativity or innovative problem-solving sessions, and organisational outcomes.

Individual applications

Individuals could use the Mind Netting catalyst in the following situations:

- describing each person as a metaphor
- using a wacky activity as a meeting ice-breaker for example, personify a chair with feelings
- using metaphoric drawing as a game with the family
- using an unrelated metaphor to find creative solutions at home, study or work
- using multidimensional mind mapping to help children think of diverse perspectives around a keyword or image. This was a favourite idea of participants who wanted their children to think of diverse possibilities.

Team bonding

The MIGN framework could be adapted to team bonding:

- Mastery Modelling: The facilitator models a visual emblem to introduce himself or herself, with elements such as 'my happiest time', 'words that I would like in my obituary', 'my vision', 'my special skills and interests'.
- Intensive Immersion: Team members individually immerse themselves in illustrating their emblems using the facilitator's model as an example.
- Group Germination: Each team member tells a story about his or her emblem. Usually, there would be laughter and surprise at each story sharing.
- Mind Netting: The team could draw up a composite metaphor to represent the team's emblem of values, vision, skills, etc.

Team creativity framework

Facilitators or consultants could plan a team innovative problem-solving session using the MIGN catalysts:

- Mastery Modelling: Model upfront whichever process you would like to use for your team creativity session.
- Intensive Immersion: Immerse everyone in the chosen process by motivating team members to participate fully—to experience the process, to discover, to reflect and to learn while finding solutions for a relevant task.
- Group Germination: Divide diverse participants in mini-groups of three or four. For example, a group could have a mix of participants from marketing, engineering and psychology disciplines. The group mission is to optimise the input of every member and to have equal airtime.
- Mind Netting: Use various creative thinking tools to net the ideas of diverse participants. An engineer could look at a problem through paradoxes while a psychologist could turn the problem into personal metaphors.

Organisational outcomes

An organisation could use the MIGN catalysts in the following way:

- Mastery Modelling: Ask teams the question: 'Which person, sports team, organisation, country, animal or nature would you like our company to be benchmarked against?'
- Intensive Immersion: Immerse every participant by asking them to speak or write down their thoughts on sticky notes, then ask each team to select from its central list of preferred benchmarks.
- Group Germination: Assign to each group one benchmark to explore further; for example, one group could consider how your company could be like the Manchester United soccer team, while another group could extract innovation lessons from Singapore Airlines.
- Mind Netting: Net the thoughts from different groups as well as subsequent thoughts that emerge after each sharing and at the end of the session.

SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed the distinction between creativity and innovation, barriers to innovation and my theory of team creativity catalysts that aligns with industry innovation solutions.

The four creativity catalysts can be applied flexibly in different situations, and the following chapters expand on the applications to help accelerate team creativity and innovation in organisations. Chapter 2 discusses how Mastery Modelling could be used to benchmark innovation. Chapter 3 examines how Intensive Immersion could motivate empowered exploration. Chapter 4 illustrates how Group Germination could lead to collective growth for organisations. Chapters 5 to 10 highlight how tools of creative thinking used in Mind Netting could lead to a spectrum of ideas for innovation. Chapter 11 synthesises all the chapters illustrating the team creativity catalysts.

My wish is that the team creativity catalysts and broad applications in this book will help your corporation innovate and grow, rather than be a laggard or wither.[10]

MASTERY MODELLING: BENCHMARKING INNOVATION

CHAPTER 2

The late martial arts master Bruce Lee Jun Fan learnt the Wing Chun style of 'gung fu' at the age of thirteen from Master Yip Man in Hong Kong. While Bruce also became a boxing and cha-cha dance champion as a teenager in Hong Kong, he moved to Seattle to work and study, and to start his Jun Fan Gung Fu Institute. Bruce immersed himself in the philosophy and techniques of martial arts, equating yin and yang to hard and soft physical movements. He taught celebrities such as Steve McQueen, James Coburn and James Garner his art of Jeet Kune Do, or 'the way of the intercepting fist.'[11]

INTRODUCTION

Learning from the masters exists in every sector. An apprentice learns from a kung fu master, a master craftsperson or a master chef. Hence, the creativity catalyst of Mastery Modelling is about modelling the mastery of the experts to provide benchmarks for accelerating team creativity and innovation. This chapter highlights modelling practices: modelling through neurolinguistic programming; modelling geniuses and innovative people; modelling innovative companies; and modelling innovative countries.

NEUROLINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING

Neurolinguistic programming involves modelling the cognitive, language and behavioural patterns of exceptional individuals for other people to emulate. Neurolinguistic programming founders Richard Bandler and John Grinder, who had modelled the skill patterns of exceptional therapists such as Virginia Satir and Milton Erickson in the 1970s, believed that human behaviour could be transformed if people emulated special skills. The desired skills would then be 'anchored' or imprinted as a learning process.[12]