Innovation in Action

Organizations today realize that innovation is critical to achieving and sustaining a leadership position in the marketplace. Specifically, innovation enables the improvements and breakthroughs that delight customers and incorporate new products and services never before imagined. Yet most organizations lack the tools, the processes, and the organizational alignment necessary to support innovation.

To foster the generation and implementation of new ideas, individuals and teams must learn to use new tools to leverage their creative abilities and an effective innovation process to translate new ideas into productive solutions. Finally, the organization must install systems to remove barriers and create a culture that supports innovation.


William C. Miller


From 1983 to 1987, Miller was senior management consultant for the Innovation Management program at SRI International (formerly Stanford Research Institute). Prior to joining SRI, he was director of training and development for Victor Equipment, Co., the leading American manufacturer of gas welding equipment.

Miller helps executives and professionals discover the deeper values that drive their most creative work and helps enhance their skills in producing innovation within their organizational environment. He works primarily with major industrial companies and multinationals like 3M, Hewlett-Packard, Procter & Gamble, IBM, Eli Lilly, and Pillsbury. He also has taught the "Creativity in Business" course at Stanford.

Overview

Innovation in Action provides the tools, skills, and processes for individuals, teams, and work groups to generate new ideas and implement innovative solutions. It consists of five modules and a half- to one-hour context-setting introduction, which can be configured in several different ways depending on the needs of the group or individual.
### Innovation Styles—1/2 day

This module explains four different approaches to innovation and identifies the participant's own approaches and preferences for generating new ideas. It creates an awareness and understanding of others' styles and discusses how to build synergy, work with, and value others' styles. Participants complete a self-assessment that will illustrate their own approach to innovation.

**Objective**
Understand and practice applying four different innovation styles.

**Instructional Activities and Models**
- The Four Principles of Innovation represents this course's approach to innovation: everyone is innovative. There are several distinctive innovation strategies and individuals use a mix of strategies and have preferences for ways of innovating.

- The Innovation Profile is a self-assessment questionnaire that allows participants to identify their most preferred approach or style of innovation.

- The Innovation Styles Model represents the four innovation styles and their key characteristics: Visioning, Modifying, Experimenting, and Exploring.

- Benefits of Innovation Versatility presents the payoffs for using all four styles: more creative ideas, a better functioning team, and more effective presentation of one's ideas to others.

**Outcome and Payoffs**
- Outcome: Knowing one's primary innovation style and practice in using all four styles

- Payoffs: Wider scope of new ideas, increased team synergy and creativity, better ways to sell ideas to others

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### Innovation Tools & Practices—1/2 day

Participants learn four tools for generating ideas and finding innovative solutions to everyday challenges. They practice selecting and using the appropriate innovation tools, which are based on the different styles, to produce a more creative and comprehensive set of ideas. These tools will help participants develop more effective incremental and breakthrough improvements.

**Objective**
Learn and apply four idea generation tools that relate to the four innovation styles.

**Instructional Activities and Models**
- Wish Listing provides an opportunity for participants to learn and apply a tool that helps generate Visioning ideas.

- The Force Field Analysis provides an opportunity for participants to learn and apply a tool that will help generate Modifying ideas.

- The Matrix Analysis provides an opportunity for participants to learn and apply a tool that will help generate Experimenting ideas.

- The Symbol Analogy provides an opportunity for participants to learn and apply a tool that will help generate Exploring ideas.

**Outcome and Payoffs**
- Outcome: The ability to use different innovation tools to generate ideas

- Payoffs: Experience in applying specific tools to generate innovative ideas based on the different styles, increasing participants' capacity to generate a broader range of ideas and solutions

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### The Creative Journey—1 day

Participants learn and apply a four-stage process for innovation: assessing and meeting the challenge of risk and uncertainty, generating innovative options, implementing a solution, and celebrating the results. This step-by-step process will help individuals and teams generate and implement innovative solutions that will have impact.

**Objective**
Learn a step-by-step process for generating and implementing innovative solutions and apply the steps to a real team business issue or problem.

**Instructional Activities and Models**
- The Creative Journey Model consists of a four-stage process that explains each stage in terms of two key outcomes. The stages are: Challenge, Focus, Creative Solutions, and Completion.

- The Case-Study Application provides a walk-through of an applied example and gives practice in the "how to's" of the stages in the process.

- The Application to Your Own Challenge helps participants apply the steps of the Creative Journey Model to a real life issue chosen by the team.

**Outcome and Payoffs**
- Outcome: Actual practice and progress toward an innovative solution to an issue

- Payoffs: The ability to implement ideas, not just create them; motivation and buy-in to the idea of using a process; higher probability that good ideas will be implemented
Taking Initiative—1/2 day

Participants interact in a series of exercises to gain insight about their individual strengths and areas for improvement at each stage of the innovation process. They then develop strategies to overcome the barriers and to gain buy-in from others for their new ideas.

Objective
Explore the factors affecting individual initiative to move forward through each stage of the innovation process.

Instructional Activities and Models
- The Personal Initiative Assessment, a self-assessment questionnaire, provides insights into one's own conditions for being creative and one's level of motivation toward a particular goal.

- Designing Internal/External Conditions for Ideas helps participants access their own experience and work in small groups to identify what internal and external conditions promote and inhibit creativity.

- Gaining Acceptance for Ideas helps participants work individually to identify a solution and a potential audience they wish to accept their idea, then develop a strategy for influencing others based on their understanding of initiative factors and innovation styles.

Outcome and Payoffs
- Outcome: Practice in presenting new ideas and solutions to others in a more persuasive way

- Payoffs: Building confidence and self-knowledge about how to move forward through the Creative Journey in spite of risks and uncertainties

Strategic Innovation Management—1 day

Strategic Innovation Management is designed for intact teams and functional groups. It is designed to measure the ability of the work culture to foster innovation and identify the gaps and opportunities for improvement based on 16 factors. The Strategic Innovation Management Assessment Profile (SIMAP) is completed by management and the team, and areas of alignment and misalignment are identified for the groups to focus on.

Objective
Assess alignment between a team and sponsoring management and enhance management and team member skills to create a work environment that supports innovation.

Instructional Activities and Models
- SIMAP introduces participants to 16 factors that affect a work team’s level of empowerment for innovation. They are provided an overview of the 16 factors as they relate to the four stages of the Creative Journey.

- The SIMAP questionnaire allows participants, team leaders, and sponsoring management to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the participants’ team/management relationship.

- The Creative Journey Application helps the team formulate its own issue, and then use the Creative Journey to develop innovative solutions to address the issue.

Outcome and Payoffs
- Outcome: Actual assessment of the alignment between the team and the sponsors and real time experience to identify a key issue and seek an innovative solution

- Payoffs: Alignment of what is thought, said, and actually done to promote innovation and continuous improvement

Who Should Attend
Managers, professionals, intact work groups, and employees at all levels

Participant Materials

Application Examples
A major European electronics firm needed to develop a concrete strategy to meet high growth requirements of the parent company to double their annual revenues. They used various innovation tools and processes from Innovation in Action to identify a new approach to market diversification and developed a strategic alternative for a 10-year business development plan.

A worldwide high-tech corporation had to find a way to foster closer links to their distributors and end users of consumer products in order to provide correct direction to new product development. The corporation implemented Innovation in Action to identify new business and market opportunities for existing technology and systems applications.

A national banking institution needed to respond to checking account deregulation in order to maintain their current customers and attract new customers. Through the use of Innovation in Action, they developed alternatives for consumer products during this time of industry deregulation and constant market change.
How the Components of *Innovation in Action* Tie Together

*Innovation in Action* consists of five independent modules that can be configured together in different combinations to meet various corporate, individual, and team needs: innovation, quality improvement, strategic planning, organizational change, team development, and empowerment.

1. The Case for Innovation—1/2 to 1 hour
   This introduction underscores the importance of innovation and discusses incremental and breakthrough improvements.

2a. Innovation Styles—1/2 day
    Understand and practice applying four different innovation styles.

3. The Creative Journey—1 day
   Learn a step-by-step process for generating and implementing innovative solutions.

4. Taking Initiative—1/2 day
   Identify personal patterns for taking initiative.

5. Strategic Innovation Management—1 day
   Assess alignment between a team and sponsoring management, and enhance their skills to create a work environment that supports innovation.

2b. Innovation Tools and Practices—1/2 day
   Learn and apply four idea generation tools that relate to the four innovation styles.

Three Elements Necessary for Change
Three levels must be addressed to affect change:

- The Individual: Everyone has the capacity to be creative. By learning a variety of approaches and how to apply innovation tools and techniques, it is possible to leverage the individual's capacity to innovate and to value the approaches of others (Innovation Styles and Innovation Tools and Practices).
- The Process: Teams and work groups will be most productive and innovative when they have a process to follow. This allows them to focus on generating new ideas and sound solutions. The Creative Journey consists of four stages and eight steps, which combine both the rational and the personal aspects of innovation into a systematic process (The Creative Journey and Strategic Innovation Management).
- The Culture: The work culture role is to support continuous improvement and help eliminate the barriers to innovation. Critical to achieving this is the ability to measure the alignment and linkage between sponsoring management and the project team or group and to identify issues that may impede progress (The Creative Journey and Taking Initiative).

Benefits of an Integrated Approach
The primary benefits of this series approach to Innovation:

- Comprehensive and Systematic: *Innovation in Action* systematically addresses all three levels that impact change—the individual, the process, and the work culture.
- Highly versatile: *Innovation in Action* modules can be used separately or together. Each module has a variety of applications. The Creative Journey can be used as a problem-solving process and/or a management tool. Strategic Innovation Management can be used as a diagnostic or prescriptive tool, whether to foster dialogue between sponsoring management and teams, or to identify critical factors and barriers to change.
- Easy to Learn and Apply: The tools and techniques used in *Innovation in Action* are easy to learn and participants have an opportunity to apply the concepts to real work challenges in the workshop.
- Compatible: Concepts and skills taught in *Innovation in Action* can supplement existing and/or other programs on quality, empowerment, teamwork, etc.