

## WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

### Our Innovation Principles

We don't function like a regular consulting firm. To get to know us and our approach, we've written down some of our philosophy.



### Our Mission: Democratization of Innovation

"Our system is built on the idea that every organization has within it the ability to solve its own problems."

– Jeff DeGraff, Professor, University of Michigan and Founder of the Innovatrium

Innovation can be taught. Everyone can learn it. But everyone does not innovate in the same way. And that's fine. We simply believe that all organizations can indeed become innovative in many different ways. Many innovators are already working inside those organizations. We need to find them and nurture them to become highly practiced innovation leaders. Innovation is the awakening of the promise that's always been inside. That's how we designed our programs, modules, and solutions. In this way, change will come within you. You will become the driving force behind your own *sustainable growth* and *resilient capability*.



### Learning by Doing: See One, Do One, Teach One

We just said that we believe innovation can indeed be taught. However, we also believe that it cannot be taught simply through books or in the classroom alone. It's a craft that needs to be developed through practice, just like riding a bicycle or playing a guitar. Therefore we infuse all of our solutions with the principle of SODOTO (See One, Do One, Teach One). Much like the way a medical doctor is trained through residency and rounds in the clinics, we train innovators by having them observe and learn, then conduct an innovation project of their own, and then finally, teaching and coaching others.

In organizations, innovators need to learn to run and manage real innovation projects in their specific environment and face specific challenges. They run experiments with our guidance and with some more training and coaching, they can teach and coach other innovators to be. This is how you retain knowledge and learning in the organization and create a sustainable growth engine. This is how you create a legacy.



## Innovation Is Not a One Size Fits All

There are various types of ways people can innovate. Apple innovates in a very different way that Samsung does, even if they compete in the same smartphone market. Similarly, people naturally innovate in different ways. The way you think and find solutions may be different from your colleague across the room or from your significant other. And there is no right or wrong way. So how then, do you learn to innovate?

The first step to innovating is to understand yourself and your community: your team and organization. How do you normally innovate? How does your organization innovate? Are there frictions there? Why? How can you enhance your innovation skills? How can you be more effective in your organization? We have developed a deceptively simple framework to understand innovation, and it can be used for many things from assessing your leadership skills to predicting your stock price. With this framework, you find your innovation strategy and align your innovation practices and leadership behavior to it and achieve your goals.



## Fail Early, Often, and Off Broadway

The best way to innovate is to run many, short, diverse, and cheap experiments. Yep, we mean cheap. Innovation is about going to a new place you've never been before by doing something you've never done before. There is no knowing in advance what would happen. Often, the idea you didn't think would work actually did and the one you for sure thought would just didn't. So there is no use investing a lot in the beginning. Invest a little bit in many projects, and when something works, double down on it. It's also important to run very diverse experiments. Again, since you don't know what would work and what wouldn't, you need to try as many different approaches as you can. Then revise, revise, revise. Innovation is a cycle: keep on making adjustments and run new experiments.

And you shouldn't run the experiments for too long. The sooner you find out what works and what doesn't, the sooner you learn. *The idea is not to avoid failure, but to accelerate it.* Failure is good because you can learn from it.

That's what we mean by Fail Early and Often. Now, the Off Broadway part. Before Camelot the musical became the soundtrack of the Kennedy administration, it opened in Toronto and clocked in at 4.5 hours long. It then went to Boston and was still too long. A few changes later, it opened in Broadway and the rest is history. If Camelot opened on Broadway instead of in Toronto in the beginning, it would have died completely then.

So what does this mean when you run innovation projects? It means that you may need to hide for a while, before you have something to show. Experiment and learn quietly and frequently, and then you'll be ready for Broadway in no time.



## Hide Inside a Trojan Horse

Since the idea of innovation is to experiment quickly, the best way to start your project is to work with something that is already moving. Find a project in your organization that is already underway, has momentum, or receives a lot of important support and see if you can connect your innovation project to it. It's less important that your innovation project is exactly like you planned. It's more important to get something going so you can learn from it.



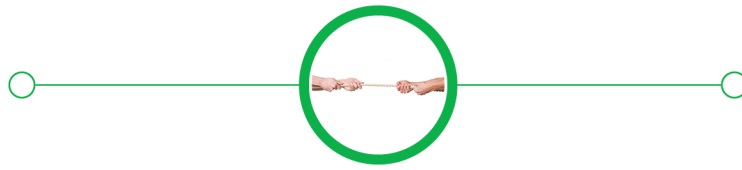
## The 20/80 Rule

"OK, that's all good, but where can I find that good opportunity to connect my innovation to?" you asked. For that, we use the 20/80 rule: It's easier to change 20% of your organization 80% than to change 80% of your organization 20%. To simplify: it's easier to radically change a small part of your life than to change a large part of your life, even for a tiny bit.

This means that the middle of the organization, where most things happen, is the most difficult place to run any innovation initiative. The middle is where regular practices happen and is very protective of the status quo. You won't get any support and your effort will be squashed, promptly. So where should you find a ripe place to innovate? Places where there is a crisis or places that are on a roll.

Do you remember when you were 15 and the girl (or boy) you had a crush on liked you back? You felt so happy, so good, so *invincible*. At that moment, you probably would have tried skydiving or crazy skateboarding stunts. When you are on a roll, you are more open to experiment and try stuff. Find a place in your organization where things have gone right. They will be more open to try your experiment.

Another place to find is a place in crisis, a place that has hit rock bottom. They have nothing to lose. They need to innovate or they will cease to exist. They will be more open to trying your way. And if you succeeded, you will become the superhero of the story.



## Constructive Conflicts

This is perhaps the most important principle. Innovation is not born through alignment; it is born through constructive conflicts. It is when we have a deep discussion of issues from different points of view that we continue to sensemake and gain a deeper understanding of those issues and produce more creative solutions. The best solutions are hybrid: they come out of those push and pull of opinions and the constructing and deconstructing of other solutions.

Therefore, it is important to have people with diverse background and points of view in your innovation team. Carefully consider the right people to include. You want people who have real expertise so they can talk about the issues but also those who are willing to think deeply and open their minds to new possibilities. Think of it as constructing a superhero team. You need people with different strengths and ability. You need a team that can compensate for individual weaknesses.

What does this mean when we work with you and your organization? It means that we put leaders in diverse teams, emphasize collaborations, and help them see past their own biases. We work with a lot of diverging tools and processes to get people to open their minds, think more creatively, and build hybrid and unique solutions. We will challenge you a lot to rise above your way of thinking and working and find the white spaces where opportunities emerge. Innovation is about breaking boundaries and reaching beyond the abyss. We can take you there.

