

Cambiana

Cambiana 2018 Summer Beach Reading

#2: Discover the secret ingredient of innovation



The power of personality

“No organization ever created innovation. People innovate, not companies.”

- Seth Godin

by Gaëlle Piernikarch, August 9, 2018

In times when change, digital transformation and globalization have become daily topics, there is a strong emphasis on drawing upon our creativity and innovative strengths to find solutions to the new problems that arise. Knowledge is now accessible everywhere and anytime, and new ideas spread at fast pace across borders and cultures. Creative activities are supportive of personal development and social networking, and large corporations strive to follow the example of innovative start-ups.

Drawing on these trends, the innovation capability is now celebrated in our private and professional lives, at individual and organizational level, as a key success factor. But what is exactly innovation and what is it made of?

Create, Invent or Innovate?

According to traditional definitions, creating is the act of “bringing something into existence”, while inventing is the act of “creating or designing something that has not existed before”, and innovating “making changes in something established, especially by introducing new methods, ideas or products.” (Oxford dictionary). In other words, and to quote the writer and journalist Harold Evans, we could say that “creative thoughts lead to invention. Innovation exploits those thoughts to make it happen.”. In any case, the innovative power of an organization lies in its people.

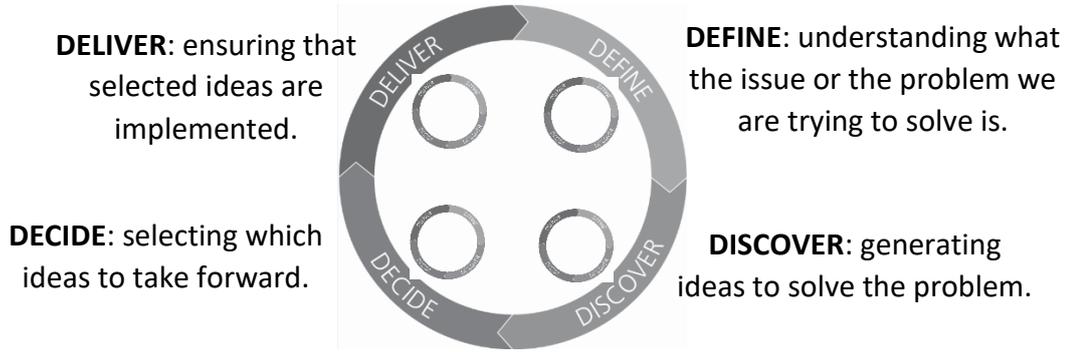
Today, the word “innovation” is often used in the sense of a process that leads to different thoughts categories, going from improving existing ideas to bringing brand new ideas into existence.

The sort of ideas we generate can also be categorized accordingly, from improving our efficiency to doing what has never been done before.

Understanding our personal innovative power

Research shows that several factors have an influence on the innovative strengths of people: a favorable environment from organizational and team points of view, our knowledge of a subject and intrinsic motivation, as well as our personality. As a matter of fact, the personality factor plays an essential role in the contributions we make, both to the innovation cycle and to the generation of ideas.

Four-stage Innovation Cycle¹



Personality preferences influence the way individuals engage in that process. Teams with a diversity of personalities show that everyone has an equally important contribution to make. Each phase of this cycle is going through the same four-phases cycle, so every type of personality is contributing to each stage of the process, bringing different results.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®) provides a powerful framework to understand our strengths in each phase of this process, as well as in which category of the idea generation we are most likely to feel energized and to be productive.

Four Categories of Innovative ideas²

Efficient Ideas	Simplifying Ideas	Adopting Ideas	Disruptive Ideas
Improve our efficiency	Simplify or refine what we do and how we do it	Ideas from other industries adapted to our business	Do what’s never been done before

Based on the MBTI® model, we can distinguish different attitudes towards innovation, which draw on two dimensions:

- how we gather and process information (based on experience and concrete facts vs. models and symbols), which relates to idea generation
- and how we interact with and grasp the world around us (with structure and planning vs. emergence and time pressure), which relates to implementation.

In combination, these two dimensions influence:

- how you define a problem
- which part of the innovation process you are likely to be energized by, and make your biggest contribution
- the kind of ideas you are likely to have.

¹ Innovation Process from Ideascap[™] in “Introduction to Type and Innovation”, Gareth Williams, OPP Ltd. 2015.

² Based on Four Categories of Ideas from Ideascap[™] and “Introduction to Type and Innovation”, Gareth Williams, OPP Ltd. 2015.

Exploring your own preferences and strengths

Everyone can have innovative ideas, the differences lying on which type of ideas are for us easier to produce and more energizing to work on, depending on our personality preferences in how we process information and ideas, and how we put them out into the world.

Let's take a few minutes for self-reflection. What would you say about yourself: What are your main strengths and contributions to innovation? What are typically your ideas about? And what would be an example of an innovative approach you took?

Further, reflecting on your past and current experience of innovation, where do you feel more energized and productive in the innovation cycle?

In the Define phase, because you feel you can draw on your:

- focus on what's currently happening to make sure issues are real, and enough information is collected and applied
- dislike of waste to improve things by making them simpler
- focus to identify the core of an issue or problem
- attentiveness to state the issue clearly and accurately to ensure time is not wasted later in the process

In the Discovery phase because you can rely on your:

- imagination to come up with ideas that are unique
- energy to encourage others
- enthusiasm for doing things differently to generate as many ideas as possible
- drawing attention to potential opportunities

In the Decide phase because you can use your:

- external curiosity about what else is happening to identify what you could adapt and how that might fit with your ideas
- internal connections to see how ideas fit a larger picture
- vision to see potential outcomes of ideas
- drive to make choices and encourage the selection of ideas to take forward

In the Deliver phase because you can draw upon your:

- consistent work style to build gradually on what exists
- drive for doing things correctly to generate ideas to make things more efficient and effective
- need for completion to ensure innovative ideas are implemented
- past experience to improve the current situation
- consistent work style to build gradually on what exists

- drive for doing things correctly to generate ideas to make things more efficient and effective
- need for completion to ensure innovative ideas are implemented

Increasing our self-awareness about when in such process we are at our best, our strengths and our development areas is essential to develop our personal capability to innovate, as well as our collaborative practices in innovative teamwork.

In conclusion

Organizations that create an environment based on a feedback culture, diversity and inclusion, as well as foster curiosity and risk-taking, prove to have a high innovation culture. As a matter of fact, innovation research shows that teams can successfully innovate, especially if they encourage diverse thinking, are integrative, exchange knowledge and experience, and manage tensions in the team.

In this context, our personality preferences are the trump card to activate in any innovation process. All innovation attitudes contribute to create value at different steps of the process and in different types of ideas, therefore everyone has a strong innovation power. The key is to realize when and where to best unleash it.

By supporting people to clearly understand their strengths in the generation of ideas and in the innovation cycle, you can directly develop individual potential and leverage the innovative contributions of your teams.

Now that you had some fresh input for the mind, how about going for a refreshing swim? Enjoy and see you next week for our next free beach reading!

Next Cambiana Beach Reading: Learn Like a Two-Year-Old.



Gaelle Piernikarch is the founder & CEO of Cambiana and has been working as a coach, change facilitator and team trainer for more than twelve years. Gaelle is a certified MBTI® Practitioner, accredited in the International Team Trust Indicator (ITTI™) and trained in Appreciative Inquiry. gaelle@cambiana.com | cambiana.com