



"In Flow"

Innovate in Flow

Insights to Help You Innovate

John Brooker and Adrian Cannon

**"They are outcomes
that we could never
have dreamed of
achieving in 2-3 days
without the Inn8
Workshop
Programme."**

Chris Dixon, Key Account Director,

**Do you want to improve the
capability to innovate in your
organisation; to make
innovation flow? Here are nine
insights based on a case study.**



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For further articles and for a brochure about our Inn8 Workshop Programmes, please see our website. Or if you are interested to talk, please contact John Brooker on hi@yesand.eu.

Background

Yes! And, worked with consultants Edgar Dunn & Co. to increase the innovation capability of seven small to medium sized enterprises in the Republic of Ireland, as part of a government initiative.

The programme met with a great deal of scepticism at the start, some CEOs making it clear they thought it would be of little benefit. However, after the programme, all agreed it had been of great value as it helped them develop innovation capability and developed innovative propositions. This is the crucial measure of any innovation programme. The companies developed fifteen propositions, including propositions for a whole new area of business, a new marketing strategy, a patentable process innovation using text messaging and new sales methods.

Based on our practical experience in Ireland and subsequent projects, we would like to share the insights we gained so that you might innovate quickly and use the proposition you innovate to establish an innovative environment.

Insights

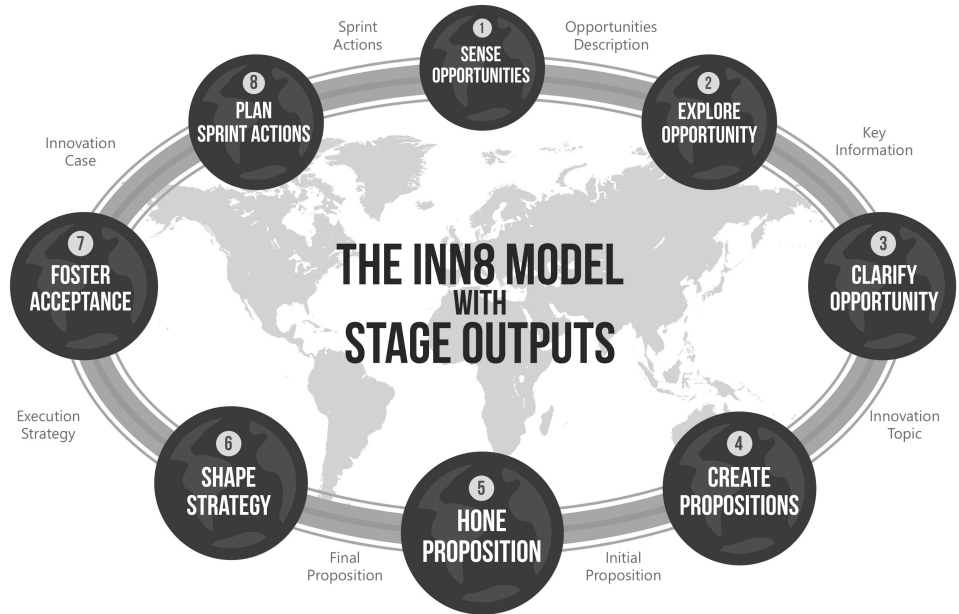
1. Use a structured tool for innovation – it works

Do you have people on your team who think they are not creative? We encountered many individuals like this on the programme; people who are logical, analytical and sceptical that any tool can help them to be creative. However, studies have shown that the use of a systematic approach that facilitates creative and analytical thinking, good communication and collaboration can produce a higher level of successful innovation than other approaches.

For our programme in Ireland, we designed what is now known as the Inn8 Workshop Programme. Please see the Inn8 model. We based Inn8 on the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) model that has been used in many of the studies mentioned. Such models combine creative tools and logical structure and enable people with different innovation styles to play to their strengths at different stages in the cycle.

Using an Inn8 type approach does not guarantee success but it will:

- Enhance success through encouraging well thought out and evaluated propositions
- Enable you to stop “off target” or inappropriate development quickly, often in the preliminary, thinking stages before the organisation invests too much resource



[For further details on the eight stages of the Inn8 Model, please see our website www.yesand.eu]

2. Innovate to learn, don't learn to innovate

We are being contentious here. We mean that you should avoid stand-alone training courses (“learn to innovate”) where people are fired up with enthusiasm, return to work and... nothing happens. Rather, you should facilitate a team to explore an opportunity, develop an innovative proposition and build innovation capability in the process (innovate to learn). This was our approach in Ireland and it worked because:

- The programme was more attractive to senior leaders. They were more willing to attend and assign valuable people to the programme because they could see the potential for immediate payback
- The attendees were more

committed to the programme as they were exploring real opportunities

- The sceptics worked with a tangible opportunity not an abstract case study

3. Make it simpler

Simplicity and ease of use are important factors if you want people both to learn a model and use it at work. Our experience in this programme reinforced this. A focus on innovation rather than training encouraged us to find ever more simple ways to explain the approach and the tools. Even if you consider your approach simple, it is likely you can simplify it further.

4. Build your programme at a slower pace

Avoid involving all members of staff from the start of your programme. Doing so increases complexity, fosters potential resistance and can overwhelm the organisation with too many

propositions. It makes it more difficult to learn lessons and can be very expensive.

The above issues lead to staff demotivation and cynicism; the top team becomes sceptical of the benefits of innovation initiatives. Instead, form a team from volunteers, create a proposition, implement it quickly or fail fast, learn from the experience and move on to the next opportunity. As you gain experience, capability and confidence, increase the number of simultaneous projects.

5. You can innovate quickly

A three-day workshop can seem like a large investment, yet if you deliver an astute proposition and a strategy to execute it, this time is worth every penny. As a client in the UK said to us, ““They are outcomes that we could never have dreamed of achieving in 2-3 days without the Inn8 Workshop Programme...The time investment versus the output is (great) without question.” This is because the climate and structure improves focus, communication and collaboration, making it more efficient to innovate.

6. Involve all functions in your organisation

The prevailing view in many organisations is that ideas come from specific areas such as R & D, Product Development or Senior Management and the rest of the organisation implements them. People in specific areas or at higher

levels may have ideas, but this does not mean their ideas are necessarily innovative or exhaustive. Indeed, as we heard during our programme, these people often become frustrated at the reliance on them to generate ideas. We also heard from people outside of these areas, frustrated they were excluded from the innovation process or had ideas rejected without a reasoned evaluation.

Whilst specific people or departments may drive innovation initiatives, a cross - functional initiative will encourage the wider organisation to take an interest in and support innovation. Our workshops in Ireland benefitted from:

- Cross - functional teams to enrich the creative process and add rigour to analysis
- Non-experts in workshops who were able to ask naïve questions and query assumptions
- People with different levels of seniority to provide different perspectives and add authority

As an example in one company, the Head of Finance contributed non-financial information that enabled the team to develop a proposition for a completely new market.

7. A special “creative environment” is important but not essential

Ideally, you will have an IN-LAWS environment. (Inspiring, Neutral or off site, Light filled, Airy, Water on tap, with Space to move). However, we had to hold workshops in rooms with:



“Despite difficulties you can innovate”

- Too many people
- No natural light and poor artificial light
- No fresh air or controllable thermostat
- Colleagues who needed to discuss business, just a few feet away

Despite these difficulties, the attendees created innovative propositions. Yes, it is harder to facilitate and participate in a challenging environment, but with a real opportunity to explore and a motivated team, you can innovate still.

8. An approach such as Inn8 is suitable for innovation at many levels

Our experience has shown that the true value of the Inn8 approach is its ability to service all aspects of the natural operating rhythms of any business. People can use the Approach and its tools:

- Within each department of the business, on a daily basis to provide a gradual improvement in the department’s performance
- For product and service development over a longer time

cycle

- At the strategic level, a level that has a long-term investment planning cycle and can include mergers and acquisitions. It offers an organisation a way of considering strategic and longer term challenges in an innovative way.

9. Know what resources you have to implement before you begin

During a workshop within the same company, a team developed two propositions. One was an incremental improvement to the sales process that freed up the valuable time of the CEO. The other proposition would transform how the company could achieve sales.

The difference lies in the approach to implementation. The incremental innovation such as the one described can probably be implemented with existing resources. The more radical innovation is highly likely to require the establishment of a new team with consequent financial investment and potential impact on current operating capability, as experienced staff work on the innovation project.

Therefore we recommend you have an idea what level of financial and human resources you can or are willing to invest in propositions, before you begin an innovation programme and what you might do with a proposition if you do not have the resources to move it forward. Will you seek investment if it is good enough, defer development or perhaps

develop it to a point where you can sell the proposition IP to another organisation?

Conclusion

Innovating should be like skiing or snowboarding, a beautiful flow that, despite some potential difficulties will lead to a joyful conclusion.

The insights we have given you here were formed during our workshops in Ireland and with other organisations since.

We trust they have been useful insights that can help improve your organisation's ability to innovate. If they have, please pass this article on to a colleague or friend who may appreciate it.

Learn More

If you would like to hear how Unipart Technology Logistics benefitted from our Inn8 Workshop Programmes, see the video on our website at www.yesand.eu and click on "Maximise Opportunities". Or download the article or e-book from the same page.

You can also register to receive our regular blog and to access a library of over 180 articles.



Authors

John Brooker has been facilitating organisations to think innovatively since 2001. He is a former Senior Vice President of Visa where he had 16 years experience of innovating new services.

Adrian Cannon was a partner in Edgar Dunn and Co before forming Witstock. Prior to EDC, Adrian led strategic development and mergers & acquisitions for Elavon Merchant Services and led OSI's highly successful consumer transaction services team."

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