

Meyer's Management Models

44. 5I Innovation Pipeline

How can I structure the innovation process in my organization?

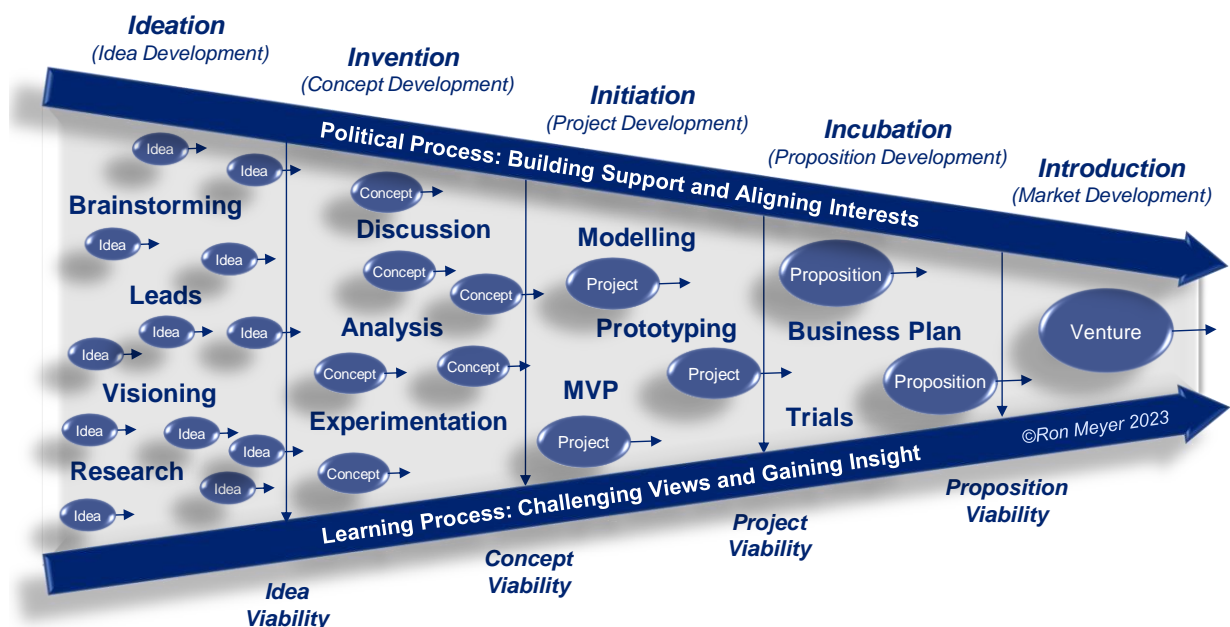
Key Definitions

Innovation is the process of coming up with something new and introducing it into practice. In organizations innovation efforts can be directed at novel products, services, or value propositions, but also at new procedures, processes, or ways of working. More ambitiously, even the business model or the organizational design can be reworked.

Innovation is not a brief event, but a longer process, typically consisting of a number of stages. It is also seldom the work of just one person, but usually involves a variety of stakeholders. Given the multiple steps and people required, it is important to map out and effectively structure the innovation process.

Conceptual Model

The *5I Innovation Pipeline* framework outlines the five generic stages that need to be organized to successfully innovate as organization. The framework suggests that numerous innovation ideas are generally needed at the start of the process to eventually finish with just one or a few launchable innovative ventures (be it a new product, process or even business). As such, the process can be pictured as a narrowing pipeline, through which the potential innovations need to flow, with various initiatives at various stages of development. Separating the sequential steps are stage gates at which the viability to move to the next step is measured and no-gos are filtered out. Lubricating the pipeline flow are supporting learning and political processes.



Key Elements

The five stages of the innovation pipeline are the following:

1. **Ideation.** The first step is to generate a wide variety of ideas, which can be done in many ways, such as brainstorming, scouting for external leads, doing research, and envisioning

the future. The general rule of thumb is that coming up with new ideas shouldn't cost more than a few hours. Then the ideas need to be evaluated on their viability – are they attractive and realistic enough to justify the investment of additional days or weeks of work.

2. **Invention.** The second step is to convert the viable ideas into more tangible concepts. This process of using initial hunches to create potentially workable solutions is called invention and can involve deeper analysis, exploratory discussions, experimentation, and ongoing tinkering. Eventually each invented product, process or business model will also need to be evaluated on its viability – is it practically feasible. This is also called *proof of concept*.
3. **Initiation.** Passing to the third step means the organization is willing to invest weeks or months to turn the invention into a *minimum viable product* (MVP) – something just good enough to field test with potential users. This initiation phase might involve modelling or simulating the new product, process, or business model, and then ramping it up to a prototype, followed by something externally presentable, to pass the project viability test.
4. **Incubation.** Once the project (i.e., product, process, or business model) has proven to be technically viable, the next step is to incubate it further, to turn it into a commercially viable proposition that can be launched in practice. This stage usually involves doing market research, staging trials, gathering lead customer feedback, adapting the proposition and finetuning a business plan.
5. **Introduction.** If the proposition is commercially attractive enough it will pass to the fifth and final stage of the innovation pipeline. This introduction can be inside the organization, in the case of a process or way of working, or outside in the market, if it is a new product, service or business model. Either way, the focus is on selecting the right application area and gaining acceptance from the prospective users and/or buyers.

Note that the main innovation pipeline activities are flanked by two crucial facilitating activities:

- A. **Learning process.** Innovating is a constant journey of questioning existing views and discovering new insights, which challenges the innovators, but other stakeholders as well.
- B. **Political process.** Innovating also means change, which is risky and can upset existing power structures. So, innovators need to align interests and secure ongoing support.

Key Insights

- **Innovation requires much more than invention.** Invention is the process of coming up with something new, but it is only an innovation if the new product, process, or business model is introduced into practice. Invention is technical, innovation is also commercial.
- **Innovation requires going through 5 stages.** Innovation starts with many ideas being generated (*ideation*), which are then turned into potentially feasible solutions (*invention*). Some of these rough concepts are subsequently ramped up into minimum viable products (*initiation*) and then molded into commercially attractive propositions (*incubation*). The last step is to launch the new venture and ensure stakeholder acceptance (*introduction*).
- **Innovation requires increasing investment & commitment.** As potential innovations move through the pipeline stages, the required management commitment and investment in money, capacity and attention multiplies, so their number usually dwindles in step.
- **Innovation requires ongoing learning & political support.** Innovation challenges the status quo, by upsetting received wisdom, creating new risks, and undermining existing interests. Hence, innovators need to keep an eye on organizational learning and politics.
- **Innovation requires a filled pipeline.** As it takes quite long for innovations to pass through all five stages and only a few make it to the end, organization need to keep their pipelines filled. This framework can be used to visualize an organization's innovation portfolio.

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Insightful Tools to Kickstart Your Thinking

Publication Schedule

<i>July 2019</i>	<i>Mind the Gap Model</i>	<i>Change Management</i>
<i>August 2019</i>	<i>Digital Platform Map</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>September 2019</i>	<i>Interaction Pressure Gauge</i>	<i>Interpersonal Interaction</i>
<i>October 2019</i>	<i>Revenue Model Framework</i>	<i>Revenue Model Typology</i>
<i>November 2019</i>	<i>House of Engagement</i>	<i>Organizational Engagement</i>
<i>December 2019</i>	<i>Confidence Quotient</i>	<i>Trust Building</i>
<i>January 2020</i>	<i>Competition Tornado</i>	<i>Competitive Strategy</i>
<i>February 2020</i>	<i>11C Synergy Model</i>	<i>Corporate Synergy Management</i>
<i>March 2020</i>	<i>Leadership Fairness Model</i>	<i>Leader-Follower Interaction</i>
<i>April 2020</i>	<i>Strategic Agility Model</i>	<i>Strategy Process Approach</i>
<i>May 2020</i>	<i>Control Panel</i>	<i>Corporate Control Dimensions</i>
<i>June 2020</i>	<i>Rising Star Framework</i>	<i>Talent Management</i>
<i>July 2020</i>	<i>Strategy Development Cycle</i>	<i>Strategy Process Steps</i>
<i>August 2020</i>	<i>7I Corporate Center Model</i>	<i>Corporate Organization</i>
<i>September 2020</i>	<i>Storytelling Scripts</i>	<i>Leadership Communication</i>
<i>October 2020</i>	<i>Strategic Bets Framework</i>	<i>Strategic Decision-Making</i>
<i>November 2020</i>	<i>Rebound Model of Resilience</i>	<i>Organizational Resilience</i>
<i>December 2020</i>	<i>4C Leadership Capabilities</i>	<i>Leadership Competences</i>
<i>January 2021</i>	<i>Digital Product Model Dial</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>February 2021</i>	<i>Digital Distribution Model Dial</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>March 2021</i>	<i>Empowerment Cycle</i>	<i>Employee Empowerment</i>
<i>April 2021</i>	<i>Innovation Box</i>	<i>Innovation Approaches</i>
<i>May 2021</i>	<i>Knowledge Sharing Bridges</i>	<i>Best Practice Sharing</i>
<i>June 2021</i>	<i>Followership Cycle</i>	<i>Leader-Follower Interaction</i>
<i>July 2021</i>	<i>Everest Model of Change</i>	<i>Change Management</i>
<i>August 2021</i>	<i>Fruits & Nuts Matrix</i>	<i>Priority-Setting</i>
<i>September 2021</i>	<i>Powerhouse Framework</i>	<i>People & Organization Strategy</i>
<i>October 2021</i>	<i>Strategy Hourglass</i>	<i>Strategy-Making Steps</i>
<i>November 2021</i>	<i>Disciplined Dialogue Model</i>	<i>Interpersonal Communication</i>
<i>December 2021</i>	<i>Team Building Cycle</i>	<i>Team Building Process</i>
<i>January 2022</i>	<i>Market System Map</i>	<i>External Analysis Framework</i>
<i>February 2022</i>	<i>Strategic Alignment Model</i>	<i>Business Level Strategy</i>
<i>March 2022</i>	<i>Creativity X-Factor</i>	<i>Creativity Enhancement</i>
<i>April 2022</i>	<i>Organizational System Map</i>	<i>Organizational Analysis</i>
<i>May 2022</i>	<i>Corporate Value Creation Model</i>	<i>Corporate Level Strategy</i>

June 2022	Change Manager's Toolbox	Change Methodologies
July 2022	Sustainable You Model	Personal Sustainability
August 2022	Value Proposition Dial	Business Level Strategy
September 2022	The Tree of Power	Organizational Power
October 2022	Psychological Safety Compass	Team Dynamics
November 2022	Strategic Action Modes	Strategy Process
December 2022	Corporate Management Styles	HQ Management
January 2023	Thinking Directions Framework	Reasoning Skills
February 2023	5I Innovation Pipeline	Innovation Process
March 2023	Resistance to Change Framework	Change Management
April 2023	Status Snake & Ladders	Leadership Branding
May 2023	Activity System Dial	Value Creation Analysis
June 2023	Customer-Centricity Circle	Organizational Design
July 2023	New Pyramid Principle	Presentation Approaches
August 2023	Stakeholder Heat Map	Stakeholder Management
September 2023	Best Practice Sharing Framework	Sharing Methods
October 2023	Ambition Radar Screen	Motivation Analysis
November 2023	Dynamic Business Paradigm	Competitive Advantage
December 2023	Dynamic Organization Paradigm	Human-centered Organization
January 2024	Interpersonal Interaction Levels	Communication Approaches
February 2024	Partnership Distance Model	Interorganizational Relations
March 2024	Embedded Identity Model	Personal Awareness
April 2024	New Learning Curve	Personal Learning