

68. Innovation Sins & Virtues

How can I improve the innovation capability of my organization?

Key Definitions

Innovation is the act of doing something new and distinctive. Firms need to constantly try to innovate their products/services, processes and even business model, to improve their value creation and strengthen their position vis-à-vis competitors.

Being innovative is not a quality that happens naturally or by accident, but a *capability* that needs to be organized. A one-off innovation can happen despite a lack of structural innovation capability, but ongoing innovation requires the buildup of the right organizational conditions.

Conceptual Model

The *Innovation Sins & Virtues* framework identifies the seven most deadly sins in the area of innovation. Each undermines an organization's capability to continuously innovate and condemns it to linger in 'innovation hell'. Each sin can be avoided by adhering to its opposite virtue. Together these seven vital virtues create the organizational conditions necessary to achieve 'innovation heaven'. The framework is intended as a checklist to evaluate an organization's current innovation infrastructure and to suggest avenues for improvement.



Key Elements

The seven sets of opposite sins and virtues are the following:

1. **The Exploitation Trap vs. The Exploration Imperative.** In the short run, it is financially more attractive to invest in optimizing the organization's current products and processes, than to place bets on inherently more risky innovation projects. So, management teams often fall for the lure of exploiting what they already have, instead of having the courage to venture out into the unknown to explore innovative opportunities. But explore they must.

2. ***The Icarus Syndrome vs. The Insurgency Mindset.*** Organizations also get stuck in the past because they come to believe that their historic success formula will remain the recipe for profitability in the future. But to be innovative, organizations need to be irreverent rebels, looking for ways to smash the past and come up with a challenging alternative. They need to be willing to upset their business themselves, instead of letting others do it to them.
3. ***The Big Bang Fallacy vs. The Marathon Mantra.*** Innovation is not an event, but a process. It doesn't happen in a short sprint but requires years of hard work. Yet, many managers think of innovation as an occasional occurrence that takes place suddenly and radically, after which a long stretch of stability sets in. But, of course, innovation is more like a marathon, requiring sustained dedication and discipline to reach the finish line.
4. ***The Innovation Monastery vs. The Innovation Bandwagon.*** The R&D department can be a key source of new technology and novel ideas, yet they are often far removed from operations and the market, which can make their thinking rather one-sided, even esoteric. Successful innovation requires a variety of skills and perspectives, making it an organization-wide activity. And novel ideas can come from anywhere in the organization.
5. ***The Business Bulldozer vs. The Business Incubator.*** Although everyone in the organization can get involved in innovation, new initiatives need to be shielded from everyone imposing their existing policies and procedures on the infant innovation. 'Business as usual' often unintentionally smothers the unusual new approach. Therefore, innovations need to be kept at a distance and incubated in the best suiting circumstances.
6. ***The Lone Inventor Legend vs. The Capability Condition.*** The stories told about aspiring innovators starting their new company in a garage has led many people to believe that true entrepreneurs don't need any support and even thrive on adversity. Unfortunately, the lone inventor is the exception, not the rule. To increase the chance of success, organizations need to create supportive conditions, including sufficient time, resources and infrastructure.
7. ***The Fermentation Fable vs. The Mobilization Missionary.*** In the same way, many top managers believe that innovations will bubble up from lower in the organization, driven by dogged individuals. In reality, the more that top management promotes innovation, the higher the chance of eventual success. At the very least, top managers need to provide air cover for challenging new initiatives, but even better is for top managers to be the advocates of innovation in general and to champion certain innovations in particular.

Key Insights

- ***Innovation doesn't come naturally.*** How to be innovative is poorly understood by most managers, while there are many innovation pitfalls into which they can easily tumble.
- ***Innovation is hindered by seven deadly sins.*** There are seven common dysfunctional behaviors undermining organizations' capability to innovate – focusing on exploitation, clinging to past successes, hoping for a sudden change, leaving innovation to R&D, imposing existing procedures, giving little support, and providing no management backing.
- ***Innovation is supported by seven vital virtues.*** Each deadly sin can be avoided by sticking to a vital virtue – embracing exploration, challenging success formulas, taking a structural approach, involving the whole organization, sheltering innovations from standard procedures, providing organizational support, and getting top managers as champions.
- ***Innovation stuck between heaven and hell.*** Few organizations live all seven virtues all the time. But this framework can be used as a checklist to evaluate how well they are doing.
- ***Innovation needs to be organized.*** The conclusion is that to be innovative requires innovation management – a structured approach to abide by the seven vital virtues.

Meyer's Management Models

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>
<i>June 2022</i>	<i>Change Manager's Toolbox</i>	<i>Change Methodologies</i>

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 Typology	Change Management
April 2023	Ambition Radar Screen	Motivation Analysis
May 2023	Corporate Strategy Framework	Corporate Strategy
June 2023	Cultural Fabric Model	Organizational Culture
July 2023	New Pyramid Principle	Presentation Approaches
August 2023	Activity System Dial	Value Creation Analysis
September 2023	Customer-Centricity Circle	Organizational Design
October 2023	Status Snakes & Ladders	Leadership Branding
November 2023	Stakeholder Stance Map	Stakeholder Management
December 2023	Best Practice Sharing Modes	Sharing Methods
January 2024	Duty of Care Feedback Model	Feedback Method
February 2024	BOLD Vision Framework	Organizational Vision
March 2024	MOVING Mission Framework	Organizational Mission
April 2024	Leadership Circle Map	Leadership Skills
May 2024	Digitalization Staircase	Digital Strategy
June 2024	Time Management Funnel	Personal Time Management
July 2024	Wicked Problem Scorecard	Organizational Decision-Making
August 2024	Hunting & Farming Typology	Sales Management
September 2024	Guiding STAR Matrix	Objective Setting Approach
October 2024	Corporate Synergy Typology	Corporate Level Strategy
November 2024	Self-Centered Thinking Traps	Thinking Styles
December 2024	Sustainability Maturity Ladder	Sustainability Management
January 2025	Top Line Growth Pie	Growth Strategy
February 2025	Innovation Sins & Virtues	Innovation Management
March 2025	Core Courage Model	Leadership Behaviors
April 2025	Change Management Phases	Change Management
May 2025	New Learning Curve	Personal Learning
June 2025	Partnership Distance Model	Interorganizational Relations
July 2025	Embedded Innovation Pipeline	Innovation Management
August 2025	Performance Assignment Matrix	Corporate Strategy
September 2025	Triple Diamond Model	Organizational Decision-Making
October 2025	Interpersonal Interaction Levels	Communication Approaches

November 2025	Synergy Value Matrix	Corporate Level Strategy
December 2025	Embedded Identity Model	Personal Awareness
January 2026	Dynamic Organization Paradigm	Human-centered Organization
February 2026	Leadership Journey	Leadership Development
March 2026	Low Performance Team Slide	Team Building