

Meyer's Management Models

74. Innovation Arena

How should I manage my organization's innovation pipeline?

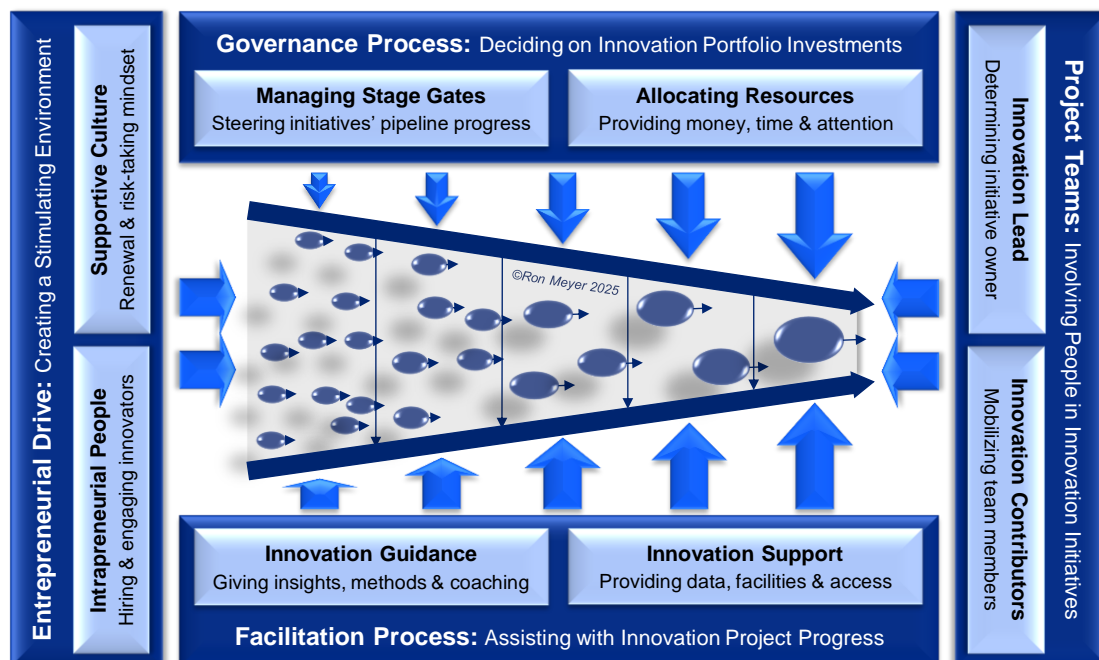
Key Definitions

Innovation is not an event but a *process*, taking months or years to bring a novel idea to a tangible new product, procedure or business. As organizations know that not all innovation ideas will come to fruition, they typically pursue various initiatives at the same time. Together, the portfolio of innovation initiatives at various stages of development is called the *innovation pipeline* (see Meyer's Model #44, the 5I Innovation Pipeline).

An innovation pipeline can be ad hoc and informal but is often organized and run in a more structured way. *Innovation management* is the set of formalized organizational conditions intended to optimize the output of an organization's innovation pipeline.

Conceptual Model

The *Innovation Arena* model identifies the four sets of innovation management interventions that can be used to improve the output of an organization's innovation process. At the center of the arena is where the innovation game itself is played, represented here by the earlier discussed 5I model. Surrounding this "innovation field" is a frame made up of the four building blocks of innovation management, each consisting of two parts. By wisely using these eight influencing factors, organizations can improve their success on the innovation pitch.



Key Elements

The innovation arena's frame consists of the following elements:

1. **Governance Process.** Throughout the innovation process, decisions need to be made about investments and whether to let initiatives proceed. This responsibility can be taken by the Board of Management or given to a separate Innovation Board. They need to:

- a. *Manage Stage Gates.* Determine which criteria need to be met to proceed, monitor how each initiative is doing and decide when to support or kill projects in the pipeline.
 - b. *Allocate Resources.* Determine which resources are required for each initiative and select which set of initiatives is the optimal investment portfolio.
2. **Facilitation Process.** Next to being judged, initiatives also need to be helped along. This assistance can be sought in the broader organization, or an innovation manager/office can be instituted to provide more structured facilitation. This help typically includes:
 - a. *Innovation Guidance.* Giving advice and feedback, providing methodologies and tools, and aiding the building of strong innovation project teams.
 - b. *Innovation Support.* Providing access to the necessary data, facilities, subsidies, services and internal and external partners.
3. **Entrepreneurial Drive.** While governance and facilitation can guide the innovation process, there also needs to be a *spirit* to innovate – a climate that engenders innovative initiatives. Top management, together with an innovation manager, need to work on:
 - a. *Intrapreneurial People.* Bringing in innovative people from outside, while stimulating insiders, getting them to take initiatives and recognizing them for their efforts.
 - b. *Supportive Culture.* Encouraging a curious, creative and risk-taking mindset, legitimizing failures and celebrating successes, all while leading by example.
4. **Project Teams.** Throughout the pipeline, innovation managers shouldn't innovate, but should guide the innovation process, involving the right people for each of the initiatives. Top management, together with the innovation manager, need to mobilize:
 - a. *Innovation Leads.* Identifying the best possible candidates to drive each initiative and getting them to take ownership and responsibility for achieving results.
 - b. *Innovation Contributors.* Identifying the required supporting team members, as well as project sponsors and other supportive (potential) stakeholders.

Key Insights

- ***Innovation can be managed.*** The flow of innovations in an organization can happen haphazardly, or can be structured into an organized innovation pipeline, that can be purposely managed to optimize the outputs given the resource investments available.
- ***Innovation management is the arena around the innovation pitch.*** There are four ways to optimize how the innovation game is played. Together, these four categories of innovation management interventions form the four sides of the innovation arena.
- ***Innovation management has two process sides.*** The innovation arena has two process sides, that influence how initiatives flow through the pipeline. The *governance process* comes from above and decides on investments and next steps (growing arrow sizes symbolize growing involvement). The *facilitation process* comes from below and assists in moving initiatives forward (the stable arrow size symbolizes consistent support throughout).
- ***Innovation management has two people sides.*** The innovation arena also has two people sides, that influence how engaged individuals feel throughout the process. From the outset the *entrepreneurial drive* felt by people in the organization will shape their eagerness to participate in innovation initiatives. As these initiatives progress, people will be invited to join *project teams*, giving them the opportunity to contribute to innovation.
- ***Innovation management requires innovation managers.*** All these activities require dedicated attention. Therefore, an Innovation Board is often required for the governance and an Innovation Manager for the facilitation, while tackling the other activities together.

Meyer's Management Models

Insightful Tools to Kickstart Your Thinking

Publication Schedule

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| <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> |
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| <i>November 2019</i> | <i>House of Engagement</i> | <i>Organizational Engagement</i> |
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| <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> |
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