

REPOSITORY OF INNOVATIVE TRAINING SCHEMES

WHAT IS INNOVATION APPLIED TO TRAINING PROGRAMMES?

There's no question that innovation is growing in importance as a skill set and competency. Over the next few years the demand for people with innovation skills and training will only increase, which means that many organizations are likely to enter the market offering innovation training.

But especially in such a field, evaluating an innovation in training programs is critical.

The assessment of training programs can be based on their depth, the experience of the trainers, the referenced body of knowledge and the inclusion of practical examples and hands-on exercises and certifications are almost always to be ignored, because no standard exists.

Given the disconnected nature of innovation, the lack of standards and absence of a common definition, any firm can define innovation and the core set of tools, methods and skills. The lack of standards and the increasing demand will allow any firm to enter the market and offer innovation training, regardless of their experience, knowledge or capability.

When addressing innovative training for innovators **SIGNIFICANT ERRORS** are likely:

- 1) **TRAINING PROGRAMS MAY DEFINE INNOVATION TOO NARROWLY – AS A SPECIFIC TOOL OR ACTIVITY.** Innovation is a system, encompassing corporate strategy, people, defined processes and corporate culture. Understanding how innovation works within a large organization requires experience implementing innovation in an organization, and understanding the breadth and depth of innovation as an activity.
- 2) **TEACHING INNOVATION IS MANAGED AN ACADEMIC EXERCISE.** While the theory and content can be presented in a classroom environment, innovation is a hands-on, interactive and immersive activity.
- 3) **INNOVATION TRAINING IS LED BY PEOPLE WHO LACK REAL WORLD INNOVATION EXPERIENCE.** Innovation differs from other management philosophies in that it often runs counter to prevailing strategic or operational logic, rather than reinforcing or improving the existing model. Cultural attitudes, behaviors and expectations must be addressed, which requires practical experience.

As innovation skills become far more important, managers and executives seeking innovation training must tread carefully. Far too many firms and educational institutions will define and market “innovation” training and certification programs. While innovation training and skills are in high demand, it is critical that anyone considering innovation training evaluate any organization offering innovation training, to ascertain if the program will deliver real skills and value. The range of firms and educational institutions offering innovation training and certification, and the breadth and depth of innovation activities will create confusion and may hamper decisions about specific programs.

Within the enGAGING project, we've developed **FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OR ATTRIBUTES OF ROBUST DISRUPTIVE TRAINING PROGRAM DEALING WITH INNOVATION FOR INNOVATORS:**

1. BREADTH AND DEPTH OF THE INNOVATIVENESS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Focus on innovation for training programs that define an “end to end” innovation process which includes: a) Defining a strategic opportunity or problem; b) Gathering trends and market insights; c) Observing and gathering customer needs; d) Generating ideas internally or externally or both; e) Capturing, managing, evaluating and selecting ideas; e) Prototyping

2. THE PEOPLE WHO LEAD THE TRAINING

It is not enough to learn the tools and methodologies in an academic setting; you must also understand the practical realities of implementing these tools and methods in corporate settings. Unless your instructor has that experience, you will miss a lot of the important but subtle nuances of innovation work.

3. ENGAGING, IN-PERSON, HANDS-ON

Many innovation training programs offer web-based or self-paced training options. These should be evaluated very carefully. Online or self-paced tools can fill specific needs or offer insights when travel budgets are tight or deeper skill development is too costly, but you'll soon find that innovation is a hands-on activity, and requires engagement with ideas and with other people. Learning in a virtual setting does not prepare an individual for what innovation activities are like in a corporate setting. When you evaluate innovation training programs, look for programs that incorporate presentation combined with hands-on exercises which reinforce the learning. You should be able to work out an innovation challenge within the structure of innovation training, preferably with other people from your organization or at a minimum with people from other firms who are learning with you. Innovation is an immersive experience, requiring people to engage a range of tools and techniques across a range of activities, engaging with an ever-evolving set of participants. Innovation forces you to work in ways that often seem counter to much of your existing knowledge and training, and may call existing processes or products into question. Exercising these issues in a safe team environment with experienced instructors or facilitators is much more beneficial than watching a video about brainstorming on your PC. The experience you receive working through an issue with an experienced facilitator or the knowledge you gain interacting with others who are learning with you will be invaluable. For deep learning, an innovation training program should incorporate a capstone or innovation project based on an issue you have from your work experience. The more practical and the more realistic the challenge or problem that you exercise, the more learning you will take away from the training.

4. TEAM ACTIVITY

Innovation is inevitably a team activity, involving a number of different resources and perspectives and requiring the use of a range of tools and methodologies. Further, innovation forces teams to compromise, to discover and to work together in new ways and on new levels. Good training programs will involve innovation teams working together to resolve interesting, relevant innovation opportunities.

5. NEW CONTENTS OR NEW METHODS

This is the aspect that mainly the expression "disruptive training" refers to.

6. ADDRESSING CHANGE-MAKING/ INSPIRE DISRUPTIVE THINKING IN MORE THAN ONE ASPECT

Complacency is the toughest thing for a company to overcome because complacency breeds only incremental change. Incremental changes are narrow paths that end, and at the end of the road, your customers and talent have left. Typically, the only time an organization changes is when it's backed into a corner, and then the disruptive innovation is only allowed to exist around existing ideas. Most companies only have a spot & react policy. This leads to non-disruptive, slow change, but it keeps the institution afloat. However, it doesn't grow or innovate the company. We all need to look at the new tools, ingredients, and resources that we have at our fingertips. These two competing ideas, reacting and innovating, are exemplified in two ideas:

Prediction - How to take data from the past to predict the future. This becomes harder and harder in a world that is changing faster and faster.

Provocation - Learning how to rearrange ingredients to try something no one else has tried. Innovation and leading innovation doesn't require a specific personality trait. It's taking what you have and creating something new, i.e., breaking the pattern of expectations or institutional weight.

Innovative training is - at the very end- training inspiring change-making and disruptive thinking. In the table below an easy-to-use check list that can be applied to map and identify if innovative training is in

I. TRAINING ADDRESSES HOW TO CRAFT A DISRUPTIVE IDEA:

- Craft a disruptive hypothesis
- Define a disruptive market opportunity
- Generate several disruptive ideas
- Shape a disruptive solution
- Make a disruptive pitch

II. TRAINING EXPLORES CLICHES.

Part of disruptive thinking is surfacing cliches. Cliches are ideas/processes that keep us doing what we are doing.

What makes people think in the same way they've always been thinking?

What are the interaction cliches?

What ideas/processes do you interact with everyday at your job?

What are the product cliches?

What ideas about your product exist?

What are the price cliches?

What about the resources/inventory relate to the price of your cliches?

At some point, cliches were great ideas. It is the strength of the idea that keeps it protected and never looked at. Disruptive thinking is looking at these "non-broken" ideas and realizing there is innovation that can be had there. How many of those decisions/ideas/processes still have value and which are there because of neglect of thought?

III. TRAINING SUPPORTS PARTICIPANTS IN CRAFTING A DISRUPTIVE HYPOTHESIS

A hypothesis is a reasonable predication. A disruptive hypothesis is an unreasonable provocation.

Hypothesis: If you hit a button on a remote and it doesn't do anything, the battery is probably out.

Disruptive Hypothesis: Why does a remote even need batteries?

Nothing kills a new idea faster than common sense.

IV. TRAINING HELPS THE UNDERSTANDING OF HOW DO WE APPROACH THINKING IN A DISRUPTIVE WAY

- What can you invert?

What if what you were doing was the complete opposite of what you are doing? Red Bull flipped traditional soda cliches.

- What can you deny?

What can you take away from what you are doing? Zip Car denied traditional rental car cliches.

- What can you scale?

- What can you distort or exaggerate? Little Mismatched sells socks in sets of three that are mismatched.

Incentivize disruptive thinking first, then look at data. This will cultivate a culture that challenges cliches and enjoy the possibilities.