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From Creativity to Team Innovation: Building the Bridge in Organizations

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Buffalo State
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

From Creativity to Team Innovation: Building the Bridge in Organizations

A Project in Creative Studies

by

Jonathan Brown

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Science

May 31, 2016

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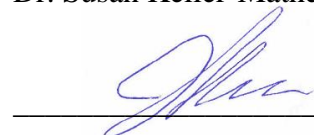
Dates of Approval:

May 31, 2016



Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers – Project Advisor

May 31, 2016



Jonathan Brown – Candidate

Abstract

The outcome of this project is a new model for team innovation. It was created as a result of the need for teams to be better prepared to innovate. The approach of this project was to investigate, clarify, combine, synthesize and finally propose useful ways to accelerate team innovation in organizations. It started with a diagram and evolved into an articulation of each step of the model. This prototype model is called *Model for Purposeful Team Innovation*. The model is divided in seven steps that include identity, mission, quality, targets for improvement, roadmap, execution, monitoring to assess the maturity and readiness of teams to innovate. The purpose of this model is to help teams in organizations to reflect on their readiness to innovate, and to implement ideas that are both novel, useful and valuable for both teams and their organization.



Signature

May 31, 2016

Date

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My friend Pat, who kindly reviewed the text and taught me rules of English grammar I have never heard of before.

To Jonathan Vehar, who helped me articulate the model by asking the right questions. To Sylvain Matte, all this because of you. Thank you for letting me know about this whole world of creativity 10 years ago.

Finally, to my wife, Emilie, who supported me along this long journey. You're my inspiration, my anchor.

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Section One: Background to the Project

Since I started my professional life ten years ago, I have noticed that leaders in organizations are mainly looking at the usefulness factor of creativity. They see creative thinking as a tool to generate value for the organization either through problem solving or by generating new ideas. Yet, Innovation is a key element for survival of organizations that goes beyond these factors.

As a candidate for a Master's of Science in Creativity at the International Center for Studies in Creativity (ICSC), I am engaged in curriculum focusing on creativity research and the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) model, tools and techniques. As part of my studies, I learned the Thinking Skills Model of CPS (Puccio, Mance & Murdock, 2011), an interesting framework to lead change in organizations. As an academic model, I've found its intellectual focus makes it more difficult to utilize in practical organizations without some additionally actionable language.

Research on creativity has increased significantly over the past fifty years, so has research on innovation. Sometimes the two concepts are mixed up together and we can still see confusion in the mainstream literature. As I've evolved in the program, my interest on the ways to move from creativity (idea generation) to innovation (idea implementation) increased significantly. Let's have a look at a few definitions and some questions.

Creativity can be defined as the ability to generate a product that is both original and useful (Amabile, 1997). Also, creative thinking is required in the innovation process, and one can have creativity without innovation (Vehar, 2013). Once creative ideas are generated in a team, what happens next? What is the process required to lead those ideas towards their successful implementation? What are the winning conditions that will help

teams to make it through innovation? How can we bridge the gap between creativity and innovation in teams?

I immediately felt the gap between those concepts, and wanted to use the master's project to help bridge that gap. I noticed sometimes there could be a long time elapsed between the two steps. Here are my personal goals related to the project:

- Create new connections on the bridge between team creativity and team innovation
- Better understand the processes and relationships between team creativity and team innovations
- Define new standards to minimize the time elapsed between idea generation and idea implementation
- Find ways to communicate the results of my project to a broader audience

Rationale for Selection

One of my strengths is the ability to sense gaps wherever I go. I discovered this ability during summer semester 2015 in Buffalo. Since I come from a business background, I noticed that the leadership teams in organizations are always looking for new ways to innovate. But, they are barely prepared to manage a process of creativity, and lead the creative outputs into actions. This occurs especially at the team level, from the bottom to the top of the organizations, both from a tactical to a highly strategic perspective.

By investigating the relevant research, this will help me to translate theory into practice, and segregate what is harnessed to the reality of the organizations from what is not. There might be one bridge, or several bridges between creativity and innovation. I

see this project as a journey into the discovery of such bridges, and I'm very excited by the fact that I intend to increase my creativity and innovation set of tools with teams. The paragraphs below clarify what I plan to do.

Manage a Process of Creativity

As I worked in a large airplane manufacturing company, I noticed that very few employees were trained on the benefits of creative thinking. Some of them possess this natural skill, but barely know how to manage it from the first spark to an action plan. In other words, there are plenty of opportunities to train people inside organizations to increase their skills on creative thinking and the CPS model. This is a first step towards team innovation.

Lead the Creative Outputs into Innovations

I really need to figure out how we can expedite the innovation process to make it both purposeful and useful to organizations. Otherwise, idea generation would be perceived as a one-time exercise, with no value related to it.

I'm highly stimulated by this project as I have a tendency to work on gaps until they get closed. And this gap seems like a great challenge to close!

I see myself working with several organizations and help them address this challenge of putting in place real processes of creativity and innovation within their teams, and not only use innovation as a buzzword. For example, if I ever discuss with a manager that is desperate about coming up with innovation in his team, I would be able to facilitate a process where he/she could see the maturity level of his/her team and their readiness to innovate.

The Inspiration for this Project

In the past 10 years of work experience, I noticed the need for managers and top management teams to count on a certain range of tools to lead their teams towards innovation. Also, when I attended my first creativity conferences back in 2007 and 2008, one of the first questions participants coming from organizations and corporations had was “What am I going to do with all this?” I had the same question but could barely find any purposeful answer.

One day, probably around five years ago, I drafted a model shown on Figure 1 below.

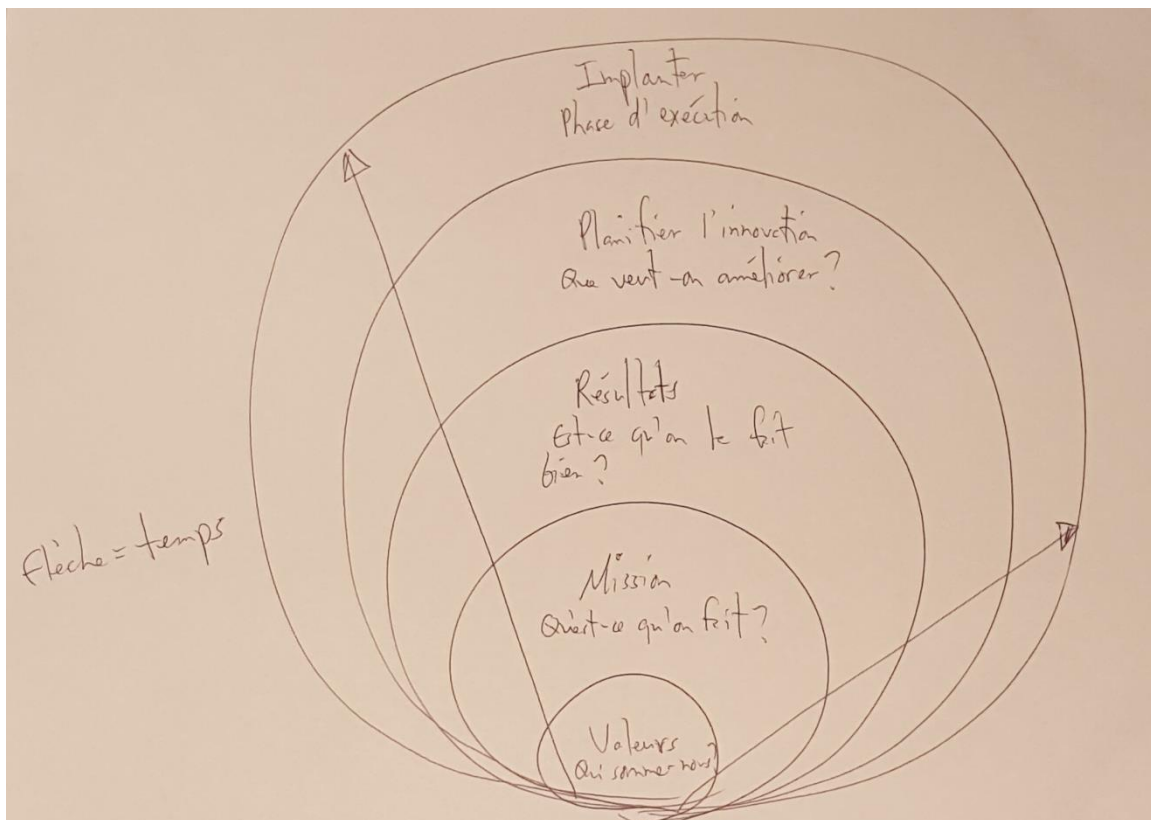


Figure 1 – Intuitive Draft of Assessment of Team Innovation

It helped me to start providing a piece of the answer. Surprisingly, I put it in a folder and forgot about it since, at the time, I had no clue on how I could use it or make a thorough research. Then I started my master's degree in creativity. I could finally have the opportunity to revisit this model.

This project is really about putting innovation in action instead of words and theories. First we need to better understand the theory to support it.

Section Two: Pertinent Literature

After completing the “Adopt-a-scholar” assignment on Michael A. West during CRS 625 Current Issues in Creativity class, I felt like I needed to dig into West’s work on team innovation. I decided to explore the literature around innovation in organizations, more specifically on team innovation in organizations.

For such a broad topic, where should we first start? This literature review begins with a broad perspective and then focuses more narrowly on the team level inside the organizations. This review starts with two general resources, including a review of the literature and a meta-analysis and then explores team and organizational climate, the role of leadership in team innovation, group norms and characteristics, and finally the innovation process (from idea generation to idea implementation).

General Resources

Crossan, M. M., & Apaydin, M. (2010). A Multi-Dimensional framework of organizational innovation: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Management Studies*, 47(6), 1154-1191. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6486.2009.00880.x

This article describes a thorough literature review of the past 27 years on organizational innovation. It also provides a multi-dimensional framework that helps to connect innovation as a process and as an outcome.

The authors state that “innovation is production or adoption, assimilation, and exploitation of a value-added novelty in economic and social spheres; renewal and enlargement of products, services, and markets; development of new methods of

production; and establishment of new management systems. It is both a process and an outcome.” (p. 1155).

The authors conducted an in-depth analysis of over 10,000 articles published since 1981 and looked at the most cited articles. They showed the difference between innovation as process and as an outcome, the first being a predecessor to the latter. However, they did not focus much attention on the individual level that contributes to innovation in the organizations.

I found it interesting to see the lack of reference to journals dedicated to creativity (e.g. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, *Creativity and Innovation Management*). Most of the references were journals related to management such as the *Academy of Management Journal*, where they looked at the top 10 journals publishing innovation research. There might be interesting opportunities to further explore the research to combine their findings with literature on creativity. One of their conclusion was that innovation research is still highly fragmented, and needs further testing.

Hülshager, U. R., Anderson, N., & Salgado, J. F. (2009). Team-level predictors of innovation at work: A comprehensive meta-analysis spanning three decades of research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *94*(5), 1128-1145. doi:10.1037/a0015978

The authors of this article presented a quantitative meta-analysis of fifteen team-level research done over the past thirty years. They looked at the factors that would contribute to increase creativity and innovation in organizations by using an input-process-output (IPO) model of team performance (Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson & Jundt, 2005). The IPO helped the authors to classify the team-level variables.

The results of this research are interesting. The authors found that team process variables such as vision, external communications, support for innovation, task orientation and internal communications are the strongest contributors to team innovation.

In conclusion, this research helps to better frame some of the main predictors of team-level innovation. I would use it in conjunction with research done by Anderson and West (1998) on the Team Climate Inventory.

Team and Organizational Climate

In this section, I will not elaborate specifically on specific articles, but will explore the different tools available to assess the climate in organizations and teams in a synthesized view.

In the Table 1 below, is a summary of the work done by Goran Ekvall (1996), Teresa Amabile et al (1996) and Anderson and West (1998). It helps to see the relationship between the facets even though there are some differences between the three measures.

Table 1

Theories of Climate for Creativity/Innovation in Organizations Comparison

Measure		Creative Climate Questionnaire (Ekvall, 1996)	KEYS (Amabile et al, 1996)	Team Climate Inventory (Anderson & West, 1998)
Dimensions	Positive or Stimulant scales	Challenge	Challenging work	Interaction frequency
		Freedom	Freedom	Participative safety
		Idea-support	Work group supports	Support for innovation
		Trust	Organizational encouragement	Vision
		Dynamism	Sufficient resources	Task orientation
		Playfulness	Supervisory encouragement	
		Debate		
		Idea time		
		Risk taking		
	Negative or Obstacle scale	Conflict	Workload pressure	
Organizational impediments				

Even though Ekvall's CCQ and Amabile's KEYS refers to a broader level in the organizations and West and Anderson's TCI happens at the team-level, we can draw some commonalities between the models.

First and foremost, support for ideas and innovation are common to the three models. This is a critical item as well as a predictor of the success of both idea generation and idea implementation. The concept of challenge is also common to the two first models. Even if West and Anderson (1998) were not specific about measuring the level of challenge, they built a sub-scale for each where excellence could be seen as a parallel of challenge.

Finally, I find it surprising that West and Anderson never mentioned any negative contributor to team-level innovation as opposed to Ekvall (1996), and Amabile et al (1996). One can only assume as an hypothesis that a low result on the TCI could be an indicator of some potential negative or obstacles in the team.

Role of Leadership in Team Innovation

In another research, de Jong and Den Hartog (2007) highlight the leader behaviours required to stimulate both employees creativity (idea generation) and what they call "application behaviour". They defined leadership as, "the process of influencing others towards achieving some kind of outcome" (p. 2).

They studied firms oriented in knowledge-intensive industries such as consultancy, IT or accountancy, since those industries require a higher set of non-routine tasks. These firms evolve in a complex environment where innovation is an important

driver of their success. The study was done through in-depth questionnaires with managers or entrepreneurs, with limitations in terms of quantitative data.

The authors articulated a total of thirteen leader behaviours connected with innovative behaviours. The authors concluded that behaviours such as support for innovation, providing vision, recognition, monitoring are key skills.

As shown previously, support for innovation is a recurring topic to get to successful innovations faster. Unfortunately, the study was mainly focused on knowledge-intensive firms, so it is hard to define whether or not the same behaviours would be found in other industries.

In a different study, Škerlavaj, Černe and Dysvik (2014) explored the impact of the level of perceived supervisor support on a team's ability to generate ideas and implement them. An interesting finding was that when high levels of creative ideas occur, it will have a negative correlation with the likelihood of their implementation. Since employees see high creative ideas as resource demanding and high risk, it could lead to a lack of support to move to their implementation.

Also, the authors argue that leaders must stay aware of the boundaries set around teams, especially, highly creative individuals. Management teams need to provide the appropriate level of support, by keeping a balance and making sure that they do not squash the creativity potential of those individuals.

Group Norms and Characteristics

In this section, some of the group norms and characteristics that make groups more creative and/or innovative are explored. What would be the conditions of success for the teams?

In an article about thought diversity in group innovation, Post et al (2009) studied the importance of connective thinking as opposed to sequential thinking in teams. The authors found that teams using the first approach will be more likely to solve problems more effectively and increase the quantity of alternatives available to solve it. They also found that those teams engage more easily in collaborative learning by considering multiple perspectives from team members. Consequently, those teams would increase their radical innovation potential. If these findings are combined with the results of this study with another article on tacit knowledge (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998), it can be argued that the more diversity you have in a team, the more likely this team will be able to increase their level of innovations. A participative environment and psychological safety climate would be conditions of success for teams to innovate as well, also highlighted by West & Anderson (1998).

In another study, De Dreu and West (2001) found that minority dissent is related to innovation in work teams, especially when the teams are engaged in decision making. By having access to divergent perspectives in a team, it will help to better capture all the facets of a decision. This study's results are consistent with Post et al (2009) work on thought diversity.

It is often assumed that team size will impact the team's ability to foster innovation. In a recent study, Peltokorpi and Hasu (2014) found that team size has a

positive effect on team innovation, most likely because of the availability of different knowledge and the variety of resources available. Again, the level of participative safety will increase the odds of having highly innovative teams. They stress the fact that team size, though, will not guarantee team innovation, as team members need to share information and work together to achieve common goals.

A study done by Caldwell and O'Reilly (2003) looked at the norms that would influence creativity and innovation within a group, which can be an important contributor. They identified the social variables related to innovation and discovered that two out of the four dimensions they have identified are the same as the ones defined by West (2000): support for risk taking and teamwork. They contend that group norms could become a mechanism to increase innovation.

Innovation Process – From Idea Generation to Idea Implementation

In another recent study, Magadley and Birdi (2012) examined the factors that would facilitate both idea generation and idea implementation. They found that individual factors such as creative self-efficacy have a stronger influence on idea generation than idea implementation, as opposed to group factors having a stronger influence on idea implementation rather than idea generation. Another study (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2013) showed that team composition (individual creative personality) will impact team creativity. If the team climate is positive and nurtures innovation, then highly creative teams would become highly innovative teams.

The generation of ideas would sometimes lead to their successful implementation. What happens when employees generate radical ideas in an organization? Silva and

Oldham (2012) studied not only the number of ideas submitted versus number of ideas implemented, but also the level of radicalness of ideas. In fact, radical ideas represent a threat to status quo and the management practices in place. They conclude that the number of ideas implemented was high when they were at a relative low level of radicalness. This ratio could increase if those employees would evolve in a safe psychological environment, as well as if they have a strong network to support the implementation of their ideas.

West (2002) shares a model of team innovation involving four group factors that would determine group innovation: task characteristics, group knowledge diversity and skills, external demands and integrating group processes. He also broke down group processes in eight components of the process such as participation in decision making, supporting innovation and reflexivity. West showed that external demands can become predictors of innovation. The more threatening the environment around teams is, the more likely teams and organizations will innovate to minimize this level of threats. He stresses the notion that this relationship is not linear though.

Schippers, West and Dawson (2015) pointed out that team reflexivity, which is “the extent to which group members overtly reflect upon and communicate about the group’s objectives, strategies and processes and make changes accordingly” (p. 771), combined with high external demands, will predict a high level of team innovation. It concludes by stating that leaders should pay attention to the level of team reflexivity based on the level of external demands.

Finally, West and Anderson (1996) have found that the group composition (e.g. size, heterogeneity) will influence the group process and by the same time the outputs of an innovation process to a certain extent. Those outputs can be rated on four different levels: level of radicalness, magnitude, novelty and effectiveness. However, the authors concluded that there still needs to be further research to understand the extent to which input factors and group processes will influence levels of team innovation.

In conclusion, we can see that some topics are recurring to predict the ability for a team to innovate. For example, items like participative safety, participation in decision making, challenge in teams and support for innovation are critical components of team innovation.

Section Three: Process

The approach of this project was to investigate, clarify, combine, synthesize and finally propose useful ways to accelerate team innovation in organizations. To do this, I performed a literature review, then proposed a model, got feedback on the model, and finally prepared an outline to communicate the results during a conference.

A draft of a model that would help teams to innovate faster was created as part of this project. My target audience to use the “guide of bridges” will be leaders in organizations, from supervisor level to vice-president.

Project Plan

Action	Completion Date
Literature review	February to April
Find a mentor to support my project – contacted Jonathan Vehar	April
Completed research on literature	April
Prepared Draft of Model	April
Got feedback on the model	May
Incorporated feedback and strengthen the model	May
Completed final Draft section 1-6	May

Evaluation Plan

One of my challenges with this project was to maintain focus and not get overwhelmed by research. The starting point was the work of Teresa Amabile and

Michael West. The main driver will be the session design for Mindcamp, as it will help me to frame the outcome of my research and package a way to communicate it.

Most of the evaluation plan was driven by a “done/not done” kind of approach with the milestones proposed in the previous pages. I was aiming for an adherence to plan measure of 90%, which means my objective is to meet a minimum of 9 milestones out of 10.

The main winning condition was to get feedback on my model throughout the whole project. I held Skype calls with my sounding board partner almost every two weeks, as well as a weekly Skype session with my instructor. I also got in touch with my mentor on the second half of the project, in April, to receive his inputs and refine my concepts. I did not hesitate to reach out if required to a classmate or another instructor to receive a different perspective. I presented the model to my classmates in April as well, while it was still in development (see Appendix B for detailed presentation).

Finally, once the class is over, I will open a blog that will help me share my thoughts around the project, document the key findings, and communicate with a larger audience. I’m not planning to do a lot of interaction with the audience during the semester, but it might become a great vehicle to share and interact with people.

Continuing the Model

One of the most exciting part of this project is to be able to pursue the prototype and lead it to a tangible outcome such as a book or a tool for leaders in organizations.

In the next section, I will present a model that is inspired both by the literature review made and my personal experience.

Section Four: Outcomes

The result of this project is a new model for team innovation. It was created as a result of the need for teams to be better prepared to innovate. It started with a diagram and evolved into an articulation of each step of the model. It is inspired by Michael West's work on team reflexivity and team innovation (Schippers, West & Dawson, 2015; West, 1990).

This prototype model is called, *Model for Purposeful Team Innovation*. The name might evolve through time, as it is in its initial development and therefore currently being further developed and tested. The prototype is the result of my ten years of organizational work experience in conjunction with my academic study of creativity at Buffalo State.

Purpose and Underlying Assumptions of the Model

The purpose of this model is to help teams in organizations to reflect on their readiness to innovate, and to implement ideas that are both novel, useful and valuable for both teams and their organization. It could be used as an assessment tool by managers or consultants as well as functioning as a dashboard. Based on West's team reflexivity concept (Schippers, West & Dawson, 2015), it is a very dynamic model that helps set the foundations for a team to move faster towards innovation.

Here are some assumptions related to the model:

- Ideas have already been generated by the team
- External demands can affect the speed of movement
- Flexible model: some bubbles can be wider, smaller, or larger
- In order to innovate, a team needs to first structure itself

- Idea generation is a continuous process and is embedded in this model. Hence, teams shouldn't stop generating ideas as they move along the process

Presentation of the Model

The model is divided in seven steps to assess the maturity and readiness of teams to innovate. The steps are divided into the following:

1. Identity
2. Mission
3. Quality
4. Targets for Improvement
5. Roadmap
6. Execution
7. Monitoring

The model can be visualized as follows (see Figure 2):

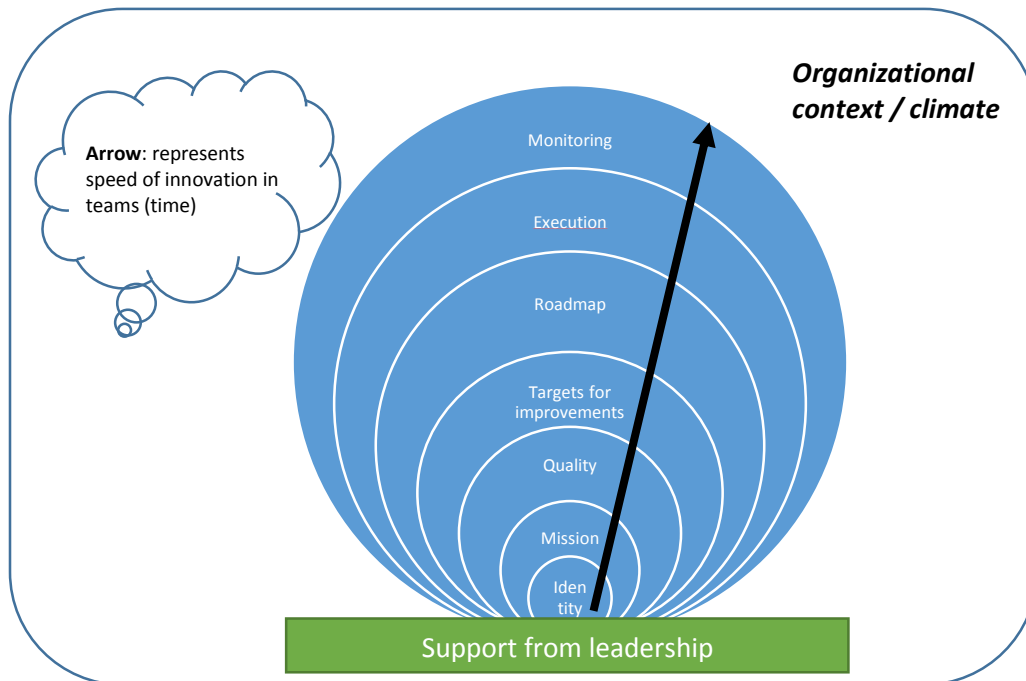


Figure 2. Model for Purposeful Team Innovation

Each subset of the model, starting from a broad to a more specific perspective is described next. The reader can follow the evolution of the model in Appendix A.

Organizational Context/Climate

Any team is evolving in a certain organizational context, in a defined moment in time. The climate and context will have an influence on the likelihood of a team to generate new ideas and innovate (Amabile et al, 1996; Ekvall, 1996). The level of external demands will also impact the level of innovation coming out of the teams (West, 2002).

Support from Leadership

As described by West (1990), support for innovation is a critical condition to predict and facilitate innovation in teams. This starts with the support from the immediate

level of supervision in a team. The more support you get from the higher levels of leadership, the more chances innovative outputs will be generated by the teams.

Seven Steps of the Model

Each of the seven steps of the model is explored in detail next. Each step includes at least one guiding question.

1- Identity: Who are we? The main question to ask at this stage is: Who are we? This constitutes the fundamental question of any team. By clarifying who the team is and what the team's core values are, it will help to get people to set a point of reference and define common ground. Values can lead to commitments to action and subsequently, guide behaviour (Dose & Klimoski, 1999).

2- Mission: Why do we do what we do? What is the team's mission? Who is the customer and/or end customer of the team? But most importantly, why do we do what we do? These simple questions will help to align the team direction. Kaplan and Norton (2008) explained the notion of mission in an organization. Teams can use the same principle at their level.

3- Quality: How well do we do what we are supposed to do (quality and results)? Sometimes teams keep working in a reactive mode and do their best to respond to external demands. It is critical for a team to understand well the results delivered, as well as the quality of those results. At this stage the teams could work with Key Performance Indicators (KPI) or other measures to help them capture the outcomes of their actions.

Quality is defined by the ability to meet or exceed the expectations from the customer. If teams want to innovate properly, they need to ensure they do what they are supposed to do in the proper way. If a team takes the proper time to clarify the first three steps of this model, it will significantly increase the chances to expedite innovation. The reason is that it provides the team the appropriate level of leadership and a clear direction, alignment and commitment (Drath et al., 2008) to move to the next level.

4- Targets for Improvement: What do we want to improve? Which target to set? Now that the team members have done their homework to better understand their level of maturity, they can start to identify potentials for innovation. Where do we see the most value? Where should we put our focus? What are our objectives and what do we want to achieve? Which specific targets do we put in place?

5- Roadmap: How do we improve it? Once the objectives and the targets are defined, what resources are required? How do we measure the progression? The roadmap is the time for planning the execution. By defining the constraints, resources available, risks, stakeholders involved, and priorities, the team can prepare an action plan to achieve the objectives. It is important for the team to identify check points to measure the progression, and tools to track it. An effective approach of *Plan-Do-Check-Act* developed by Deming (2000) is recommended. This step is the “Plan”.

6- Execution: Is it happening? This is the most important phase that will confirm if the planning stage was done properly. Teams need to also stay flexible to opportunities, without losing focus on the objectives. This step is the “Do”.

7- Monitoring: Do we progress as planned? The best way to make sure that a team executes is to monitor the execution. Teams should build monitoring tools that will not add too many constraints and will help facilitate the execution. For example, visual management tools such as thermometers or dashboards can help to set the right level of priorities on the actions. This step represents the “Check-Act”, where teams can also refine the tracking tools to make them more effective and meaningful.

The Arrow

An important aspect of the model is the arrow. It represents the speed to which teams can innovate. The longer the arrow is, the longer the team will generate innovations. See example in Figure 3.

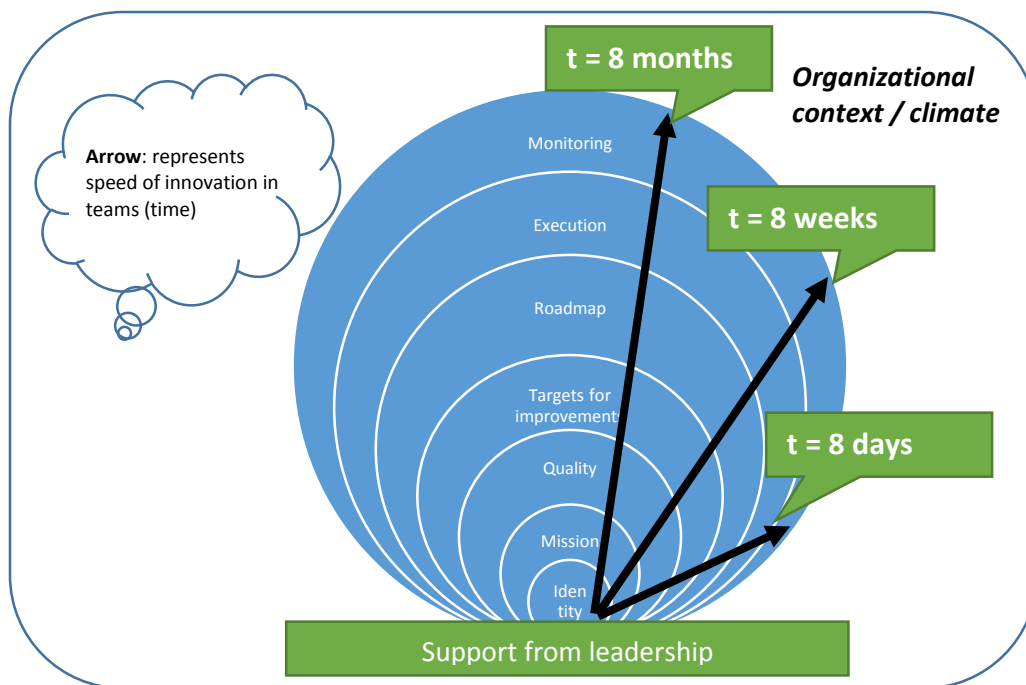


Figure 3. Model for Purposeful Team Innovation Speed of Arrow Depiction

Testing the Model: A Case Study

Since I wanted to better understand the applicability of the model, I tested the model in my team at work. By not explicitly articulating to the team that the concepts presented were my new thinking regarding a model, I was able to see whether or not the hypothesis and assumptions of the theoretical foundations made any sense to them.

One of the first actions I took when I joined the team was to propose a set of the team core values to my boss. She immediately provided feedback and we adopted them as the core principles of our team. When she hired another person, we communicated those values to that person, and he accepted them.

We worked in parallel very hard to better understand what we were doing, for whom and why. By clarifying those questions, we could move fast to the third step of the model. I found it interesting to see that this stage took a few months, since we were a new team. Where the first two steps can be done very quickly, the third one can take from weeks to months to get a good picture of the results and the quality of the deliverables. This really depends on the speed of the outputs generated by the team.

We identified three areas of improvement: process improvement, visual management, and team performance. We agreed to address each of them in the next three quarters to come, and built an action plan for the visual management aspect. The planning phase went very quickly, in less than a week. We are currently in the execution/monitoring stage, where we track the progression of our plan every week. So far it is progressing well, and we highlight any risks or roadblocks as they come along.

I presented my model to my boss recently, six months after having started the testing. She was very curious to see how we could actually use it as a more systematic tool inside the team!

This model is a promising one, and slight changes and tests will be required in order to build a strong case around it. The next section will describe the tremendous amount of things I learned over the past months.

Section Five: Key Learnings

This project led to several adjustments and an incredible spectrum of learning, combined with several challenges. In this section, I will elaborate on some specific learnings and new connections that have been made during the past months.

As described in section two, I had the following four objectives:

- Create new connections on the bridge between team creativity and team innovation.
- Better understand the processes and relationships between team creativity and team innovations
- Define new standards to minimize the time elapsed between idea generation and idea implementation
- Find ways to communicate the results of my project to a broader audience

I feel very proud to say that most of them have been achieved, especially the first three objectives. I still need to clarify and execute a strategy for the fourth objective, even though I am ready to communicate the results of my project at the Mindcamp conference in August.

There have been multiple learnings that occurred during the past weeks. We will explore them below both from a process and a content perspective. Let's start with the content perspective.

Literature on Team Innovation is a Jungle

I found such a broad spectrum of literature on team innovation. As stated by West and Farr (1989, p.17), "team innovation research is a jungle of inconsistent findings".

Scholars sometimes mix creativity and innovation, especially the ones not familiar with the publications dedicated to creativity such as the *Journal of Creative Behavior* or *Creativity and Innovation Management*. I must admit that an important portion of my literature review did not refer to the journals on creativity, as I was looking more at the output, once the creative product is generated in teams. I wish there would be a more holistic view of both creativity and innovation among the scholar community, and a consistent content between scholar and practitioners. There are still tons of opportunities to pursue field-experience research to better capture the relationships between creativity and innovation, even though the area of research is quite broad.

Support for Innovation in Organizations is Crucial

The majority of articles showed previously how important the support for innovation is in the organization, from an individual to a team, and an organizational perspective (Amabile et al, 1996; Anderson & West, 1998; de Jong & Den Hartog, 2007; Ekvall, 1996; Schippers, West & Dawson, 2015; Škerlavaj & Dysvik, 2014; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2013). As mentioned by Sternberg (2006), creativity is a decision. We argue that the same principle applies to team innovation for both individuals and leadership teams.

Translating a Model into a Workshop

Presenting the model to a bigger audience is something very important to me. Therefore, I had to translate the theoretical model to a practical one in order to be able to present to the Mindcamp conference. Since the conference is expecting highly interactive workshops, I decided to make the model a living model. My intent is to have people building their own model in sub-groups, and be able to share the model in a plenary

afterwards. This would give me the opportunity to share my model as well as getting new insights on its strengths, weaknesses and limitations. I had the opportunity to design a workshop for a creativity and innovation conference for the first time (see Appendix C). I do not know yet if I will be selected as a presenter, but it does not matter at this stage. I will present my model anyways to whomever is curious to learn more about it!

Now that we have described the key learnings from a content perspective, we will now look at them from a process point of view.

Resilience as a Powerful Skill

At the beginning of the semester, I learned that my dad would have only a few weeks left before he would die. The news hit me like a train, and I felt like I would probably miss something if I didn't go and see him at the hospital. He called me on my birthday and passed away four days later. The following weeks had been tough, and I could not find any motivation to work on my project as I was in mourning. I even thought of leaving the class and the program.

Nevertheless, I finally reached out to my instructor to let her know how difficult the moment was and put the cards on the table. I shared my concerns and expressed vulnerability, and the fact that I am very hard on myself. It paid off. In fact, by being totally open, it turned the negative energy into a powerful wave of motivation. I finally started to gradually turn the page and find purpose in my project.

Do not get Overwhelmed in Research

Innovation is a wide field of study and we can easily lose our way in searching for relevant literature. This is a recurring reality since the beginning of my Master's program.

I tend to look for a maximum of articles and sometimes I get lost in searching for the articles cited in the articles. This can be compared as a research on Wikipedia, where we can easily click on links and search content forever without finding a way out.

For about three weeks I had challenges in finding the right articles to build my literature review. Since research on team innovation is not very well classified, it took me a while to finally converge and build the foundations of my review. I must have read over fifty articles to find out that half of them were not relevant for what I was looking for. A key learning, for future research, is to ask for assistance sooner in the process and work with feedback loops. I will reach out to a specialist in research or a professor who knows exactly the field of study I'm about to explore, even if there is no such existing field of study.

On the Notion of Working Alone and Discipline

This semester was sometimes very challenging because we were left alone on our journey. I'm highly stimulated by working with people in teams, or in the context of a team work. I am usually highly disciplined when I work with other people and noticed that it can easily fade away once I work by myself. Therefore the best way to overcome this lack of discipline is to share a clear plan with someone else and keep the focus on the execution of the plan. It worked very well with Sue over the last two months of the semester!

Feedback: The Best Food for Thought

One of the main highlights of this project is the tremendous insights I received by sharing the model and asking for feedback from my sounding board partner, Clay, and

my instructor Sue. They both helped me to narrow down to a more specific topic (move from organizational innovation to team innovation). This valuable feedback acted as a lighthouse for the rest of the project and led to the creation of my prototype.

Once the prototype was created, I also asked for feedback to experienced practitioners in the field of creativity: Jonathan Vehar and Sylvain Matte. They both have been leaders at the Creative Problem Solving Institute and worked on creativity facilitation. They challenged some of the components of the model, and it forced me to better articulate it. For example, Jonathan asked me a very simple question: “What is the objective and the outcome of this model?” I was first a little bit hesitant because I was not 100% sure if it was an assessment tool fixed in time or a dynamic model. I also requested feedback from my boss, who asked a lot of questions that helped me to improve the overall presentation of the model.

I am striving to look for candid feedback, the same as the one described by Catmull and Wallace (2014). Sometimes people do not want to be rude and tend to shy away from candor. From now on, I will be asking for candid feedback on the model and its development, and I’m looking forward and ready to receive it!

However, I am also very realistic in the timing and frequency of requesting such feedback. I will look for a balance in order to avoid “over-feedback” so as not to lose its full potential. One study even showed that too much feedback could lead to a decrease in learning and performance over time (Lam, DeRue, Karam & Hollenbeck, 2011).

The most fascinating thing is that learning is a living and continuous process. Since I am planning to pursue the development of my model, I look for more research, articles and books to support it.

Your Feedback is Crucial

As you may have read, I'm looking to get feedback from several people to enforce and improve the model. I do not have the pretention to reinvent the wheel with this model, but only to develop an accessible tool, easy to understand but mainly easy to apply on the field.

I would greatly appreciate the reader could provide feedback on this model. Genius is not the sake of one individual. I rather see it as a collective process where we can make this model a better and collective effort to help teams innovate faster and better. Tell me what do you like about it, what could be improved/modified to make it even more purposeful in organizations. Please send me an e-mail at jonathan.brown@hec.ca with your feedback.

It would also be greatly appreciated that you respect the author by citing the source of this master's project when using the model. You will find in Figure 4 a copy of the model and in Table 2 a summary of each steps of the model.

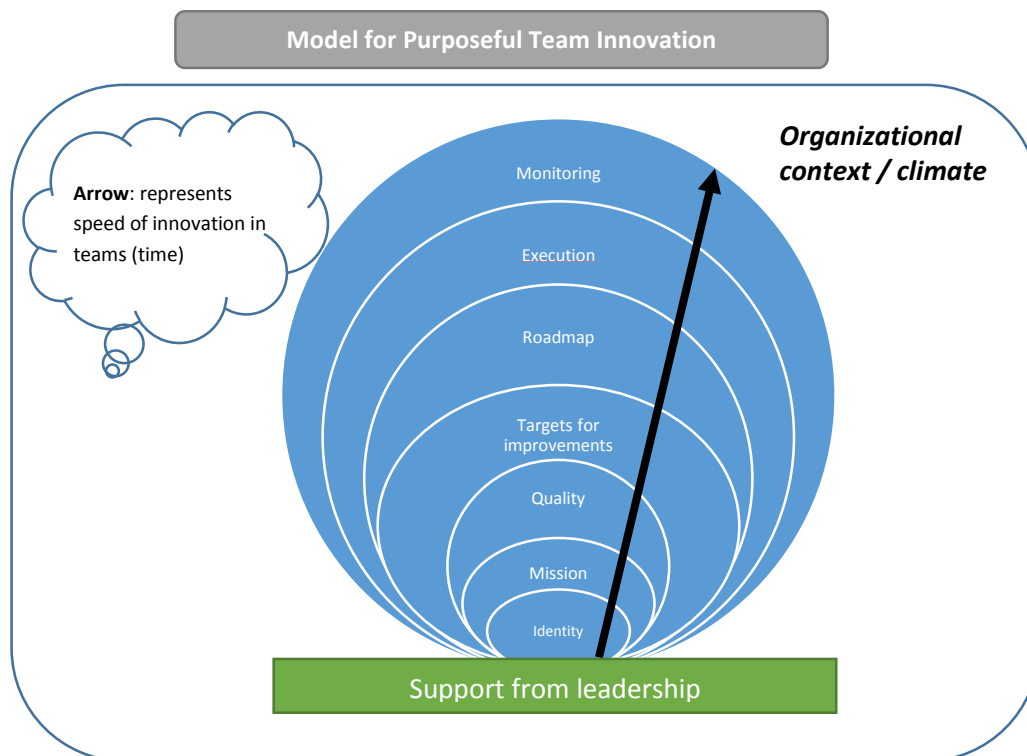


Figure 4. Model for Purposeful Team Innovation

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Brown, J. (2016). *From creativity to team innovation: Building the bridge in organizations*. (Unpublished master's project). Buffalo State, Buffalo, NY.

Table 2.

Summary of the Seven Steps of the Model for Purposeful Team Innovation

<p>Monitoring</p> <p>The best way to make sure that the teams execute is to monitor the execution. Teams should build monitoring tools that will not add too many constraints and will help facilitate the execution. For example visual management tools such as thermometers or dashboards can help to set the right level of priorities on the actions.</p>
<p>Execution</p> <p>The most important phase that will confirm if the planning stage was done properly. Teams need to stay flexible also to opportunities.</p>
<p>Roadmap: How do we improve it? What resources are required? How do we measure the progression?</p> <p>Now it's time for planning the execution. By defining the constraints, resources available, risks, stakeholders involved and priorities, the team can prepare an action plan to achieve the objectives. It is important for the team to identify check points to measure the progression, and tools to track it.</p>
<p>Targets for improvement: What do we want to improve? Which target to set?</p> <p>Now that the team members have done their homework, they can start identifying potentials of innovation. Where do we see the most value? Where should we put our focus? What are our objectives and what do we want to achieve?</p>
<p>Quality: How well do we do it (quality and results)?</p> <p>Sometimes teams keep working in a reactive mode and do their best to respond to external demands. I think it's crucial to well understand the results delivered, as well as the quality of those results. By quality I mean the ability to meet or exceed the expectations from the customer. If teams want to innovate properly, they need to ensure they do what they're supposed to do the proper way.</p>
<p>Mission: What do we do? For whom ? Why ?</p> <p>What is the team's mission? Who is the customer of the team? But most importantly, why do we do what we do? These three simple questions will help to align the team on a clear direction.</p>
<p>Identity: Who are we?</p> <p>This constitutes the fundamental question of any team. By clarifying who the team is, its core values, it will help to get people to set a point of reference and define its common ground.</p>

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Brown, J. (2016). *From creativity to team innovation: Building the bridge in organizations*. (Unpublished master's project). Buffalo State, Buffalo, NY.

Section Six: Conclusion

Overall, I can consider this project as a journey towards organizational team innovation. The project did not focus on creativity per se, but looked at the process to get the creative product to a successful outcome in teams within organizations. The Master's degree helped me to understand and put into practice creativity both as a professional and a personal skill (Puccio, 2012).

Not surprisingly, some of the components such as support for innovation and freedom are similar components of the creative process (Amabile et al, 1996).

A Bright Future for the Model

Now that I have generated my prototype, I'm ready to start communicating and explaining its foundations and applications. What I see myself doing next is a threefold approach: refine the model, get another round of feedback, and finally, communicate to a broader audience.

Refine the Model

I feel like I still have some slight changes to make to the model. The first priority is to clearly explain the limitations of the model. For example, I need to be clear what the model is, and what it is not. It will help me to better communicate its essence and potential outcomes, as well as its limitations.

There might be opportunities to develop the model to make it a more structured maturity assessment tool to be able to benchmark the organization with a world class organization (Chiesa, Coughlan & Voss, 1996). I could also elaborate on the model at a

team level, but then to compare the interaction of the assessment results on a department level and link it to an organigram (see Figure 5 below).

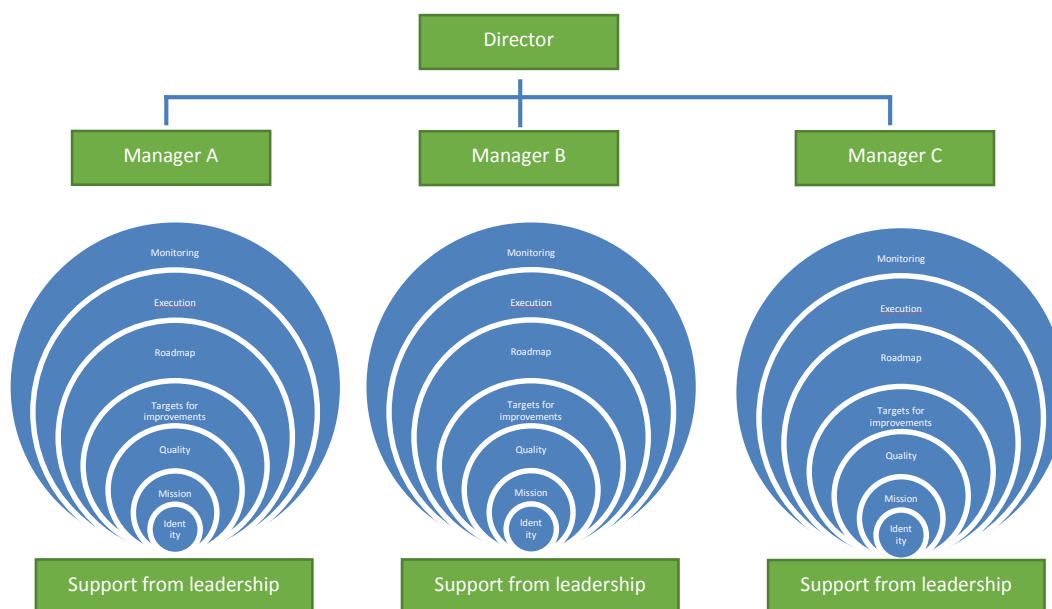


Figure 5 – Assessment of Team Innovation Within a Department

The model could also be combined with Lencioni's (2002) model of the five dysfunctions of a team. This suggestion was brought by Sylvain Matte. Since my model is aimed at the team level and does not consider all the complexity of the individuals of the team members, it would be interesting to explore how the two models could fit together.

Another limitation of my model is that I did not spend time explaining the notion of external demands as much as Anderson & West did (1998). Obviously the level of external demands will influence the odds of a team to move faster towards innovation.

The model does not mention also all the complexities of organizations, and the

interactions between the different layers and the other people/teams within the organizations.

I will give myself the next three months to fine tune the model. However, I'm always open to improve and develop the model to make it as relevant as possible and always consider the context after that period of time, as model development will be an ongoing process.

Get Another Round of Feedback

Since I received only feedback from a few people, I am looking forward to receiving additional feedback from people in four different domains: non-profit sector, banking industry, education, and finally consulting. It will help to test the model in different contexts and environments, to see where it could be more applicable and purposeful. It will also help to refine some of its elements.

There are risks to taking several directions based on the feedback, but I feel like there will not be major changes as it has a strong foundation. This round of feedback will be achieved by the end of September of this year, as I want to move to the next steps of its development.

Communicate to a Broader Audience

I have always dreamed of writing a book. With this model in my back pocket, I feel like I can finally have the appropriate content to communicate and be published. The first step is to populate my blog and start publishing posts. Of course, there are lots of roadblocks on the path to being published by an editor, but this time I will use the

leverage of my network to find a publisher (for example, ICSC Press). If I don't find any, I already see myself becoming my own publisher to expedite the process!

The objective is to publish my book before the end of 2017. Once the book is released, I see myself presenting the results to conferences: Creativity Expert Exchange, CREA-Conference, C2-Mtl, etc. Something I can see coming is that I will probably come to a point where I will be looking for a partner or a helper during my journey. As mentioned before, I love to work with teams, so it might be natural to come to this kind of partnership.

By diffusing the model, I see it as a strong tool to stimulate creative leadership both for team members and leaders.

The Final Words

In conclusion, I hope the model will become a useful tool deployed in several organizations. I'm very excited to have come up with a model that I see as both novel and useful. Now the time has come to leverage my creative leadership potential, and use the model as a catalyst for change.

Organizations cannot afford to keep the status quo. By raising their level of awareness and reflexivity, and taking the right set of actions, teams will not only increase their level of performance, but also make their contribution to innovation in the organization. By using the model for purposeful team innovation, teams will have an additional wild card to move faster towards innovation. And leaders will have another tool to support them in their creative leadership.

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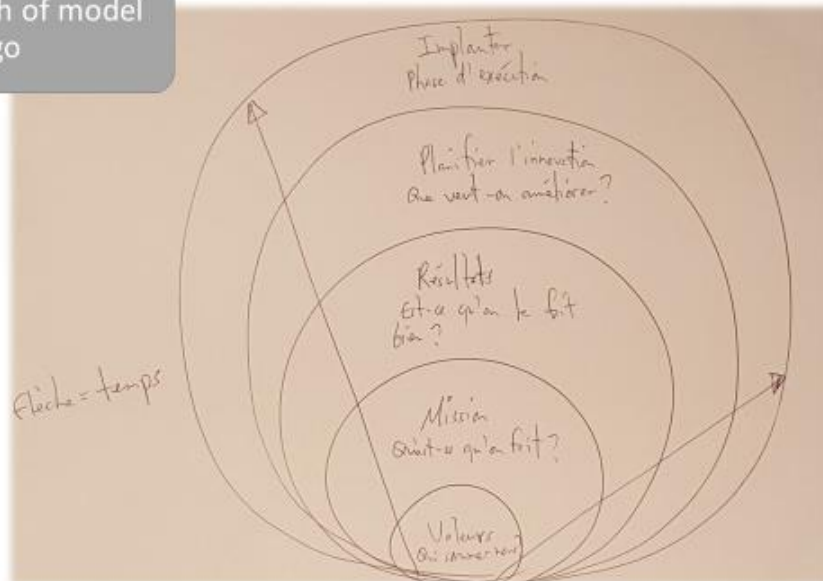
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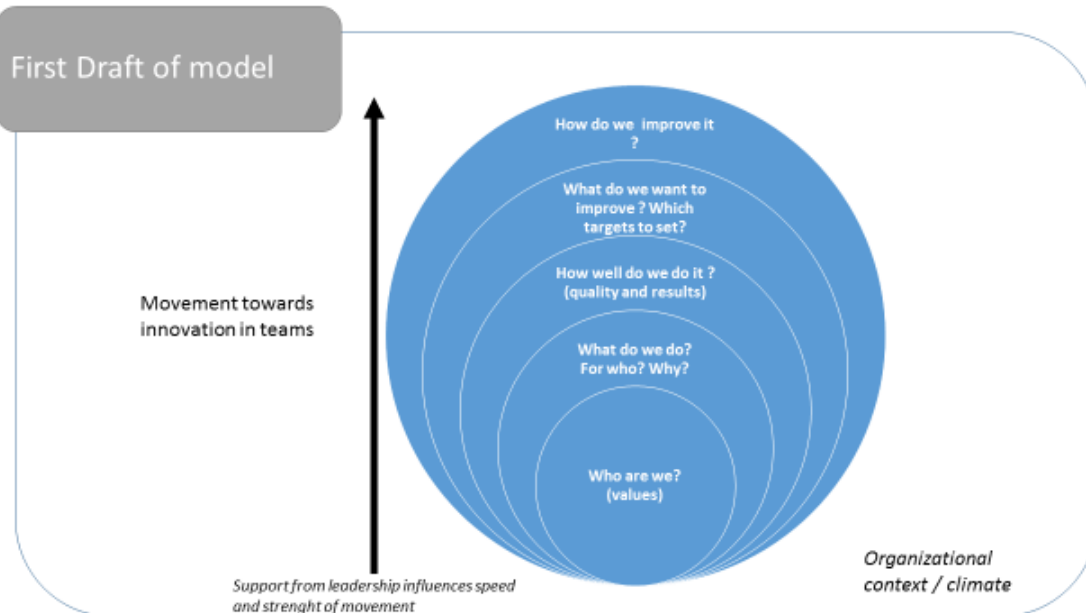
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Appendix A – Evolution of the Model

Initial sketch of model
~ 5 years ago



First Draft of model



Second revision



Model for purposeful team innovation

Monitoring
The best way to make sure that the teams executes to monitor the execution. Teams should build monitoring tools that will not add too many constraints and will help facilitate the execution. For example visual management tools such as thermometers or dashboards can help to set the right level of priorities on the actions.

Execution
The most important phase that will confirm if the planning stage was done properly. Teams need to stay flexible also to opportunities.

How do we improve it? What resources are required? How do we measure the progression?
Now it's time for planning the execution. By defining the constraints, resources available, risks, stakeholders involved and priorities, the team can prepare an action plan to achieve the objectives. It is important for the team to identify check points to measure the progression, and tools to track it.

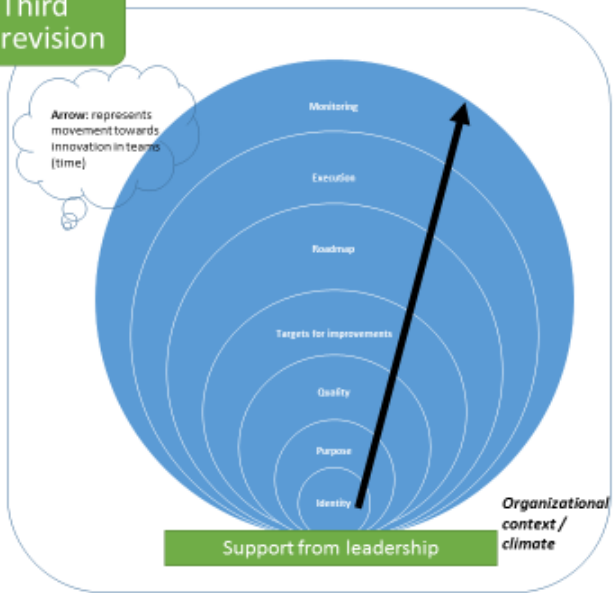
What do we want to improve? Which target to set?
Now that the team members have done their homework, they can start identifying potentials of innovation. Where do we see the most value? Where should we put our focus? What are our objectives and what do we want to achieve?

How well do we do it (quality and results)?
Sometimes teams keep working in a reactive mode and do their best to respond to external demands. I think it's crucial to well understand the results delivered, as well as the quality of those results. By quality I mean the ability to meet or exceed the expectations from the customer. If teams want to innovate properly, they need to ensure they do what they're supposed to do the proper way.

What do we do? For who? Why?
What is the team's mission? Who is the customer of the team? But most importantly, why do we do what we do? These three simple questions will help to align the team on a clear direction.

Who are we?
This constitutes the fundamental question of any team. By clarifying who the team is, its core values, it will help to get people to set a point of reference and define its common ground.

Third revision



Model for purposeful team innovation

Monitoring
The best way to make sure that the teams executes to monitor the execution. Teams should build monitoring tools that will not add too many constraints and will help facilitate the execution. For example visual management tools such as thermometers or dashboards can help to set the right level of priorities on the actions.

Execution
The most important phase that will confirm if the planning stage was done properly. Teams need to stay flexible also to opportunities.

Roadmap: How do we improve it? What resources are required? How do we measure the progression?
Now it's time for planning the execution. By defining the constraints, resources available, risks, stakeholders involved and priorities, the team can prepare an action plan to achieve the objectives. It is important for the team to identify check points to measure the progression, and tools to track it.

Targets for improvements: What do we want to improve? Which target to set?
Now that the team members have done their homework, they can start identifying potentials of innovation. Where do we see the most value? Where should we put our focus? What are our objectives and what do we want to achieve?

Quality: How well do we do it (quality and results)?
Sometimes teams keep working in a reactive mode and do their best to respond to external demands. I think it's crucial to well understand the results delivered, as well as the quality of those results. By quality I mean the ability to meet or exceed the expectations from the customer. If teams want to innovate properly, they need to ensure they do what they're supposed to do the proper way.

Mission: What do we do? For who? Why?
What is the team's mission? Who is the customer of the team? But most importantly, why do we do what we do? These three simple questions will help to align the team on a clear direction.

Identity: Who are we?
This constitutes the fundamental question of any team. By clarifying who the team is, its core values, it will help to get people to set a point of reference and define its common ground.

Appendix B – Final Presentation to the Class

From creativity to innovation: building the bridge

(or how to expedite team innovation in organizations)

CRS 690
Jonathan Brown



恢复力

Context



- Initial goal of the project was to better understand the bridge(s) between creativity (idea generation) and innovation (implementation of those ideas) in organizations (West & Farr, 1990)
- Creativity becomes useless in organizations if none of the ideas get implemented
- I wanted to use my findings to share and communicate the outcome with my team, and also through a blog and the MindCamp conference
- My hypothesis was that there are many different kinds of bridges for the different types of innovations
- The scope was very wide and not specific to what, where and who in an organization

What happened during the Semester?



From organizational innovation to team innovation

- After an insightful discussion with my sounding board partner, I decided to focus on team innovation inside organizations

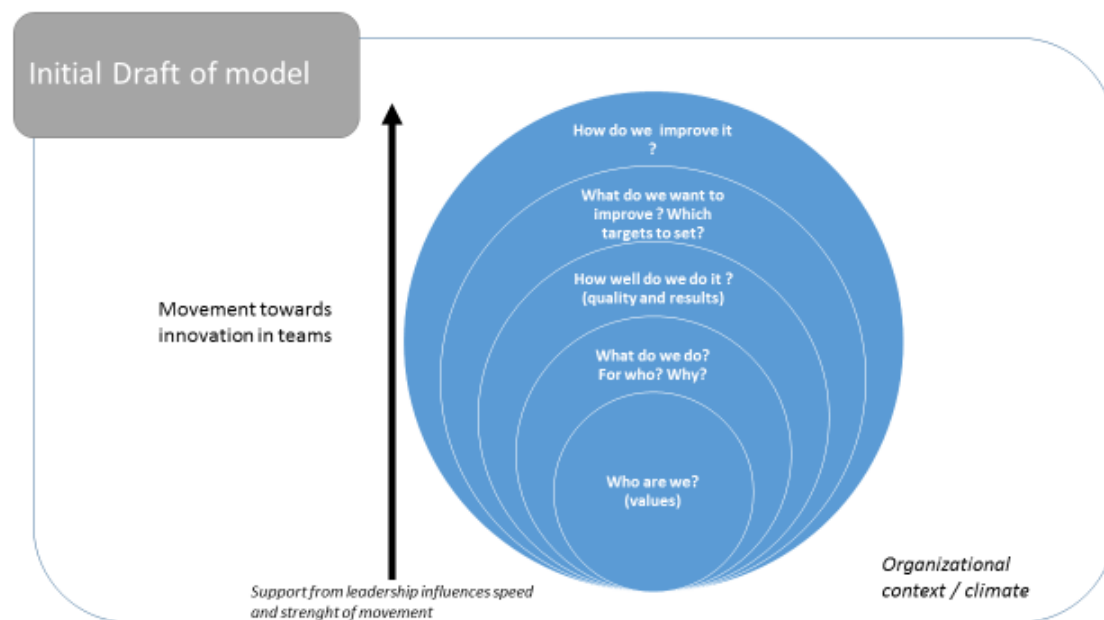


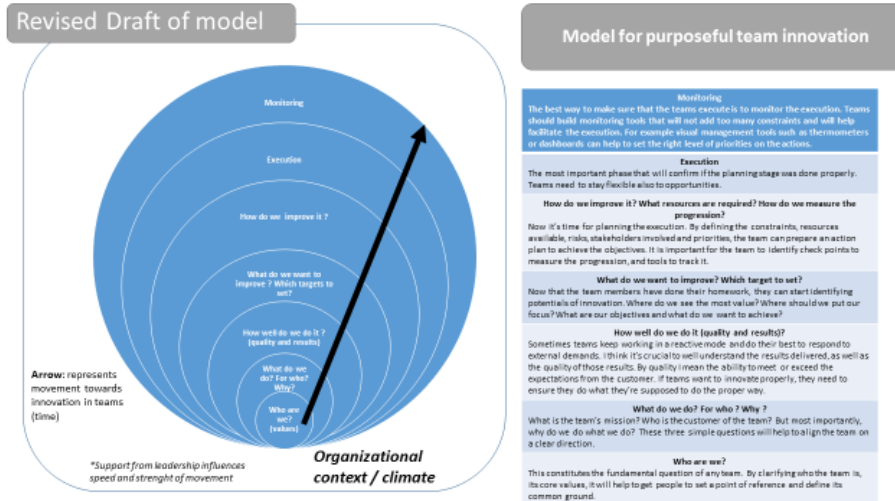
- It led me to draft a model that would help teams to implement faster their creative ideas



The Model for purposeful team innovation

- I developed this model after reading several articles, and based on my work experience with teams
- It is a very dynamic model that helps better set the foundations for a team to move faster towards innovation (based on West's team reflexivity concept)
- Can be used as an assesment tool by teams and management to better understand how close they are from innovation
- Some assumptions related to the model:
 - Ideas have already been generated by the team
 - External demands can affect the speed of movement
 - Flexible model: some bubbles can be wider, smaller, or larger
 - In order to innovate, a team needs to first structure itself





Definitions of team reflexivity and team innovation

- Team reflexivity is defined as “the extent to which group members overtly reflect upon and communicate about the group’s objectives, strategies (e.g., decision making), and processes and make changes accordingly” (Schippers, West & Dawson, 2015).
- Team innovation is “the intentional introduction and application within a team, of ideas, processes, products or procedures new to the team, designed to significantly benefit the individual, the team, the organization, or wider society” (West & Farr, 1990)

Reference

- Schippers, M. C., West, M. A., & Dawson, J. F. (2015). Team reflexivity and innovation: The moderating role of team context. *Journal of Management*, 41(3), 769-788. doi:10.1177/0149206312441210
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Appendix C – Outline submitted to Mindcamp presentation

Full Title: The Innovation Bridge: Closing the gap between good ideas and their successful implementation in organizations

(Short Name for lists will be "The Innovation Bridge")

Presented by: Jonathan Brown

Length: 90 minutes

This session is for: Adults

Description:

Are you tired of generating tons of great ideas at work but never see them implemented? Do you feel like the team you're working with evolves in a constant chaos and in a firefighter mode?

Then this workshop is for you!

In this highly interactive session, you will learn to understand what it takes to bring ideas into life within your team in your organization.

The workshop will enable participants to build a bridge between idea generation and idea implementation with their colleagues.

The Skinny: 3 things you will get from this session:

1. Learn new insights on team innovation in organizations
2. You will be able to build your own bridge between idea generation and idea implementation
3. Learn more about team reflexivity

Maximum number of Participants: 20

Needs/Notes: Need a room to hang large sheets of paper, color Sharpies, large sheets of paper to draw, tape to hang paper

Permission to place this Project in the Digital Commons online

I hereby grant permission to the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State college permission to place a digital copy of this master's Project *From Creativity to Team Innovation: Building the Bridge in Organizations* as an online resource.



Jonathan Brown

May 31, 2016

Date