Section 1: Your Development Need(s)

Unskilled
- Not a good judge of what’s creative
- Doesn’t understand the marketplace for innovation
- Can’t select from among creative ideas which one would work the best
- Doesn’t innovate
- May not be open to the creative suggestions of others
- May be stuck in his/her comfort zone of tasks and methods of doing them
- May not understand creativity or the process of innovation
- May close too soon with solutions and conclusions
- May be a perfectionist avoiding risk and fearing failures and mistakes
- May not use experiments to learn and improve, and may block the innovations of others
  Select one to three of the competencies listed below to use as a substitute for this competency if you decide not to work on it directly.
  Substitutes: 2,5,12,14,16,24,30,32,34,37,38,46,48,51,53,57,58,61,63,65

Skilled
- Is good at bringing the creative ideas of others to market
- Has good judgment about which creative ideas and suggestions will work
- Has a sense about managing the creative process of others
- Can facilitate effective brainstorming
- Can project how potential ideas may play out in the marketplace

Overused Skill
- May err toward the new and reject the old
- May prefer creative people and undervalue those less creative
- May get too far out in front of others in thinking and planning
  Select one to three of the competencies listed below to work on to compensate for an overuse of this skill.
  Compensators: 16,17,24,27,33,47,50,52,53,59,61,64

Some Causes
- Don’t understand the market
Don’t understand creativity
Fear mistakes
Get it right the first time
Perfectionist
Too comfortable

Leadership Architect® Factors and Clusters
This competency is in the Strategic Skills Factor (I). This competency is in the Creating the New and Different Cluster (C) with: 2, 14, 46, 58. You may want to check other competencies in the same Factor/Cluster for related tips.

The Map
Innovation involves three skills. The first is a total understanding of the marketplace for your products and services. That’s knowing what sells and why. What more do your customers want? What features would be most attractive to them? And what do your non-customers want that they don’t find in your products? The second is being able to select from among many possible creative ideas for new products and services, those which would have the highest likelihood of success in the marketplace. The third skill is taking the raw idea and managing its transition into a successful product in the marketplace.

Section 2: Learning on Your Own
These self-development remedies will help you build your skill(s).

Some Remedies
☐ 1. Have enough customer knowledge? Understand your markets. Understand them historically, today, and most importantly tomorrow. What have your customers done in the past? Which new products succeeded and which failed? What do they buy today? Among your current customers, what more do they want and are willing to pay for? For those who did not buy your product or service, what was missing? What do your competitors have that you don’t? What are the known future trends that will affect you? Aging of the population? Eating out? Electric cars? Green movement? What are some of the wilder possibilities? Fusion? Space travel? Subscribe to THE FUTURIST Magazine put out by the World Future Society. Talk to the strategic planners in your organization for their long-term forecasts. Talk to your key customers. What do they think their needs will be? More help? – See #15 Customer Focus and #46 Perspective.

☐ 2. Want to foster creativity? Manage the creative process. You need raw creative ideas to be able to manage innovation. While you may not and don’t need to be the source for the creative ideas, you need to understand the process. Creative thought processes do not follow the formal rules of logic where one uses
cause and effect to prove or solve something. The rules of creative thought lie not in using existing concepts but in changing them—moving from one concept or way of looking at things to another. It involves challenging the status quo and generating ideas without judging them initially. Jumping from one idea to another without justifying the jump. Looking for the least likely and the odd. The creative process requires freedom and openness and a non-judgmental environment. The creative process can’t be timed. Setting a goal and a time schedule to be creative will most likely chill creativity. More help? – See #14 Creativity.

3. Issues with creative types? Manage creative people differently. Creative people have special gifts but special problems come along with the gifts. Many times you have to buffer and protect creative people from the normal processes and procedures of the organization. Creative people need rumination time undisturbed by the process expectations of others. They need to carve out some portion of their time to study problems deeply, talk with others, look for parallels in other organizations and in remote areas totally outside the field. Naturally creative people are much more likely to think in opposite cases when confronted with a problem. They turn problems upside down. They think differently. They ask what is the least likely thing it could be, what the problem is not, what’s missing from the problem, or what the mirror image of the problem is. Creative people can be playful. Playfulness is highly related to coming up with new ideas. Anything goes. Most creative people are not detail oriented, get their expense reports in late and ignore deadlines they consider trivial compared with what they are doing. If you manage creative people, you have to give them room.

4. Can’t brainstorm ideas on your own? Get creativity out of a group. Many times the creative idea comes from a group, not single individuals. When working on a new idea for a product or service, have them come up with as many questions about it as you can. Often we think too quickly of solutions. In studies of problem-solving sessions, solutions outweigh questions eight to one. Asking more questions helps people rethink the problem and come to more and different solutions. Have the group take a current product you are dissatisfied with and represent it visually—a flow chart or a series of pictures. Cut it up into its component pieces and shuffle them. Examine the pieces to see if a different order would help, or how you could combine three pieces into one. Try many experiments or trials to find something that will work. Have the group think beyond current boundaries. What are some of the most sacred rules or practices in your organization? Unit? Think about smashing them—what would your unit be doing if you broke the rules? Talk to the most irreverent person you know about this. Buffer the group. It’s difficult to work on something new if they are besieged with all the distractions you have to deal with, particularly if people are looking over your shoulder asking why isn’t anything happening.
5. Reaching too far? Extend existing ideas into something new. Very few innovations are pure breakthroughs. They are variations on a theme, borrowed ideas from other fields, or putting old ideas together in new ways. Knowledge and free flow of ideas increase the chance of novel connection, as when a Pizza Hut manager solved a time-to-bake problem by considering how to transfer heat using a child’s Erector set as heat transfer probes. Many innovations are mistakes. Post-it® Notes was a glue experiment that failed. Creative ideas may be closer at hand than you think. Before you try for the grand idea, extend everything you now do 24 inches to see what you get.

6. Ready to decide? Select the idea. Creativity relies on freedom early, but structure later. Once the unit comes up with its best notion of what to do, subject it to all the logical tests and criticism any other alternative is treated to. Testing out creative ideas is no different than any other problem-solving/evaluation process. The difference is in how the ideas originate.

7. No tolerance for mistakes? Develop a philosophical stance toward failure/criticism. After all, most innovations fail, most new products fail, most change efforts fail, anything worth doing takes repeated effort, anything could always have been done better. To increase learning, build in immediate feedback loops. Look for something that is common to each failure and that is never present when there is a success. There will be many mistakes and failures in innovation; after all, no one knows what to do. The best tack is to ask what can we learn from this? What caused it? What do we need to do differently? Don’t expect to get it right the first time. This leads to safe, less-than-innovative solutions. Many problem-solving studies show that the second or third try is when we come up with the best solution.

8. No traction for good ideas? Learn how to move ideas through the organization. Once an idea has been selected, you need to manage it through to the marketplace. Designing processes to get the job done most efficiently and effectively is a known science. Look to the principles of TQM, ISO and Six Sigma. More help? – See #63 Total Work Systems (e.g., TQM/ISO/Six Sigma). Read a book on each. Go to a workshop. Ask for help from the Organizational Effectiveness group in your organization or hire a consultant. Have the team work with you to design the best way to proceed. Teams work better when they have a say in how things will be done.

9. Derailed by politics? Become a skilled politician. Sometimes creative ideas are orphans until everyone is convinced they are going to work. Early in the process of turning the ideas into products, resources may be tight. You will also have to deal with many units outside your team to get it done. Organizations can be complex mazes with many turns, dead ends, quick routes and choices. In most organizations, the best path to get somewhere is almost never a straight line. There is a formal organization—the one on the organization chart—where the path may look straight, and then there is the
informal organization where all paths are zigzagged. Since organizations are staffed with people, they become all that more complex. There are gatekeepers, expediters, stoppers, resisters, guides, Good Samaritans and influencers. All of these types live in the organizational maze. The key to being successful in maneuvering an innovation through complex organizations is to find your way through the maze in the least amount of time while making the least noise. More help? – See #38 Organizational Agility.

10. Curious? Become a student of innovation outside your field. Look for and study new products you buy and use. Find out the process that was used to create it. Watch Modern Marvels on the History Channel. Read The Soul of a New Machine by Tracy Kidder to see how innovation happens from the inside. Write down five things from your research that you can model in your own behavior.

11. Want to reinvent the business? Innovate your business model. Gary Hamel says the keys to doing this are to build a point of view of change and opportunity, inspire others with a manifesto, create a coalition, pick targets of opportunity, co-opt and neutralize the naysayers, find a translator to influence top management, go for small wins (demonstration projects), and infiltrate your innovation into ongoing projects.

Section 3: Learning from Feedback
These sources would give you the most accurate and detailed feedback on your skill(s).

1. Boss’s Boss(es)
   From a process standpoint, your boss’s boss probably has the most influence and control over your progress. He/she has a broader perspective, has more access to data, and stands at the center of decisions about you. To know what he/she thinks, without having to violate the canons of corporate due process to get that information, would be quite useful.

2. Direct Boss
   Your direct boss has important information about you, your performance, and your prospects. The challenge is to get this information. There are formal processes (e.g., performance appraisals). There are day-to-day opportunities. To help, signal your boss that you want and can handle direct and timely feedback. Many bosses have trouble giving feedback, so you will have to work at it over a period of time.

3. Internal and External Customers
   Customers interact with you as a person and as a supplier or vendor of products and services. You’re important to them because you can either help address and solve their problems or stand in their way. In
customer service and programs such as TQM, ISO and Six Sigma, clients and customers become a more prominent source of feedback.

4. Past Associates/Constituencies
When confronted with a present performance problem, some claim, “I wasn’t like that before; it must be the current situation.” When feedback is available from former associates, about 50% support that claim. In the other half of the cases, the people were like that before and probably didn’t know it. It sometimes makes sense to access the past to clearly see the present.

5. Peers and Colleagues
Peers and colleagues have a special social and working relationship. They attend staff meetings together, share private views, get feedback from the same boss, travel together, and are knowledgeable about each other’s work. You perhaps let your guard down more around peers and act more like yourself. They can be a valuable source of feedback.

Section 4: Learning from Develop-in-Place Assignments

These part-time develop-in-place assignments will help you build your skill(s).

- Monitor and follow a new product or service through the entire idea, design, test market, and launch cycle.
- Launch a new product, service, or process.
- Relaunch an existing product or service that’s not doing well.
- Seek out and use a seed budget to create and pursue a personal idea, product, or service.
- Do a study of lost customers, including interviewing a sample, and report the findings to the people involved.
- Plan for and start up something small (secretarial pool, athletic program, suggestion system, program, etc.).
- Plan a new site for a building (plant, field office, headquarters, etc.).
- Manage a group of resistant people with low morale through an unpopular change or project.
- Assemble a team of diverse people to accomplish a difficult task.
- Manage the interface between consultants and the organization on a critical assignment.

Section 5: Learning from Full-Time Jobs

These full-time jobs offer the opportunity to build your skill(s).

1. Chair of Projects/Task Forces
The core demands for qualifying as Chair of a Project/Task Force assignment are: (1) Leader of a group with an important and specific goal. (2) Tight deadline. (3) Success or failure will be evident. (4) High-
visibility sponsor. (5) Learning something on the fly. (6) Must get others to cooperate. (7) Usually six months or more. Three types of Projects/Task Forces: (1) New ideas, products, services, or systems (e.g., product/service/program research and development, creation/installation-launch of a new system, programs like TQM, ISO and Six Sigma, positive discipline). (2) Formal negotiations and relationships (e.g., acquisitions; divestitures; agreements; joint ventures; licensing arrangements; franchising; dealing with unions, governments, communities, charities, customers, and relocations). (3) Big one-time events (e.g., working on a major presentation for the board; organizing significant meetings or conferences; reorganizations, mergers, acquisitions, or relocations; working on visions, charters, strategies, other time-urgent issues and problems).

☐ 2. Change Manager
The core demands to qualify as a Change Manager are: (1) Leader of a significant effort to change something or implement something of significance. (2) Success and failure will be evident. (3) Always something new and unique to the organization. (4) Must get many others to buy in and cooperate. (5) Involves cross-boundary change. (6) High visibility sponsor. (7) Exposure to significant decision makers and key stakeholders. (8) Resistance is expected and near-universal. (9) Cost of failure is significant. Examples include: (1) Total Work Systems like TQM, ISO, or Six Sigma. (2) Business restructurings like a move away from a core competence and into a new product space or industry, i.e., American carmakers move into smaller, more fuel-efficient products. (3) Installing major systems (like an ERP or HRIS) and procedures for the first time. (4) M&A integrations, responding to major competitor initiatives that threaten the organization. (5) Extensive reorganizations. (6) Long-term post-corporate scandal recovery.

☐ 3. Heavy Strategic Demands
The core demands necessary to qualify as a Heavy Strategic Demands assignment are: (1) Requires significant strategic thinking and planning most couldn’t do. (2) Charts new ground strategically. (3) Plan must be presented, challenged, adopted, and implemented. (4) Exposure to significant decision makers and executives. Examples of jobs with Heavy Strategic Demands: (1) Strategic planning position. (2) Job involving repositioning of a product, service, or organization.

☐ 4. Small Entrepreneurial
The core demands for qualifying as a Small Entrepreneurial assignment are: (1) Founder or core team member of a company or brand. (2) Personal financial stake in the business’s success or failure. (3) Success and failure will be evident. (4) Build business case and secure funding from investors. (5) Chart new market strategy for new product line. (6) Manage all aspects of the business—from product design/development, supply chain, marketing, sales, finance, HR. Examples of Small Entrepreneurial jobs would be: (1) Small business owner. (2) Among the first employees of a growing company. (3) Starting an
incubator business or a new business line. (4) Launching a new brand or new product line. (5) Entering a new market. (6) Responsible for a new product/system through entire cycle.

5. Start-Ups

The core demands to qualify as a start from scratch are: (1) Starting something new for you and/or for the organization. (2) Forging a new team. (3) Creating new systems/facilities/staffs/programs/procedures. (4) Contextual adversity (e.g., uncertainty, government regulation, unions, difficult environment). Seven types of start from scratch: (1) Planning, building, hiring, and managing (e.g., building a new facility, opening up a new location, moving a unit or company). (2) Heading something new (e.g., new product, new service, new line of business, new department/function, major new program). (3) Taking over a group/product/service/program that had existed for less than a year and was off to a fast start. (4) Establishing overseas operations. (5) Implementing major new designs for existing systems. (6) Moving a successful program from one unit to another. (7) Installing a new organization-wide process as a full-time job like Total Work Systems (e.g., TQM/ISO/Six Sigma).

Section 6: Learning from Your Plan

These additional remedies will help make this development plan more effective for you.

Learning from Experience, Feedback, and Other People

1. Being a Student of Others

While many of us rely on others for information or advice, we do not really study the behavior of other people. Ask what a person does exceptionally well or poorly. What behaviors are particularly effective and ineffective for them? What works for them and what doesn’t? As a student of others, you can deduce the rules of thumb for effective and ineffective behavior and include those in your own library. In comparing yourself with this person, in what areas could you most improve? What could you specifically do to improve in ways comfortable for you?

2. Learning from Bosses

Bosses can be an excellent and ready source for learning. All bosses do some things exceptionally well and other things poorly. Distance your feelings from the boss/direct report relationship and study things that work and things that don’t work for your boss. What would you have done? What could you use and what should you avoid?

3. Learning from Observing Others

Observe others. Find opportunities to observe without interacting with your model. This enables you to objectively study the person, note what he/she is doing or not doing, and compare that with what you would
typically do in similar situations. Many times you can learn more by watching than asking. Your model may not be able to explain what he/she does or may be an unwilling teacher.

4. Learning from Remote Models
Many times you can learn from people not directly available to you. You can read a book about them, watch tapes of public figures, read analyses of them, etc. The principles of learning are the same. Ask yourself what they do well or poorly and deduce their rules of thumb.

5. Getting Feedback from Bosses and Superiors
Many bosses are reluctant to give negative feedback. They lack the managerial courage to face people directly with criticism. You can help by soliciting feedback and setting the tone. Show them you can handle criticism and that you are willing to work on issues they see as important.

Learning from Courses

6. Survey Courses
These are courses designed to give a general overview of an entire area (such as advertising), product or product line, division’s activities, process (getting a product to market, TQM, ISO and Six Sigma), or geography (doing business in “X”). These types of courses are good for general background and context.

7. Strategic Courses
There are a number of courses designed to stretch minds to prepare for future challenges. They include topics such as workforce diversity, globalization, the European economic community, competitive competencies and strategies, etc. Quality depends upon the following three factors: (1) The quality of the staff. Are they qualified? Are they respected in their fields? Are they strategic “gurus”? (2) The quality of the participants. Are they the kind of people you could learn from? (3) The quality of the setting. Is it comfortable and free from distractions? Can you learn there?

There is no shortage of creativity or creative people in either academia or industry. The shortage is of innovators. All too often, people believe that creativity automatically leads to innovation. It doesn’t. Creative people tend to pass the responsibility for getting down to brass tacks to others. Ted Levitt – American marketing scholar and former Harvard Business Review editor
Suggested Readings


