

Imagine new possibilities

The summer break is upon us. These times of collective respite are important for us, as everything and everyone slows down. It's a time to clear our minds, let inspiration take hold and consider new ideas. How can we bring some of that summer inspiration back to the office? This edition of the Right Lane Review is about the importance of fresh thinking and new ideas.

It is no secret that creativity requires constraints. Setting a short time frame on a project like growth strategy development can be just the right constraint to liberate a team's thinking. Our first article on building a growth strategy in two days shows how bringing focus and structure to a growth project can yield excellent results.

Expansive thinking at the right point in a strategy process ensures that an organisation has the right inputs for strategic decision making. Our second article on the value of diagnosis makes a strong case for why top teams need to invest time in developing a common view of the world through an evidence based approach.

Inspiration often strikes where there is a question. Our ability to be curious can open us up to new information, new ideas and new experiences. Article three 'Curiosity will make you ready for complexity' highlights that our ability to ask the right questions and maintain a sense of wonder is becoming increasingly important for success.

Curiosity fuels the fire of innovation. Article four 'Innovation is for everyone' focuses on the potential for organisations to build a culture of innovation. Applying design thinking in various ways is one approach for building this culture of innovation. We look specifically at hackathons and co-design processes.

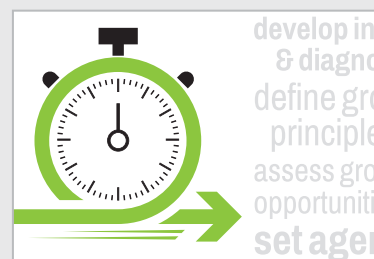
Design thinking is one way we can approach innovation, our five step innovation process is another. This approach centres on introducing external experts and participants to a structured ideation process. Our final article puts the spotlight on the approach we took with RASV to reimagine the Royal Melbourne Show.

We hope that this edition of Right Lane Review spurs your own desire to keep questioning and keep imagining. From everyone at Right Lane we wish you all a safe end of year break and look forward to starting 2018 with new ideas and exciting projects.

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3. Curiosity will make you ready for complexity

Is curiosity just another 'Q' (in addition to IQ and EQ)? This article explores the different kinds of curiosity and how you can build your, and your organisation's, capacity for staying curious.



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This ideation case study puts the spotlight on the work Right Lane did with the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria (RASV) to reimagine the Royal Melbourne Show.



how to build a growth strategy in two days

by dr marc levy

develop inputs
& diagnosis
define growth
principles
assess growth
opportunities
set agenda



Right thinking

Some organisations are looking for a new way to create growth strategies that is quick and cost effective. We have created a method that enables senior teams to build a compelling growth aspiration, and a targeted portfolio of growth opportunities and implementation plan, in an intensive workshop format. The process is robust and the results have been excellent.

Two days? It's a provocative title: growth strategy is a serious topic and growth strategies should be built deliberately. However, organisations can get some of the basics of a growth strategy right with concentrated effort.

Our full-scale method for helping clients with growth strategy involves: establishing the current underlying growth rate and forecasting the future trajectory; settling on a single growth aspiration among many possible options; valuing the economic contributions of existing and prospective organic and inorganic growth strategies; determining the most value creating combinations of growth strategies; building required capabilities; and creating detailed implementation plans. It requires deep quantitative analysis, fielding an expert team and committing as much as two to three months of work.

But many organisations cannot commit the resources required to do this rigorous work, or don't have the time to do it, so we have developed a simpler method – building the basics of a growth strategy in a workshop over two days, informed by some pre-work and careful session planning.

... build the basics of a growth strategy in a workshop over two days, informed by some pre-work and careful session planning.

The preparation: Developing the inputs

It starts by engaging a small project team, usually a couple of senior executives with some external support, to create the inputs for the executive or management team workshop. These inputs may include a diagnosis, a set of growth principles and a way of making sense of the growth opportunities, an initial assessment of the growth opportunities, and the agenda and session plans for the workshop.

Conduct diagnosis

The diagnosis typically includes a presentation of historic and forecast revenue, overall and by component part – product or service line, geography, customer type, etc. – looking back and forward a minimum of three years, and basic industry and market analyses. The industry analysis could cover what's changing in the world and what that means for the organisation's growth strategy, or a 'three-era' five forces analysis – How attractive was the industry three to five years ago? What's it like now? What will it be like in three to five years? The purpose of the diagnosis is to create context for the development and evaluation of growth opportunities.

Determine growth principles and a way of framing the growth opportunities

The growth principles cover the project team's beliefs about growth, such as the organisation's internal capabilities to manage growth, the capital available to invest in growth, the right number and timing of growth opportunities, and initial high-level hypotheses about the make-up of the growth portfolio. Examples of growth principles are 'we can successfully prosecute one high effort and two lower effort growth opportunities in FY2018 and FY2019' or 'over the next five years,

we expect more than two-thirds of the organisation's growth to come from organic growth'.

We've also found that it can be helpful to frame the growth program using a portfolio tool. One such tool is Nagji and Tuff's Innovation Ambition Matrix (2012), which splits opportunities into three groups: existing products and markets, and new to the company and new to the world products and markets. The three horizons of growth (Baghai, Coley & White 2000) is another helpful tool; it suggests that organisations should simultaneously pursue growth opportunities that defend and extend existing businesses, nurture new businesses and create viable options for the future. A framework from Leinward, Mainardi & Adolph (2016) can help an organisation to identify growth opportunities that build on existing strengths: '...start with your own capability-based growth engine ... move outward [to, for example, near market expansion] from your core in a deliberate fashion'.

Conduct initial assessment of growth opportunities

In preparation for the workshop, it can be helpful to conduct some basic analysis on known 'candidate' growth opportunities – for example, an initiative to sell new services to an existing customer cohort or a highly prospective merger. This analysis might cover market potential; a worst, believable and best case in relation to the value of the opportunity; and an assessment of the organisation's capability and capacity to pursue the opportunity.

We sometimes help clients to build a simple financial model before the workshop that shows the combined impact of growth opportunities over and above the organisation's underlying growth trajectory. This can be edited during the workshop as new information comes to hand.

Build the agenda and session plans

Prior to the workshop, we usually conduct a participant survey to identify some of the 'soft points' in the existing growth strategy. This helps with development of the agenda. For example, the executives of one client were critical of their organisation's understanding of the external trends impacting on their growth strategy, their understanding of the size of future sources of growth and their prioritisation of potential sources of growth, and so we were able to focus in on these issues at the workshop.

With or without the survey input, careful and inclusive agenda development and session planning is key. There's a lot riding on this intensive approach and so it's important to avoid missteps. Sometimes we plan for the session to run over two non-consecutive days to stage some of the pre-work, find additional data or correct course if necessary. Conducting preliminary analysis privileges growth opportunities known prior to the workshop; splitting the two days helps to ensure proper treatment of new ideas.

'... the executives of one client were critical of their organisation's understanding of the external trends impacting on their growth strategy, their understanding of the size of future sources of growth and their prioritisation of potential sources of growth, and so we were able to focus in on these issues at the workshop.'



The two days: Developing a growth strategy

Confirm growth principles and growth strategy statement

The workshop starts with a review of the growth principles developed by the project team. Will the growth be primarily built on existing or new growth opportunities? Are mergers on or off the table? How much can be invested in the growth program? What capabilities are likely to be required? Are we working alone or with partners?

Another important early step is to develop a concise growth strategy statement (fewer than 35 words), covering the objective of the growth program, its scope or boundary constraints, and what distinctive assets the organisation will employ to deliver growth (Collis & Rukstad 2008).

Long and short listing and creating growth plans

Much of the workshop is then taken up by collaboratively long listing, and then prioritising and short listing, growth opportunities. The purpose of the preparation phase is to give participants the data they need so that they can focus in the workshop on scrutinising and building on the opportunities, and working out which are the most attractive. Attractiveness can be assessed using a simple evaluation tool to plot opportunities based on their potential impact, the timing with which they may be pursued and the effort required to pursue them. The short final list is likely to include six to ten priorities, which require different levels of effort, scheduled over two to three periods.

For the short list of growth opportunities, workshop participants co-create growth plans that cover the activity required, resource allocation, interdependencies and risks, and measures of success. We use the simple financial model referred to above to give workshop participants a level of confidence in the aggregate financial impact of the portfolio of growth opportunities.

'Calling it out'

Throughout the long and short listing process, as groups make important decisions about growth strategy, we try to raise participants' levels of awareness of cognitive biases that might impact upon the quality of their decision making. We encourage clients to 'call it out' when they see colleagues looking for information that supports their existing beliefs, rejecting data that goes against what they believe, or placing too much faith in their own knowledge and opinions. Confirmation bias, overconfidence bias, and others, can be quite easy to recognise: '...that didn't work last time we tried it', 'I'm the one who led that, and in my experience...', 'All the research shows that retention is easier than acquisition'.

Increasing awareness of biases such as these is particularly important when an organisation is working through growth strategy quickly; there is not the same time for reflection and course correction as there is on a project of longer duration.

What's next?

Once the final short list, or portfolio of priority growth opportunities, is agreed, participants assign accountabilities, revisit the implications for resource allocation, discuss any enabling infrastructure that is required to support the growth program, and agree measurement, monitoring and review protocols. The governance and organisation of the growth program is critical and it is important that these factors are properly considered. Who will lead the growth effort? Who will meet to review progress? How frequently? What will the standard agenda look like? What reporting is required? How will we handle significant deviations from expectations?

Communications and engagement are important next steps. We typically help clients to create a 'growth strategy on a page', to facilitate clarity of internal communications, and encourage clients to make the program as inclusive as possible, including establishing small project teams, with clear accountabilities, to choreograph individual growth opportunities.

The results of these 'cut down' growth strategy projects have been excellent. In one workshop, levels of agreement to the statement 'I understand the principles that govern our growth decisions' went from 30% at the start of the workshop to 100% at the end; 'I am aware of our growth priorities' went from 29% to 100% and 'I understand the firm's growth plans' grew from 12% to 100%.

This condensed approach allows organisations to build robust growth strategies quickly and efficiently, so that they can get on with the demanding work of implementation.



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want to know more?

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the value of a robust diagnosis

Be better prepared for next year's strategy and planning process



by debbie williams, abhishek chhikara & dr marc levy

Right thinking

Undertaking robust analyses of what's happening in the world, the industry, and within organisations, is critical for clients to build an evidence base and a common reference point to draw upon when engaging in strategic thinking and strategic planning. We suggest that clients adopt a diagnostic approach that sorts data into patterns, and replaces the overwhelming complexity of reality with a simple story from which levers for action can be identified.

In a previous Right Lane Review article, we described our approach to strategy development. It involves asking unassuming but challenging strategic questions like: Where will we compete? How will we win? and What capabilities do we need to build? (Levy 2016). We ask clients to spend time 'upstairs' thinking about these questions, and, only when they've been satisfactorily answered, 'move downstairs' into strategic planning discussions covering goals, measures and priority initiatives. This sequence is shown in the following chart and this link ([Strategic thinking before strategic planning](#)).

While these two steps are critically important they are generally not sufficient. Preceding strategic thinking and planning – which frequently comes to a head at board and executive team strategy

offsites – we encourage clients to undertake robust analyses of what's happening in the world, their industries and their organisations, so that they have an evidence base and a common reference point to draw upon.

This sounds obvious enough, but over hundreds of strategy and planning engagements we've found that it's common for the analysis phase to be foregone or given short shrift. Leaders don't always see the value in it. Why? Only recently one of the exec team has done some strategic analysis; a consulting firm's report includes a section on industry analysis; an external report or some market research traverses some of the ground; leaders may believe that their senior teams already know what they need to know.

This reminds us of an Indian parable of four blind men walking through a forest who come across an elephant. Each blind man feels a different part of the elephant's body and describes the elephant based on their experience. One feels the trunk and describes it as a snake, another feels a leg and describes it as a pillar. What happens next depends on who is telling the story. In some versions, the men suspect the others and come to blows. In another version, they stop talking, start listening and collaborate to 'see' the full elephant.

Richard Rumelt, in his book *Good strategy, bad strategy*, calls this analysis a **diagnosis** and notes that 'an especially insightful diagnosis can transform one's view of the situation, bringing a radically different perspective to bear'. And with radically different perspectives can come different opportunities.

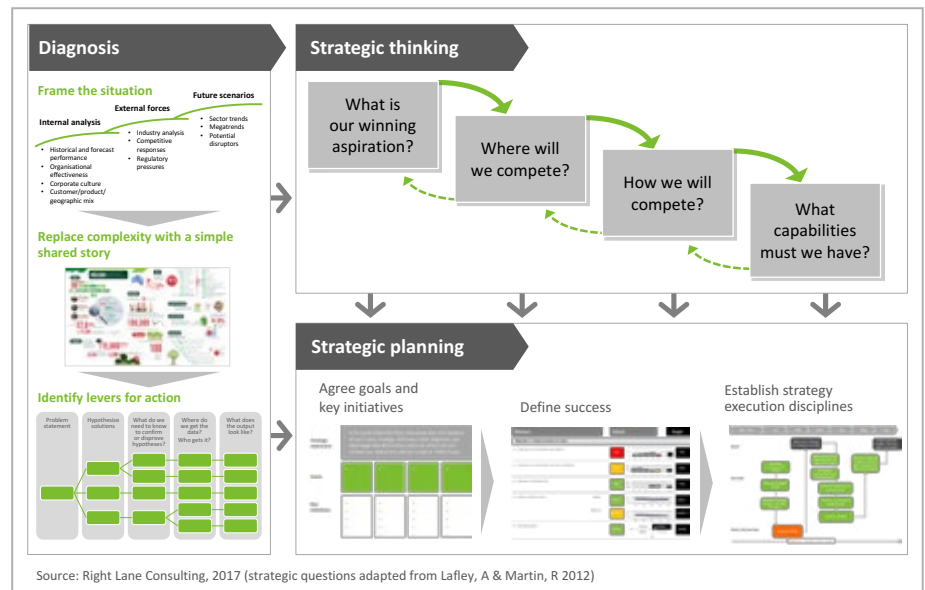
Consider these recent examples from our work:

- A financial services organisation realised that taken for granted assumptions about the demographic profile of its membership were incorrect, leading to a reappraisal of its marketing programs.
- A representative organisation identified that its growth would come from industries and member cohorts that it was not explicitly targeting.
- A government enterprise discovered that long term trends in its financial performance gave it less time to change its business model than it previously thought.
- A deeper understanding of a retail business's stakeholder intentions led to a change in the way it framed its strategic options.
- A facilities manager came to the conclusion that its prospects would be enhanced by privileging one type of customer over another.

We encourage clients that are unsure of the merits of a diagnosis to consider these questions:

- Is there an opportunity to identify a handful of hitherto unknown, strategically material insights among the overwhelming morass of analysis that is typical within organisations today?

Right Lane's approach creates strategic clarity



'... an especially insightful diagnosis can transform one's view of the situation, bringing a radically different perspective to bear.'

- Will everyone bring the same understanding of the organisation's performance and health (Davis, 2005), situation and prospects to the strategic thinking and planning discussions?
- Does the organisation have a contemporary 'house view' about how changes in the world will impact the organisation and its business model?

We suggest that clients adopt an evidence-based approach to discussing the elephant in their boardroom. One that links data into patterns, and replaces the overwhelming complexity of reality with a simple story from which levers for action can be identified.

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curiosity

will make you ready for complexity

by zoe pappas & giselle diego



Right thinking

Some say we are in an age of increasing complexity – the rate of change and volume of information we are required to process is only expected to increase. In the face of this increasing complexity, curiosity, and our ability to nurture our inquisitive side, may well be a determinant of success. Right Lane has been working with clients to build teams' curiosity, and in particular using problem solving frameworks with client teams with a focus on surfacing deeper questions.

We have all come across a child who has recently discovered 'why'. In fact, that insatiable appetite for discovery that we prize in children starts even before they can verbalise the question. Sadly, somewhere along the way to adulthood many of us lose the intensity of that curiosity. Some say we are in an age of increasing complexity – the rate of change and volume of information we are required to process is only expected to increase. In the face of this increasing complexity, curiosity, and our ability to nurture our inquisitive side, may well be a determinant of success. This article explores how curiosity is being conceived of as another 'Q', the different kinds of curiosity and how you can build your, and your organisation's, capacity for staying curious.

Curiosity quotient: 'CQ'

As professor of business psychology Thomas Chamorro-Premuzic identifies (2014), there are three psychological qualities that determine our ability to manage complexity: IQ, EQ, and CQ. While IQ and EQ have been assessed and discussed for some time, CQ – the measure of a 'hungry mind' – is beginning to gain currency as another determinant of success.

Our complex world places a much greater cognitive load on our minds. Higher levels of IQ, our intelligence quotient, enable people to learn and solve novel problems faster. Our EQ or emotional quotient, as first posited by Daniel Goleman in his book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), is a measure of how we express and control our

emotions and recognise those of others around us. Individuals with higher EQ, he says, are likely to be less susceptible to anxiety, have better interpersonal skills and be more entrepreneurial. Our EQ helps us navigate the stresses and demands of complexity.

The curiosity quotient, CQ, is a measure of a 'hungry mind' – our insatiable appetite for discovery. Chamorro-Premuzic (2014) notes that individuals with higher CQ share two traits that help them deal successfully with complexity. Firstly, they are more able to tolerate a higher degree of ambiguity and be comfortable operating in a complex environment where the terrain is unfamiliar and the answers are unknown. Secondly, they are more likely to invest more time in the acquisition of knowledge. By continuously investing in acquiring knowledge, individuals build expertise which enables them to translate complex situations into familiar or simple ones.

What's encouraging is that while a person's IQ remains relatively fixed throughout their life, it is possible through a combination of coaching and practice for us to develop our emotional and curiosity capabilities.

Not all curiosity is equal

If curiosity is a capability we want to build and nurture, it is worth understanding that there are different types of curiosity, and not all of them are the productive kind. Ian Leslie (2014), in his book *Curious: The desire to know and why your future depends on it*, notes two main types of curiosity, diversive and epistemic. Diverse curiosity follows no particular process or method; it slides from one novel object to the next. It is impulsive and distractive – it seizes us. It can be positive but can also be highly unproductive. Diverse curiosity is the desire for novelty – the kind that is stimulated as we flick through our social media feeds from one thought bubble to the next.

Epistemic curiosity, on the other hand, is a directed attempt to build understanding. It involves much more effort, takes more time, and requires deep application and concentration. Psychologist and philosopher John Dewey (1910) notes that curiosity, while starting off as basic

experimentation and questioning, can transform into a 'positive intellectual force'. Epistemic curiosity is the intellectual force that Dewey mentions; it is this type of curiosity we are seeking to build and nurture.

The power of questions

The secret to nurturing your epistemic curiosity lies in learning to ask really good questions. An answer often signals the end of a discussion whereas a good question can open up a wealth of possibilities (Firestein 2012). As children we are praised for having the answers to questions but the cumulative effect of this over the years is that it satisfies what once was insatiable curiosity. With a simple change of perspective we can pique our curiosity. Rather than searching for an answer, we should instead ask ourselves what is possible and see where it takes us.

Nowadays – with the entire cannon of human knowledge sitting in our pockets – finding answers has become all too easy, and stopping too soon can be tempting. A simple exercise can be borrowed from the Japanese Toyota Production System – the 'five whys' – which demands you ask 'why' five times to follow the chain of cause and effect responses and ultimately uncover the root cause of a problem. Applying this thinking helps us keep pushing through the easy answers and exercises our curiosity muscles.

Fostering a curious culture in the workplace

Leadership is an important factor in establishing a curious culture within our organisations. As leaders, especially in traditional command and control leadership models of the past, our teams have expected us to have all the answers. More current forms of leadership ask us not to solve problems and answer questions but to create an environment for our people that encourages them to keep discovering, probing and solving problems for themselves. We can embed a curious culture by encouraging our teams to keep asking challenging questions and by asking good questions ourselves.

There are other important factors though: we need to ensure there is alignment with our systems, processes and incentives to make sure they don't unwittingly discourage good, robust questioning. We also need to make time – carve it out, if that's what it takes. Google famously asks its staff to spend 20% of their work time tackling a 'what if' question to encourage innovation.

Fostering a curious culture provides fertile ground for innovation and makes us more fit and ready to tackle change and complexity in our work and lives.



**'I have no special talents.
I am only passionately
curious.'**

Albert Einstein

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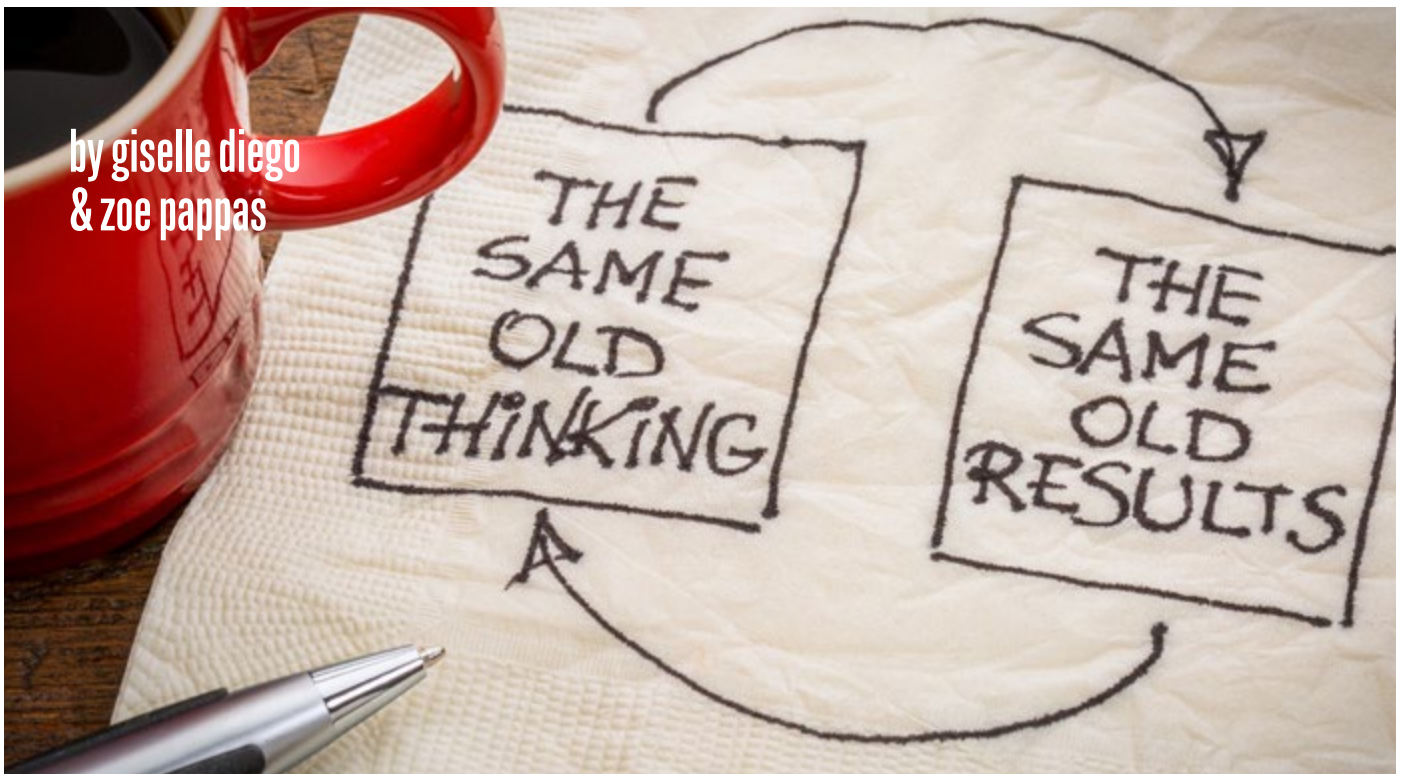
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innovation is for everyone

using design thinking to build
a culture of innovation

by giselle diego
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We often hear organisations tell us ‘innovation is one of our values but we aren’t an innovative organisation’. Innovation has taken on this almost religious like position with promises of (business) salvation and complete (organisational) transformation. The high priests of this innovation religion are the Jobs, Bezos and Musks of this world.

With this as the backdrop it is little wonder that most organisations do not feel capable of being more innovative. We had one client tell us ‘we’re not in the business of mobile phones, innovation doesn’t apply to us’. If you are bringing greater value to people you serve, greater than they have today, that’s innovation.

At Right Lane, we believe that it is time to demystify and ‘de-deify’ innovation in order for it to have applicability and, more importantly, impact for organisations. Innovation requires creative thinking. We all have the capacity to be creative we just need different ways to be creative. Organisations can develop a culture that fosters the creativity of all employees; it takes leadership and a commitment to trying over and over again.

An innovation culture can be fostered using many methods. We have been working with clients across sectors using design thinking as the basis for our approach to innovation. In this article we describe what design thinking is and two different approaches we have used with various organisations: hackathons and co-design.

Right thinking

An innovation culture is something that can be nurtured and developed in any organisation using a variety of methods. We have been working with clients across sectors using design thinking as the basis for our approach to innovation. Facilitated processes like hackathons and co-design workshops are a great way to kick off a renewed focus for innovation and provide employees with an opportunity to participate, to learn and to make mistakes in a safe environment.

'Design thinking - first used to make physical objects - is increasingly being applied to complex, intangible issues, such as how a customer experiences a service.'
(Kolko 2015)

Design thinking as a toolkit

'Design thinking – first used to make physical objects – is increasingly being applied to complex, intangible issues, such as how a customer experiences a service' (Kolko 2015). Design thinking is a systematic approach to problem solving that uses tools and methods from design in order to arrive at more innovative solutions.

Different approaches to design thinking

There are different ways to approach the phases of design thinking for example, Stanford's d.school, a pioneer in design thinking, identify five steps in the process: empathise, define, ideate, prototype, test. Whereas IDEO, world leading design and innovation firm, describe four phases: gather inspiration, generate ideas, make ideas tangible and share your story. Jeanne Liedtka, a leading design thinking expert and practitioner from Darden Business School, asks four questions: what is, what if, what wows, and what works?

Regardless of how the approach is structured or described they all share three core beliefs: understand needs, broaden the horizon of what is possible and iterate and test solutions multiple times.

Design thinking is human centred on two levels: we begin with understanding the end users needs and centre those needs throughout; and the process itself is a social one, it necessitates collaboration and effective team work.

Design thinking meets business thinking

Business thinking and design thinking are seemingly incongruous but as Tim Brown of IDEO points out 'business thinking is integral to design thinking ... a design solution can only benefit from the sophisticated analytical tools ... that have evolved in the business sector' (Brown 2009). Increasingly design is being seen as a competency that creates business value for organisations. McKinsey & Company (Edson et al. 2017) is conducting research into the connection between business value and design and their preliminary findings suggest there are three broad themes that appear to correlate with improved financial performance in design-led organisations: first, design is more than a department; second, design is more than a phase; and third, design is more than a feeling.

Becoming a design-led organisation requires leadership commitment and involves everyone. Over the last 18

months, we have been working with clients on their innovation challenges applying the principles of design in different ways.

Hackathons

What started off in software development as an intensive process where teams get together and build a software solution in a short period of time, 24 or 48 hours, is now broadening in its scope. These intensive environments are being used in business, government and the social sector as a way of approaching a problem in a different way with a view to finding an innovative solution in a short, defined period of time.

At Right Lane we combine this intensive hackathon environment with design thinking used as the problem solving methodology. At our hackathon events participants are given an organisational challenge to work through and working in small teams step through some of the design thinking phases to guide them to arrive at an idea to pitch.

Teams start by understanding their end users needs and this can take various forms. For example we have: filmed current and former clients and played the video during the workshop; asked staff to come in and be interviewed by their colleagues; interviewed stakeholders and customers ahead of the workshop and developed profile posters to be reviewed; and developed customer archetype booklets and posters that teams review during the workshop.

Teams identify insights and focus on a particular part of the problem they will be solving for. Teams are then led through a structured brainstorming process to really push them to think expansively in terms of what is possible. With a wide net of ideas they then zero in and choose an idea to prototype. A prototype is a representation of the idea that someone can interact with; for example, some of our hackathon participants have developed role plays, posters, 3D models, written songs and developed storyboards.

Prototypes are then presented for feedback either to a panel of judges or to the same people that were interviewed at the beginning of the hackathon. Judging panels are often made up of senior people within the organisation, such as the executive team, or customers.

We always wrap up our hackathons with a discussion on what the actions and next steps are for the ideas developed so as not to lose momentum. A common criticism of innovation processes is that ideas are developed and no one sees what happens to them; it's important to chart a clear course of action coming out of the event.



Co-design

Co-design, which is often referred to as participatory design, is about bringing external people into a design process as contributors. Using co-design asks us to think of our customers and stakeholders as experts. Bringing them into the problem-solving process can lead to meaningful outcomes with impact. This is because our customers and stakeholders have the most to teach us.

The idea is that you speak to your customers before you have even dreamed of the final solution. By getting your product or service in front of end users early, and understanding their reaction, you can work towards a differentiated, value-added solution. This can take the form of regular feedback sessions with customers, or stakeholders, or it can be part of a more formal process such as developing a new product. Co-design de-risks a project as you can iron out issues before rolling out an entire new product or service.

Right Lane recently worked with StateCover Mutual Limited on a product co-creation process. The process began with one-on-one interviews with customers and stakeholders to understand their needs. The conversations were expansive and provided rich qualitative data. The team drew insights from this data and participated in an ideation workshop with numerous rounds of structured brainstorming and prioritisation. Small teams were allocated two to three ideas to develop over a short period of time.

A co-design workshop was held where each customer and stakeholder interviewed was invited back to provide feedback to teams. Each team presented their various prototypes to each stakeholder individually. Then the whole group came together for an overview of themes and stakeholders provided general feedback to all teams. Ideas were prioritised, collapsed into others or parked and a plan of action was confirmed to take a number of ideas into the next stage of development.

StateCover CEO/MD Linda Bostock said of the process: 'As a Mutual,

member centricity is fundamental to our sustainability. So, the co-design process where we invite our members to participate in our product development, has a perfect alignment with our business model. So much so that we plan to incorporate co-design into our strategic planning process – it's a great way to capture those insights that are critical to meeting the future needs of our members. Not only this, but the process is a great way to energise the team and support staff engagement. It's a win-win!'

Intentional by-products of these approaches

Facilitated innovation processes, such as a co-design process, provide environments where employees from different areas can work together and learn from each other. Collaboration is essential for innovation: 'great projects are achieved by great teams ... even the most legendary inventor is often a team in disguise' (Kelly 2001). Getting teams together to work on a creative problem can be a great way to improve collaboration in your organisation.

In any situation where we have brought customers and stakeholders into the room and asked them for their perspective and feedback, both sides have extolled the virtues of the approach. For customers or stakeholders, they appreciate being asked for their perspectives and find it interesting problem solving especially when the outcome has a direct impact on them. For the organisation, they gain rich insights that they can use to iterate a solution and move them towards an outcome they may not have thought of on their own. The process also builds trust between parties.

Facilitated processes are a great way to kick off a renewed focus on innovation and gives teams tools to apply in their day-to-day work or to be applied to their own innovation project. Increasing your organisation's capability for innovation can be as simple as committing to regular brainstorm sessions or seeking feedback on ideas from other parts of the organisation. You don't need to invent a phone or app to be innovative you just need to give your organisation permission to ask 'how might we do this differently?'



Collaboration is essential for innovation 'great projects are achieved by great teams - even the most legendary inventor is often a team in disguise.' (Kelly 2001)

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ideation in the real world

reimagining the Royal Melbourne Show



by david hershan, zoe pappas & giselle diego

**ROYAL
MELBOURNE
SHOW**

New ideas – the kind of ideas that can transform your organisation – rarely fall out of the sky into our laps while we stare out the window. In many cases the development of good ideas requires an organisation to create the right conditions to spark the ideas and fertile ground in which they can seed and grow, yet knowing how to bring about those conditions is where many of us need help. One way is to introduce fresh thinking by bringing in people who are external to the organisation and involve them in a process of co-design.

Earlier this year Right Lane assisted the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria (RASV) to 'Reimagine the Royal Melbourne Show', involving external participants with specific expertise, in a structured ideation process. The RASV was seeking to identify step-change growth opportunities for the Show through this process.

Involving external participants in the ideation process enables us to introduce different experiences and fresh perspectives. In this case, management were so close to the daily operations of the Show that it was hard for them to think of ideas without being constrained by current operational challenges. By carefully selecting participants with demonstrable success in delivering innovation and growth in related fields, the internal team were inspired to think differently about what was possible. Through a highly structured, facilitated approach we were able to create the conditions to unlock new possibilities and enable step change thinking.

Right thinking

Our five-step innovation process introduces external perspectives by involving external participants in deliberate ways. External participants with expertise and experience in delivering growth and innovation in related fields can provide new ideas and push the organisation to think differently about what is possible. The introduction of these external perspectives is coupled with a highly structured and facilitated approach and that respects the expertise of the internal team while unlocking new and expansive thinking.

The problem went from a conceptual challenge - 'we need to grow' - to something far more tangible and ambitious.

Right Lane's five step innovation process:

1. Define the problem

First, we spent time defining the core problem that the project was seeking to address and reframing it in a way that was motivational for participants to engage with and solve. The problem went from a conceptual challenge – 'we need to grow' – to something far more tangible and ambitious – 'we want to re-invent the Show to make it a must-see annual event for 1 in X Victorians'. Having this clarity helped motivate participants to think beyond incremental improvements, and, further into the process, ensured we had a yardstick to prioritise the ideas with the greatest impact.

2. Develop hypotheses

We then worked with the client team to develop broad hypotheses on the greatest opportunities to solve the problem we'd identified. As this step lays the ground for the rest of the process, it was important to take time to do this in a way that provided enough clarity to enable, but not constrain, the later phases. Hypotheses were therefore framed as broad questions – could step change growth be generated through: a radical change in the physical design of the event, a revamped education program that brought large numbers of school children and their parents along, or a distinctive offer targeting migrant groups or tourists?

3. Select participants

External participants were then carefully selected based on their experience and track record as it related to these broad hypotheses. For example, as the team had formed a hypothesis that step-change growth might come from changing the event design, we invited an expert with deep experience in innovative event design whose resume comprised multiple major events including the opening ceremony for the Sydney Olympics. Another participant had a proven track record in developing innovative schools programs linked to the state curriculum, and understood how to successfully deliver a program that created a value proposition for schools and teachers. Internal participants were also carefully selected, on the basis of their operational experience and their perceived openness and willingness to engage with the fresh thinking their external counterparts could bring. We also felt it was important to create some value for the external participants; in this case, opportunity to connect with interesting like-minded people, be part of shaping an iconic event, invitations to events and where appropriate opportunities to continue collaborating.

4. Facilitate structured ideation session

We engaged external participants by providing them with a briefing in advance, and then involved them and their internal team in a highly stimulating and productive half-day ideation workshop aimed at addressing the problem we'd identified in step one. This workshop was carefully structured and involved using convergent and divergent ideation techniques to capture the current thinking and then extend the thinking of participants. In total over 100 ideas were identified, many of them completely new to the internal team. At the final stage of the workshop, a smaller number of the ideas – deemed to be the most prospective and solving our core problem – were prioritised by participants to take forward into the validation phase. Participants – both external and internal – left feeling energised and motivated to continue the work and stay connected to the process.

5. Validate the ideas

Following the first workshop, we conducted research to validate each of the prioritised ideas. This involved gathering basic data on addressable market size, likely benefits and costs, competitors/case studies and so on. The intent was to provide enough information to persuade the team to proceed (or not) to a trial phase or a point where material investment was required to advance the idea. We sought further input from a fresh group of external participants, those with even more relevant 'on ground' experience; now that the ideas were progressing beyond basic hypotheses we could be even more targeted in who to invite. We conducted another half day workshop – this time aimed at prioritising the remaining ideas by assessing the strength of their value propositions and their size and economic attractiveness. We also involved the RASV board in another short listing process once the ideas were advanced enough to enable them to make a decision to further invest in their development. All told, four of these new ideas were taken through to implementation for the 2017 or 2018 Show, with another sitting in the pipeline for development in 2019 and beyond.

Benefits of our approach as identified by RASV

RASV's CEO and Head of Strategy and Research identified the top three reasons that Right Lane Consulting and its approach made a difference to RASV:

1. Right Lane acted as a connector: Right Lane assisted RASV to develop the growth hypotheses, identify the external participants to involve in the process, introduce the opportunity to these participants and gain their commitment to participate.
2. The value of passionate people: By engaging the right external participants, in the right way, they became emotionally invested in the outcome of reimagining the Show.
3. Diversity of the thinkers: Having external participants that each brought a different perspective and range of experience enabled the best opportunities to be fleshed out to a high level of detail within the workshop.

Benefits of this approach

The process that we have developed enables our clients to open up their organisation to collaborate with external individuals in a highly structured way, that respects the expertise of the internal team while unlocking new and expansive thinking. External participants don't see the roadblocks that can limit those within an organisation and their involvement helps inspire internal teams to imagine new possibilities.

By involving external participants with the right skills and experience you can gain access to enormous data sets to inform the decisions you make. This approach also enables you to identify partners that can lend the skills required to successfully execute on the opportunities identified.

We can't always expect our organisations to have all the skills internally to tap into trends in technology, consumer preferences and regulation and policy, as well as have sufficient experience in executing new ideas. Involving the right external participants in a structured and stimulating process can inject the right amount of new thinking to allow you to reimagine your organisation.



'Right Lane facilitated the identification of realistic, implementable step-change ideas for RASV. They supported us in engaging remarkable external participants and individual pre-briefings underpinned this successful outcome.'

RASV and our stakeholders were impressed with the passion and professionalism the team exhibited.'

Jeanette Mayes, Manager, Strategy and Research, RASV

For more information on co-design see Diego, G and Pappas, Z 2017 'Innovation is for everyone', Right Lane Review, December.

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want to know more?

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About Right Lane

Right Lane is a flourishing, top quality, management consulting firm.

We employ our distinctive ideas and processes, and our absolute commitment to delivery, to help clients we care about pursue their inspiring missions.

We work alongside clients who do great work within the sectors they operate, and we are excited to be involved in creating outcomes that truly make a difference.

We are an ethical consulting firm with a strong belief in the work we do, and with a passion to give back to the broader community with the skills and expertise available within our walls.

Right Lane was established in 1997 to help private, not for profit and public sector clients to clarify and accelerate their future plans. Over the past 20 years, we have helped the executive teams and boards of more than 150 organisations to define and adapt their direction and strategy, identify and clarify their priorities, align their efforts with their aspirations, get their major projects started and finished, and measure and improve their performance.

Our areas of focus

- Developing and managing strategy and planning processes for clients
- Leading strategic growth projects, such as pre-merger analysis, new product feasibility, marketing expenditure effectiveness and growth options evaluation
- Implementing strategy through aligning and engaging the organisation, and measuring and monitoring performance
- Assisting clients with governance projects – from board culture and capabilities to board appraisals and reviews

B Corp certified - what does it mean?

In 2015 Right Lane became Australia's first B Corp certified strategy consulting firm.

This follows Right Lane's decision in 2011 to adopt 'for benefit' principles, including reasonable returns, inclusive ownership, stakeholder governance, transparency, and social and environmental responsibility.

B Corporations are a new kind of company that uses the power of business to solve social and environmental problems. Certified B Corporations meet higher standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability. The performance standards measure a company's impact on all its stakeholders, including workers, suppliers, community, and the environment. It's like Fair Trade certification but for the whole business.

