Collective Creativity Playbook

Set the innovation scene for breakthroughs

YOUR GUIDE TO BREAKTHROUGH INNOVATION. EVERY DAY.
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Step Into The New Age of Innovation

We are at the doorstep of a new innovation era, one that is fundamentally different in the quantity and quality of breakthroughs it can bring. Several trends are forcing a break from the traditional, internal, and lengthy R&D approach, setting the dynamics of today’s Age of Innovation. Besides technology itself, the emergence and use of innovative methods are also accelerating and diversifying, such as design thinking, open innovation and gamification. Relying on traditional methods like R&D project groups or solo geniuses are risky—they’re not efficient nor fast enough to outpace the competition and overtake rapidly moving startups. While traditional methods may be tough to maintain, Collective Creativity opens new doors.

There is often a disconnect between the innovation potential of an organization and its ability to deliver breakthroughs. When building the front end of innovation, the role of inspiring creativity to produce high-yield value is often misunderstood. Leaders must intentionally build the ability and willingness of people for meaningful outcomes. This starts at infusing Collective Creativity into any product, process or organizational development.

What choices can your organization make to set the innovation scene for breakthroughs?
Despite the fact that more than 60% of major enterprises have a dedicated innovation executive, practitioners face their challenges with organizational setup, culture, mindset, industry and various other factors.

A recent report names the top challenges chosen by corporate innovation executives, which includes: fostering an internal culture of experimentation and innovation (57%), juggling competing internal agendas and goals (56%), overcoming the middle management “permafrost” layer (45%), and moving forward despite deferred commitment and delayed action (33%). Even with market share leader companies, only 31% collaborate on planning future organizational endeavors, 22% on creating new services across units of functions, and 20% collaborate on planning future market endeavors. Innovation collaboration is currently stymied.

Through working with 60+ Fortune clients, Be-novative has seen a multitude of innovation roadblocks in organizations. We compiled an inventory of eight common barriers and eight solutions to each, that can serve as your playbook to put the Collective Creativity mindset and toolbox to action.

Furthermore, you will find answers to the most pressing dilemmas innovation leaders struggle with, such as:

- **Why do investments in innovation not yield breakthroughs?**
- **Why is it difficult to get a critical mass of fresh, high-quality ideas out of your team?**
- **How do you maximize the creative potential of your organization to enable innovation flow?**
- **How do you engage and motivate people for participation and implementation?**
- **How can innovation become an organic, continuous practice in your whole organization?**
- **How do you choose the right tools to make innovation collaboration seamless and inclusive?**
Everyday Innovation

What is the barrier?

Innovation theatre

“Innovation theater” is a term by business guru Steve Blank that describes when companies invest resources into innovation without a clear strategy. It’s easy to hype trends, spout buzzwords and hold photo-ops, but innovation requires hard work. Even if your organization is fired up about it, the first steps can be daunting.

When an innovation endeavor starts as just a quick fix to a broken issue, it becomes a problem. Market share leaders are no exceptions to this practice; collaborative innovation comes into play when a fix is needed to a specific organizational issue (57%) or solving specific client/customer issues (51%). While unavoidable in high-pressure environments, this approach does not leave room for creativity to bloom and become a practice—the human mind is not wired this way.

Everyday innovation is the antidote to innovation theater. The right cultural norms, recurring practices, and always-on tools will allow employees and partners to feel continuously engaged to contribute.

“For a future-oriented practice, build new habits by providing time and structure to support collaborative experimentation and creativity.”

“Learning and innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow.”

William Pollard
Recommended Everyday Innovation Actions

- Dedicate 20 minutes in weekly meetings to innovation sessions (at Be-novative, we hold virtual sessions every Friday). Several Fortune500 companies launch ideations for different departments to contribute before a workshop or meeting of strategic importance. Challenge your team with new issues that they can build ownership around and allow them to create innovation challenges themselves.

- Ask senior leaders to be sponsors and active drivers of the organization-wide efforts by running smaller department-wide sessions.

- One-off events such as hackathons can be an important rallying cry but plan how to best integrate these high-visibility efforts into a continuous practice.

- Create a comprehensive communication strategy about your innovation practices. Employees should understand the process and get to know the opportunities, challenges as well as their user rights. A strategy that uses incentives and rewards will help inspire them.

- Publish a guidebook or set of rules on how members should handle problem-solving and inevitable disagreements as ideas mature to concepts.

- Remember, you’re rewiring your culture. Have patience with your new structure and follow through consistently.
Creative Stimulation

What is the barrier?

**Uniformity**

Employees are often forced to innovate by top-down mandate, leading to reluctant, uninspired participation and questionable value. The tools for managing innovation can also hinder creativity by being either too simplistic (e.g. forms to submit an idea) or too process oriented with several bottlenecks. Without the right inspiration, interactive flow, methods or tools, people will contribute uniform inputs.

Simply put, innovation is about transforming creativity into tangible value. Without creativity, there is no innovation—you have to actively cultivate it. According to the World Economic Forum, by 2020 creativity will be in the top three skills needed to succeed in any professional environment. Along with the other skills listed, they become vital for the coming years enabling Collective Creativity.

To achieve breakthroughs, organizations should stimulate creativity and manage innovation in equal measures. Actively hire for creativity and also enable the creative mindset to emerge from each and every member of your team.

Ensure that your mix of methodologies, tools, and practices are consciously infused with creativity-enhancing features. The combination of the above will spark disruptive solutions. Proactively stimulating creativity is an essential prerequisite to get out of the business-as-usual mode.

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**Top 10 skills in 2020**

1. Complex problem solving
2. Critical thinking
3. Creativity
4. People management
5. Coordinating with others
6. Emotional intelligence
7. Judgment and decision making
8. Service orientation
9. Negotiation
10. Cognitive flexibility

Source: World Economic Forum
Recommended Creative Stimulation Actions

- Make creativity one of the key skills you look for in potential employees.

- Provide a creative working environment. E.g. a wall decorated by employees, interactive lunches or team building events, flexible project teams.

- Induce collaboration. Enable people with diverse backgrounds to meet and share their perspectives and ideas.

- Organize workshops introducing lean, agile, design thinking, kanban, gamification, 6Sigma, 6Thinking Hats, random words and other creativity-enhancing methods or tools that people can build into their own processes.

- Use an innovation management tool with features that enhance creativity and keep the team inspired to come up with surprising solutions instead of generic ones.
Collective Genius

What is the barrier?

The Myth of the Lone Genius

The lone genius has been celebrated as the source of innovation. But as innovation advisor Greg Satell put it, no one person “ever has all the pieces of the puzzle.” Even with famed innovation heroes like Edison or Jobs, the reality is that they were both leaders who often orchestrated and synthesized the work of other geniuses. Because of the current connected and information-rich world, the collective genius can be unleashed like never before.

Truly innovative groups consistently source and integrate participants’ will to change, and provide insight and expertise into the collective genius. Open innovation is spreading and the collaboration between organizations are playing a central role. Technology allows this collaboration to happen on an unprecedented scale and reach; this is the first time in history when large, distributed organizations practice simultaneous innovation across tens of thousands of people. Add conscious organizational design to this technology boost and have a game plan to consolidate the contributions of a large and diverse crowd.

“Internet will become more and more collective, innovation and order will become more and more bottom up.”

Matt Ridley

Also, no matter how brilliant your members may be, do not let innovation stop at your doorstep. The bigger and more varied your ecosystem is, the better. Open innovation is now a worldwide phenomenon and scored tremendous business successes by convening outside sources. Procter & Gamble became an open innovation pioneer by increasing productivity, lowering costs and doubling their innovation success. Cisco and other companies are using “speed innovation” to bring like-minded organizations together.
Recommended Collective Genius Actions:

- Diversify. Bring together people who have different skills, work styles and experiences in workshops, project teams and team-building programs.

- Be a social architect. The conflict of ideas and opinions is productive for innovation; set up the culture in a way that it is considered beneficial by all participants. E.g. Autodesk regularly holds an Idea Cage Match where employees dress up as fighters and allow their opinions and suggestions to clash. This became one of our best practices after working with Vodafone.

- Create an open innovation challenge that asks university students (or any target audience) to imagine your industry five years from now. Let them share ideas, then nurture the best ones as prototypes at a closing hackathon or special event. Inspire groups to test and integrate newfound patterns into novel concepts. As a leader, ensure the resources for implementation and be comfortable experimenting with the winning ideas.
Innovation Community

What is the barrier?

Innovation Privilege

In traditional workplaces, innovation typically remains a privilege of the few, being based on seniority, department or location. However, that kind of restriction at the top of the funnel impedes progress. Surprising ideas can appear from the farthest corners and levels of an organization.

Without the trust and support of a connected innovation community, toxic habits will take over. An often-heard notion to innovation privilege is that innovation is somebody else’s job. Overcome this by proving that the process belongs to everyone. The organization’s ability to build an inclusive, ever-widening community with shared principles and responsibility, will determine its successes.

“No organization ever created an innovation. People innovate, not companies.”

Seth Codin

Set the scene and make sure that all the ingredients for a healthy community are in place and remain vital. Consequently, the participation and proactive commitment to bring about change should be recognized.
Recommended Innovation Community Actions

- Consider building an innovation team of 5-25 people that may become facilitators and community managers from idea creation, through concept elaboration, rapid prototyping, experimentation to implementation. Have the team regularly share topics.

- Make it a part of your organizational DNA to incentivize and reward contributions continuously through a combination of gamification, professional rewards like conference opportunities or other perks.

- Ideas should be peer-evaluated by those involved in the process and especially by the innovation team. Conduct regular review sessions that are open to everyone.

- Be transparent. Metrics on activity rates, the number of ideas, selected projects or other important data should be published and available without restrictions.

- Provide a framework that sets a common purpose with shared values. Make sure people are familiar with the company’s innovation KPIs.
Safe Space

What is the barrier?

Consequences

It’s a common scenario for people to fear the consequences of suggesting change. Fear is an innovation killer and with a culture of fear, the same results will churn. Especially in highly sensitive topics, the loudest or highest paid person’s idea seems to prevail, while others give up after failing to see their contributions valued. Furthermore, if people are unwilling to risk failure because of its cultural implications, the odds of innovating successfully in the long term will decrease.

Provide a safe space for new ideas to emerge without fear or consequence. Inquiries should be shared openly, being an essential element for enabling groups to have the time necessary to birth new insights and make sound judgments. Also, digitize and anonymize. A safe and anonymous environment creates conditions in which every person will contribute. Digitalizing this environment allowing for anonymity is a real plus—Be-novative’s experiences indicate that the vast majority of participants use anonymity in a beneficial way, appreciating their virtual space isolated from initial judgment.

The activity taking place in this safe space can be compared to “jamming”, the coming together of musicians during their creative sessions. First and foremost, it is fellow “jammers” who have a say in whether a new idea is valuable or not. In conclusion, all contributors need to feel secure to speak up and experiment collectively.

“We need the light of illumination and the darkness of incubation.”

Alan Briskin, Author
The Power of Collective Wisdom: and the Trap of Collective Folly
Recommended Safe Space Actions:

- Be mindful of the various personality types on your team. Each individual has potential to add something meaningful, but the environment has to shift constantly to get the best from each of them. Introducing anonymity or semi-anonymous sessions (where originators of selected ideas can uncover their identities) will encourage out-of-the-box ideas.

- Encourage a wide range of opinions to bounce off of each other. Innovation stems from the friction of diverging views coming together. Make it known that any contribution is welcome and can be of potential for implementation; those from accountants, lawyers, juniors, customer care employees, and etc.

- When holding in-person workshops, maintain a facilitator role as a leader to mediate possible differences. Internal forces may disrupt the newly created space and you should be ready to step in.

- Foster creative resolutions for integrative decision making. Combining ideas that seem to be in opposition (not compromises!) can pave the way for teams to ultimately embrace diverse views and overcome conflicts.
Innovation Flow

What is the barrier?

**Incrementalism**

Incrementalism is an organization's inability to continuously and remarkably reinvent itself. It manifests in risk aversion, a resistance to change, inadequate feedback mechanisms and cumbersome decision-making. It's what happens when people believe that they must choose either efficiency or innovation, but not both. The reason behind this is usually the “quick fix” pressure: innovation teams are often placed under extreme amounts of stress to produce tangible business results with unclear directions, unrealistic deadlines, little to no training and suboptimal tools and methodologies.

When Collective Creativity principles are in place, the result is an efficient innovation flow. Discovered by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, flow is a state of activity in which a person's efforts become more agile and nimble, and their organization operates at peak performance. Engineering for this state is a high-value component of success.

“There is no way to know whether a thought is new except with reference to some standards, and there is no way to tell whether it is valuable until it passes social evaluation.”

Prof. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Take the steps necessary to help employees find their flow by creating learning opportunities within the process. This will drastically reduce the time from ideation to implementation, and when the whole team is in the zone together, the co-creation of ideas become seamless.
Recommended Innovation Flow Actions:

- Have members take part in the elaboration, rapid prototyping, and implementation of their own ideas. One of the most fruitful experiences for innovators is when they arrive in the flow state while working on their own ideas.

- Cultivate flow by using a combination of digital and in-person activities to encourage high levels of creativity, experience, and engagement.

- Identify and empower your core group. They are people who are open to change and uncertainty, as well as those who are interested and easily engaged in challenging activities. Make sure they have the time and resources needed to take action.

- Foster continuous flow-inducing skill development. Let participants understand, buy into and periodically reflect on the practical value of creative flow-inducing methodologies and tools that are built around them.

- Expect the unexpected. Once within the flow zone, people will start to find intersections everywhere. Previously unrelated concepts will connect in unforeseen ways.
Collective Commitment

What is the barrier?

Not Invented Here

“Not invented here” is a restrictive mindset rooted in personal ego and/or group loyalty. It allows people to cling to a single individual’s idea as the only possible solution (usually themselves). It also leads people to reject an idea simply because it originated in a different team or department. Last but not least, this behavior is manifested as a defense mechanism; disengaged employees find it hard to accept outside innovation. Members that hinder the creative exchange of ideas in this way doom innovation to failure.

With market leading enterprises, resistance to innovation collaboration is driven by perceived downsides such as “complications of project ownership” (53%), “collaboration is not worth the time it takes” (40%), leads to groupthink (25%) and “employee frustration” (21%). According to Gallup, the majority of employees in the West are “not engaged” at work and about one-fifth being “actively disengaged”. Alarmingly, only one in seven workers in Europe are “psychologically committed to their jobs.” Address this so that these issues do not become a source of innovation toxicity in your organization.

“We have found that both the innovation team and the business units having skin in the game and a say in the decision-making is an important component of success.”

Darren Snellgrove, J&J Innovation

Collective commitment is a successful bottom-up approach to bridge the chasm so that solutions can be implemented by a self-motivated and group-motivated task force. The shared sense of purpose and ownership eliminates tension. In this peer-supported setting, allies work together to strengthen and refine ideas and ultimately collaborate toward breakthroughs.
Recommended Collective Commitment Actions:

- Share the outcomes of challenges where people contributed with their ideas. Knowing which ideas were selected serves as a motivator for participants to contribute again. Create an inspiring mix of transparency from managers and peer recognition for contributors.

- Build affinity with a combination of cultural practices and tools that your innovation team can facilitate to ensure that ideas are channeled in and decisions are made in time.

- Harmonize goals. The innovation team can help align business and team objectives with the self-fulfillment goals of individuals.

- Set up rules allowing proactive and peer-recognized employees to take matters into their own hands. This promotes the growth of resources and responsibilities on the way to implementation.
Human-centric Innovation Engine

What is the barrier?

Inadequate Tools

An organization’s potential is dependent on the right tools. Current tools may feel familiar and comforting, but they’ll hinder innovation if they’re not designed to spark creativity. You can’t expect digital surveys and idea boxes to spur breakthroughs; it keeps contributors from engaging with other people’s ideas. Sticky notes are hard to digitalize, scale and integrate into ongoing efforts. In-person workshops can’t always scale beyond the room.

Pick tools that succeed in the modern digital world. Look for software designed to stimulate people’s natural urge to create and invent. Prioritize human-centric choices that empower everyone to thrive in the Innovation Age.

When deciding on digital tools, consider these aspects:

- **Shorter innovation cycles.** The initial sourcing of ideas should be a very quick, collaborative process that fully engages participants. It should yield the highest number of useful ideas in the shortest amount of time in a process that people enjoy.

- **Enhanced evaluation.** New ideas should happen in two steps:
  - Important criteria, such as impact and feasibility, should be used to let participants quickly screen ideas. A mass peer input in this way will help surface the most interesting and actionable solutions.
  - Have experts give feedback for the top 1% of peer-evaluated ideas including their personal vote on which ones can go through further elaboration or experimentation.

  This 2-way evaluation will guarantee the broadest buy-in as possible as they are quick, easy and motivating.

- **Agile processes.** The innovation journey should flow in a way that stimulates contributions throughout the evolution of ideas with as minimal friction as possible. Empower your team to make regular and consistent decisions with agile built-in methods.
**Engagement.** Your tool should engage participants, reward creative collaboration and induce both a cultural transformation and high-ROI output. In most organizations, this kind of cross-pollination between innovation functions and HR goals is most successful. Gamification should bring about friendly competition and rewards.

**High-quality outputs.** Most innovation tools can be too uniform and focused on just the process. Your interest is in generating breakthroughs—do not let quality slide. Enablement of co-creation is what makes or breaks innovation quality. Look for tools that successfully embed proven offline methods like lean prototyping or design thinking into their core.

**Scale.** Choose solutions that can involve your whole organization as well as your ecosystem, partners, university students, potential customers and other target groups.
The “Hummingbird Effect” demonstrates the incredible speed of innovation, the unexpected pivots, rapid maneuvering in experimentation, vision, and the collaborative nature of breakthroughs. Apply the Hummingbird principles of Collective Creativity for a tremendous impact on both the pace and quality of innovation.

Inspiration + Engagement + Collaboration + Speed + Efficiency = Breakthroughs

Collective Creativity as a next generation methodology and toolset is already delivering results at the most successful organizations. Yours is no exception—set the scene for breakthroughs.

What’s next? We have the best practices on how to use Collective Creativity from eight enterprises. Download it here: Collective Creativity Best Practice Guide.

Are you ready for your breakthroughs?

Request a demo

Be-novative is the Collective Creativity cloud platform built for innovation breakthroughs. The award-winning software's unique methodology fuses gamification, crowdsourcing and design thinking principles to digitally emulate how a confluence of creative minds produces innovation quickly, engagingly and efficiently. Visit us at www.be-novative.com