

background: what are innovation competencies?

Overview by Ed Bernacki

By definition creativity involves finding new insights and ideas. Innovation extends this to using processes to develop, judge and act on ideas. Creativity is primarily an individual pursuit. The vast majority of new ideas come from insights generated by an individual in pursuit of everyday challenges. Group processes are used when individual effort is not sufficient to satisfy a challenge (or in cases when a deliberate attempt is made to generate new ideas).

Individual Skills/Competencies for Innovative Thinking

These competencies comprise insights, skills and experience that can be gained through training and learning activities. These skills will be refined and enhanced when used on a daily basis.

1. Ability to Generate New Ideas

- ❖ Defining a problem or challenge.
- ❖ Searching for options for a solution.
- ❖ Ability to use tools to brainstorm stronger and more sophisticated options.
- ❖ Ability to refine and reduce options to recommend a solution.

2. Ability to Develop Ideas

- ❖ Understanding of the need to manage ideas through stages of development.
- ❖ Ability to use processes to enhance ideas.

3. Ability to Judge Ideas

- ❖ Understanding that ideas are not equal and they need to be judged/evaluated/measured.
- ❖ Ability to judge, through intuition and by use of “tools” between ideas (eg which one is better and why) and to evaluate the wholeness of an idea (eg is this a good idea or a great idea?).
- ❖ Use of models to judge the value of ideas.

4. Ability to Communicate New Ideas

- ❖ Recognising the “marketing” potential of an idea.
- ❖ Ability to articulate an idea; to convert something conceptual for presentation.
- ❖ Ability to define the value of an idea and present it to earn the commitment of others.

5. Ability to translate Ideas into Actions

- ❖ Ability to translate a workable idea into a series of stages, phases or steps.
- ❖ Understanding of planning – distinguishing between goals, strategies and actions.

There are further competencies for managing and leadership related to the need to nurture and support people using these skills.

Attributes/Qualities of Innovative Thinkers

The competencies for innovation go hand in hand with the qualities, attributes and attitudes necessary for innovative thinking. These qualities reflect the inner motivations of people to use these skills:

- ❖ Challenges status quo
- ❖ Sense of enthusiasm and passion.
- ❖ Curiosity and questioning.
- ❖ Visionary to make connects other miss
- ❖ Willing to experiment, fail and learn from the experience
- ❖ Constantly seeks new stimuli
- ❖ Limits criticism of their own ideas
- ❖ Flexible and adaptive
- ❖ Reflective
- ❖ Recognises patterns and systems
- ❖ Sees the “big” picture and the details
Tolerates Ambiguity
- ❖ Committed to learning and knowledge
- ❖ Balance intuition and analysis
- ❖ Collaborative yet individual thinker