

EXERCISE Determining Where to Join the Innovation Cycle

Purpose Help students understand that the Innovation Cycle is a continuous process that continually iterates, how to determine where to “join” that cycle, and what tools are appropriate.

Recommended for Trail 10, or whenever students face a specific innovation challenge

This is a good thought process to have students go through for every specific innovation challenge they face. It will help them get proficient at applying the Innovation Cycle and help them recognize when they may be drifting away from Innovation Cycle and toward the Status Quo Cycle.

Time required 10-20 min.

Key Points

The Innovation Cycle is a continuous iterative process.

There is no one place to “start” or “finish” the Innovation Cycle.

The best place to “join” the Innovation Cycle depends on your objectives and what tasks you may have already completed.

All Phases of the Innovation Cycle support and are supported by the other Phases, especially those immediately before and after.

Many innovation tools fit best in a particular Phase.

The videos for each of the Paths in Trail 10 describe what occurs in that Phase. This material is summarized in the Habits of an Innovator download for that Phase.

This exercise can be combined with the exercise *Tools of an Innovator*.

Instructions

You may want to formulate a variety of possible innovation challenges or scenarios for students to consider. These may be as simple as:

- You have an idea for a new product/technology/app. Now what?
- You have created a prototype. Now what?
- You have completed a series of customer interviews. Now what?
- You have discovered a useful new technology for making _____. Now what?
- You want to be an entrepreneur, but you don’t know what kind of business to start. Now what?
- You think you have a solution to an important problem. Now what?
- You want to help people who are struggling with _____. Now what?

You want to get students thinking about where that challenge puts them on the Innovation Cycle, and perhaps what tools or process they may want to use.

This is also a way to get students thinking about exactly what they do and don't know (what hidden assumptions they may be making) and help them understand when they may be moving too quickly or skipping important steps in the innovation process.

Students are unlikely to know what the available tools may be. So, you may want to make some suggestions, explain how their challenge is addressed by some specific methodology (e.g. design thinking, lean startup, etc.), or encourage them to research some specific approach that could be helpful. Some common innovation tools, sorted by Phases of the Innovation Cycle are:

OBSERVE: REALITY PHASE

- Appreciative Inquiry
- Behavioral Mapping
- Customer Demos
- Customer Interviews
- Customer Surveys
- Diary Study
- Ethnography
- Eye Tracking
- Focus Groups
- Genchi Gembutsu - Go and see for yourself.
- Innovation Accounting
- Positive Deviance
- Voice of the Customer
- Web Analytics

- Process Flow Diagram
- Shoshin - The Beginner's Mind
- Startup Learning Milestones
- Statistical Analysis
- Storyboarding
- SWOT Analysis

CREATE: IDEA PHASE

- Brainstorming
- Brain Writing
- Creative Process Incubation
- Creativity Simile & Metaphor
- Diverge Converge
- Idea Management
- SCAMPER
- Scenario Planning

REFLECT: FEEDBACK PHASE

- Affinity Diagram
- Analogs & Antilogs
- Assumption Surfacing
- Cohort Analysis
- Customer Interviews
- Customer Profiling/Archetypes
- Emotional Journey Map
- Empathy Map
- Experience Mapping
- Five Whys

ACT: ACTION PHASE

- Experimental Design
- Growth Hypothesis
- Value Hypothesis
- Kanban
- Leap of Faith
- Minimum Viable Product
- Opportunity Analysis
- Prototyping
- Small Batches
- Split A/B Testing