

EXERCISE Taking Action

Purpose Help students understand how to take action to pursue their ideas in ways that promote innovation rather than the status quo, and how to adjust their actions to reflect the Innovation Cycle rather than the Status Quo Cycle.

Recommended for: Trail 10 Action Phase Path

Time required 10-20 minutes

Format This is a facilitated conversation for helping participants come to important insights.

Key points

Acting on our ideas is necessary to create value, but it's just as important to be clear about how we take those actions.

The key distinction in the Action Phase is between applying what are already convinced will work (including unproven ideas) and exploring & experimenting to find out what will work.

Even what we already think we know how to do, can be improved or sometimes replaced by something better.

Before doing this exercise, students should have been exposed to the Innovation Cycle, and to the key distinction made in the Action Phase: Apply vs. Explore.

Ask students:

When you take action in ways that follow the Status Quo Cycle (detect & correct), what does that look like? (Any time they are assuming they already know how it will turn out, or they want to influence things to assure a certain outcome.)

Can you think of some examples? (When they do something they think they already know how to do, or they know how something is supposed to be done.)

Can you follow the Status Quo Cycle with a new idea? (Yes, when they fall in love with it too quickly and convince themselves it will work, before they have tried it.)

When you take action in ways that follow the Innovation Cycle (explore & discover), what does that look like? (Whenever they are trying something new, they are curious about something, or they recognize that they are uncertain how things will turn out.)

Can you think of some examples? (Whenever they have unanswered questions, no established process, or untested ideas.)

As they give you specific examples, prompt them to consider how they would act differently in those situations depending on which pattern they are following.

Variations

- You may want to list examples of when they are following each cycle, on a flip chart of white board, as they give them to you. You can then go back and pull items from those lists and ask them how those actions would be different if they were following the other pattern.
- This is a great exercise to do when someone is about to use some innovation tool or strategy in the Action Phase (e.g. prototyping, choosing a specific business model, etc.). This will help them understand how to do that in a way that is truly exploratory, so they get the answers they need. Too often, the primary tendency is to focus on using the chosen tool or strategy correctly, which is a symptom of a status quo mindset.