

UPGRADING YOUR OPENNESS



When you reflect on what you have observed, in the Feedback Phase the key choice is between Reinforce and Discover. You can seek to reinforce your opinions and beliefs, or you can seek to discover new ways of understanding the world around you. This is about how you interpret the information you gather.

Seeking to reinforce your views follows the Status Quo Cycle. It is often driven by Ego Bias, the desire to be “right,” which can create a powerful emotional pull toward reinforcing what we already believe. Seeking reinforcement tends to lock you into interpreting the world based on your own conventional wisdom, maintaining the status quo.

Another risk is Assumption Bias—a tendency to form opinions and make decisions based on hidden assumptions. This is something everyone does. You couldn’t function without making assumptions, but it’s important to always monitor yourself for this tendency and strive to identify and check those assumptions.

WHEN YOU ARE NOT OPEN: INNOVATION FAILS

What goes wrong...

- Failing to listen
- Lack of empathy
- Lack of insight
- Rigid thinking
- Defensiveness
- Arrogance

What happens as a result...

- Misunderstood issues
- Misdiagnosed problems
- Unnecessary conflict
- Ineffective communication
- Missed discoveries
- Irrelevant and low quality ideas

Striving to discover follows the Innovation Cycle. It opens you up to changing your understanding, which is the path to innovation. Your goal should be to come up with new interpretations that prompt you to refine and revise your thinking, and gain new insights. When innovation is successful, we tend to credit great ideas. But the real work of innovation comes from being open and reflective. Because that generates the insights that lead to those ideas.

GOALS

In the Feedback Phase, you are trying to understand and discover. Your two goals should be:

1. Make sense of what is happening.
2. Discover new ways to understand what you observe and experience.



OPENNESS HABITS OF AN INNOVATOR



- 1) Set aside time to reflect on what you observe.
- 2) Be sure to separate your observations—the facts—from how you interpret those facts.
- 3) Actively use your imagination to invent alternative interpretations to consider.
- 4) Seek and consider others' interpretations and opinions—especially when they disagree.
- 5) Identify and question your assumptions and beliefs.
- 6) Base your decisions on which interpretations are most useful, rather than always worrying about what may be “true.” (You frequently don't know.)
- 7) Sometimes you should repeat the Innovation Cycle to explore and test your insights.

ASK YOURSELF

- How willing am I to question my own beliefs?
- What unexamined assumptions am I making?
- What are some alternative explanations that I can consider?
- Am I genuinely open to being persuaded of another point of view?
- How am I welcoming dissent and guidance?
- How can I update my thinking and gain new insights?
- What can I discover?