# YES, YOU CAN INNOVATE

A workshop report published by

CiO
ACADEMYASIA

*CIO Academy Asia conducted an innovation workshop introducing the Six 'I's Approach to Corporate Innovation, led by Michael Jenkins, Lead Six "I" Certified Practitioner, Entheo Network.*

*Prior to the workshop, a presentation was made by Kalyan Madala, CTO, Technology Business Unit, IBM Singapore, on "5 Trends for 2022 and beyond: Building persistence, resilience and purpose".*

*This report is based on the insights shared by the expert trainer and the participants during the workshop.*

---

Since the beginning of the pandemic in late 2019, the business world has gone through a seismic shift. For years, we have been talking about a VUCA world. VUCA is an acronym — first used in 1987, drawing on the leadership theories of Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus — to describe or to reflect on the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of general conditions and situations. The uncertainties have only intensified in the last two years and all bets are off.

In this context, what's going to shape our future and which trends are gathering momentum in 2022—every digital leader is keen to find answers to these questions.

The IBM Institute for Business Value surveyed and interviewed tens of thousands of executives and consumers around the world to understand how consumer, employee and investor demands are shifting, what high-performing organisations are doing differently and where executives are making the biggest bets.

According to Kalyan Madala, CTO, Technology Business Unit, IBM Singapore, the study revealed 5 major trends:

- **Digital Transformation has become a way of life:** 60% organizations sped up their investments in digital technologies due to COVID-19 and more than half (55%) permanently course-corrected their organizational strategies. In the next 2-3 years, CEOs are going to pursue operational agility and flexibility (56%) more than any other action. IoT, Cloud Computing and AI are the top technologies they expect to deliver business results. They say they are going to be 332% more involved in business ecosystems in 2022 than they did in 2018.

- **Human capital is precious and scarce:** 30% of employees have already changed their employers in 2021 or plan to do so by the end of the year. Another 15% plan to voluntarily change employers in 2022. Employees want to work with companies that offer flexibility, match the values of employees and care about their mental, physical and financial well-being.

- **Sustainability and transparency are urgent priorities:** Both consumers and organizations are putting a premium on sustainability. Half of the respondents say they are willing to pay higher prices (54%) or even take a pay cut (48%) for a sustainable future. 9 out of 10 companies say they will be working on sustainability initiatives across the enterprise.

- **Tech adoption should reshape business operations:** In response to COVID-19, almost 64% organizations moved to more cloud-based business activities. 97% are employing cloud and 78% have at least piloted AI. 2019 saw a monumental rise in deployment of hybrid cloud (700%) and intelligent workflows (560%).

- **Trust and security underpin sustained innovation:** More than 90% cyber-related incidents arose in cloud environments. 3 in 5 zero trust leaders say their security approach has enabled digital transformation compared to 35% of all others.

Mandala also shared a State of X model to ensure hyper-modularity in organizations across 4 systems: Systems of Insight (real time intelligence and analytics platform), Systems of Record (clear and strict interfaces, pluggable in the motherboard), Systems of Engagement (Extreme flexibility and agility, digital distribution platform, customer centric) and Systems of Integration (services, events, data exposition, platforms for internal and external ecosystems).

He also shared an IBM Garage innovation model which can help translate ideas into reality with speed.
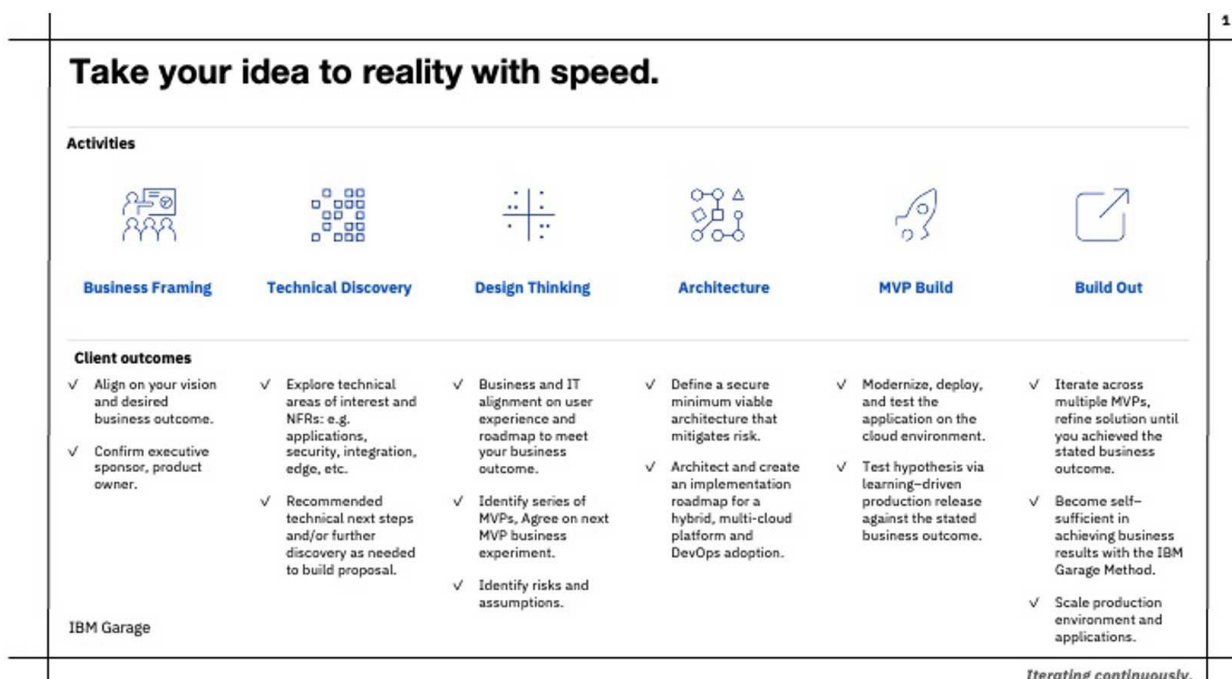


## What is innovation?

The common perception about innovation is that it is often a work of genius, and innovators produce rabbits out of their hats, that they generate ideas out of the blue, leading to jaw-dropping discoveries and achievements.

As Theodore Henderson, Innovation coach and trainer writes in The Forbes, innovation isn't just about the creation or generation of new devices, ideas or

methods. It also represents the process of uncovering new ways to do things. It can also mean changing business models and adapting to changes to achieve better products and services.

In the context of organizations, "innovation is vital in the workplace because it gives companies an edge in penetrating markets faster and provides a better connection to developing markets, which can lead to bigger opportunities, especially in rich countries".

"When a company has an innovative culture, it'll grow easily, despite the fact that the creative process isn't always simple. Tried-and-tested methods may be reliable, but trying out new things is a worthwhile experiment," writes Henderson.

## Can innovation be learnt or taught?

Another misconception about innovation is that it is an innate trait in individuals. Disruptive innovators like Steve Jobs, Jeff Bezos, and Elon Musk possess special skills of connecting the dots that other human beings don't have.

That's not the whole truth. Hal Gregersen, senior affiliate professor of leadership at INSEAD and co-author of "The Innovator's DNA," believes that there are five key skills that disruptive innovators possess: the cognitive skill of associating and the behavioral skills of questioning, observing, networking, and experimenting. According to Gregersen, all these skills can be learnt or taught.

Gregersen and co-authors Clayton M. Christensen (professor of business administration at the Harvard Business School) and Jeff Dyer (professor of strategy at Brigham Young University's Marriott School), "believe that roughly two-thirds of the skills it takes to innovate can be learned."

## Yes, you can innovate

"Culture is incredibly important for innovation," says Jenkins. "Culture plus process lead to innovation and purpose is in the heart of it."

In the 6 'I' model of innovation that Jenkins shared in his workshop, purpose forms the core and the 6 'I's radiate from it. Purpose in this model signifies the goal to develop skills to refine business challenges and the 6 'I's stand for Identify, Ignite, Investigate, Invest, Implement and Improve.

Innovation can be nurtured in an organization when these 6 Is are followed. Natalie Turner, the Founder of the Entheo Network, invented The Six 'I's of Innovation, a PEOPLE and PURPOSE driven methodology that blends the principles of design thinking with organisational development, and a unique innovation strengths assessment for individuals and teams.

## What do the 6 'I's stand for?
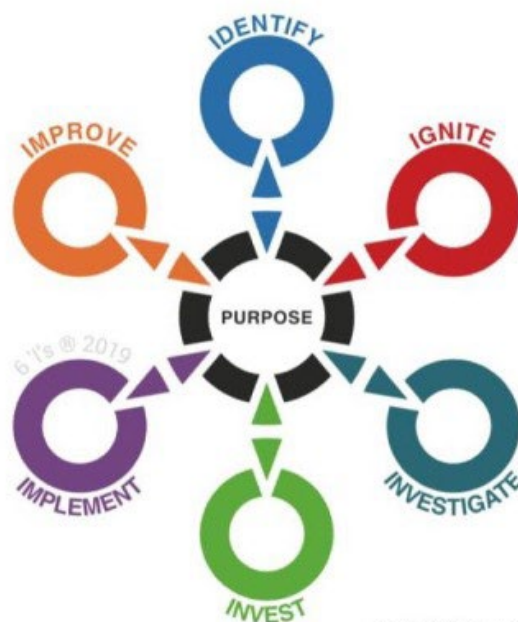
Each 'I' in this formulation corresponds to a particular value or action. They are as follows:

**IDENTIFY** opportunities by understanding trends, patterns and future areas of growth

**IGNITE** ideas by creating novel solutions

**INVESTIGATE** by prototyping, testing and researching ideas

**INVEST** by having the courage to create business models and persuade others

**IMPLEMENT** by making an idea happen and creating value from it

**IMPROVE** by optimising your ideas and learning from success and failure

The first I, Identify, (represented by the colour blue as in the Blue Ocean Strategy) refers to the identification of opportunities. These can be needs or trends that create a space for generation of ideas. Curiosity is very important in this space and leaders are supposed to invoke curiosity among all team members.

Once an opportunity has been identified, the next step is to Ignite (represented by Red) passion and creativity to rise up to that opportunity. It refers to the ignition and creation of ideas that can address that opportunity or meet a customer/stakeholder need. Here, we need to let the creative juices flow. Creativity in this context means an orientation or attitude that desires to seek and imagine new possibilities.

Leaders can ignite passion and creativity in their teammates by stimulating them to share their ideas. It can only happen if leaders build a culture of free expression where each idea is valued, not judged. To achieve this, leaders should encourage open innovation and collaboration by being broadminded about learning new things.

In Investigate (represented by grey and blue), we can investigate the new ideas by prototyping, testing and validating with customers, stakeholders and end users. In this stage, leadership helps others to be methodical and organized. Leaders need to create a culture where people are encouraged to explore and question things. In phase can involve customers and users too (in testing and validating).

Once the idea has been validated, we move to the Invest stage (represented by green, as in green shoots of innovation). It refers to the investment of time, resources and money, into the development of the idea. For the leadership, this implies stepping into the unknown despite challenges. In terms of culture, it means helping others develop the skills of persuasion, and convincing others to collaborate.

Once you are ready to leap into the unknown, you enter the next stage: Implement (represented by purple). Jenkins said that implementers are the unsung heroes of innovation. They implement the idea into something that is going to generate value. They are very committed. They stay committed despite challenges and are dedicated to achieving results. In this stage, leadership's job is to minimize risks. The culture requires team members to complete work in timeframes and budgets. This also requires collaborating and building partnerships.

The last stage is Improve (represented by orange), where the idea is improved upon and extended into other areas of opportunity. This requires certain cleverness, a mental brightness and quick intelligence to pivot or capture other areas of opportunity. Leadership's job at this level is  creating learning for continuous improvement and helping others learn from what does not work out. To have a feedback loop is important in this phase.

For organizations seeking to innovate, Jenkins also presented a 3-level Horizons model:

- Horizon 1 corresponded to Incremental innovation or improvements
- Horizon 2 referred to new innovations
- Horizon 3 covered disruptive innovation
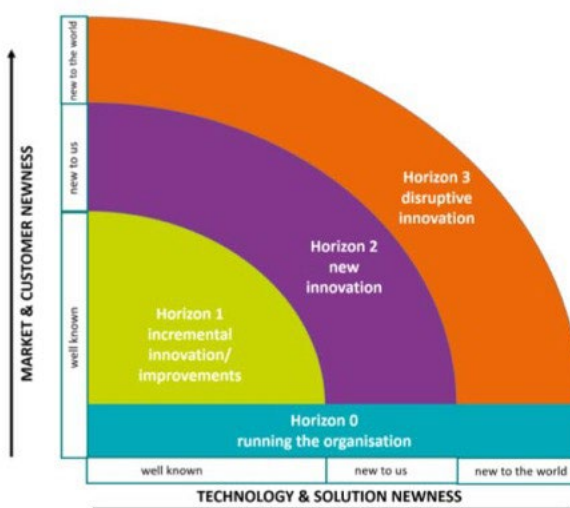


What kind of profiles are needed to balance the needs  (immediate and long term) and ROI across the 3 Horizons? According to Jenkins, there needs to be more emphasis on Identify and Ignite, particularly Identify as the skills of making sense of trends and patterns are critical.  "The LCO aspects are really important, plus open mindedness and curiosity.  You will also need strong Invest as well, it will take courage to bring in H3 innovations plus new investment models," he said.

In large enterprises, especially those bound by government regulations, risk management is an important factor while fostering innovation. Radhey Shyam, Head of Transformation Asia Pacific, Allianz Technology, pointed this out during the workshop. He cautioned about how risk management should

augment every innovation approach. Relating to the 3 horizons of innovation, resource allocation and risk-reward trade-offs must be taken into account, he said. Drawing on his experiences operating in the heavily regulated financial services sector, Radhey highlighted that compliance risks cannot be taken lightly, especially when introducing business models and digital platforms.

The council also discussed extensively about the 6 innovation profiles. Perry Young, Executive Director, Perimeter & Network Security, Standard Chartered Bank, highlighted that profiles such as "Investigate" and "Implement" require deeper technical competencies, and in today's climate of talent shortage, raised the question if innovation teams can still operate effectively with such profiles missing.

Jenkins' drew examples from his own innovation teams, sharing that most teammates hold primary and secondary profiles within the team and double up in their roles for the reasons earlier mentioned by Perry. It is more important for innovation teams to recognise the profiles that are missing from their teams, and this is half the battle won in recognising potential blindspots that may hinder success. Perry added on with perspectives on ensuring longevity and sustainability in innovation projects. Past the initial stages of excitement and ideation, the momentum must carry the team through deeper "Investigate" and "Implement" phases.

Setting a culture for innovation is key. That's where the purpose statement is important to help team members, especially new members who've joined mid-way through, to rely on the purpose statement as  the project's true north.

In many of CIO Academy Asia's engagements with C-level tech leaders, support from the board and fellow Senior Leadership members is critical to the success of any innovation project. CIO for franchise owners and operators of retail brands such as H&M, COS, Scoop Australia, Udara Dharmawanse,

emphasised the importance of continued senior leadership buy in and closer collaboration in the "investigate" and "implement" phase, when new innovations are tested in a live operational environment.

What happens when an organization does not have people in the 6 profiles, do they  have to restructure their teams? Answering the question, Michael said there are quite a few options to restructure their teams. "For example, you can consider what it will take to enable people to develop those strengths that perhaps need dialing up and how to bring in the skills you think you might need through judicious partnering as opposed to a wholesale restructuring. In that sense, there is a multiplicity of permutations really due to the context which is why it is all so fascinating!" he said.

"I think one of the biggest factors is: once you know what the gaps are, what are you going to do to actively address them?," he added. "One thing we do know is that hope (that things will improve miraculously by themselves) is seldom a great strategy (!) and therefore NOT to act on the insights you get from the model would be a wasted opportunity! That's why I think it is so powerful - it's all about taking action."

In summary, innovation is not easy for any organization. It requires commitment, time and resources from the leadership and the team. There could be regulatory aspects of risk management involved as well in the case of certain types of organizations.

However, as a bottomline, organizations must remember, said P. Ramakrishna, CEO of CIO Academy Asia in his closing remarks, quoting Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, "What is dangerous is not to evolve."

Organizations that don't innovate and don't evolve will finally disappear from the horizon of existence.

Michael Jenkins
Lead Six 'I's® Certified Practitioner
Entheo Network

HR Magazine (UK) named Michael as one of the UK's Most Influential Thinkers in HR in 2013 and 2016. He is the author of Expert Humans: Critical Leadership Skills for a Disrupted World. In 2020 Michael joined the FutureWork Forum as a Partner and co-founded Expert Humans Pte Ltd.

**For Enquiries, Please Contact:**

David Chin
Deputy CEO
CIO Academy Asia
david@cioacademyasia.org