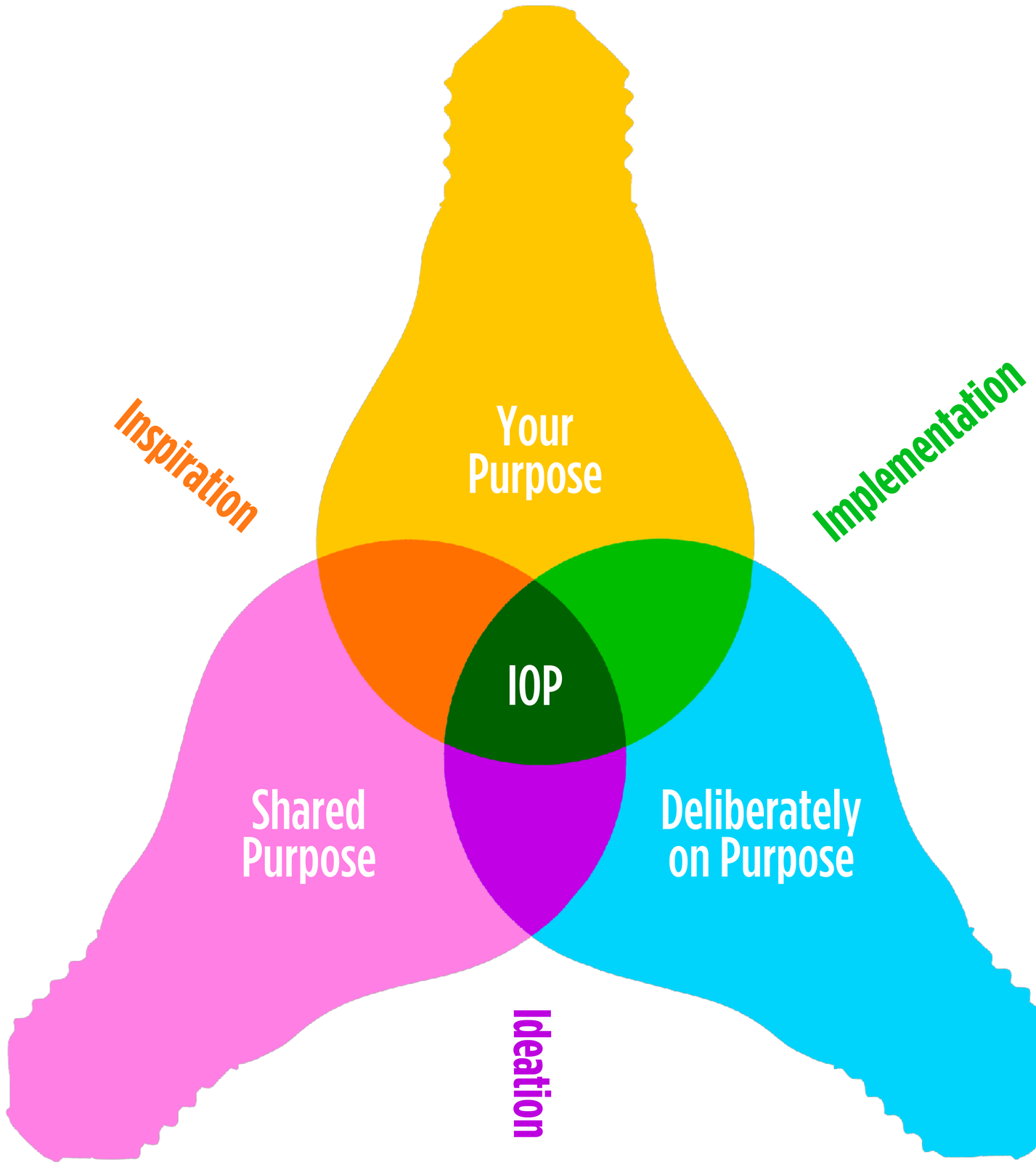
DAN GREGORY + KIERAN FLANAGAN



innovation on purpose

 www.TheImpossibleInstitute.com

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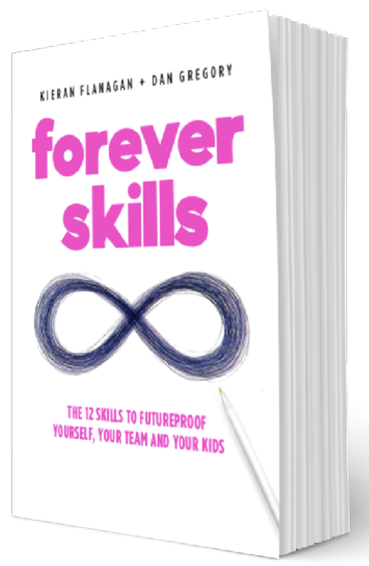
About Kieran & Dan

Kieran Flanagan and Dan Gregory are the co-founders of The Impossible Institute — a strategic think tank founded to re-imagine the way we think, lead, build engagement and navigate change. Kieran works with leaders, teams and organisations to develop commercial creativity and to "make positive change by making change positive." Dan helps smart people to "be people smart" and understand how to read and lead human behaviour.

Together, they are the strategic and creative team behind the most successful new product launch in Australian history. They have helped entrepreneurs build internationally successful businesses and have worked with some of the world's largest organisations: developing communication and marketing strategies for the likes of Coca-Cola; driving innovation and product design for Unilever and News Corp., delivering leadership development for the Australian Navy and banking corporations in Asia, building teamwork and collaboration systems for global tech giants and C-suite executives in the United States, as well as facilitating social-change strategies for The United Nations UN Women and the Singapore Government in Singapore and NGOs in Australia.

Voted in the 'top 25 C-Suite Speakers to watch' by Meetings & Conventions USA, they combine business acumen with a rapier wit and rare human insight gained while working on the Australian, US and UK stand-up comedy circuits — skills put to great use in front of millions of viewers on ABC TV's *Gruen* franchise and Channel 7's *Masters of Spin* and as in regular contributions to *Success* and *The CEO Magazine* in the United States.

They are also the co-authors of three books, the most recent being *Forever Skills - The 12 skills to future proof yourself, your team and your kids.*



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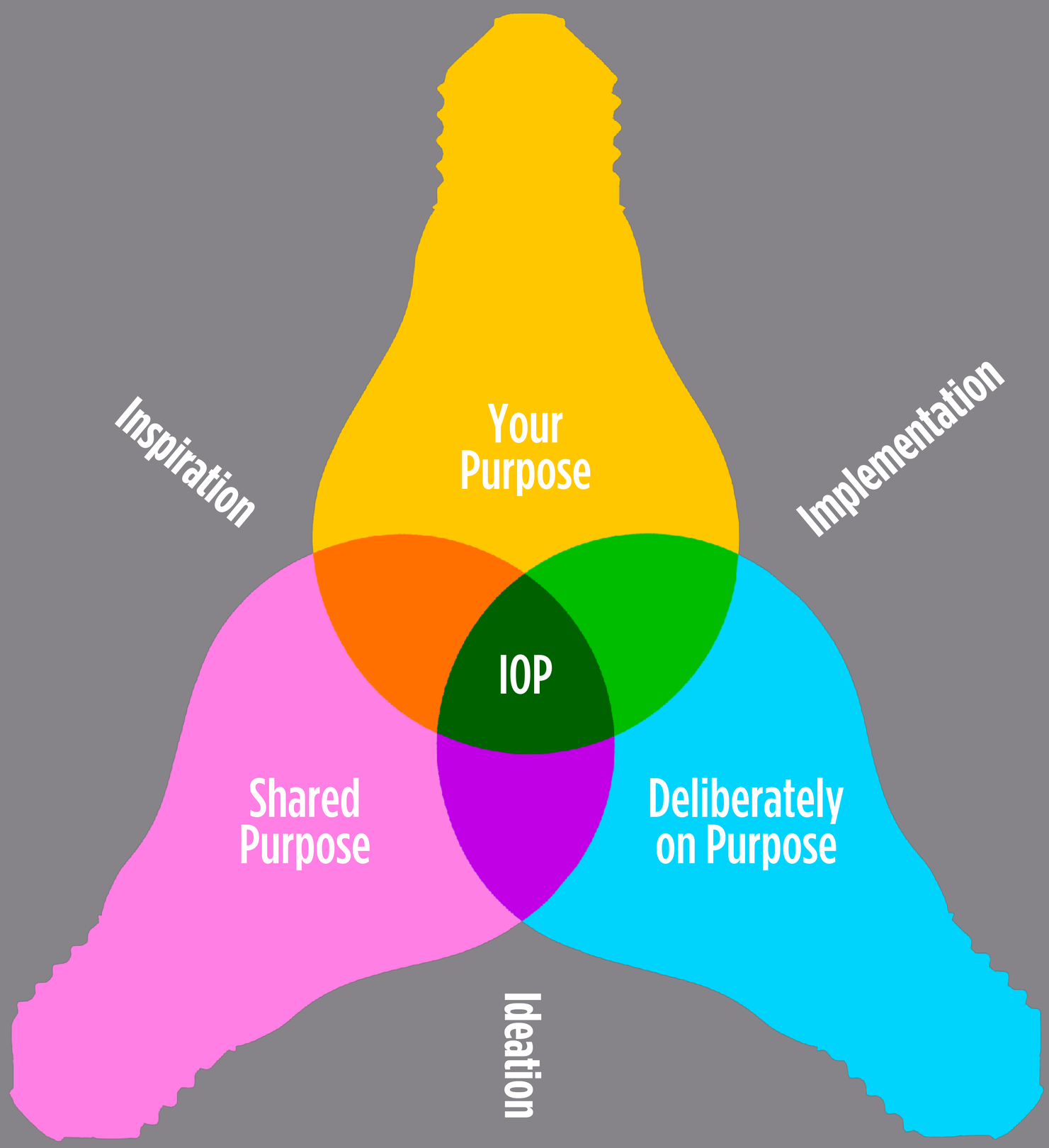


Part 1: Introduction

Innovation “on purpose”

Introduction.

This white paper was written to help us articulate some of the work we have been engaged in over the past 30 years, from product and service design to strategic planning, engagement campaigns and commercial creativity. Over the coming pages, we'll attempt to unpack what has become an intuitive and unconscious competence and repackage it in a practical and system-based process.

However, much of this will also draw on the work of those who have inspired us along our professional journey. Where possible, we have tried to attribute thinking and theory to their correct originators, although, given the nature of the democratisation of information that the online world now provides, this has not always been possible.

So, our request is, if we have missed an attribution you believe we should have made, accept our genuine apologies and please notify us so that we might make the appropriate corrections.

This being said, the purpose of this white paper is more pragmatic than academic, and we are more interested in efficacy and what has been borne out of experience than we are in sounding our own trumpets.

For this reason, we've structured this white paper so that you might be able to examine the different stages of the *Insights to Innovation* process in greater detail, with the understanding that the divisions we've made between the different phases are, in fact, manufactured and artificial.

We have also illustrated the innovation journey in such a way that it appears to have a beginning and end. This too is an artificial construct, as the process outlined might be better understood as cyclic and circular - or, as often as not, as a figure of eight.

The truth is, as one innovation journey is commercialised and implemented, the process begins again (assuming of course that a competitor has not already begun their own innovation journey to challenge our own).

So, these rather large caveats acknowledged, let's begin.

Why innovation matters.

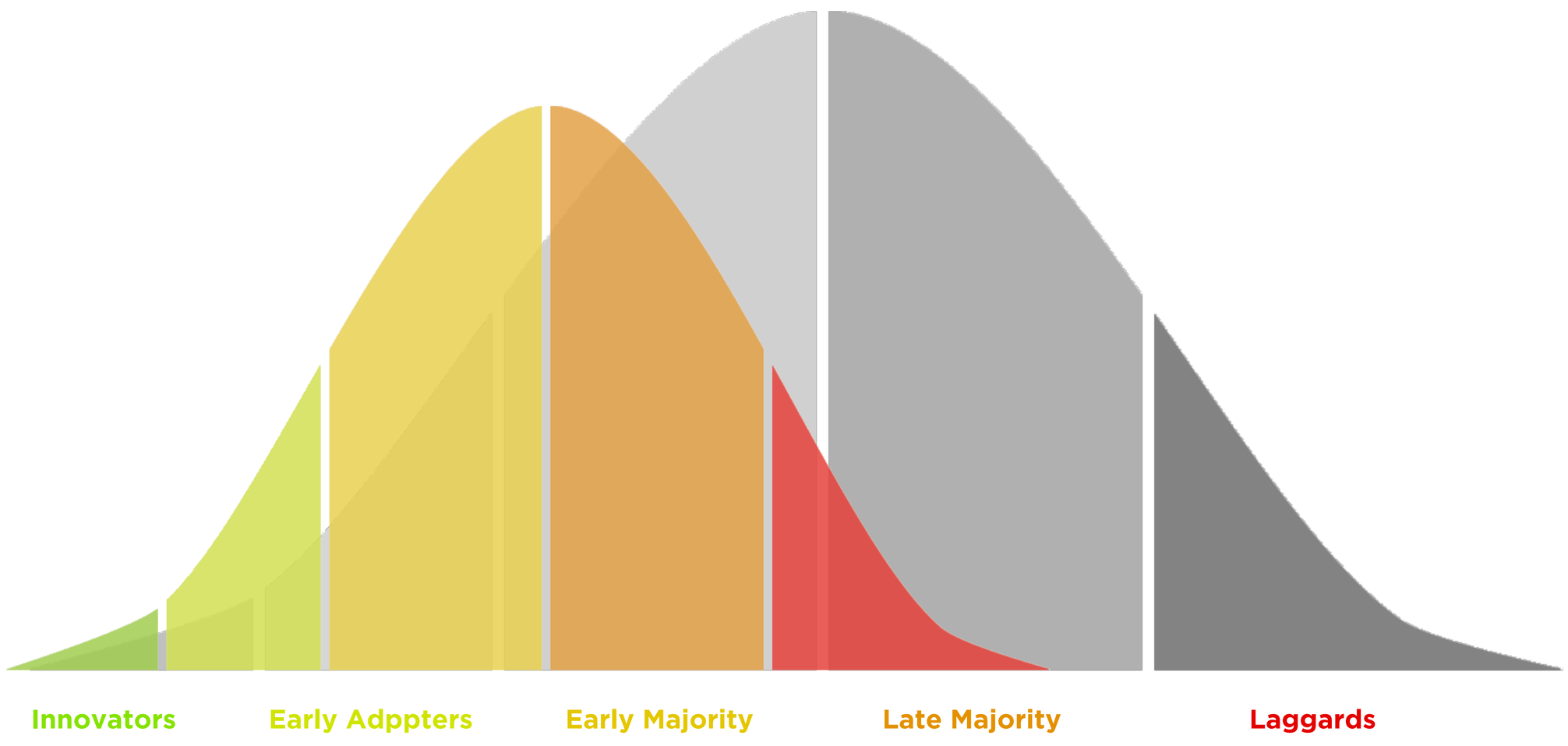
There are many factors, both commercial and societal, that make innovation a critical capability for the 21st Century, but let's start with four:

1. Accelerating Change

Innovation has always been one of the core functions of business, government and organisational life, however, its importance has been amplified and accelerated as we have navigated the four industrial revolutions of the past century or so.

If a single word was to define the professional conversations we've had over the past 30 years, it would be the word, "Change". "We're experiencing unprecedented change," "Our people are change-fatigued," "We need to be more agile and proactive in the face of change." You've no doubt heard the same or similar throughout your professional life.

The point is, that as technology has advanced, the adoption curve has contracted and those we once thought of as laggards have picked up their pace and are adopting in a shorter time span than previously. This means product, service and even social values cycles are rising and falling more quickly.



The Contracting Adoption Curve

Why innovation matters.

Adding to this change is:

2. Increasing competition

As technology has democratised the commercial world and lowered the barriers to entry, competition and speed to market has increased. For example, recently, while speaking to 500 entrepreneurs in Perth, Western Australia, we were approached by two obviously rather young women who presented us with their business cards.

We asked about their businesses but first inquired about their ages.

The first young woman, a girl aged 12, told us she had an online illustration and design business, while her sister, then 14, relayed that she had two businesses: an e-publishing business where she identified young literary talent and shared their stories online and a fashion business which allowed her to sell clothes that make young women feel good about their bodies to a global market place.

Two young women living in the most remote capital city on the most remote continent on the planet conducting international businesses from home.

This technological shift and the lowering of commercial barriers makes competition and speed to scale, exponentially faster than in previous decades.

3. Expectation inflation

As opportunities increase, so too do expectations. The net effect of expectation inflation is: firstly, our capacity to disappoint both our customers and our teams also increases, and secondly, it promotes a commercial promiscuity where employees and clients are far more likely to "shop around."

4. The need to lead or be led

In the past, large organisations have often employed acquisition strategies to drive innovation. This means they would allow smaller start ups to develop new intellectual property before buying them out and then taking the offering to scale.

However, as already asserted on this page, speed to scale is now making acquired innovation an increasingly risky strategy.

What is innovation?

Innovation is much more than new product & service design, it is in fact, category leadership. True innovation might be better thought of as thought leadership, as at its best, it sets the future course for an entire industry, not just the individual organisation or team.

A lot of people talk about innovation. Many professionals also think they are actively innovating within their organisations. However, much of what is called innovation might be better understood as iterative improvement that builds on what already exists, rather than breaking the status quo down and reinventing its successor.

Of course, iterative improvement is incredibly important, as well as being financially and culturally impactful. It also enlists many of the same tools and processes of innovation. Additionally, it feeds on and profits from our bias towards the familiar and what is already understood.

That being said, iterative improvement alone can become a risky strategy in an environment that is ripe for commercial and cultural transformation, what many of us think of as ‘true innovation.’

True innovation involves more than just new product development or service design and should, in fact, be thought of as category leadership.

In other words, not only are you tweaking around the edges of current thinking, systems, processes and output, you’re actively transforming your industry and charting a new course for your field into the future.

To be a true innovator requires more than expertise and more than creative problem solving. To drive innovation, you also need to be a ‘thought leader.’ So, what does category leadership require?

What is innovation?

To help define innovation in practical terms, we've divided the process into three distinct phases:

1. Inspiration - Insights for innovation

The first phase of innovation is defined by our capacity to observe, to understand, empathise and define the most potent opportunities for innovation and to filter these through a "value lens" rather than a product-centric point of view.

2. Ideation - The creative discipline

Perhaps the best distinction to be made between being an expert or an authority, and true thought leadership and innovation, lies in your capacity to develop your own unique intellectual and commercial property.

Experts and authorities know how things have been done, and even how things should be done, but unless they can also imagine, invent and implement new ways that things might be done, they stop short of true thought leadership and innovation.

Therefore, consider what change is needed in your industry, and of these changes, decide which do you want to be known for leading.

3. Implementation - Ideas into action

Finally, to be a true innovator, you must be willing to go to market and test, learn from feedback and continually improve your thinking and our offering.

If a great idea is nothing without insightful inspiration, then inspiration is of little value without implementation.

Too many great ideas die on the vine, but not because of a lack of quality. Nor is it due to too little excitement in the early stages. Far more determinant of your innovation success or failure, is your force of will and willingness to take action.

What is innovation?

If your ideas are important enough to you personally, and will be positively transformative for those you work with and seek to serve, shouldn't you also be willing to back yourself and to lead the change you seek to make in the world?

By all means improve, iterate and increase the relevance and salience of what you already do. But while you're doing that, make time to consider how you might lead your category and drive true innovation.

However, before we move into action, we need to first consider the frame, filter or value lens we will be projecting our innovation through.

For the rest of this introduction we will be exploring the central model of this white paper, illustrated on the following page.

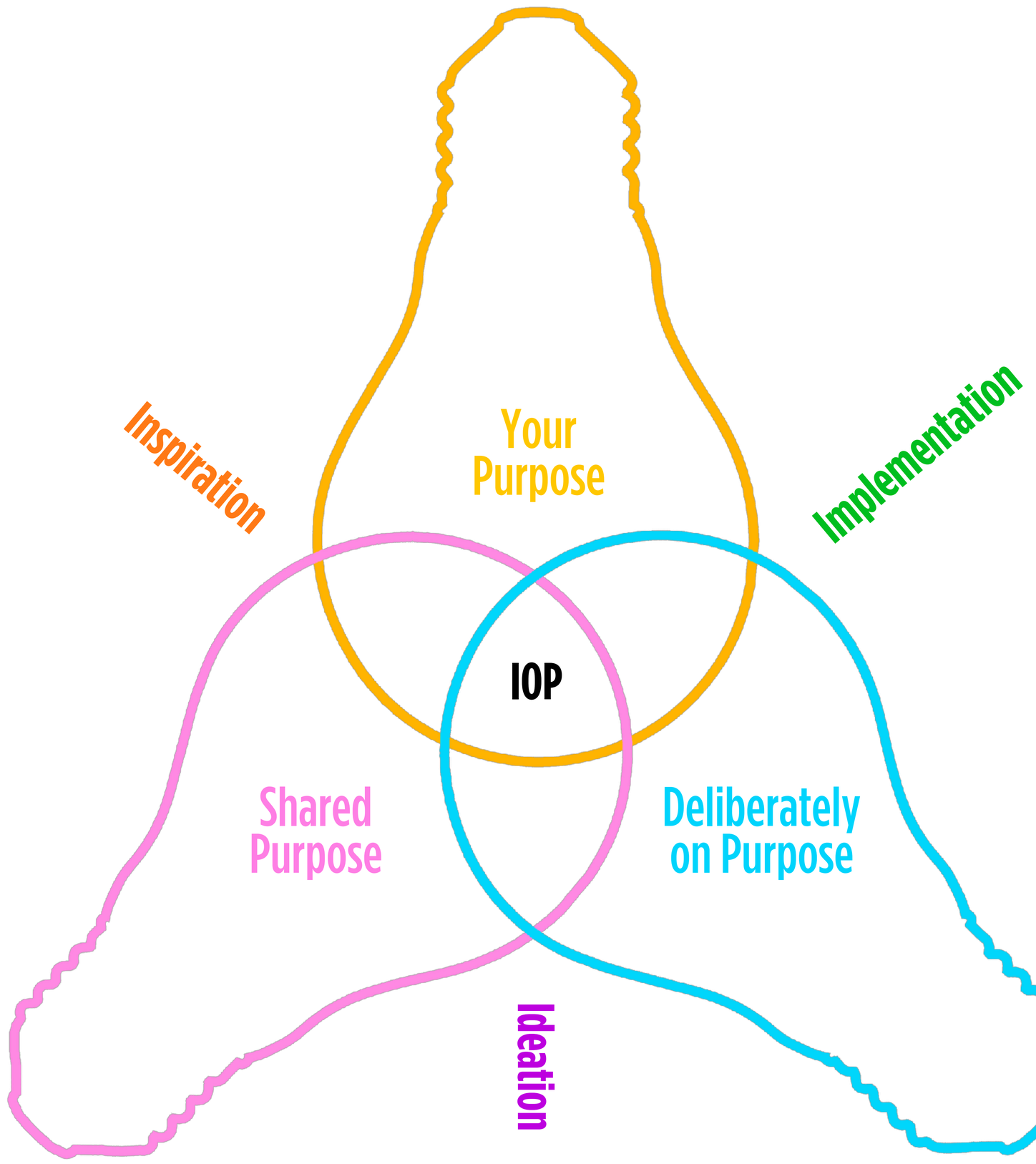
We will delve into the three filters of Innovation on Purpose:

1. **Your Purpose**
2. **Shared Purpose**
3. **Deliberately on Purpose**

The 3 sections following this introduction will more deeply explore the three phases of innovation:

1. **Inspiration**
2. **Ideation**
3. **Implementation**

What is innovation?



Model 1: Innovation on purpose

Our Ideation model is defined by three filters and three phases:

1. Your purpose
2. Shared purpose
3. Deliberately on purpose

1. Inspiration
2. Ideation
3. Implementation

Filter 1: Your purpose.

When we speak about purpose, it's hard to go past the work of Simon Sinek and his best-selling book, *Start with Why*. However, in the context of *Innovation on Purpose*, we mean to make three further distinctions about purpose. The first of which is *Your purpose*.

Often, when the subject of purpose is discussed it can be defined in an ego-based frame. Your purpose is seen as your reason for being or how you make meaning of your life and your work. For our purposes (if you'll excuse the pun) we'll define your purpose as the value you bring to the world. This shifts us from an ego focus to one of contribution.

When we talk about your purpose in this paper, what we're referring to is your "value lens." Your value lens is the filter through which all of your innovation should be filtered through.

For example:

Apple's value lens might be expressed as, "Reducing the friction between human beings and the digital interface."

Obviously, Apple is a technology company who manufactures computer processors for various products and applications. They are also world class when it comes to design. However, the value lens that has informed all of their commercial success is their capacity to make technology humanly intuitive - from the visual operating system launched in 1984 to the browsing iPod's wheel to pinching, swiping and Siri's voice activation, this filter drives all of their most successful innovations.

Kodak's value lens was (or perhaps should have been) "Memory preservation."

While film technology has been surpassed by digital technology, the need for memory preservation in the form of data storage, cloud technology and the like is booming.

Nike's value lens could be described as, "The heroism of participation."

Exemplified by their, "Just do it" slogan, innovations such as Nike + have been more focussed on participation in sport than on elite sporting performance.

Filter 2: Shared purpose.

Shifting from *Your purpose* to a *Shared purpose* is a critical distinction in innovation. What this means in practice is: are your values aligned with theirs? Unless you can frame your value in terms of the values that your team, your customers and constituents hold, you are not in relationship.

While every facet of innovation should have a people-centric component to it, this filter is where it should be initially defined.

It’s an old cliché, but, "You're selling drills but people want holes," is still a useful reminder to be people-centric in your innovation.

A well defined shared purpose allows you to shift your insight gathering, ideation and critical thinking phases of innovation from product and service to that of empathy for your customer, the context where you might be relevant to them as well as the decision making process they engage with before buying from, renting or supporting you.

For example, McDonalds knows that Happy Meals are not about the nuggets, fries and plastic toys, they're about 15 minutes of peace and quiet on the drive to Grandma’s house.

This means, to innovate successfully, we need to be able to define our customer's needs at three levels:

1. **The Literal** - What we offer as a tangible product or service.
2. **The Emotional** - The emotional experience or benefit customers experience by doing business with us.
3. **The Psychological** - What’s really driving their purchase decisions. The WHY behind the WHY.

Filter 3: Deliberately on purpose.

Innovation requires more than luck, it requires process, culture & discipline:

Too often innovation strategies are built on luck - we either engage futurists or economists in a bid to predict the future so that we might be able to get out in front of the next trend, or else we cross our fingers and hope that our engineers and designers are the ones to make the next great breakthrough.

These are flawed strategies for a number of reasons, principle among them being, luck is not a strategy. But it also fails to take account of what really defines innovation success - something explored by Oded Shenkar at Ohio State University. But more on Shenkar's research later.

Successful innovation that is congruent, consistent and deliberate requires three systemic capabilities:

1. Process

Unless you've spent your entire career in the fields of product and service design, commercial creativity and innovation strategy, you're unlikely to feel unconsciously competent as an innovator. For this reason, a systemic process, one that is designed with a bias towards a successful outcome, is critical. Hence this white paper.

2. Culture

This is equally true of culture. You have probably experienced cultures where the status quo is not to be questioned and where new ideas are critiqued and even ridiculed before they have grown beyond their infancy.

The culture and environment we create are crucial to inviting, encouraging and leading innovation at an organisational level.

3. Discipline

The myth of the inventor being struck by the muse, enlightened by a moment of inspiration or experiencing a flash of genius is exactly that, a myth.

True inspiration is far more likely to be found slumped over your desk at 11:00pm having put in months of research and weeks of ideation.

Innovation, like all forms of commercial creativity, is more discipline than talent.

3 phases of innovation.

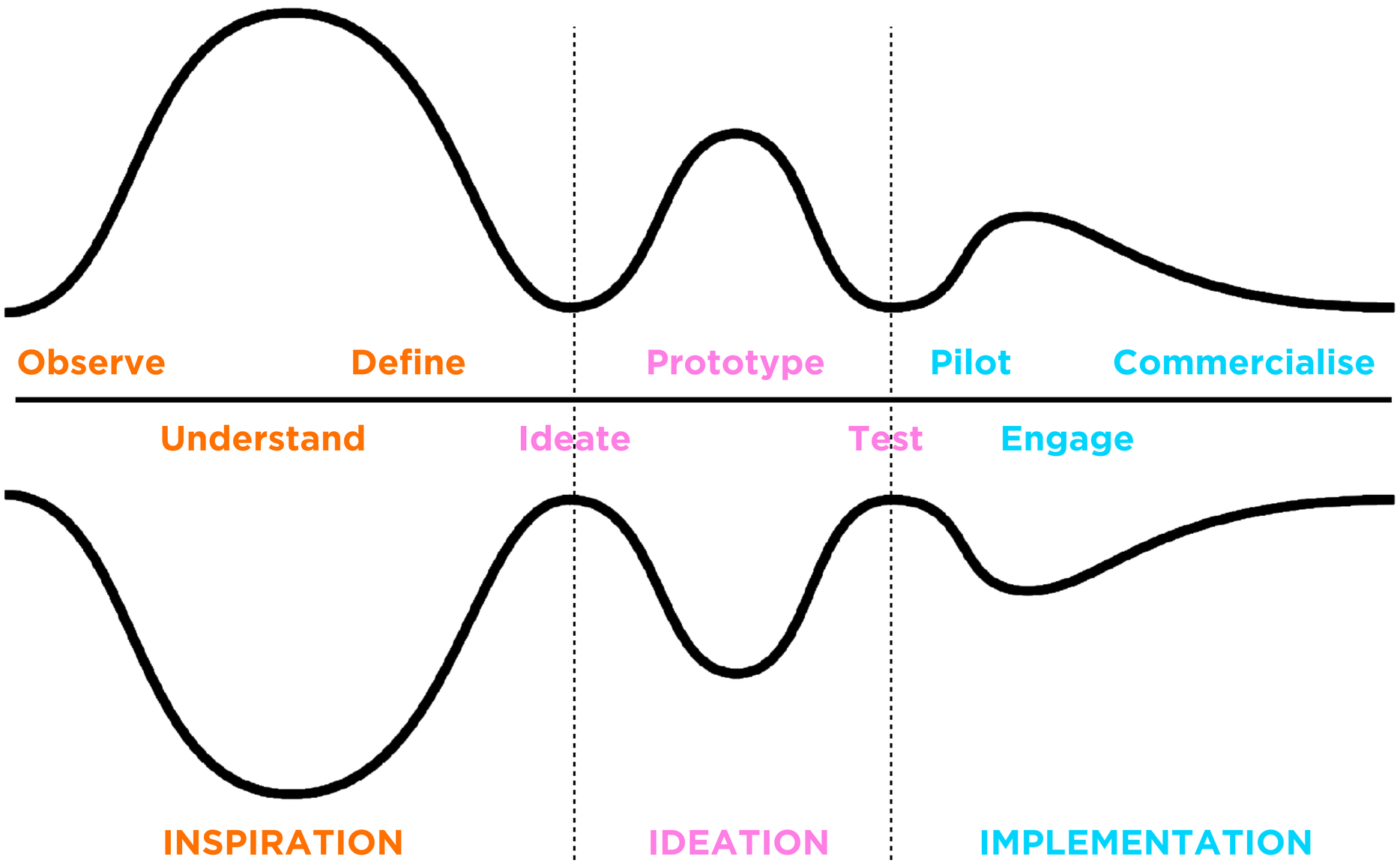
As the fields of innovation and design thinking have become mainstream strategic concerns and their methodologies are likewise increasingly common in the commercial world, so too have the numbers of models used to articulate a process that many professionals have internalised as experience-based intuition.

Perhaps the most famous is IDEO's, "Empathise, Define, Ideate, Prototype & Test," model. However, there are many more to choose from, all of which can be accessed through a simple Google search.

The "3 Phase Model" below is one we have created as an amalgam of other models, not because we believe it is definitive or indeed "the truth," but rather because it is "a truth" that we have found to be useful in explaining how we think to other people.

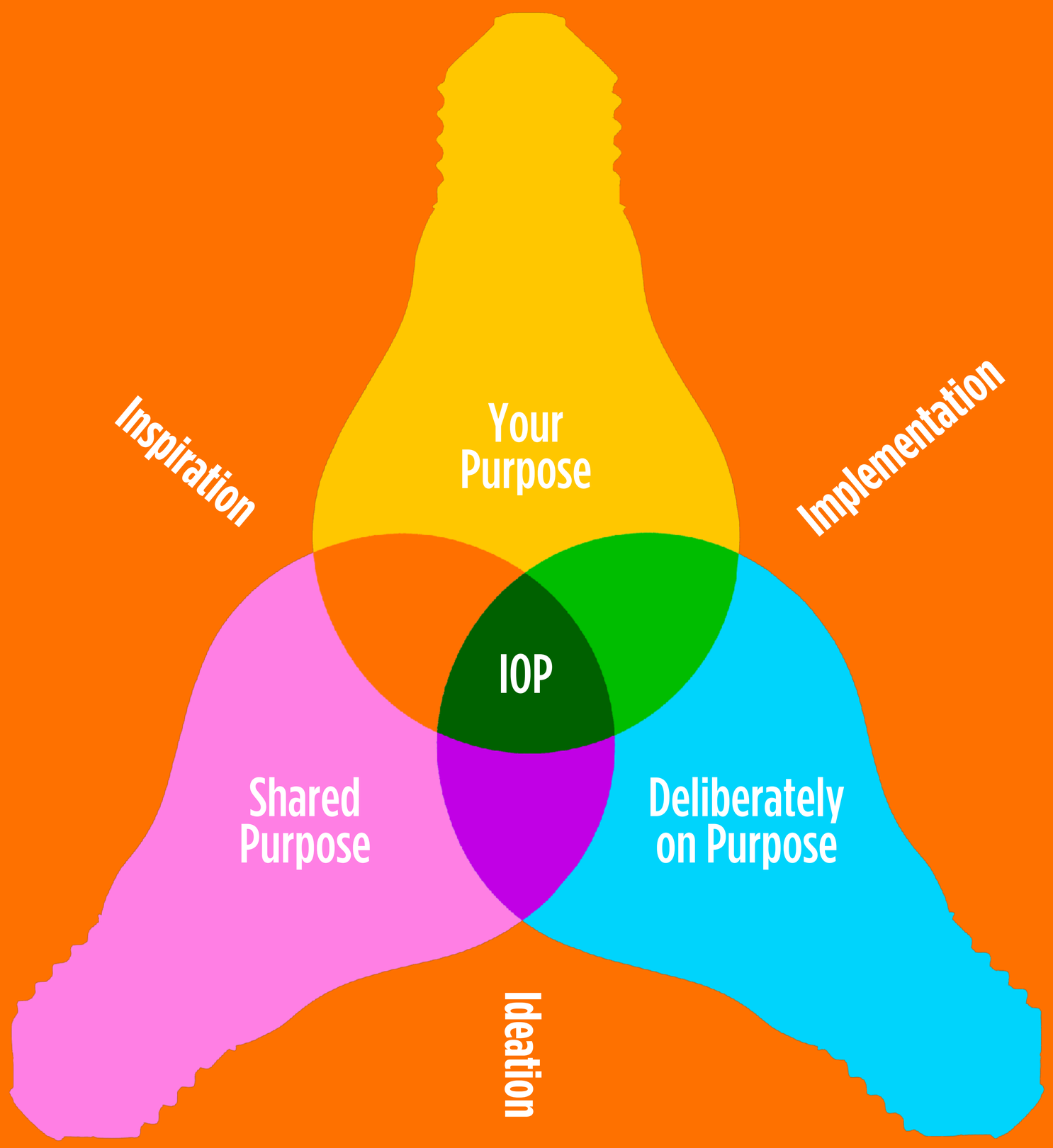
It describes 3 phases of innovation with 3 distinct activities in each. Each phase requires both Divergent (Creative) Thinking and Convergent (Critical) Thinking with the overall trend shifting from divergent to convergent thinking modes.

We will use this model as the basis for explaining the different stages and skills required for developing and executing an innovation strategy



Introduction: Innovation on purpose

1. Change is increasing the need for innovation
2. Real innovation is actually category leadership
3. It requires culture, process and discipline
4. Innovation must be:
    - Driven by your purpose
    - Aligned to a shared purpose
    - Executed deliberately on purpose
5. There are 3 phases of innovation
    - Inspiration - Insights into innovation
    - Ideation - The creative discipline
    - Implementation - Ideas into action



Part 2: Inspiration

Insights for innovation

Why insights matter.

Insights are the guiding principles that steer your innovation strategy and establish its salience and relevance in terms of market appeal, your production and delivery capabilities as well as the commercial and social opportunities it presents. This first phase of the *Innovation on Purpose* process involves three distinct stages.

On the following page is Model 2: Inspiration, which describes three stages of the insights and inspiration phase of *Innovation on Purpose*. It is inspired by and a combination of many models, most particularly *IDEO & Stanford d.School's Design Thinking* process described in the introduction and a model which most likely originated in *Competing models of entrepreneurial intentions* by NF Krueger Jr, MD Reilly & AL Carsrud.

The three stages of Inspiration include:

1. **Observe**

This stage of the Inspiration phase of innovation might best be described as research and data gathering. It includes such activities as store visits, quantitative and qualitative research and focus groups.

2. **Understand**

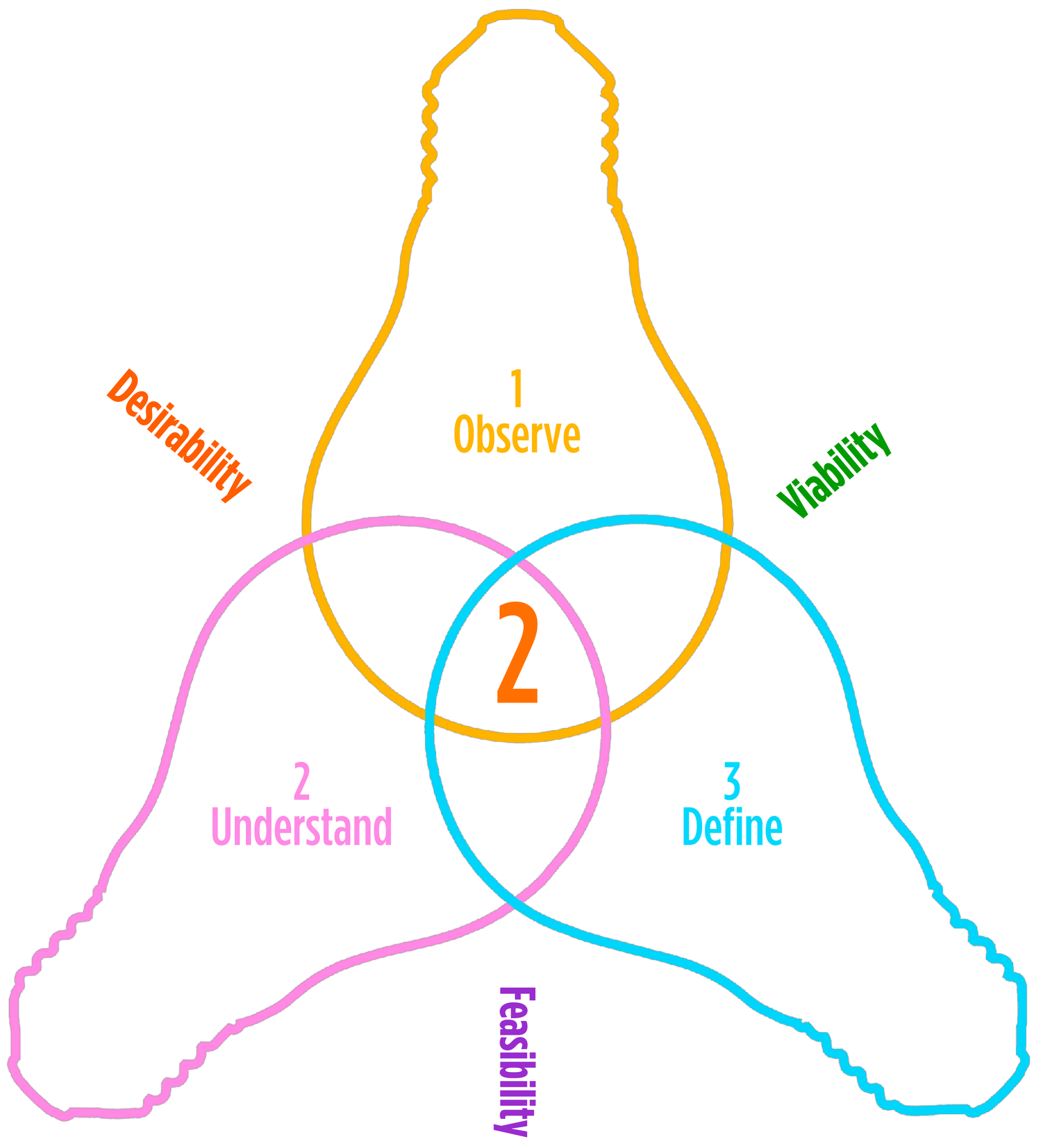
The Understand stage of the Inspiration phase is often described as empathy and might be understood as the first of the meaning making stages of innovation. It augments the raw data of observation and gives it context and detail.

3. **Define**

Finally, the Define stage of Inspiration moves more sharply from divergent thinking to convergent thinking. It is the appropriate stage for applying critical thinking and judgement and for defining which of the many identified opportunities present the greatest potential using the three filters that complement the three inspiration stages. The three intersecting filters to apply to your insights are as follows:

1. **Desirability**
2. **Feasibility**
3. **Viability**

Seeking inspiration & insights.



Model 2: Inspiration - Insights for innovation

Our Ideation model is defined by three stages and three filters/frames:

1. Observe
2. Understand
3. Define

1. Desirability
2. Feasibility
3. Viability

Is it desirable, feasible & viable?

The earliest reference we can find for these much repeated filters for innovation insights is via: NF Krueger Jr, MD Reilly, AL Carsrud "Competing models of entrepreneurial intentions" in Journal of Business Venturing, 2000. We have adapted these into the Inspiration Model 2 presented on the previous page. But no matter their origins, they are important considerations to be factored into your innovation strategy.

1. Desirability

Desirability is considered the human component of innovation planning. It requires an assessment of consumer or community needs and wants, even if these needs and wants are not well articulated or defined.

2. Feasibility

Feasibility refers to the technological factors involved in a specific innovation. In other words, do you have the technological capability to execute the intended innovation, or else, is that technology considered to be within reasonable reach?

3. Viability

Viability is the business model and financial considerations of a proposed innovation. Does it make financial sense as an investment, and moreover, it the estimated return on investment and profitability modelling supportive of your new idea or not?

Data isn’t the answer, it’s input.

In our 2019 book, *Forever Skills*, we described our tendency to view change through a very narrow lens rather than using a more holistic approach that includes all three spheres of change:

1. **What is changing**
2. **What needs changing**
3. **What is unchanging**

In a world experiencing unprecedented change and, in fact, a rate of change that is accelerating itself, it’s hardly surprising that we are so easily distracted by trends, or *What is changing*.

However, trends, whilst interesting and occasionally very exciting, only tell half the story - data isn’t the answer… it’s input!

This makes our capacity to interpret and translate data into insights, or *meaning making*, a critical skill for leaders, business people and law makers trying to navigate an abstract and ever-evolving future.

This is principally because identical input does not necessarily lead to identical results. For example, if you jump off a 1 metre high wall a hundred times, versus jumping off a 100 metre high wall once, you get rather different results.

Both exercises involve you traversing a horizontal distance of 100 metres by jumping off a wall, and but for only one variable, might offer up identical raw data.

However, only one will win you a Darwin Award and see you leave the human gene pool!

The point is, data is only as useful as the meaning we create from it. This means we need to learn to look beneath the trends to identify patterns so that we might better understand what’s really going on.

Beyond biases and blindspots.

Physicists posit that the very act of observation changes the nature of the observed, and in the social sciences, this is even more readily apparent. This means that your background, biases, blindspots and even your intelligence and experience distort the information you observe and use as data for insights.

1. Background, Biases & Blindspots

All of us filter the world through our backgrounds, biases and blindspots. These need not be negative prejudices, as even a bias towards optimism brings its own unintended consequences and risk.

Given that there is no way to completely transcend our own biases, the need for a diversity of expertise and opinion is a critical asset in innovation. More on this on the next page.

2. Intelligence & Experience

Though it sounds counter-intuitive, in our experience, it is often it is our best and highest performing employees that are the worst, or at least the most resistant innovators.

However, when you drill down into why this might be the case, you begin to realise that they have a significant personal investment in the current system and the status quo. It works for them and they understand how to excel within it.

Consider for yourself how willing you would be to undermine or even revolutionise a system that allows you to perform at your highest, earns you praise and rewards you with status and a paycheque that allows you to live the life you believe you've earned. Hardly an intrinsically motivating opportunity.

Contrastingly, our worst (or most challenging) employees are often the most willing to entertain a new possibility and to reinvent the existing paradigm.

With these observations in mind, be aware of how intelligence and experience might undermine your innovation efforts and how ignorance and naivety might in fact be an asset to you.

See from multiple points of view.

Critical in avoiding our biases and blindspots is the need to diversify our points of view. In 2014, a range of experiments conducted by researchers including Evan Apfelbaum at MIT Sloan School of Management, observed that, "Both diversity and homogeneity have the ability to affect how people think or make decisions." What's more, the more diverse a team is, and the more open the exchange of information, the higher the collective IQ.

One of the experiments conducted by MIT researchers involved taking a homogeneous group of only men, and then adding a woman to the group to test the effect on problem solving. What they found was that the collective IQ and the group's capacity to solve problems increased.

In fact, they kept adding women to the group until the homogeny balance tipped back the other way and the collective IQ decreased.

Their finding wasn't that women necessarily made the group smarter, but rather the diversity of points of view made the group smarter. This means, diversity of thinking, not just diversity of gender, ethnicity, experience and sexuality, is critical to innovation and creative problem solving.

What we have found in our consulting and training work is that collaboration does not even require other minds to be in the room with you. We'll discuss these techniques in more detail in the Ideation section of this paper.

Meaning is made not found.

Insights and research are often considered to be dry and linear phases of the innovation process, but this need not be the case. In fact, it should not be the case. Perhaps the most critical stage of the Inspiration phase of *Innovation on Purpose* is the Define stage, also known as meaning making.

The way data is interpreted will significantly affect how it is then applied to innovation strategy. This makes caution, or more appropriately an openness to alternative possibilities, critical in the face of incomplete data.

Consider a statistic such as, “Women over 50 in a particular part of town own small to medium sized dogs.” The data is relatively simple to understand, however the interpretations are many and varied.

The part of town they live in might be a military district with a high percentage of widows who are seeking comfort and company. It may be that there is a crime problem in the area and the dogs are seen as a deterrent. The data may be incomplete and the owner’s sex is completely irrelevant. It may be a part of town which is more prone to allergies because of the dryness and lack of humidity in the air and it’s actually the length of the hair of the dog rather than its size which is important. And so on and so on.

Before turning inspiration and insight into and instruction for your innovation team, it’s worth interrogating the data a little more rigorously.

We’ll pick up on this further in the Ideation phase when we discuss “solving the right problem.”

Patterns are more predictive than particulars.

“A single slap in the face is assault. But if you’re always being slapped… it might be you.” This quote is a half-remembered paraphrase of a line from a movie long forgotten, but the message is fairly simple to understand. We’ve also cleaned it up a little for our easily offended readers.

We often get to share conference stages around the world with futurists, social researchers, demographers and economists who deliver exciting predictions about the future of work, about consumer psychology and of the technologies that will transform our world. However, we’re yet to meet one that will offer a money back guarantee on their predictions.

We prefer to look into the future with the bearing of Clint Eastwood. In other words, we like to squint. This allows us to be less distracted by the minutiae and detail of what these futurists, and our data, might be presenting us with and to take in the broader picture scanning for patterns that might emerge.

We do this because patterns are usually more predictive than particulars. This is a crucial understanding in meaning making and picks up on our “small dog metaphor” from the previous page.

For example, in the early 2000s, businesses became enamoured with social media. Everyone was now on Facebook and other platforms were being created to serve this obsession (and also to cash in on the connectivity boom).

Business typically treated social media like traditional media formats, as a means for advertising more product, and simply shouted at passing customers as they had done since the 50s.

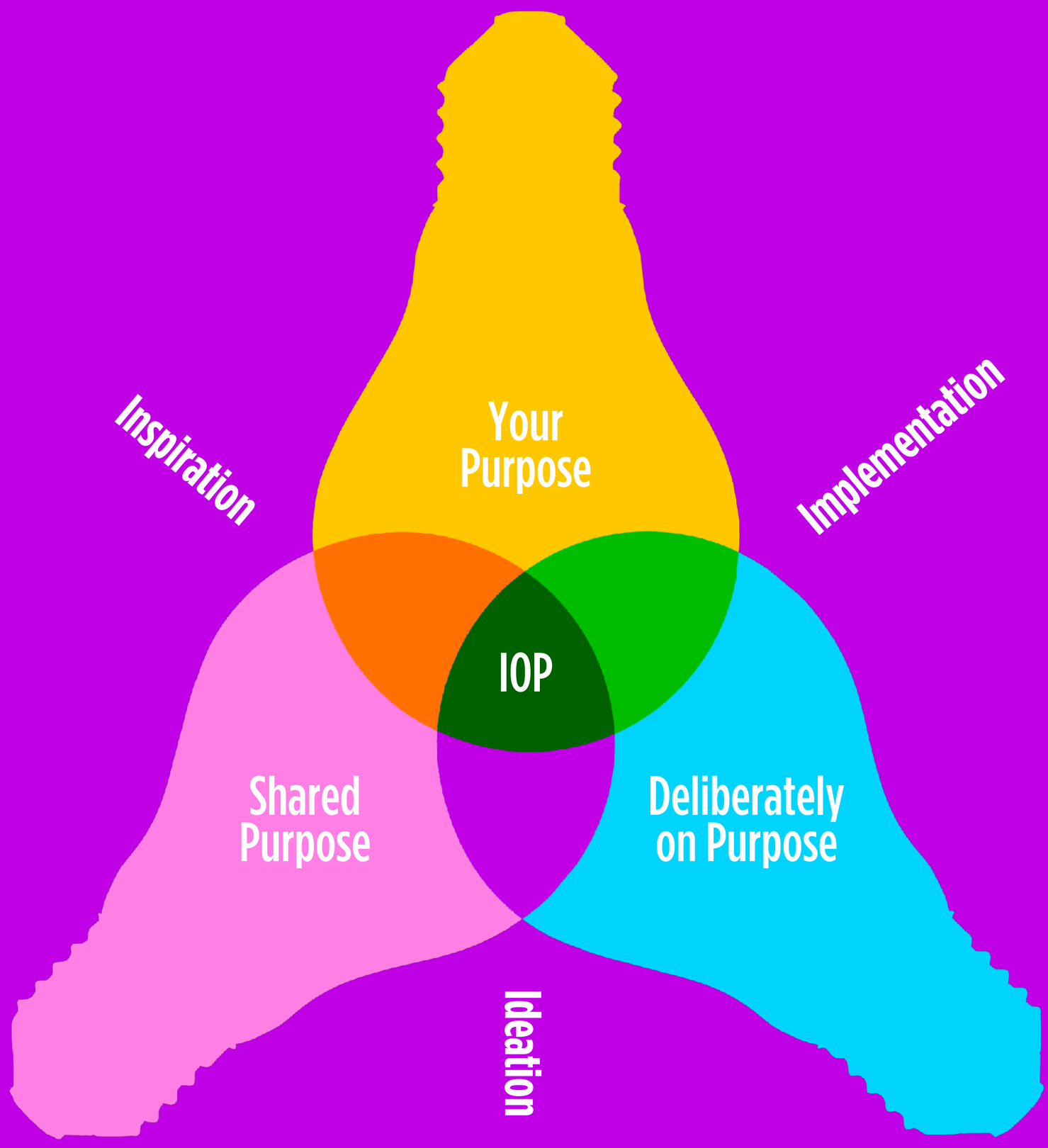
A more useful observation might have been less about the particulars of social media and more by the rising need for connection, impact and visibility in societies of increasing isolationism, cocooning and a decline in trust around traditional institutions.

Rather than focusing on advertising spend, they might have invested in strategies that promoted greater social connection.

The point we’re making is, don’t let a single slap define you, or your innovation strategy.

Inspiration: Insights for innovation

1. Insights are critical to innovation
2. Inspiration requires that we:
    - Observe behaviours
    - Understand beliefs
    - Define opportunities
3. We need to filter opportunities by:
    - Desirability
    - Feasibility
    - Viability
4. Data isn't the answer, it's input
5. Go beyond biases and blindspots
6. See from multiple points of view
7. Meaning is made not found
8. Patterns are more predictive than particulars



Part 3: Ideation

Creativity as a discipline

Creativity is a discipline not a talent.

In 2016, the World Economic Forum, in their *Future of Jobs Report*, predicted skills shifts from 2015 to 2020. Key in these shifts was the increasing demand for Creativity and Complex Problem Solving skills. The importance of these skill sets was reiterated in the research for our 2019 book, *Forever Skills*.

Traditional notions of creativity are often anchored in childhood. We typically think of activities such as drawing, musical ability or poetry composition as what might be considered creative skills.

We would like to propose a different definition. For our purposes, we will define creativity as an ability to think and to solve problems in ways we have not seen before.

This definition allows us to move from the narrow definitions of artistry and to create a space where we might all be able to identify ourselves as creative.

As the problems we face in business and in our communities become more complex, interconnected and impactful, we will all need to upgrade our cognitive software from time to time and to increase our creative capabilities.

This means creativity must also be treated, not as a talent or a flight of fancy, but as a discipline, a practice and something that is commercial and consistent.

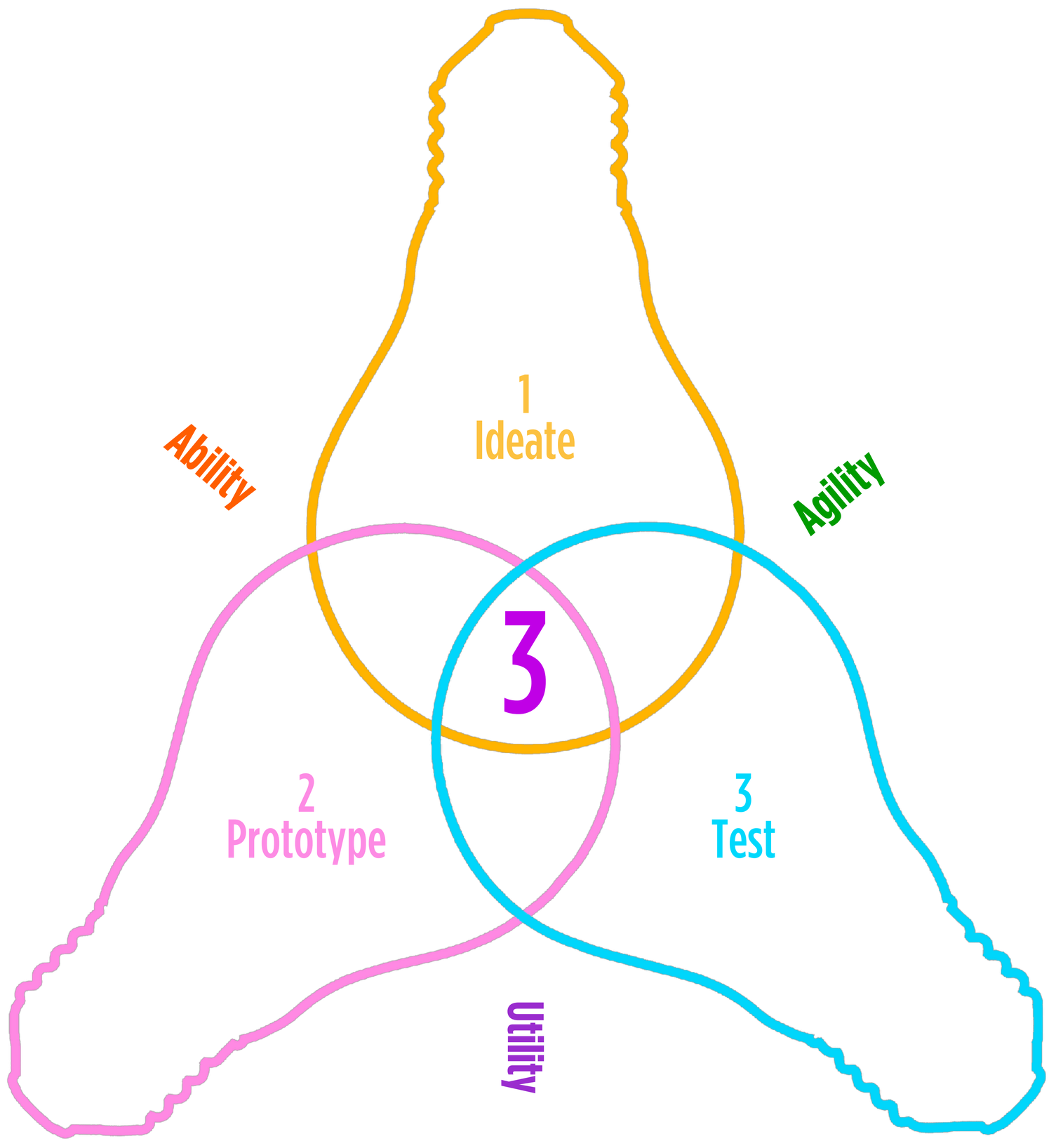
In the Ideation phase of *Innovation on Purpose*, illustrated in Model 3: Ideation on the next page, we will describe three stages of ideation and the creative processes of innovation:

1. **Ideate**
2. **Prototype**
3. **Test**

We will also explore three forms of creative thought:

1. **Mental Ability**
2. **Mental Utility**
3. **Mental Agility**

Accessing your creative genius.



Model 3: Ideation - The creative discipline

Our Ideation model is defined by three stages and three modes of creative thinking:

1. Ideate
2. Prototype
3. Test

1. Mental Ability
2. Mental Utility
3. Mental Agility

1. Mental Ability

Can you see the unknown?

The first of the three creative thinking modes is what most people would typically associate with creativity - the capacity to imagine, to bring the non-existent into reality and to see the unknown.

This is also perhaps the form of creativity that causes the greatest angst and most reinforces the fear of the blank page, not because of the limits placed on your thinking but because of the limitlessness nature of its parameters.

So, in an effort to reduce this creative anxiety, following are five guidelines and tools designed to make mental ability more accessible and systematic:

1. Solve the right problem

This is where your time spent in the inspiration phase of the *Innovation on Purpose* process really starts to pay dividends.

It may initially seem to be a point so obvious that it doesn't need to be spelt out so emphatically, and yet, experience and the practice of developing innovation strategies for all kinds of organisations and industries has taught us that it bears repeating.

Some years ago, we were asked to help an entrepreneur launch a product called Lawn Block. Unlike traditional lawn suppliers, they didn’t ship large heavy rolls of sod that were awkward and hard to manoeuvre, they shipped the lawn as squares of a similar size to commercial carpet squares.

These were distributed through big box hardware stores and they wanted to launch with a promise of being "easy to lay.”

After a short diversion down the rabbit hole of clever “easy lay” double entendres, we sat down and analysed some of the lawn purchasing data from the big box hardware stores. It turned out that the average lawn purchase from a hardware store was 2 metres by 2 metres square - a very small lawn indeed.

What we learned was, people didn't go to hardware stores to buy a complete lawn, they went looking for a “Lawn repair kit," which is what we ended up launching. That was the right problem to solve.

1. Mental Ability

2. Learn to think in questions

Typically, on confronting a challenge, an issue or a problem, we'll come with a pre-conceived notion of a solution. In other words, we try to activate our creative thinking using a statement.

So, why might this statement-based approach to creativity, problem-solving and innovation be a problem in itself and how might we work around it?

One of the reasons that statement-based problem solving can actually get in the way of our creativity is that it narrows our mental bandwidth and creates biases in how we approach possible solutions.

On having to cross a river, for example, there's a world of difference between, "We need to build a bridge," and, "How might we cross the river?" Statements pre-suppose a solution and tend to close down possibilities, whereas questions open possibilities.

For instance, you might decide a zip line or a ferry, a boat or even a tunnel is a better short or long-term solution to your river conundrum - the point is, you only get there by asking a question. With statement-based ideation, you're going to get a bridge and nothing but a bridge

So how does this process play out in a practical way? Let us share an example from early in our professional lives. Many years ago, we launched two bottled water brands into the market for Coca-Cola. The first brand in the market place enjoyed premium ranging with multiple refrigerator facings (in other words, there was a shelf-wide row of Brand #1 bottles dominating customers' eye-lines).

The second brand into the market, Brand #2, was left with only a single bottle width fridge facing. For Brand #2's marketing team, this was a problem.

So, they came to us with a fairly typical brief to solve the problem. They wanted us to design a shelf strip, a very thin ad that runs the length of the shelf, in order to draw attention to their lonely bottle's ranging. Of course, when you ask for a marketing solution and you then stipulate what kind of marketing solution you'd like, you run the risk of getting exactly that and nothing more.

1. Mental Ability

Our approach, however, involved framing the problem as a question not as a statement. The question became, “How might we increase Brand #2's refrigerator presence?”

The solution we ultimately presented, and that Coca-Cola executed, was in fact an innovation solution, not a marketing one. We created the first “clear flavoured water” brand by adding three flavours and instantly quadrupled Brand #2’s fridge presence and also lifted sales significantly.

However, without the initial reframe as a question, we’d never have reached this solution.

3. Seek answers, not "the answer”

Imagination is easy, but creativity is hard!

We are all incredibly imaginative given the opportunity, however, creativity requires discipline and a willingness to apply our creativity to a particular task, under defined parameters within a given timeline. Ultimately, it’s a numbers game.

Too often we fall in love with our second idea. Our first idea is usually rubbish. The second is significantly better, but we decide to try a third one (also usually rubbish) just to be sure.

The problem with such a narrow exploration is that we typically generate default answers using default thinking.

When we work on problems or innovation opportunities at The Impossible Institute, we use Siimon Reynold’s infamous “Box Method”. It is breathtakingly simple but extraordinarily powerful.

The method consists of a single white page with four rows of five boxes drawn on it for a total of twenty boxes. The goal is to jot a simple concept or idea into each box and to not leave your desk till the page is full.

When working together on a problem or an innovation opportunity, we will both fill in 25-30 of these pages, which means, by the time we sit down to assess our answers we are choosing from a pool of over 1000 ideas. There may be smarter people than you trying to solve your problem or challenge, but the key is to outwork them.

1. Mental Ability

For creativity and innovations that extend beyond your default thinking, discipline and numbers beat talent!

But you also need to be willing to question your answers.

One of the issues you will also face when trying to be more innovative or to create new solutions to problems you and your team or even you customers face is the heavy burden of legacy solutions.

The “We tried that in the 1980s” brigade or the, “But we’ve never done it that way before,” chorus are innovation killers who must be reeled in if you are to achieve anything remotely new.

This requires a willingness to be solution agnostic and to evaluate all solutions, even ‘your own babies’, (yes we all get attached to our own ideas), with a cold detachment.

In other words, you need to question your answers in order to move beyond existing team biases (as well as your own).

4. Challenge the limits of what's possible

One of the reasons we called our business The Impossible Institute is because of a methodology we use called *Impossible Thinking*. Often, leaders and organisations will dismiss lines of enquiry too soon by buying into existing definitions of what’s possible and what is not.

Asking an impossible question allows you to get to the other side of an issue and to then see if you can reverse engineer what seems like an impossible solution into a possibility.

For example, some years ago, we were working with an enormous financial institution, a bank that was experiencing a critical customer service breakage point because of the number of customers who were being put on hold whilst calling the contact centre and also because of the length of time they spent on hold.

Their customers became angry and abused their staff, which left their staff stressed out and angry themselves and a downward spiral of experience was significantly affecting both customer and team engagement.

1. Mental Ability

The leadership team had brought us in to run a performance workshop for the contact centre team so they could get customers “on and off the calls more quickly,” all while “delighting and surprising their customers.” You might see the inherent oppositional KPIs they had set in place.

Our approach was again to ask a question, but this time we asked what they believed to be an impossible question, “What would it take for people to want to be put on hold?”

Initially, their default thinking kicked in, “They wouldn’t!” they complained. “Yes, but what could make them want to be put on hold?” we persisted.

In the end, we explored many possibilities including gamifying the on-hold experience with time-based rewards such as a free coffee from a national chain, as well as creating the possibility of using high-profile music celebrities to record unplugged versions of their songs that could only be heard on this bank’s on hold music. People who weren’t even customers would call up and ask to be put on hold.

The point is, so much of our thinking, creativity and innovation is default, predictable and not nearly good enough for us to become leaders in our industries and fields.

However, we can move beyond our default thinking by thinking in questions, not statements.

5. Fail Smart

"Failure is a part of the journey to success,” is one of those sentiments that we all nod and agree with, while inside assuming it applies to someone else, but not us.

However, not only is failure possible, it's probable, at least to some degree.

Rather than living in denial, we would do better to assume failures as likely possibilities, to prepare for them, to limit their impact and to learn from them and use those learnings to adapt and repurpose our thinking.

Which leads us to creative thinking mode Number 2...

1. Mental Utility

Can you re-see the known?

Can you re-see the known is a question that reminds us of the joke, "What did the first person who milked a cow think they were doing?" It's a little off colour but it puts us in a mindset to see things not as they are, but as they might be.

Conversion, the ability to repurpose an object or idea as something else, is perhaps the oldest form of creative expression. In fact, it might be considered the mode of thinking that makes us most human - our capacity to see sticks and stones as tools, fire as a means of cooking, animal fat as soap and grain as bread is what has advanced society to the comfortable civilisation we now enjoy.

Unlike our previous creative mode, mental utility can seem more practical and a little "MacGyver-ish," as we've narrowed our exploration to the items or opportunities we have immediately at hand.

1. Diversify your input

In the Inspiration section of this paper, we discussed the importance of diversity and collaboration as a means of increasing collective intelligence, but it is also critical for avoiding situational or contextual blindness.

Critical errors in transferring patients from the operating theatre to the recovery wards at The Great Ormond Street hospital in London, England, were famously corrected, not by a surgeon, a nurse or hospital administrators, but by the pit crew boss of Ferrari's Formula 1 racing team.

A lack of medical training was actually an asset, allowing them to bring their own unique intelligence, that of fast, precise and accurate transitions, to the table in a way that medical experts were unable to.

Likewise, London's underground railway, The Tube, was mapped and made easy to navigate, not by cartographers, but by an engineer more used to looking at electrical schematics than geographic maps.

It is for this reason that innovations often originate inside imaginations not currently employed within an industry or category.

2. Collaborate outside your industry

Recently, Tontine Pillows solved a problem the bedding and linen industry has been trying to tackle for decades, “How to encourage consumers to change their pillows in the interests of hygiene and health.”

Tontine’s solution? Use by dates printed in faint ink on the pillows. Hardly a revolutionary technology, we’ve had use by dates on tins of beans for decades. However, most pillow experts missed it because we tend to look inside our industry for expertise rather than outside of it for opportunities.

This practice can be encouraged and inter-industry collaboration can be facilitated without actually having an outside expert in the room.

Often, to broaden the thinking of those we work with, we’ll run an exercise we call *Borrow a brain*. Very simply, we divide the team up into small groups and then give each group a brain to work with. Eg.. We’ll ask one group, “How would Walt Disney deal with this issue?” or “How might Steve Jobs tackle this?” and “What about Richard Branson? How would the Virgin Group’s founder respond?”

Real collaboration across a diversity of experience and thinking styles is clearly preferable, but it shouldn’t be seen as a reason to delay or to not look for answers outside your industry

3. Identify universals

In discussing *Your Purpose*, we identified Kodak’s ideal value lens as “memory preservation.” This lens makes sense regardless of photographic technology, and critically transcends the use of traditional film.

This is what we mean when we say, “Identify universals.” By laddering up to a broader definition of the value your provide for the customers you serve, you don’t become locked into a particular product or service offering or find yourself limited to an existing, or even dominant, technology.

This leads us to macro-ing, mixing, moving and mashing up.

1. Mental Utility

4. Macro, mix, move & mash-up

The four M's are simply tools that force your brain to look at existing products, systems, processes and industries in a new way.

Macro-ing draws on your capacity to identify the universals we just mentioned and to see the big themes within our businesses, organisations and market places as we did with the Kodak example.

Mixing is about playing with the ingredients of an innovation and adjusting the concentrations of different elements. Google did this by dialling down the completeness and visual content in their search results and dialling up the speed of search results.

Moving is about shifting the context of a product, service or idea to a new environment to observe how it changes and how we change in relation to it. "What if we applied the mapping of electrical circuits to mapping physical spaces?" for example.

Mashing-up, like mixing, throws different ideas together, though in a perhaps more vigorous way. What we want to do is to create unexpected collisions between previously and distinctly disconnected technologies. Sometimes you get "Sharknado" but occasionally you'll get fusion dining.

5. Be a little childish

If you have children, you may have marvelled at their ability to see a thing as something else entirely. A cardboard box becomes a racing car, a cardboard tube is a light sabre, a card table becomes a boutique shop counter, etc.

We are all born with the capacity for mental utility, we just need to reawaken it within ourselves.

It is for this reason that prototyping and testing with our team members and focus groups is best done in a low-tech way. Develop a prototype that is too finished and both your team and focus groups may be reluctant to criticise it or to fully participate in its co-creation.

Keep it simple and "incomplete" and you more readily invite others to "play."

1. Mental Agility

Can you un-see the known?

In addition to mental ability - your capacity to see and bring the unknown into existence, and mental utility - an ability to see the known as more than it is, a third from of creative problem solving is mental agility, the willingness to move beyond failure, to open a new possibility as another closes and to ignore initial setbacks and "un-see the known."

1. Interrogate your thinking

When investing in innovation, we spend a great deal of our time looking for new answers, but as often as not, it's the question that might need changing. What this requires is a willingness to evaluate your thinking for accuracy, or much more importantly, for relevance and salience.

In other words, ask better questions of yourself and your team. Questions that are values aligned and congruent with your goals and vision and don't be so quick to believe everything you believe.

One of our professional idols from our previous careers in the world of advertising was Bill Bernbach. Bill was a legendary Madman of New York's advertising scene in the 1950s and 60s and is reputed to have carried a small note in his top pocket reading, "They might be right."

We'd like to add an amendment to Bill's note that reads, "We might also be wrong."

2. Change the frame

Be willing to let your ideas and creativity find their own level. You might be driving so hard for a new product offering that you miss its application as a profitable service or be so focussed on new revenue streams that you pass by efficiencies that reduce expenditure and increase profitability.

Too often we view the world in a binary of good and bad when a more useful frame for innovators, entrepreneurs and leaders is, "Useful in one way or another."

1. Mental Agility

3. Be comfortable with ambiguity

We're very tempted to leave the above heading completely unexplained as a practical exercise in ambiguity, but we shall resist.

Human beings, for the most part, find ambiguity and uncertainty rather unsettling. In fact, it's not uncommon for people to gravitate to the most certain person in the room, independent of their expertise or correctness on a particular matter.

However, a willingness to "swim in ambiguity," can be a particularly useful mindset when it comes to innovation. It allows you to make "illogical" connections whilst leaving the working out and rationalisation of these connections to a later date or to someone else entirely.

Quite often when working with clients and in our own business strategy sessions, we'll capture interesting thoughts that are incomplete or otherwise interesting but a little absurd. These often feel like the fleeting glances you catch out of the corner of your eye that evaporate if you look directly at them, but will often evolve if they are allowed to steep in your imagination like a nice pot of tea.

4. Cultivate curiosity

You may have heard the claim, "Great ideas can come from anywhere." It's a nice thought, but how might we make this pithy aphorism a little more practical?

What this can look like in practice is a willingness to explore the world outside of your own interests, to take time to distract your mind with divergent experiences and to indulge in what might seem unrelated.

One of the astonishing features of the human brain is its ability to make patterns, meaning and connections, and these seemingly unrelated diversions can often be reconfigured in new and unexpected ways.

For example, you might not see any connection between the disco music of the 1970s and cardiac health. However, if we were to tell you that a useful way to achieve the correct tempo for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation, or CPR, is to sing the BeeGees' hit, "Stayin' Alive" in you head, you'll never be able to get that thought out of your head. Which is exactly what The British Heart Foundation was counting on.

1. Mental Agility

5. Learn to love problems

If you're unsure where to begin your ideation strategy, start with the breakage or friction points that are generic to your industry or category.

As much as we would all like to believe that we belong to unique corporate cultures and organisations with distinctive brands and points of difference, from a customer point of view, we all tend to screw up in predictable, or at least very similar, ways.

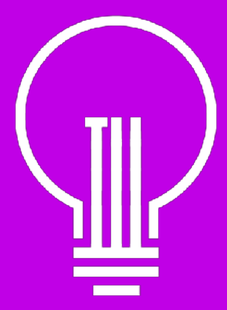
Customers and clients typically share the same complaints about all banks, all lawyers, all building contractors and all retailers.

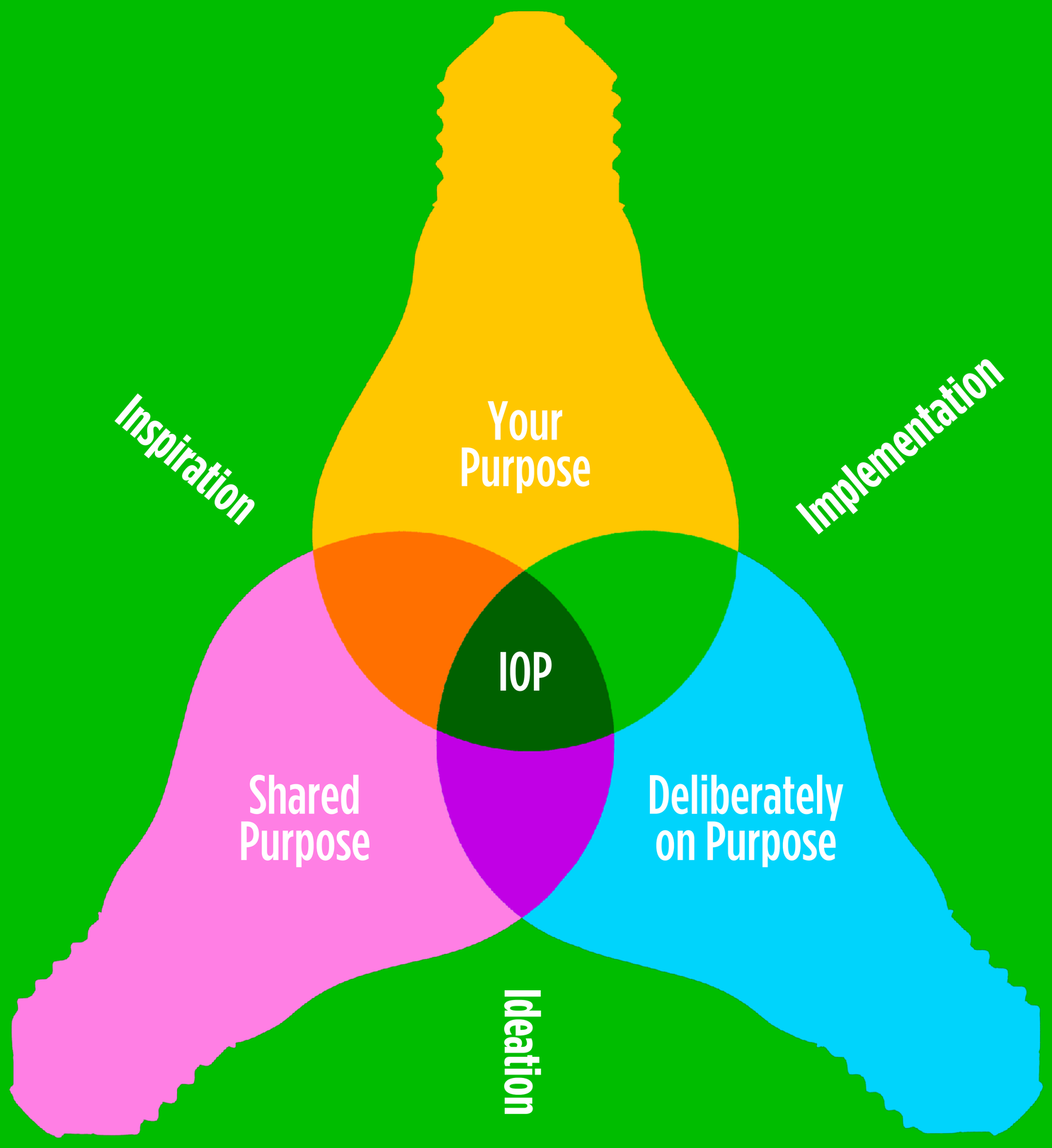
However, rather than being a feature by which we are all damned, it is in fact an opportunity to stand out and innovate.

Approaching a problem or challenge with an attitude of, “How could this be useful?” or “How could I use this to my advantage?” helps to ameliorate your defensiveness when issues do arise, but more importantly, it alerts your brain to the possibility of opportunity.

Ideation: The creative discipline

1. Creativity is a discipline not a talent
2. Ideation involves 3 activities:
    - Ideate
    - Prototype
    - Test
3. We need to use different ideation strategies:
    - Mental Ability
    - Mentail Utility
    - Mental Agility
4. Can you see the unknown?
5. Can you re-see the known?
6. Can you un-see the known?





Part 4: Implementation

Ideas into action

Ideas are not enough.

Oded Shenkar, who we mentioned in the introduction to this paper, conducted a study while at Ohio State University which was published in his 2010 book, *Copycats*. He asserted that 97.8% of the value of an innovation goes to the imitators, not the innovators. Given that, should we simply steal the ideas of others, or is there something else we might consider?

The truth is, ideas without influence and implementation are impotent, and while the imitators may have experienced greater market place success, it may also be true that they possessed characteristics, other than unoriginality, that helped them achieve this success. These characteristics will be explored here in Part 4.

The case we'll make here is that identifying a need or want through insight gathering and definition, followed by a rigorous ideation and creative phase, all filtered through a value lens defined by multiple levels of purpose will still only take you part of the way towards a successful innovation.

The final phase, Implementation, is critical to your success and the viability of your innovation efforts.

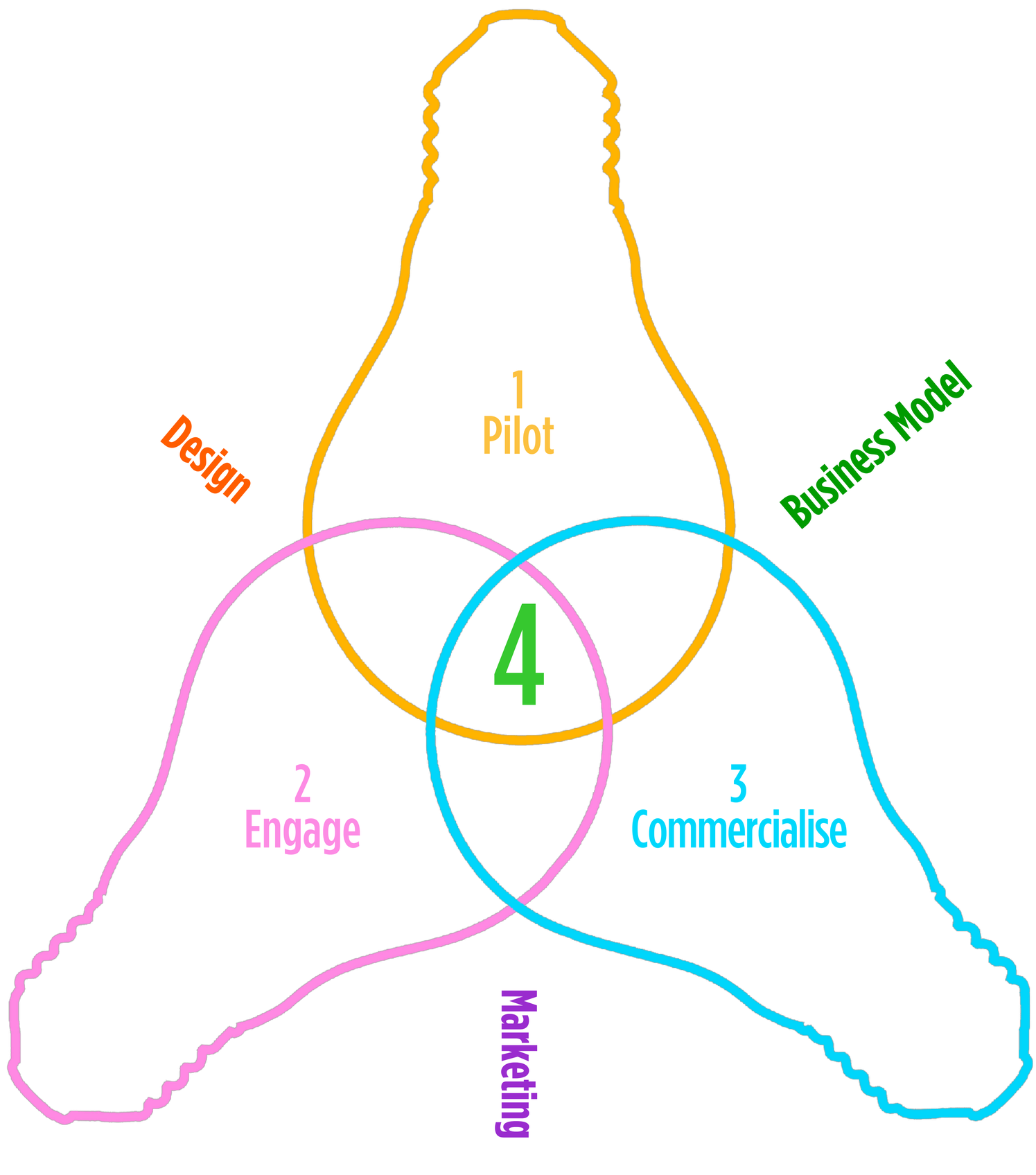
In Part 4, we will examine the three stages of Implementation, illustrated in Model 4: Implementation on the next page and as follows:

1. **Pilot** - The creation of an in market product or activation.
2. **Engage** - Your capacity to build engagement and excitement around your idea.
3. **Commercialise** - The business model and financials that determine your success.

We'll then explore the three skills required to bring these stages to fruition:

1. **Product & Experience Design**
2. **Marketing & Engagement Strategy**
3. **Business Model & Financials**

Making it tangible.



Model 4: Implementation - Ideas into action

Our Ideation model is defined by three stages and three filters/frames:

1. Pilot
2. Engage
3. Commercialise

1. Product & Experience Design
2. Marketing & Engagement Strategy
3. Business Model & Financials

Design success in.

In the long term, design beats discipline and motivation.

Of course, this is not to say that discipline and motivation are over-valued, or indeed unnecessary, simply that they are short term strategies that require constant vigilance and shoring up.

What is critical here, is the understanding that designing your product, service and experience offering with a bias towards success and away from failure, makes success more likely. A strategy we explored more completely in our 2015 book, *Selfish, Scared & Stupid*.

So, how does this play out in practical terms?

You've probably employed *design over discipline* in your personal life. If you have alarms set on your smart phone for 6:00... 6:05... 6:10... etc., or if you have ever set an analogue alarm clock and then placed it on the other side of your bedroom so you have to physically get up out of bed to turn it off, you are already an expert in design over discipline.

We call this “Hacking human nature.”

Large corporations and governments do exactly the same thing. For example, working with financial institutions all around the world, we have learned that, despite most of us believing that saving for the future is a wise course of action, the only time people reliably save money and keep those savings, is when the money is deducted from their salary or wages before they receive them and kept in an account they have limited or no access to. This is a behavioural bias towards savings success.

This same thinking should be brought to the implementation phase of your innovation. Consider where the breakage points lie in your engagement campaign, distribution channels, warehousing and payment mechanisms, and hack them so that you reduce friction with regard to desired behaviours and increase frictions around those behaviours you'd like to avoid or minimise.

Bias towards action.

Of course you should prioritise the quality of your offering and hold yourself and your team to the highest possible standards, however that being said, progress beats perfect.

You've probably heard the entrepreneur's cliché, "Launch at 80%." Of course, the problem with this advice is that it's really only possible to assess 80% once you have achieved 100%. The intension of the advice , however, is sound.

Two things to consider that make implementation more powerful:

1. Your pilot will never be perfect

Having developed multiple launch strategies for clients in both product and service industries as well as launching many products and services of our own, what we can promise you is that you will never be perfect at launch.

That might not sound like reassurance, but believe us, this has included what would become the most successful new product launch in Australian history as well as the most dramatic brand resurrection ever achieved in Australia (which we were hired to orchestrate after once of the most catastrophic brand launches in history). These “imperfect” strategies were ultimately exported around the world.

The point is, you really don't know what the market thinks until they tell you. What’s more…

2. Your launch isn’t the last step

In the introduction to this paper, we mentioned that one of the caveats we had in reducing a process that has become intuitive with experience to one that can be illustrated in a model is the tendency to see it as having a beginning and an end.

Even when you have created an in market activation, invested in an engagement campaign and built a business model with (hopefully) realistic financial projections, you are not at the end.

Many times we have had to relaunch a product as a service or repackage a service into an out-of-the-box product, not because the insights, ideation or innovation was flawed, but because our method of implementation and delivery was.

Know what you’re selling.

We are all in the business of sales and marketing. If you're a leader, you're selling your vision, if your a parent, you're selling bedtime and broccoli, and if your in a relationship (or trying to get into a relationship), you are very definitely in sales and marketing. The point is, innovations, even great, world changing ideas, need to be sold.

This draws us back full circle to where we started this paper. With a value lens through which you might project your innovation strategy through. This value lens should also inform your sales, marketing and engagement strategies.

1. **The Literal**

What is the clearest articulation you can make for the product or service you are bringing to the market place. A useful exercise for this is to write it out and then cross out words until it no longer makes sense. Our friend Matt Church calls this part of engagement the "Known spoken.”

2. **The Emotional**

This is where most sales people and marketers spend their time, describing features and benefits and making emotional calls to action. Matt refers to this as the "Known unspoken.”

3. **The Psychological**

The psychological level of what you are selling might never be mentioned in your sales or marketing, but it should still inform your strategy. Matt calls this the “unknown unspoken.:

A middle aged man might say he's buying a sports car for literal reasons such as aerodynamics, performance and German engineering. He might even admit to the effectiveness of emotional triggers such as conveying success, status and even a feeling of social superiority.

However, he is unlikely to admit to his underlying psychological driver to feel vital as his potency and power as a man are in decline, yet this understanding is still important to understand.

Just don't say it out loud!

Practice storytelling & story doing.

Leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators around the world have all embraced storytelling as a way to share their vision, build their brands and create engagement around their products and services and you should too. We'd also like to suggest that you go one step further and embrace "story doing."

One of the competitive advantages stories have over other forms of communication is that they can be personal, sharable and transferable. You can tell them in the first person, the third person, via social media or over a coffee. In fact, stories can take on a life of their own that no Madison Avenue executive can come close to emulating.

In constructing the stories you create around your innovations, it's important that you build your why into them. In other words, the moral to your tale should align with the value lens you used to start this journey, anchored not in your ego but in the contribution you seek to make to those you wish to serve.

But as powerful as the stories you tell about yourself can be, what is much more powerful are the stories that other tell about you on your behalf. This is the essence of story doing.

In other words, what is your "special sauce," your "secret herbs and spices," your "no-where-else-experience," that I feel compelled to tell others about.

When Lexus decides to fix a problem with one of their models by sending a small team to every Lexus owners home with a technician who fixes the problem there in your driveway, with an apology and a gift, that is a no-where-else-experience.

When Tiffany treats a 10 year-old girl looking for a charm for her bracelet like a 30 year-old looking for an engagement ring, that is worth sharing.

When Morton's Steak House meets Peter Shankman at an airport gate with a steak in response to a cheeky tweet, that is story doing!

You built it, now better it.

The end is not the end.

Throughout this paper, we've suggested that innovation is more cyclic and circular than a linear process with a clear beginning and end, and we'd like to echo those thoughts as we close off Part 4.

One of the risks associated with a successful innovation is the tendency to feel comfortable and to bask in our own success. Of course, celebrating wins is incredibly important for us culturally and personally, however success is perhaps better understood as part of a continuum.

In Part 3, we inferred that often times our best people can be our worst innovators, however it is perhaps more accurate to say that success can breed apathy. In fact, it is for this reason that we stopped running Innovation Workshops, and instead, now deliver workshops on "Risk Prototyping."

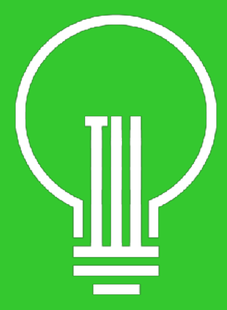
Human beings, on the whole, are far more driven to defend what they have than they are to build something new. Risk Prototyping, rather than fighting this inclination, seeks to amplify it and utilise it.

People will allow themselves to be more creative in addressing a perceived threat that they might be in undermining their own job security.

What this means for you, as an innovator, is that once you have established a successful foothold in the market place, your should immediately begin designing what will kill your innovation, and then to implement it before your competition does.

Implementation: Ideas into action

1. Ideas are not enough
2. Implementation has 3 stages:
    - Pilot
    - Engage
    - Commercialise
3. These require 3 skills sets:
    - Product & Experience Design
    - Marketing & Engagement Strategy
    - Business Modelling & Financial
4. Design success in
5. Bias towards action
6. Know what you're selling
7. Use storytelling and story doing
8. Build it then better it



Conclusion: Implications & Applications

Innovation is not a talent or skill set that we are either born with or not, it is a series of processes, a cultural capability and a discipline that can be learned, improved and implemented at an individual and organisational level.

Yes, we do live in a world of unprecedented change, change that is unpredictable, particularly if we are being led by it rather than leading it. But this is the true opportunity of innovation, to lead, not just our team or our organisation, but our entire industry into the future.

To do this effectively, we need to *Innovate on Purpose* - Your purpose, Shared purpose and deliberately on purpose. In other words, we need to project our innovation strategies through the value we contribute to those we work with and the customers, members and constituents we serve.

This requires a willingness to commit to the different phases of innovation. To be inspired by insights that allows us to identify true opportunities. To embrace different creative thinking modes and to challenge our pre-conceptions during the ideation phase. Ultimately, it demands that we implement and let the market tell us what we are doing right and where we need to improve.

We hope this paper has been useful to you on your innovation journey and we'd love to hear stories about how you have applied this thinking in your own professional life.

Cheers,

Kieran & Dan

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