

VISUALISING INNOVATION ECO-SYSTEMS

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Abstract

Your ability to innovate is key to survival and success. We have been exploring ways to help innovation leaders see the big picture, understand their current innovation eco-systems and then take a proactive approach to their nurture and growth. Using components of an innovation Game (InnovoZone™), participants in this workshop will visualise different innovation scenarios and develop narratives to tell stories about successes and failures. We will use these stories to help us see how to analyse, diagnose and fix unhealthy innovation eco-systems using a simple model, and explore how a taking a gaming approach can accelerate learning.

Workshop Activities

1. Visualising Innovation, introducing the innovation eco-system
2. Adding processes to the eco-system and resourcing them
3. Eco-system modelling – stories that help us improve on reality!
4. What gets in the way – barriers to innovation and how to overcome them
5. The next step - creating a dynamic simulations

1. Visualising Innovation

There are many models of innovation out there – each trying to create a common language that we can use to discuss innovation processes with the hope that we can improve our capability. Many of these models however focus too heavily on the creative processes which of course and by definition are crucial to the process. However focusing too much on this aspect underplays the importance of other activities essential to true innovation – development, leadership and generating a return. Our concept of the innovation eco system covers all these areas and helps us to see the big picture.

What is the Eco-system?

In this workshop we propose that by visualising the whole innovation “Eco-System” we are in a better position to ensure that all parts of the idea lifecycle are covered and working effectively. The idea lifecycle at its most basic level consists of:

- **Creativity** – how ideas are generated
- **Development** – translation of the idea into something of potential value (n.b. not necessarily financial value)
- **Value Realisation** – generating value from your developed idea, a return on your investment
- **Leadership** – creating the environment where innovation can prosper – tending the innovation eco-system

Together, these 4 zones of activity represent the environment in which we can build eco-systems of techniques and approaches consciously designed to fit the innovation situation, rather than continuing (by default) to use the same old accidental approach that you have applied so far and hoping it will work out.

By adding “processes” which represent the people, skills, architectures, technologies, leadership capabilities, events and strategies into these 4 activity zones, we can construct any number of innovation eco-systems (or scenarios) and use the visual model to help us see where things work well or where there are gaps or barriers.

Exercise: Participants will brainstorm at a high level what type of processes might be included in each of the four activity zones to build effective innovation eco-systems

2. Populating Eco-systems - Adding processes to the model

The workshop will explore how processes (a term used in the broadest context) can be defined to represent anything from traditional business processes, to specialist skills, architectures, events and strategies. These processes can then be added to the eco-system to describe how ideas flow through it. Nothing comes for free, and so these processes will have to have some kind of resource assigned to make them work.

Exercise: Participants will brainstorm a number of specific processes and discuss what sort of resource might be needed.

3. Modelling an eco-system – real examples

Using “Process Cards” from InnovoZone, The Innovation Game™ we will model innovation eco-systems and diagnose problems. Using narrative development techniques, we will explore some case studies which illustrate the diagnostic power of visualising and storytelling to illustrate broken eco-systems and the steps we can take to fix them.

Exercise: Participants will be invited to model their own stories and reflect these back to the group.

4. What gets in the way?

Exercise: The participants will use “reverse innovation” techniques to identify critical barriers to innovation that emerged from the previous modelling exercise. Strategies to overcome these (provide antidotes) will be developed.

5. Playing Games – adding the dynamic element

If time allows, we will discuss the value of adding a dynamic simulation to the modelling process to see how this makes the model much more “real”. In simulation mode, players develop innovation eco-systems in real time in competition (or collaboration) with the other players with the objective of generating as much value (e.g. money) as possible, more quickly than their competitors.