

The Human Touch

The Ten Faces of Innovation is a book about innovation with a human face. It's about the individuals and teams that fuel innovation inside great organizations. Because all great movements are ultimately human-powered. Archimedes said, "Give me a place to stand and a lever long enough and I can move the world." The innovation personas described in the next ten chapters are not necessarily the most powerful people you will ever meet. They don't have to be. Because each persona brings its own lever, its own tools, its own skills, its own point of view. And when someone combines energy and intelligence with the right lever, they can generate a remarkably powerful force. Make sure they have a place on your team. Together you can do extraordinary things.

At IDEO, we believe that innovators focus on the verbs. They're proactive. They're energetic. Innovators set out to create, to experiment, to inspire, to build on new ideas. Our techniques may at times seem unusual, but the results can be truly extraordinary.

All good working definitions of innovation pair ideas with action, the spark with the fire. Innovators don't just have their heads in the clouds. They also have their feet on the ground. 3M, one of the first companies to fully embrace innovation as the essence of its corporate brand, defines it as "New ideas—plus action or implementation—which result in an improvement, a gain, or a profit." It is not enough to just have a good idea. Only when you *act*, when you *implement*, do you truly innovate. Ideas. Action. Implementation. Gain. Profit. All good words, of course, but there's still one piece left out. *People*. That's why I prefer the Innovation Network's definition: "*People* creating value through the implementation of new ideas." The classic 3M definition might leave you with the impression that, as a bumper sticker might put it, "Innovation Happens." But unfortunately, there's no spontaneous combustion in the business world. Innovation is definitely not self-starting or self-perpetuating. People make it happen through their imagination, willpower, and perseverance. And whether you are a team member, a group leader, or an executive, your only real path to innovation is through people. You can't really do it alone.

This is a book about people. More specifically, it is about the roles people can play, the hats they can put on, the personas they can adopt. It is not about the luminaries of innovation like Thomas Edison, or even celebrity CEOs like Steve Jobs and Jeffrey Immelt. It is about the unsung heroes who work on the front lines of entrepreneurship in action, the countless people and teams who make innovation happen day in and day out.

The ten core chapters of this book highlight ten people-centric tools developed at IDEO that you might call talents or roles or personas for innovation. Although the list does not presume to be comprehensive, it does aspire to expand your repertory. We've found that adopting one or more of these roles can help teams express a different point of view and create a broader range of innovative solutions.

By developing some of these innovation personas, you'll have a chance to put the Devil's Advocate in his place. So when someone says, "Let me play Devil's Advocate for a minute" and starts to smother a fragile new idea with negativity, someone else in the room may be emboldened to speak up and say, "Let me be an Anthropologist for a moment, because I personally have watched our customers suffering silently with this issue for months, and this new idea just might help them." And if that one voice gives courage to others, maybe someone else will add, "Let's think like an Experimenter for a moment. We could prototype this idea in a week and get a sense of whether we're onto something good." Or someone else could volunteer to be a Hurdler, and pledge to get the team some seed funding for an exploration of the concept. The Devil's Advocate may never go away, but on a good day, the ten personas can keep him in his place. Or tell him to go to hell.

One important caveat. My feelings about Devil's Advocates should not be interpreted as some sort of endorsement for a "yes-man culture." IDEO has always believed in constructive criticism and free debate. Actually, strong innovation roles can lead to more critical thinking, as team members develop a broader perspective

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from which to view projects. But the Devil's Advocate seldom takes a real stand, preferring to tear down an idea with clever criticism, and often exhibiting the mean-spirited negativity associated with that role. Meanwhile, the innovation roles are intended to encourage people to stand up for what they believe in.

So who are these personas? Many already exist inside of large companies, though they're often underdeveloped or unrecognized. They represent latent organizational ability, a reservoir of energy waiting to be tapped. We all know plenty of bright, capable people who would like to make a bigger contribution, team members whose contributions don't quite fit into traditional categories like "engineer" or "marketer" or "project manager."

In a postdisciplinary world where the old descriptors can be constraining, these new roles can empower a new generation of innovators. They give individuals permission to make their own unique contribution to the social ecology and performance of the team. Here's a brief introduction of the personas:

The Learning Personas

Individuals and organizations need to constantly gather new sources of information in order to expand their knowledge and grow, so the first three personas are *learning roles*. These personas are driven by the idea that no matter how successful a company currently is, no one can afford to be complacent. The world is changing at an accelerated pace, and today's great idea may be tomorrow's anachronism. The learning roles help keep your team from becoming too internally focused and remind the organization not to be so smug about what you "know." People who adopt the learning roles are humble enough to question their own worldview, and in doing so they remain open to new insights every day.

- 1 The Anthropologist brings new learning and insights into the organization by observing human behavior and developing a deep understanding of how people interact physically and emo-

tionally with products, services, and spaces. When an IDEO human-factors person camps out in a hospital room for forty-eight hours with an elderly patient undergoing surgery—as described in Chapter 1—she is living the life of the Anthropologist and helping to develop new health care services.

- 2 The Experimenter prototypes new ideas continuously, learning by a process of enlightened trial and error. The Experimenter takes calculated risks to achieve success through a state of "experimentation as implementation." When BMW bypassed all its traditional advertising channels and created theater-quality short films for bmwfilms.com, no one knew whether the experiment would succeed. Their runaway success, which underscores the rewards that flow to Experimenters, is detailed in Chapter 2.

- 3 The Cross-Pollinator explores other industries and cultures, then translates those findings and revelations to fit the unique needs of your enterprise. When an open-minded Japanese businesswoman travels 5,000 miles to find inspiration for a new brand, she finds a concept an ocean away that sparks a billion-dollar retail empire, and demonstrates the leverage of a Cross-Pollinator. You'll hear her story in Chapter 3.

The Organizing Personas

The next three personas are *organizing roles*, played by individuals who are savvy about the often counterintuitive process of how organizations move ideas forward. At IDEO, we used to believe that the ideas should speak for themselves. Now we understand what the Hurdler, the Collaborator, and the Director have known all along: that even the best ideas must continuously compete for time, attention, and resources. Those who adopt these organizing roles don't dismiss the process of budget and resource allocation as "politics" or "red tape." They recognize it as a complex game of chess, and they play to win.

- 4 The Hurdler knows the path to innovation is strewn with obstacles and develops a knack for overcoming or outsmarting those roadblocks. When the 3M worker who invented Scotch tape decades ago had his idea initially rejected, he refused to give up. Staying within his \$100 authorization limit, he signed a series of \$99 purchase orders to pay for critical equipment needed to produce the first batch. His perseverance paid off, and 3M has reaped billions of dollars in cumulative profits because energetic Hurdler was willing to bend the rules.
- 5 The Collaborator helps bring eclectic groups together, and often leads from the middle of the pack to create new combinations and multidisciplinary solutions. When a customer-service manager wins over a skeptical corporate buyer to the idea of brainstorming new forms of cooperation, and the resulting new program doubles their sales, he's playing the role of a very successful Collaborator.
- 6 The Director not only gathers together a talented cast and crew but also helps to spark their creative talents. When a creative Mattel executive assembles an ad hoc team and dubs them "Platypus," launching a novel process that creates a \$100 million toy platform in three months, she is a role model for Directors everywhere. Her story is told in Chapter 6.

The Building Personas

The four remaining personas are *building roles* that apply insights from the learning roles and channel the empowerment from the organizing roles to make innovation happen. When people adopt the building personas, they stamp their mark on your organization. People in these roles are highly visible, so you'll often find them right at the heart of the action.

- 7 The Experience Architect designs compelling experiences that go beyond mere functionality to connect at a deeper level with customers' latent or expressed needs. When an ice cream shop turns the preparation of a frozen dessert into a fun, dramatic performance, it is designing a successful new customer experience. The premium prices and marketing buzz that follow are rewards associated with playing the role of the Experience Architect.
- 8 The Set Designer creates a stage on which innovation team members can do their best work, transforming physical environments into powerful tools to influence behavior and attitude. Companies like Pixar and Industrial Light & Magic recognize that the right office environments can help nourish and sustain a creative culture. When a business team doubles its usable output after reinventing its space and a sports team discovers a renewed winning ability in a brand-new stadium, they are demonstrating the value of the Set Designer. Organizations that tap into the power of the Set Designer sometimes discover remarkable performance improvements that make all the space changes worthwhile.
- 9 The Caregiver builds on the metaphor of a health care professional to deliver customer care in a manner that goes beyond mere service. Good Caregivers anticipate customer needs and are ready to look after them. When you see a service that's really in demand, there's usually a Caregiver at the heart of it. A Manhattan wine shop that teaches its customers how to enjoy the pleasures of wine without ever talking down to them is demonstrating the Caregiver role—while earning a solid profit at the same time.
- 10 The Storyteller builds both internal morale and external awareness through compelling narratives that communicate a fundamental human value or reinforce a specific cultural trait. Companies from Dell to Starbucks have lots of corporate legends that support their brands and build camaraderie within their teams. Medtronic, celebrated for its product innovation and

consistently high growth, reinforces its culture with straightforward-from-the-heart storytelling from patients' firsthand narratives of how the products changed—or even saved—their lives.

The appeal of the personas is that they work. Not in theory or in the classroom but in the unforgiving marketplace. IDEO has battle-tested them thousands of times in a real-world laboratory for innovation. Every year, we work on literally hundreds of innovation projects. And where once the bulk of our clients were start-ups or technology companies, today some of our biggest clients are progressive leaders of the Fortune 100. They seek us out not just for help with a single innovation but for a series of innovations. They come to us to tap into the insights and energy of a talented team, adept at playing roles like Cross-Pollinator, Anthropologist, and Experimenter.

Transforming Innovation

The Ten Faces of Innovation is designed to help you bring the human elements of innovation to the workings of your enterprise. In giving innovation a face, I've also tried to give it a personality. And I've had a lot of help, thanks not only to my brother, David, who founded the firm, but also to the hundreds of talented IDEO designers, engineers, and human factors people who have paved the way over the last twenty-seven years. It's my hope that this book pays them tribute by shining a light on the essential approaches, personas, and roles that nourish innovation.

The Ten Faces of Innovation is about how people and teams put into practice methods and techniques that infuse an enterprise with a continuous spirit of creative evolution. Successful businesses build fresh innovation strategies into the fabric of their operations. They do it year-round and in widely differing parts of their enterprises. When the team's creative engine is running at top speed, the momentum and synergy can keep a company ahead through bad times and good.

In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, this book is about seizing the innovation opportunities in a company, an industry, a

region, even a nation. It's about developing the personas of your team to maximize its influence. The right innovation project at the right time can spur a companywide movement, generating an afterglow that permeates the workplace—sparking a culture of innovation that takes on a life of its own.

The proof, as they say, is in the pudding. In the following chapters, you'll find ample evidence of the transforming power of a culture of innovation. You'll find companies where innovation is no longer merely about generating compelling new products and services. Companies where the creative process itself—how they work, inspire, and collaborate—has developed a remarkable energy that keeps the organization moving forward.

As you get to know the ten personas, keep in mind that they're not inherent personality traits or "types" that are permanently attached to one (and only one) individual on the team. A persona is not about your predetermined "business DNA." These innovation roles are available to nearly anyone on your team, and people can switch roles, reflecting their multifaceted capabilities.

This nimble contextual switching from role to role may sound a bit complicated, but you are already probably very good at it. For example, I play at least half a dozen roles every day, including husband, father, brother, IDEOer, author, speaker, mentor, and Transformation team member. Completely immersed in one of my business roles, I get an urgent phone call from my son, and I switch instantly into father role. In doing so, I change my attitude, my tone of voice, my patience level, and even my thought patterns. Staying in one role when I need to be in the other would be inappropriate and ineffective. Worse yet, it could damage relationships or even my career. But getting the role just right can be very rewarding.

It's the same with innovation roles. We have too many people out there playing Devil's Advocate when they should be in a learning role like the Anthropologist, when they should be invoking an organizing role like the Collaborator, when they should be adopting a building role like the Experience Architect. The innovation roles give you a chance to broaden your creative range, with the flexibility to pick the

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right role for the right challenge. The innovation roles offer a new vocabulary, sparking a fresh discourse that invites team members to make their own unique contributions to the success of the enterprise.

And like a Method actor immersing himself in a new role, you may find that walking in the shoes of a new persona changes your attitude and outlook, even your behavior. If it opens you up to new thought patterns, the new role may help you achieve personal and professional

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growth. And thinking of the ten innovation elements as personas rather than tools reminds us that innovation is a full-time endeavor for all modern organizations, not just a task to be checked off periodically. The personas are about "being innovation" rather than merely "doing innovation." Taking on one or more of these roles is a conscious step toward becoming an innovator in your daily life.

When you begin building your team, remember there is no set formula for using the personas. People can take on multiple roles. You need not have a one-to-one mapping of teams to personas, and you certainly don't need ten people on every team. It's unlikely every team will have every persona represented. Conversely, this isn't Hollywood, and no one wants to be typecast. You might find yourself wearing the hats of two or three personas as you move from one project to the next.

Some of these roles will undoubtedly fit you better than others. You may be a born Cross-Pollinator or a nimble Experimenter. You may also find you're a better Anthropologist than you thought possible. This isn't a competition between the individual innovation roles. It's a team effort to expand the overall potential of your organization. Increasing your skills in just two or three roles can make a critical difference. *Ten Faces of Innovation* is about inviting you to broaden your color palette. Maybe you've always favored blue and green, but if you open these pages and try a few brushstrokes of purple, you might be amazed at the results. So take up your brush and let it fly. The canvas is waiting.