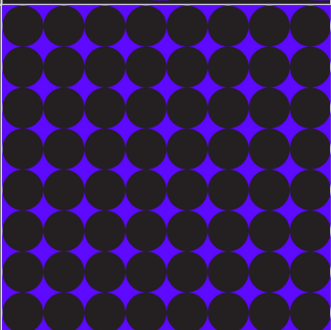
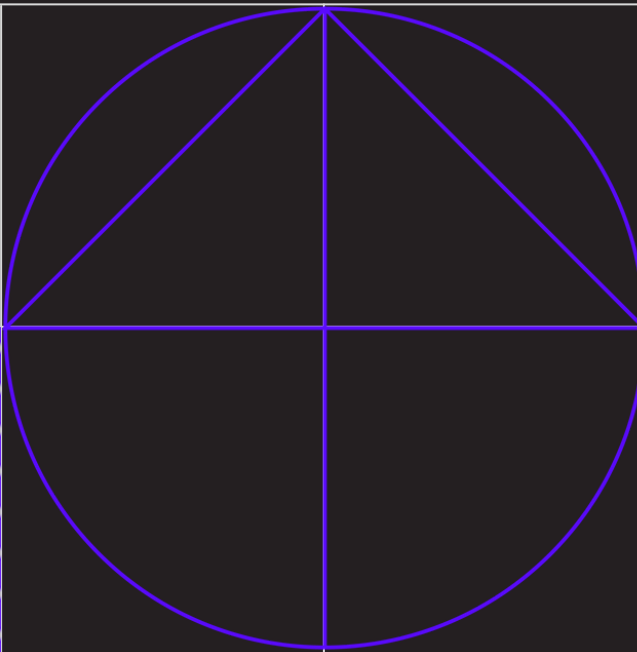
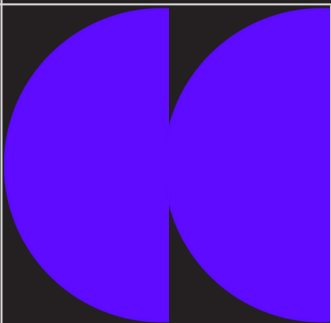


# INNOVATION NORTH



Session 14 Key INsights:

## LEADING INNOVATION TEAMS SUCCESSFULLY



# Nimble Organizations

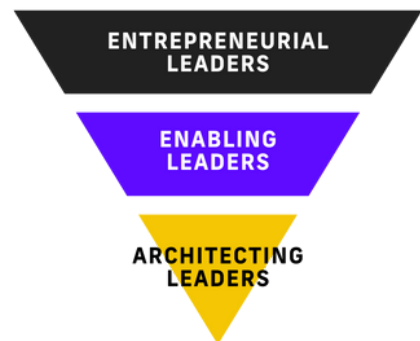
In traditional organizations, senior executives are responsible for directing middle management on both the goals of the organization and the tasks needed to achieve those goals. Middle management, further, direct innovation teams to implement those tasks. These teams are seen as fixed structures, self-contained and inward-looking.

Even though this model was effective in a world that was relatively stable and predictable, it is a liability in today's world full of complexities and change. Today, we need nimble organizations, which allow for both centralized and decentralized decisions.

In Deborah's model, nimble organizations "flip" the hierarchy and incorporate three types of leaders in their structure, each of which play a specific role in the organization:

**Entrepreneurial Leaders:** These are leaders in innovation teams that facilitate the development of new ideas for the organization. These are the leaders who understand the details of the ground realities and are the most capable to come up with product/service ideas that best fit the needs of the stakeholders and the fast-changing environment. For that, these teams are externally-oriented (see more below under "xTEAM").

**Enabling Leaders:** These leaders form middle management, which act as a bridge for linking the ideation done by the innovation teams, and the larger vision held by top management. These teams assist in information and resource transfer to and from the innovation team and top management, playing a critical role to keep the organization connected and aligned.



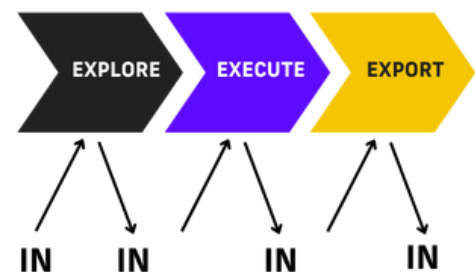
**Architecting Leaders:** These leaders form the top management in an organization. They are responsible for not only developing the vision and larger plans for the organization, but also setting the normative stance and culture of the organization. These leaders hold the resources needed for the implementation of ideas, meaning the entrepreneurial teams require their buy-in to execute their ideas.

# xTEAMS

xTEAMS are 'externally oriented teams' that facilitate the entrepreneurial leaders to not only develop novel ideas but also implement them effectively, creating value for both the organization and the stakeholders.

xTEAMS follow a flexible three-phase process – explore, execute, and export. In the explore phase, the team generates awareness of the context in which the innovation needs to occur. This helps in developing ideas that fit best within the existing turbulent system.

In the execute stage, xTEAMS enact the ideas to receive feedback on the impact(s) that the ideas are likely to create. Feedback received from the execution of the idea is not only restricted to the xTEAM, but also disseminated across the organization in the export phase, which facilitates vicarious learning by others in the organization.



Successful xTEAMS are particularly adept at these three functions:

**1. Sensemaking:** Team members reach out to stakeholders to not only collect information and perspectives about their needs, but also to reflect and make sense of what they hear. This increases the general awareness of innovation teams about the external environment and can help generate novel, useful, and viable ideas.

**2. Ambassadorship:** Team members develop connections up the hierarchy to the top management to generate buy-in on the ideas. Without higher-level support, ideas are unlikely to transition into implementation.

**3. Task Coordination:** Creating and implementing impactful innovation requires different interdependent teams to coordinate their tasks appropriately. For example, coordination of tasks between R&D, operations, sales and marketing, and finance would not only lead to the development of ideas that are viable and fit the needs of the stakeholders, but also lead to efficient and effective implementation of the innovation.

## Nimble Cultures

An important enabler of how teams can innovate in turbulent times is creating a nimble culture within organizations, in which leadership is distributed. As organizations and teams move from a culture of command and control to one that is more flexible, networked, and collaborative, they require members at any level of the organization to step up. Additionally, organizations must nurture an environment that is inclusive, which fosters innovation and learning.

At the Lab session, our second breakout group exercise asked each participant to reflect on their own organizational culture. We were given cards (xCARDS) that represent the characteristics of a nimble environment, covering four core dimensions: stepping in and out to lead, setting up for innovation, creating the culture and including others.

Examples of characteristics on the cards include “Leaders emerge even when they don’t have formal titles” and “People know how to innovate while considering customers, capabilities and the business model”. This exercise encouraged participants to not just evaluate the current aspects of their organization’s culture, but to prioritize three characteristics they want to work on to keep advancing towards a nimble culture.

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