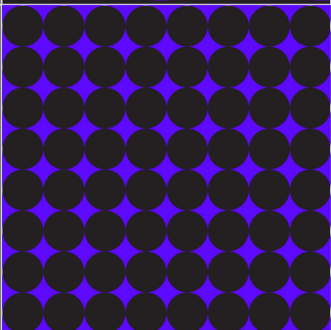
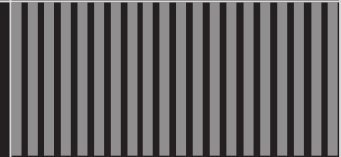
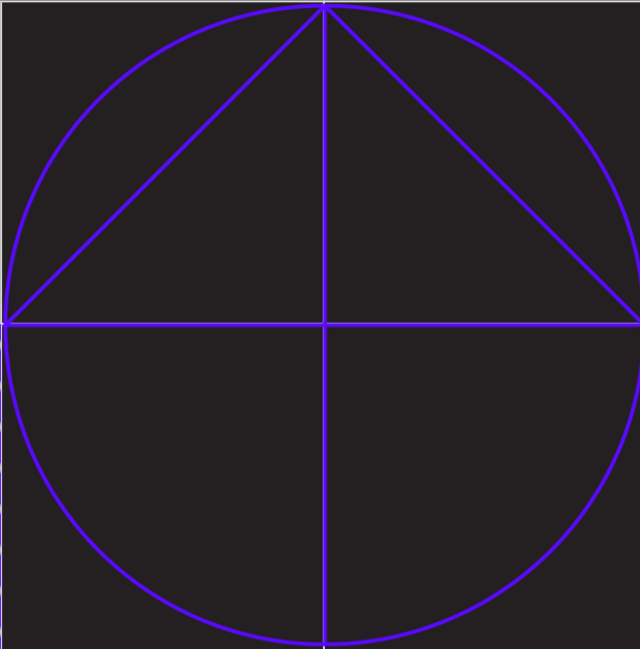
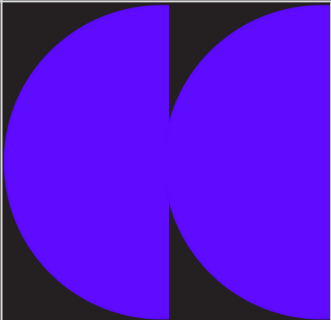
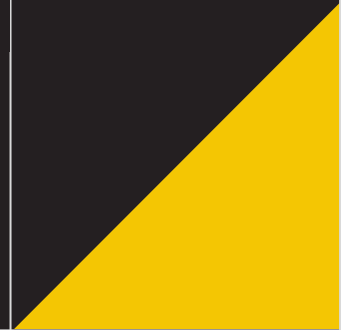


# INNOVATION NORTH



Session 8 Key INsights:

## CREATING A CULTURE OF CREATIVITY



# INsights On Creativity

Creativity has traditionally been viewed within the business world as a mysterious process best left to “the creatives” in the company. But in today’s disrupted business world, it is a necessary component of innovating at the systems level. The question is, how can companies get past conventional attitudes toward creativity and foster a culture where it thrives throughout the organization?

Professor Colin M. Fisher of University College London led an Innovation North Lab session on creating a culture of creativity within corporations. He defined creativity as a process that combines novelty and usefulness, and stressed that both are necessary for creativity.

## How Can Managers Foster Creativity In Organizations?

Colin inspired us to view creativity as a collective endeavour, not a solo adventure. Managers promote creativity by acting more like a member of a jazz ensemble and less like an orchestra conductor.

He also reminded us that creativity is both a time-consuming and a collective process. Managers should strive to foster a creativity-prone culture; they do this by shaping the context rather than directing the action. We invite you to reflect on and (further) carry out some of this session’s main takeaways on how to organize for creativity:

**Take time to understand and define the problem:** Spending time defining your problem is key. During this process, make sure to check whether the problem statement is clear, what hidden assumptions may be present, which needs are being addressed, and what the scope of the problem is. How you define the problem will shape the direction the conversation goes.

**Design collaborative processes:** Creativity is a team sport! Approaching creativity in teams taps into a diversity of resources, skills, and abilities, and has a stronger impact.

**Activate intrinsic motivation:** Motivation can yield fast results. Although financial incentives can motivate people, they do not foster creativity. People are more creative when given challenging work, autonomy, and encouragement. Managers should also match tasks with people’s interests and skills.

**Build a culture of psychological safety:** No one can be creative when they are afraid of being judged or ridiculed. Managers should strive to create an environment where the group members share a sense that it is okay to fail and make mistakes because those failures and mistakes are treated as opportunities to learn and improve. We want people to feel safe coming up with wild, ridiculous ideas!

**Promote, don't hide, in-the-moment creativity:** Create some structures (but not too many) that allow coordination and flexibility. In work contexts that are inflexible and have too many protocols, improvisations that lead to new ideas are often hidden and pushed to the under-life of the organization. Managers need to recognize and publicly discuss these improvisations so they can be properly considered. They could lead to novel organizational practices!

**Leverage expertise, but invite challenges to it:** Experts and previous knowledge are a double-edged sword. They can push the collective learning process but can also stifle new ideas. Teams must be encouraged to listen to experts and draw on existing knowledge, but also to challenge them in order to generate new ideas and perspectives.

**Use idea-generating techniques:** In brainstorming sessions, use techniques such as fun warmups and improvisation (“Yes, and”). Design and innovation company IDEO3 offers these tips: be visual, defer judgment, encourage wild ideas, build on the ideas of others, go for quantity, hold one conversation at a time, and stay focused on the topic. And don't forget **analogous inspiration**—that is, thinking of parallel situations that deal with a similar problem.

## Connecting Creativity To Innovation

At the Innovation North Lab, we have talked about the importance of **defining a problem carefully**, so that it is not so narrow as to be limiting but not so wide to be as intractable. In the breakout groups, we learned that a good problem statement stimulates creativity, whereas a more ambiguous one instead prompts discussion about the problem itself. We also learned that how we define a problem shapes the solution set. This makes it important for innovators to continuously return to the definition of problem to ensure that they are on track to desirable solutions. A problem should be seen as dynamic and fluid: it transforms as our understanding and practices evolve.

Another important point that connects creativity to the Lab's work is the importance of **diverse teams and collaboration** for systems innovation. Complex problems require multiple perspectives, because no single person can see the whole system. Identifying and engaging diverse types of people and stakeholders (including those often overlooked) stimulates new ideas and helps us reframe the problem. This influences our potential solutions. Brainstorming **solutions** requires "looking right and left" at the people with a stake in the business. It also includes looking at those who may seem to be further afield: they can be a source of inspiration and useful analogies.

Colin defined creativity as the process of generating ideas that are both novel and useful. We suggest that innovators need to ask themselves, "**Useful to whom?**". Conventional approaches to innovation speak to usefulness to the customer. Let's challenge that assumption and ask that the innovation be useful not only to a customer, but also to a **citizen**. Novel products, services, or processes can generate revenue from a customer and improve society. They will catalyze intrinsic motivation within the innovator and develop an enduring income stream.

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