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INNOVATION

Innovation On Innovation

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Left: Dine with Design. See p. 46.



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FROM THE EDITOR

AN INNOVATION EQUATION



Winston Churchill famously once said, “We shape our spaces and thereafter they shape us.” Apple and Disney were both started in a garage. So was HP. But even more than the environment that enabled them, they were shaped by a mindset. Let’s call that intentional creation of an environment of innovation *space*. Combine this intent with the ambition to see it through and face the adversity that comes along with making mistakes and learning from them. It turns out that innovation requires courage as well. Plus, the ambition to make something not just good but rather extraordinary and unexpected. So if all the above is true, then Space + Courage + Shine = Innovation.



Space

The renowned author Clayton Christensen suggests that the key to future success in business is through disruptive innovation. That companies must possess the proper structure in order to innovate repeatedly and retain competitive advantage. In other words, to innovate it is not enough to just create and nurture an environment of innovation; the organization itself must be structured with the same intention. This means reporting structures as well as the lack thereof as appropriate. The creative genius, the mad scientist, the inspired rouge designer—these stereotypes mask the truth that innovation is a team sport. And when teams are properly enabled, they produce better results. They need the right environment, the right kind of innovation space within which they can do their best work.

Courage

If you are in a leadership position in a company, it's time to do more than talk about thinking differently; it's time to act differently. This means new methods of approaching problems for sure, but it also means a new attitude toward accepting risk. Businesses are mostly designed to mitigate risk. Someone once said that each business is perfectly designed to achieve the results it gets. See, the thing is, without risk, smart risk, the environment where risk and, yes, even failure is permitted, businesses do not achieve the reward.

I have developed an axiom that looks like this: $C + R = RI$. Creativity + Risk = Reward. Students in the grad course I instruct for five weeks each year at Northwestern University will be very familiar with this equation. Their grades are dependent on not just the amount of creativity they bring to assignments, but also the amount of risk they take. So, if a business is not getting the results it wants, it's time to shake things up. Both change and the opportunity it presents are an imperative to create impact in a world hungry for innovative ideas.

Shine

The world that businesses are competing in is changing and becoming increasingly more competitive. Products and services are simply better than they were before. Good design is everywhere, and true, noticeable, transformational innovation is being executed at higher levels than ever before. This is not to say that incremental innovation is not important. We clearly need a combination of the two. Apple is a great example: breakthrough products that are then made better and kept relevant through incremental improvements. Incremental, or foundational, innovation also results in platforms—solid launch pads for new ideas that are built on systems thinking.

FROM THE EDITOR

Shine is the idea of quality magnified. Is what we are putting out not just good but great? Does it shine? Is it special? Is it great for the user, great for the environment, great for society, distinct, suitable, repeatable? Great ideas go beyond business and, in fact, are even more influential when, whether they are a result of breakthrough or incremental innovation, they help our world and everyone who lives in it. When innovation performs at this level it literally and figuratively shines and it gets noticed; it gets attention.

According to the Wikipedia entry for “innovation,” it can be induced by many circumstances: “It can occur as a result of a focused effort by a range of different agents, by chance, or as a result of a major system failure. According to renowned business expert Peter F. Drucker, the general sources of innovations are different changes in industry structure, in market structure, in local and global demographics, in human perception, mood and meaning, in the amount of already available scientific knowledge, etc.”

So basically, innovation covers everything, right? Innovation can be renovation, the answer to consternation, the cure for mental constipation. Innovation also has many adjacent soldiers serving its interest: change, alteration, revolution, upheaval, transformation, metamorphosis, reorganization, restructuring, variation. Innovation is hard and requires enormous energy, but like any habit, once you fall into it, it becomes known, repeatable, routine. The muscle that grows from risk taking—fueled by courage—encourages taking even more risk, and along with smart risk taking and creative ideas usually comes reward. All it takes is the space, the courage and the relentless pursuit of quality.

I know what you might be thinking. Finally, it's about time. Right? This journal has been called INNOVATION since the beginning of time, and we've finally gotten around to an issue on well...innovation. For this ambitious mission we needed someone up to the task. We called upon one of IDSA's most excellent practitioners of the genre, the brilliant and dedicated Brian Roderman. Brian is a long-time IDSA contributor and principal of a company dedicated to the pursuit of innovation in all three of the dimensions I outline above. I know you will enjoy and learn from the articles this talented pool of writers has provided for this issue of INNOVATION on innovation. Thank you, Brian.

Enjoy the issue, challenge the thinking and let me hear from you.

—Mark Dziersk, *FIDSA*, INNOVATION Executive Editor
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“Space + Courage + Shine = Innovation”



DESIGN IN THE CONTEXT OF INNOVATION

This issue of INNOVATION is about just that: innovation.

Together we will address strategies, identify key players and take on multi-industry perspectives on the state of innovation in business today.

After 30 years in design and innovation consulting, I have come to believe that innovation deserves a methodology and a process all to itself. Most importantly, there is a time for strategic thinking, a time for operational understanding and a time for tactical doing—and each phase is critical to delivering the right solution to market. The key to success is understanding when and how you work in each mindset.

Designers are primed and trained to solve complex problems and think divergently, yet in many boardrooms across America, company executives do not utilize design in the context of their innovation. As designers, it is up to us to challenge this perspective.

To this purpose, this issue features contributions from leaders in the fields of design, along with those who have a different focus outside our industry. You'll get a chance to hear a balanced viewpoint from multiple perspectives, including some, in fact, that contradict our own philosophies. It is my hope that by sharing varied voices in a common forum, we can begin to elevate the dialogue of design in the context of innovation.

To get the conversation started, we will do some innovation level setting. We'll begin with a primer on some foundational elements for defining and deploying innovation in organizational settings. Once we have shared our perspective on the foundations of innovation, you'll get a balanced point of view on innovation from the business, technology and user perspectives in articles from Raleigh Gresham, a business innovation specialist; Todd Summe, a leader in the technical R&D world; and a strong viewpoint on insights from Jonathan Dalton, IDSA. We will also share some tips and tricks for better collaboration with balanced teams. You'll then go behind the scenes with Newell Brands, makers of brainstorming tools like Sharpie and EXPO Markers. Finally, this issue wraps with a feature on the future of innovation and the next wave: the experience revolution.

I know that I've been personally blessed in my career to be firmly rooted in both the industrial design community and the progressive innovation initiatives that circle around it. It is my hope that this issue helps open further dialogue about our role in the innovation sphere and continues to push our boundaries into the unknown so that we can all continue to create what is ahead of us.

—Brian Roderman, FIDSA, Guest Editor
and President, IN2 Innovation



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