The Silver Bullet Guide to Innovation
What is innovation?

Innovation is a process...

- Idea generation
- Evaluation
- Development
- Implementation

...applied to a number of domains

- You!
- Products
- Processes
- Relationships
- Structures

The Silver Bullet guide to innovation - sheet 1

© The Silver Bullet Machine™ Manufacturing Company Limited 2002
Idea generation - the heart of innovation

The creative act is not an act of creation in the sense of the Old Testament.
It does not create something out of nothing; it uncovers, selects, re-shuffles, combines, synthesises already existing facts, ideas, faculties, skills.
The more familiar the parts, the more striking the new whole.

Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation

Koestler’s definition is enormously important.

- Firstly, it states that you don’t have to be a genius, or lucky.
- Secondly, it tells us that the process underlying idea generation is the formation of a new pattern of parts that already exist.
- Thirdly, as a result, we can all contribute - we can all be creative.
In the business and organisational worlds, the ‘patterns’ referred to in Koestler’s definition are better known by terms such as ‘learning’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘experience’, within which the ‘parts’ are bundled.

So, before we can form a new pattern, we must firstly unbundle the existing patterns to release the ‘parts’.

We must ‘drag the raindrops out of the valleys’...we must *unlearn*.
• Step 1 - Select the appropriate focus of attention
  “We need to invent a new game...what about basing our thinking on chess?”

• Step 2 - Define what you know
  “Chess is played by two players”...“The castles are placed on the corners”...

• Step 3 - Share
  “Only one piece can be on any square at any time”...”With one exception, each piece keeps its identity throughout the game - a knight is always a knight”...

• Step 4 - Ask “How might this be different?”
  “What if there weren’t two players?”

• Step 5 - Let it be...
  “Mmm. Well, there might be four...” ”...playing as two teams of two...”
  “...conferring...” “...or maybe not...what if the second player didn’t see the first player’s moves?” ”Or maybe we could have 32 players, one for each piece...”

• Step 6 - ...Then repeat steps 3 and 4 for another feature...
  “What if the castles didn’t start at the corners?”...
Safe evaluation

No idea is born with a business case attached.

If a new idea is challenged too soon, it will die; if there is no challenge at all, the organisation will waste resources, and might even jeopardise the business.

To evaluate ideas in a wise, balanced and safe way, ask these questions, which are based on Edward de Bono’s *Six Thinking Hats*.
Making it happen

“We have no shortage of ideas - our problem is making something happen!”

Many organisations are very good at generating ideas, but have great difficulty in making something happen, in managing an idea from its genesis right through to full implementation.

Unlike idea generation - which can be done by individuals, but is more powerful and productive in small groups - evaluation, and even more so development and implementation, require co-ordinated and consistent effort across the organisation.

To make it happen, you need two ‘big things’ to be in place, and, in addition, a host of ‘other things’ too. The two ‘big things’ are:

- a fundamental commitment to make it happen
- financial ‘headroom’ to support the investment, and underwrite the risk.

The ‘other things’ relate to motivators and enablers...
Making it happen - motivators

Motivators

Role of senior management
- Funding
- Resource allocation
- Promotion and reward
- Story-telling
- Managing cross-boundary conflict
- Mentoring
- Reviewing
- Protection

Performance measures
- Number of people trained
- Time spent on idea generation...
- Inputs
- Outputs
- Number of ideas
- Commercial value of ideas

Rewards and recognition
- Short vs long-term
- Individual vs group
- Consistency
- Sharing
- Risk

Who?
- Senior team
- Department heads
- Middle managers
- Junior managers
- Shop floor and clerical

How?
- Tailored courses
- Embedded conferences
- Train-the-trainer
- Idea generation
- The whole process

Scope?
- Project management
- Managing uncertainty
- Cross-boundary working...

Training

Embedding innovation in the day job
- Quality
- Continuous improvement
- IT systems design
- Process design
- Business planning
- Strategy
- Induction
- Publicity and visibility

The Silver Bullet guide to innovation - sheet 7

© The Silver Bullet Machine™ Manufacturing Company Limited 2002
Making it happen - enablers

The pipeline
- Generating ideas
- Collecting ideas
- Sharing ideas
- Methods of evaluation
- Reviewing the stock-pile

Enablers
- Language
- Attitude to risk
- Attitude to challenge
- Cross-boundary sharing
- Line vs project
- Fear vs empowerment
- Attitude to failure
- Willingness to listen
- Role of hierarchy and status
- Physical environment

Physical environment
- Open space
- Private space
- Communal space
- Who is near whom?
- Food and drink
- Access to outside
- Provision of technology

Culture
- How is the team selected?
- What training do they have?
- Who is the leader?
- To whom does the leader report?
- Where is the team located?
- What are the milestones?
- How is the project monitored and controlled?
- How are risk and uncertainty managed?
- What is success?
- What are the criteria for implementation?
- What causes the project to be cancelled?
- How do we capture the learning?
- What happens to the team at the end?

Managing the project
- The beginning
- The middle
- The end

Budgets
- For what?
- How determined?
- And what about?
- Power-play
- Top-down
- Bottom-up
- Driven by strategy
- Uncertainty
- Risk
- Serendipity

Funding
- Who holds the funds?
- How many sources of funds are there?
- How close is the funding to the idea?
- What information is required to support the funding decision?
- How quickly is the funding decision made?
- Who decides?
- What are the decision criteria?
The unlearning organisation™

- The day-job doesn’t get in the way.
- It doesn’t have to be broke to fix it.
- The only rule is “rules are for breaking”.
- Negligence is distinguished from learning.
- They listen.
- They share - information, people, resources, risk.
- They say “yes” more than they say “no”.
- They don’t rush to judge.
- They are wise in managing risk.
- Their performance measures support innovation, rather than discourage it.
- They are very good at managing both the line and projects.
- They consider innovation to be the core business process.