

Innovation

by Devmountain Tutorials



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to identify the characteristics of innovation. Specifically, this lesson will cover:



1. What is Innovation?

In the 1980s and 1990s, after decades of vinyl records, the invention of portable cassettes and CD players allowed regular people the ability to carry their music with them wherever they went. But Steve Jobs, CEO and co-founder of Apple, saw a unique opportunity to innovate the music experience even more.

In 2001, Apple released the iPod—an innovation that fundamentally changed the way people all over the

world listen to music and helped Apple become the powerhouse company it is today. In fact, most major inventions in the history of the world were created because someone saw an opportunity to do something different or unique. As Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Albert Szent-Györgyi once said, “Innovation is seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought” (Shontell, 1).

No matter where you want to go in the future, if you’re going to lead your life successfully, you’ll need to understand how to use your **innovation** skill to achieve your goals. In other words, you’ll need to think outside the box, create unique solutions to old problems, develop bold solutions to new problems, and think creatively in all aspects of your life. That might mean inventing a recipe to use up leftovers in the fridge, developing a new slogan for your company’s product, or changing the way employees are onboarded in your department. Wherever life takes you, relying on your innovation skill will not only help you think differently about the world around you, it will help you instigate change, explore opportunities, and even create the future you want.

Innovation often begins with this type of divergent thinking, where you try to come up with a variety of different ways of looking at a situation. And it’s important because if you only consider one idea, it will most likely be similar to something you’ve done before. The most common way to use divergent thinking to come up with a variety of options is by brainstorming.

➔ **EXAMPLE** The idea for Poodle Jumper came from a brainstorming session when our Founder and CEO, Mary, was brainstorming with her husband on how to better balance the demands of their family and careers. She wanted a service to help manage the pet care and grooming for her poodle, Lucy. When she couldn’t find a company to meet her needs, she decided to create it.



TERM TO KNOW

Innovation

The ability to creatively think and generate original/unique ideas and solutions outside of routine perspectives.

2. What Does Innovation Look Like in the Workplace?

Innovation in the workplace often comes in the form of informal and planned brainstorming sessions with small groups of people to solve problems.

Brainstorming is a group activity that encourages people to share ideas in a spontaneous way to reach a solution. Whether you’re brainstorming as part of a group at work or a team at your church or school, the most effective brainstorming includes people from a wide variety of backgrounds. That’s because working with people with different perspectives can help you come up with ideas you wouldn’t ordinarily have thought of, which in turn can make you more successful at practicing your innovation skill. So, the next time you brainstorm, consider inviting new people to the team. (For example, you might try reaching out to your network using your relationship-building skill to ensure you have a variety of members represented.)



HINT

Here are some important considerations to take into account whenever you’re brainstorming as part of your innovation skill:

- **Begin your brainstorm with a warm-up activity or icebreaker:** These help participants break down mental barriers, loosen their minds, and lower their judgments. (After all, there are no bad ideas in a brainstorm!) There are countless games and icebreakers you can find online—just search for “brainstorming activities.”
- **During the brainstorm, it’s important to practice free association, by considering unconnected thoughts and ideas as they pop into your head:** Remember, there are no “good” or “bad” ideas at this point. By leveraging your experience and knowledge, sharing all of your ideas with your team, and encouraging others to do the same, you’ll help everyone consider situations in new and novel ways.
- **Don’t be afraid to ask questions—even ones that seem silly or obvious—because they can challenge your assumptions:** Stay curious and search for insights by taking the time to ask how things work and why they work that way.
- **After the brainstorm, try convergent thinking, which means taking a more linear, logical approach to evaluate the ideas you came up with:** Not every option will be the innovation you’re looking for, and that’s perfectly normal! In fact, the winner might not even be one single idea. It might be a combination of many of the ideas you’ve explored.
- **Once you have a winner, try using your initiative skill to take action, and try out the concept that you think is best:** If things don’t go according to plan, don’t get discouraged. Instead, learn from your mistakes and try again.

You can also try brainstorming on your own if you don’t have the time or opportunity to include others. Consider the same tips whether you’re brainstorming with a group or by yourself.

➞ **EXAMPLE** At Poodle Jumper, we keep our founding history of brainstorming alive by encouraging employees to submit ideas at any time. The ideas are reviewed every two weeks and the innovative ideas are incorporated into our plans.

"There's a way to do it better... find it."

Thomas Edison, Inventor



SUMMARY

This lesson covered the topic of **innovation**, including **what innovation looks like in the workplace**. Innovation is the ability to creatively think and generate original and unique ideas and solutions outside of routine perspectives. Innovation often begins with divergent thinking, where a variety of different ways of looking at a situation are explored. Brainstorming is a common way to use divergent thinking to come up with a variety of options. In the workplace, innovation often comes in the form of informal and planned brainstorming sessions with small groups of people to solve problems. Effective brainstorming includes people from a wide variety of backgrounds to bring different perspectives to the table. Finally, after a brainstorming session, convergent thinking is used to evaluate and choose the best ideas to pursue, and then action is taken using the initiative skill.

Source: This tutorial was authored by DEVMOUNTAIN and Sophia Learning. Please see our [Terms of Use](#).



ATTRIBUTIONS

- [The Greatest Comeback Story Of All Time: How Apple Went From Near Bankruptcy To Billions In 13 Years](#) | Author: Alyson Shontell



TERMS TO KNOW

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