

# The Keys to Understanding Innovation

*Initial steps in creating an innovative mindset*

**Anita R. Wood**

# Goals

Help you formulate the *right questions* which elicit the *right answers* needed to innovate, and determine if your organization is *ready to act* on the answers you receive.

# Objectives

- Why innovation is valuable in most situations;
- How questions are at the core of innovation;
- Who should be asked the questions;
- What are the right questions;
- How do you determine the organization's innovation readiness.

# Why Innovate?

## Three Rules of Work

- ◆ Out of *clutter*, find *simplicity*
- ◆ From *discord*, find *harmony*
- ◆ In the middle of *difficulty*  
lies *opportunity*

Albert Einstein



# Why innovation is valuable in most situation?

OBJECTIVE ONE

# Times of **Crisis** or Opportunity



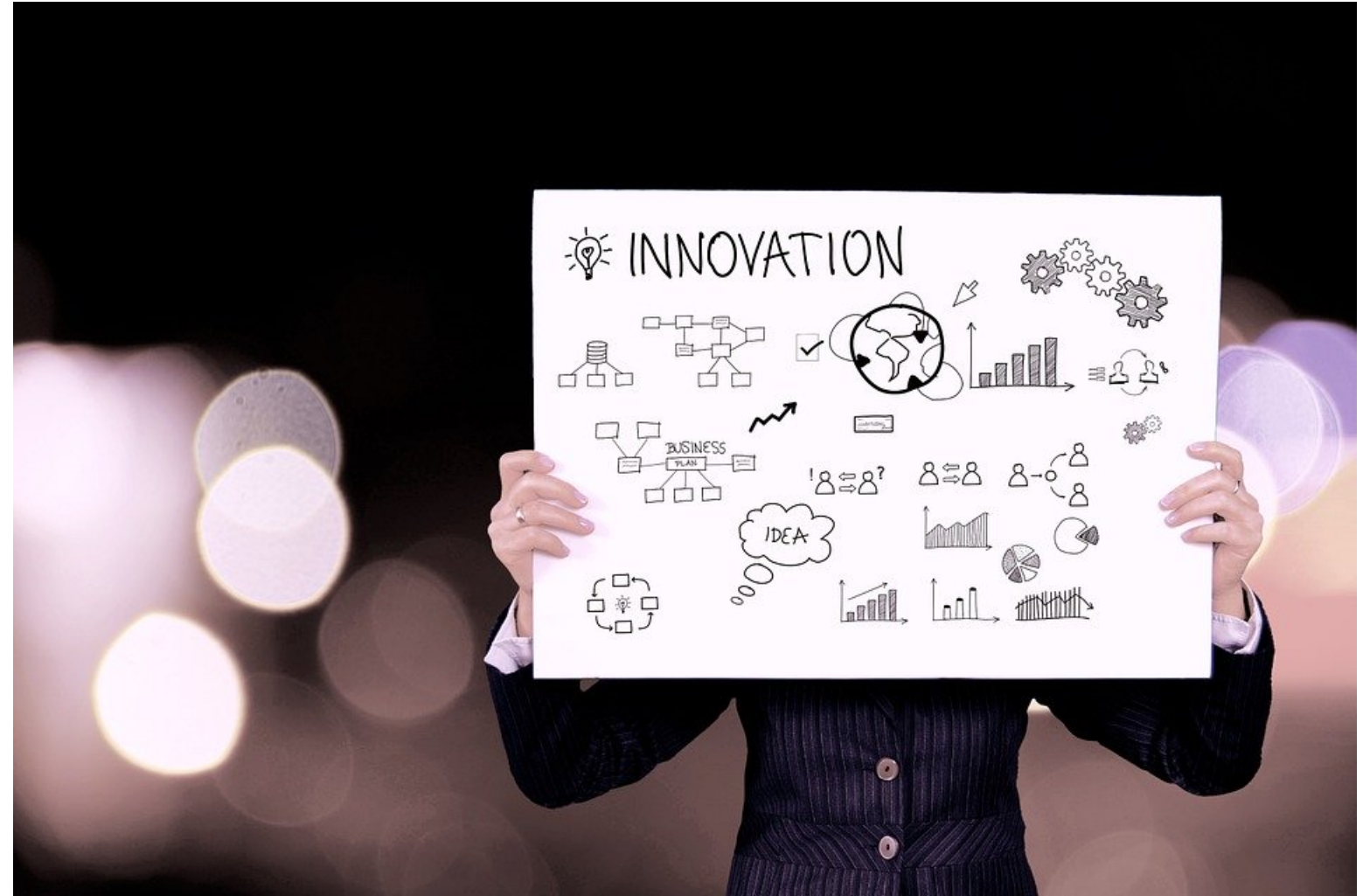
# Crisis



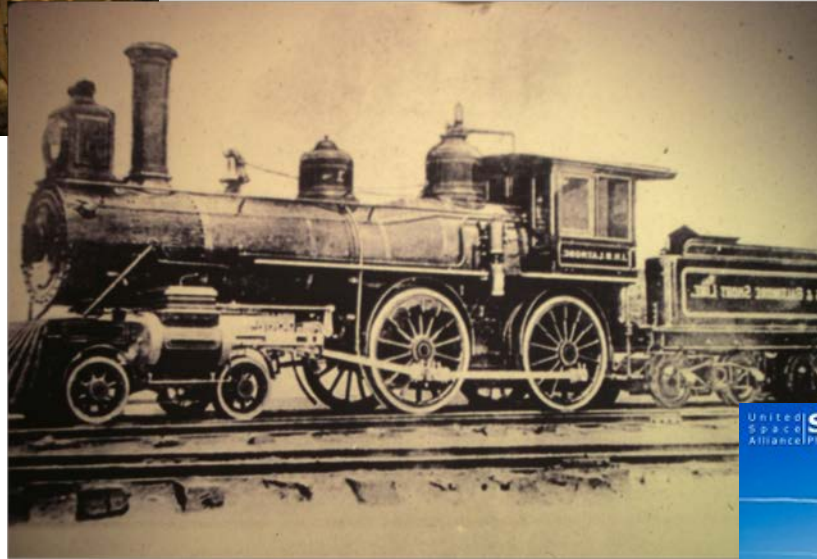
## Opportunities for Innovation

- Low-end innovations offering more for less (\$)
- Previously unknown or unimportant problems
- Competitors are otherwise distracted
- New talent pool
- Sense of urgency

Move off the  
*beaten path*





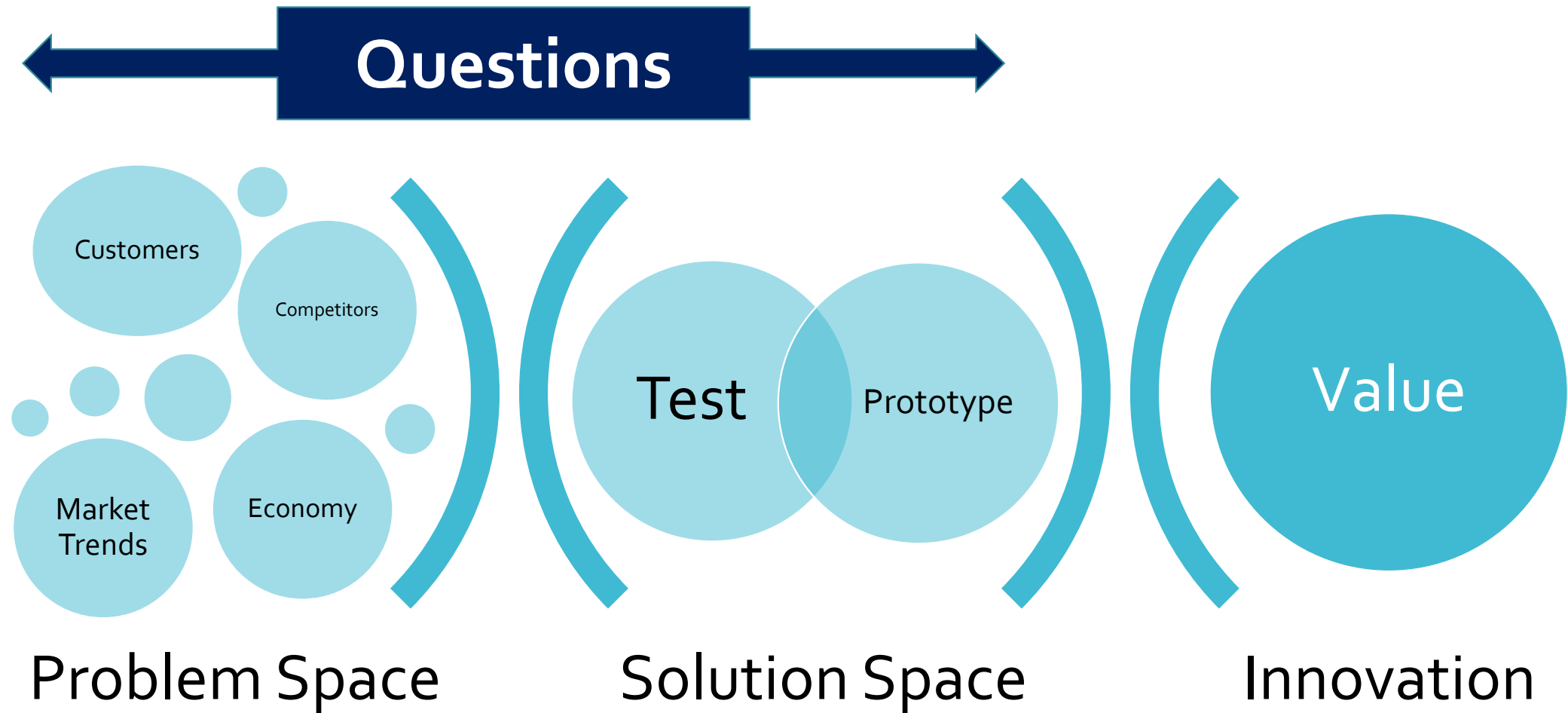


4 feet and 8-1/2 inches



**Examples of an organization,  
group, or person that  
successfully got off-the-beaten-  
path**


# Innovation Framework





# How questions are at the core of innovation?

## OBJECTIVE TWO



**“The answers you get  
depends on the  
questions you ask.”**

Thomas S. Kuhn

# Questioning Mindset






School  
Work  
Internet



Google™

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky



# Who should be asked the question?

OBJECTIVE THREE



# Stakeholders



Who cares?  
Who know?  
Who must agree?

---

## External

- Customers
- Vendors
- Partners

## Internal

- Employees
  - Champions
  - Users
  - Designers
  - Developers

# Questioning Mindset

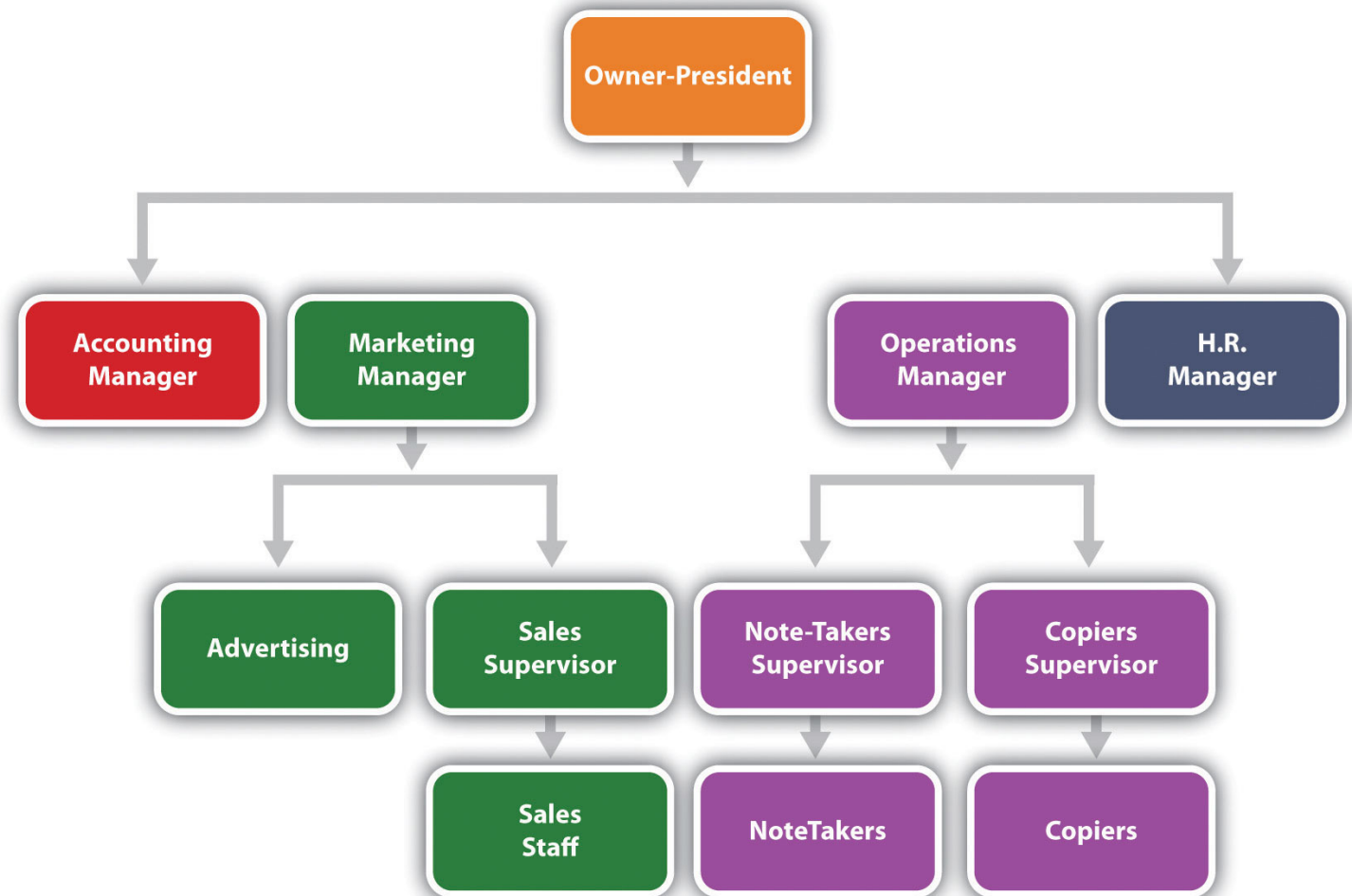


Image credit: cmaconsult.com

# Sequencing

- When is the appropriate time to engage?
- How will the stakeholder participate?
- How can I engage them efficiently?

# Diversity





## Examples/questions about identifying stakeholder



# What are the right questions?

OBJECTIVE FOUR

# Questioning 101

Declarative .

Imperative !

Explanative !!

Interrogative ?

Who?

Where?

When?

Why?

What?

Which?

How?

# Questioning 101

- Open
- Closed
- Probing
- Leading



# Question Types & Goals

VIEW OF  
PROBLEM

*Wide*

**Adjoining**

**Elevating**

*Narrow*

**Clarifying**

**Funneling**

*Affirm what we  
know*

*Discover  
something new*

INTENT OF THE QUESTION

# Considerations When Asking

## Tone

- Vocal
  - Connect and build trust
- Environmental
  - Purpose and transparency

# Considerations When Asking

## Sequencing

- What Is? *describe*
- What Caused? *understand*
- Why & Why Not? *Disrupt*
- What if? *Disrupt*
- How? *Converge*


# Considerations When Asking

## Probing

- Clarification
- Completeness
- Accuracy
- Evaluation

## Do Not Ask !

- What's the problem?
- Whose fault is it?
- Why don't you do it this way?
- Haven't we tried this already?
  - Better - *What is different this time?*



# How do you determine both organizational **Innovation Readiness?**

OBJECTIVE FIVE

# Innovation Maturity Matrix

Maturity



## Traditional

Centralized R&D/Innovation  
Unit responsible for all  
innovation and development

## Advanced

Coordinated innovation  
across entire organization,  
separate units for descriptive  
innovations

## Beginner

Innovation relies primarily on  
heroic individuals, little  
formal processes

## Scaling

Focused on building  
innovation capabilities of  
business units

Scale

# Employee Assessment

- How good are your employees in identifying new opportunities for innovation?
- How supportive is your workforce environment when it comes to collaboration and innovative activities?
- Are your employees motivated, rewarded and organized to innovate repeatedly?
- Are you staying competitive by developing and launching innovations quickly and effectively?
- Are your employees familiar and on board with all of your innovation activities and planning?



INNOVATION

# Assessment: Is Your Company Actually Ready to Innovate?

by [Daniel Dworkin](#) and [Markus Spiegel](#)

November 06, 2015

 Save  Share  4 Comment  Print



How much do you agree with each statement about your organization?

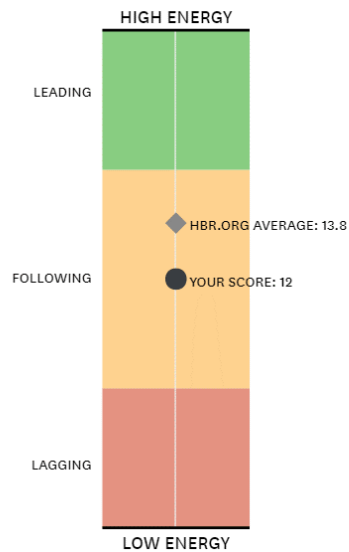
1. Leaders communicate an exciting vision for the work my company pur

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☒ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

2. Leaders demonstrate sustained, visible support for the projects they

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree

# Constant Energy



## Why it's important:

Team members who demonstrate constant energy—that is, strong and consistent passion and engagement—are equipped to challenge assumptions, develop new solutions to problems, and persevere in the face of setbacks. When energy is low or sporadic, teams either fail to deliver innovation results or achieve only incremental impact.

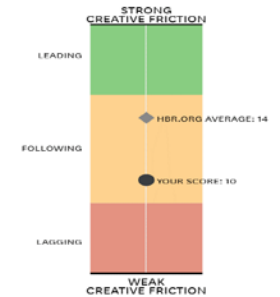
## Tips for leaders:

- Set high expectations for teams to achieve breakthroughs.
- Convey your own passion for the innovation opportunities that teams pursue.
- Make the team's progress, learning, and success visible to other colleagues.
- Set ambitious timelines to inspire teams to move into action quickly.
- Stay in contact with team members formally and informally from project kickoff to conclusion.

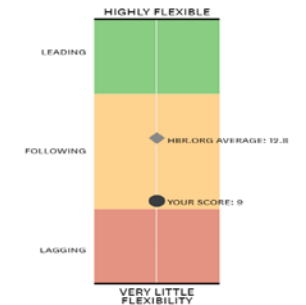
## Tips for team members:

- Pursue ideas that excite you personally—and share your enthusiasm with your teammates.
- Tell people outside your team about its progress, learning, and success.
- Approach customer collaboration with a spirit of curiosity and open-mindedness.
- Set regular meetings with project sponsors, and reach out informally between status updates.

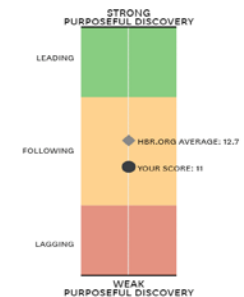
# Creative Friction



# Flexible Structure



# Purposeful Discovery



# Closing

Why innovation is valuable in most situations;

How questions are at the core of innovation;

Who should be asked the questions;

What are right questions;

How do you determine both personal and organizational innovation readiness.

**Anita R. Wood**  
Innovative Educator & Trainer

*anitarwood@verizon.net*