How do you successfully innovate?

THOMAS JEFFERSON UNIVERSITY

PROF. DR. LES SZTANDERA
Innovation Games®: Creating Breakthrough Products Through Collaborative Play

INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGY – REACHING OUT TO DESIGN DISCIPLINES

If it weren’t for Nexus Learning, Dr. Sztandera, would have never worn such a hat.

DR. LES SZTANDERA

PhilaU Nexus Learning Center
Innovation Games are proven techniques for working with all groups of customers to create innovative products and services. They are a means of fueling innovation by understanding what your customers really want.
What Makes Innovation Games Unique

- Game playing provides a perfect setting for developing innovative products and services
- Each game leverages insights from market research in unique ways
- They utilize verbal, written, visual and non-verbal forms of communication, therefore revealing clients’ true needs
How Innovation Happens

- Traditional Market Research
- Innovation Games

Know
Know You Don't Know
Don't Know You Don't Know
Innovation Games - Examples
# Selecting The Game

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding...</th>
<th>Consider These Games:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer needs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Product Box</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Me and My Shadow</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Remember The Future</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product functionality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Product Box</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>20/20 Vision</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product usage</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spider Web</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Start Your Day</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shaping your future product</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prune The Product Tree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>20/20 Vision</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goal: Identify what customers don’t like (about your process or system).

Activity:
Draw a boat on a whiteboard or sheet of butcher paper. You’d like the boat to really move fast. Unfortunately, the boat has a few anchors holding it back. The boat is your system, and the features that your customers don’t like are its anchors. Customers write what they don’t like on an anchor. They can also estimate how much faster the boat would go when that anchor was cut. Estimates of speed are really estimates of pain.
**Activity:**
Put the name of your product or service in the center of a circle. Ask your customers to draw other products and services, ask them to tell you when, how, and why these are used. Ask them to draw lines between the different products and services.

As your customers reviews when and where they user your offering, you can capture the various inter-relationships that exist between the different products and service that they use throughout the day.

**Goal:**
Clarify the operating context for your products and services.
**Product Box**

**Goal:**
Identify the most exciting, sellable features.

**Activity:**
Ask your customers to imagine that they’re selling your product at a tradeshow, retail outlet, or public market. Give them a few cardboard boxes and ask them to literally design a product box that they would buy. The box should have the key marketing slogans that they find interesting. When finished, pretend that you’re a skeptical prospect and ask your customer to use their box to sell your product to you.
**Prune The Product Tree**

**Goal:**
Build a product according to your plans.

**Activity:**
Start by drawing a very large tree on a whiteboard. Thick limbs represent major areas of functionality within your system. The edge of the tree – its outermost branches – represent the features available in the current release. Write potential new features on several index cards, ideally shaped as leaves. Ask your customers to place desired features around the tree. Observe how the tree gets structured – does one branch get the bulk of the growth? Does an underutilized aspect become stronger?
Start Your Day

**Goal:** Understand how and when your customer uses your product.

**Activity:**
Ask your customer to describe the daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly events that are related to their use of your product on pre-printed, poster-sized calendars or a simple timeline on poster paper. Ask them to describe events in time frames appropriate for your project. Special event that are unique to an industry or sector (like a conference), or days in which everything goes horribly wrong and they’re looking for help. While they’re doing this, be alert for how your product helps – or hinders – their day.
**Activity:**
Create a list of features with an estimated cost. The cost can be development effort or actual cost you intend to charge for the feature. Customers buy features that they want.

Features are priced high enough that no single customer can buy the features. This helps motivate customers to negotiate between themselves as to which features are most important. Observation of this negotiation provides great insight into what customers are willing to pay for.

**Goal:**
Prioritize features.
**Show and Tell**

**Activity:**
Ask your customers to bring examples of artifacts created or modified by your product or service. Ask them to tell you why these artifacts are important, and when and how they’re used.

Pay careful attention to anything that surprises you – artifacts you expected them to create or modify that they have ignored, artifacts that aren’t used, or artifacts used in unexpected ways.

**Goal:**  
Identify the most important artifacts created by your product.
Me and My Shadow

Activity:
Shadow your customer while they use your product or service. Literally. Sit next to them and watch what they do. Periodically ask them “Why are you doing that?” and “What are you thinking?” Take along a camera or camcorder and record key activities. Ask for copies of important artifacts created or used by your customer while they are doing the work.

Goal:
Identify your customer’s hidden needs.
Give Them A Hot Tub

**Activity:**
Write several features on note cards, one feature per card. Include several completely outrageous features. If you’re making a portable MP3 player, try adding features like “heats coffee”, “cracks concrete” or “conditions dog hair”. If you’re making a system that manages payroll, try adding features like “plans family reunions” or “refinishes wooden floors”. If you’re building an office building, add a hot tub in the lobby. Observe what happens with a customer uncovers one of these outrageous features.

**Goal:**
Use outrageous features to discover hidden breakthroughs.
20/20 Vision

Activity:
When you’re getting fitted for glasses, your optometrist will often ask you to compare between two potential lenses by alternately showing each of them. Start by writing one feature each on large index cards. Shuffle the pile and put them face down. Take the first one form the top and put it on the wall. Take the next one and ask your customers if it is more or less important than the one on the wall. Place it above or below, depending on its relative importance. Repeat this with all of your feature cards.

Goal:
Prioritize features.
The Apprentice

**Activity:**
Ask your engineers and product developers to perform the “work” of the system that they are building. If they’re building a new data entry system, have them do the work of the current data entry operators. If they’re building workflow management software for furniture delivery people, have them deliver furniture. If they’re building a system to analyze vehicle performance data, ask them to change the oil in the car. They gain knowledge of the customer experience and some degree of empathy for the real problem that your customer is trying to solve.

**Goal:**
Create empathy for the customer experience.
Remember the Future

**Activity:**
Hand each of your customers a few pieces of paper. Ask them to imagine that it is sometime in the future and that they’ve been using your product almost continuously between now and that future date (month, year, whatever). Then ask them to write down exactly what your product will have done to make them happy or successful or rich or safe or secure or art – choose what works best for your product.

**Goal:**
Understand your customer’s definition of success.

Key point – ask “What will the system have done?” not “What should the system do?”
Putting Innovation Games To Use

- What are your questions?
- What will you do with the answers?
- Select and prepare for the game.
  - select & invite participants
  - organize internal team
  - handle the logistics
- Play the game.
- Process / analyze the data.
- Present results and take action.
Innovating we will go …