

Scoping Mindsets

Gauging the motivation, attitude, mood and intent of user groups and related stakeholders

Mind-set: Sensing Changing Conditions

As creators of the new, Innovators need to have the mind-set of continuously keeping up with the pace of change whether political, economic, social, cultural, scientific, or technological. Changes, especially in areas where others have not yet fully explored, often indicate fertile ground for innovation.

But, in our information-intensive world the challenge of finding new and unexplored opportunities is huge. The torrent of news and data can be overwhelming, and we must think about where to gather information, how to categorize it, and how to relate it to the goals and strategies of the organization. We should actively monitor various information sources--periodicals, websites, books, broadcasts, podcasts-and opinions of leading experts and thought leaders.

We should regularly debrief about what these sources and experts are saying, and discuss what trends we see emerging. It is important not only to spot changes in trends but also to understand how those changes have occurred over time, so that we can foresee how changes might happen in the future and tell us something about how our innovations will fit.

Mind-set: Seeing Overviews

While in an unfamiliar place, observing surroundings and getting information on the ground helps us navigate in that place. Cues in the environment, landmarks, and street signs are all helpful sources of information for guidance. Also valuable are "overviews," like street maps, navigation systems that show

GPS location, and radio broadcasts about traffic and weather patterns. These big pictures help provide a broader understanding of the place compared to detailed perspectives on the ground. Innovators searching for opportunities greatly benefit from such overviews as well. Parts, relations, patterns, and dynamics that are visualized as overviews help us better understand the changing context in which we intend to innovate.

The insights that we gain from close-proximity and ground-level observations about people and context are a good source for incremental innovations. Often radically new and disruptive innovations emerge from our overview mind-set, the ability to see big pictures.

Mind-set: Foreseeing Trends

Trends show us general directions in which something is developing or changing. They emerge in our daily life all the time.

For sensing innovation opportunities the most common trends that we track relate to technology, business, culture, people, markets, and the economy. Some trends are short-lived, like subprime mortgage lending, while others signal lasting changes in our daily life. We should identify and understand trends early on so that we are in a better position to quickly and positively respond to their impact on the future.

Recognizing trends is a skill that can be cultivated by carefully learning to discern patterns of activities taking place around us. Simply being able to recognize which sectors of the economy are growing and which are in decline can help us develop a provisional sense of the economic opportunity. Staying on top of the latest technology developments and seeing patterns of their adoption, we can begin to foresee how technology trends may shape the types of products and services that will be required in the future.

We also ought to cultivate a mind-set for recognizing "megatrends" (e.g., aging of the population in the United States and Europe) and thinking about the implications such big changes will have on innovation opportunities.

Mind-set: Reframing Problems

Being able to recognize and understand the "conventions" that operate in an organization can help us think about how things might be approached differently. For example, in industries governed by Six Sigma practices, minimizing variability in manufacturing becomes a primary driver of business decisions.

This practice makes sense for established processes, but may not be the appropriate mind-set when pursuing new-to-the-world businesses. As conditions change, what was once true may no longer be so. To be truly innovative, new problems and opportunities need to be thought through differently.

Challenging conventional wisdom requires an understanding of how it came to be in the first place and thinking about how best to reframe it to be appropriate for a future possibility. Just as it is important to Question prevailing conventions, it is equally important to Question how innovation challenges are framed. Is the innovation challenge about making a better mobile phone, a better mobile communication device, or creating a compelling remote communication experience? Moreover, mind-sets for reframing problems broaden possibilities and help us arrive at nonobvious solutions.

Mind-set: Forming an Intent

After we develop a good understanding of the latest news, developments, trends, and conventions, we switch to a mind-set of consciously forming an early

Intent for innovation. By consciously stating the prevailing and emerging conditions, it becomes easier to define the type of innovation that should be conceived. For instance, if a long-range trend indicates *an* aging population that is expected to live longer than any prior generation, then our innovation intent will prominently factor in the needs of people with potentially limited mobility.

Continuously keeping up with latest events and trends helps us develop hunches about where the world may be headed and gut feelings about the kinds of innovations that can be built on those trends. Many businesses operate according to such hunches. But such an intuitive approach may be wildly off the mark and can lead to unnecessary expenditures and failed products. More than asserting an intent based on best guesses, grounding an Initial intent statement in a fact-based context makes it both reliable and credible.

It is ok to lead with a hunch but then qualify it with supporting evidence so that the emerging goals are reasonable and logical. The intent statement becomes even stronger if it can reference historical precedents.