

Three Keys to Innovation During Times of Change

Change disrupts. That's the problem with change—it's unpredictable, triggers new challenges and seems to happen faster than ever. That's also why many people resist change. Change is hard. It requires stepping into the unknown and creating a new "normal."

But change can also serve as a catalyst for creativity and innovation. Jesus himself was an agent of change and introduced a series of radical shifts in how people would know God and relate to him. For example, as the perfect sacrifice and our high priest, we now have direct access to God through Jesus (Eph. 3:11-12; Heb. 4:14-16).

As Jesus-centered leaders, how can we innovate during change? How can we turn the disruptiveness of change into something constructive? Here are three keys to help you innovate in the midst of change and challenge based on a six-year study of entrepreneurial innovators.*

Look and Listen

Tomorrow's opportunities arise from today's challenges. However, we can easily miss those innovative ideas if we're not looking and listening for them.

Identifying opportunities stems from seeing problems and needs in current circumstances. What are the needs and frustrations you see emerging during change or a crisis? Where are people getting stuck? What causes the greatest angst on your team or in your organization due to the changes you're experiencing? As you carefully and intentionally study the needs, challenges and problems flowing from change, you'll begin to identify new insights and ideas about how to do things in a fresh, innovative way.

To listen well, asking the right questions is critical. The most powerful questions are: Why?, Why not? and What if? When you've asked these questions once, ask them again. And again. And again, like a toddler exploring the world!

As a result, these questions will help you probe beneath the surface, leading to new insights and ideas about different ways of doing things. Learn to question the unquestionable. Challenge assumptions and the status quo. In doing so, you'll gain new perspectives, generate inventive ideas and identify unique paths forward.

Mingle and Connect

Innovation stems from the ability to bring disparate ideas together to create something new. To foster this type of thinking, interact with people and ideas that are new and different. Learn to mingle with others who challenge your way of thinking and have completely different approaches or fields of expertise.

Change forces us outside our comfort zones in search of new ways of thinking and problem solving. Mingling with diverse people, viewpoints, cultures and disciplines creates new perspectives, which can ignite the spark of innovation.

For nearly 30 years, Arrow Leadership has been developing Jesus-centered leaders for greater Kingdom impact. We help leaders and organizations lead differently through transformational programs, personal mentoring, organizational consulting and exceptional resources. Discover how you can grow in Jesus-centered leadership to be led more by Jesus, to lead more like Jesus and to lead more to Jesus.



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New connections are made when our thinking is challenged, when we see things in fresh ways and when we're forced by change to do things differently.

Experiment

While the process of innovation will give rise to all kinds of new ideas, not every new idea is worth implementing. Therefore, the third key to successful innovation is to experiment by developing models and “beta” testing the best ideas. As you try out new ideas ask: What worked the way you anticipated? What didn't go well? What discoveries emerge from your experimentation?

Failure—or rather the fear of it—short circuits experimenting. Instead of fearing failure, give yourself and others permission to fail. As Thomas Edison remarked, “Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”

Experimenting weeds out weak and mediocre concepts, allowing the best and most innovative ideas to be proven and then implemented.

Change elicits a broad spectrum of responses. For many people, “hunkering down” in a bunker of personal safety feels best. However, change can serve as an incredible opportunity and impetus to think in new ways, see things from a fresh perspective and create innovations that open new opportunities you never thought possible for yourself, your team and your organization.

To seize the opportunity of change, it takes intentionality—intentionally looking and listening, seeking out different perspectives through mingling and connecting and then beginning to explore and experiment to determine what works best.

Arrow Leadership is cheering you on as you innovate, trusting God for fresh ideas to flow from the challenges and changes you may be facing today. We're here to serve you! Please let us know if there are specific ways we can come alongside you to spur on your innovative thinking!

*Adapted from “The Innovator's DNA,” by Dyer, Gregersen and Christensen (2009).

About Dr. Rick Franklin: Rick is husband to Dana and father to four adult children. His passion to develop Christian leaders has been honed and cultivated during the course of 30 years of ministry in a variety of church, parachurch, teaching and consulting roles domestically and internationally.

Rick is an Arrow leader (Arrow Class 7) and prior to joining Arrow Leadership as Vice President, Rick served with his wife, Dana, in a variety of senior leadership positions with Cru in the US, Eastern Europe and Canada.



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