

This is getting us nowhere

CHAPTER 1

“All the armies in the world cannot resist an idea whose time has come.”

Victor Hugo

I'll say it again.

This is getting us nowhere.

Time and time again marketers push off into yet another innovation project and come to grief on the same rocks. From financial services to fine wines, soft drinks to soap detergents and there is an alarming consistency in all of them; innovation isn't working. That's not to say no innovations happen or get launched, of course they do. But it's just so damned hard. More and more corporate resources are being funnelled into the quest for tomorrow's big innovation and it just isn't happening. It is costing more and more to develop each innovation and they are being no more successful.

Our chairmen are always talking up innovation as a core competence and how it will solve so many of the issues facing both the top and bottom line. It will transform low-margin, low-growth 'dog' categories and products into cash-generating superstars. With mounting competition from small nimble new entrants, the big players are finding themselves in a tighter and tighter corner. 'Innovate or die' is the mantra, but actually it should read: 'Innovate (faster and with fewer resources) or die.'

Investment in R&D is being focused on key areas, innovation teams are well staffed and research budgets are bigger than ever. But the innovation task still seems to be getting harder. Resources are being chewed up by the bucket load including, most importantly, internal energy and inspiration. But the final results are less than sparkling most of the time.

What is the problem? The Funnel

The key innovation process in major businesses today is the Innovation Funnel; the process of developing ideas in stages at the end of which is an evaluation that whittles the ideas

down to a smaller number so that resources can be focused on fewer ‘winners’ in the next stage. It isn’t working. In fact it seems to be inspiring low-quality ideas, making the whole process longer and more resource intensive and, ultimately, producing poor-quality output. If corporations want to grow both top and bottom lines consistently, then they need to fix it. Fast.

The alternative to the formal, admin-intensive Innovation Funnel that is held up as the way to break out of the innovation doldrums is to be a rebel; break all the rules and spearhead a drive to put yourself out of business before your competitors do by innovating entirely new markets. This is good, but not enough, and it can divert attention away from the core challenge which is to create growth in core markets with current brands. This is the real challenge for innovators, and it is more difficult to do than radical innovation because innovating the core has all the constraints of an existing business model heaped upon it.

There must a better way than either of these two approaches to deliver innovation in these hyper-competitive, over-saturated markets with marketing savvy cynical consumers.

There is. It’s called Rocketing. It is formally introduced in Chapter 5 and explained in detail, step by step, in Chapters 6 to 9. Instead of focusing all efforts and resources on whittling down many ideas to a ‘winner’, Rocketing takes the analogy of a rocket motor and focuses on building ideas up to maximum impact at launch. Rocket motors are very simple, but very powerful, and make a good model for an innovation process that has to work within a major corporation. Rocketing is not intended as a total replacement for the Funnel, but as a reallocation of resources and an upgrading of the principles and methods used within it. There are four stages to Rocketing:

- *Destination* – Being crystal clear on your goal is the first and crucial step in successful innovation.
- *Combustion* – Generating a larger number of high-quality ideas through continuous insight, multiple ideas generation and efficient ideas management.
- *Nozzle* – A swift prioritization of ideas, relying on experience and instinct together with powerful evaluation criteria, releases time and resource into the rest of the process.
- *Expander* – Building ideas into prototypes and 360° mixes earlier by focusing effort and energy on building ideas, not spotting problems.

With the tools and process laid out in these chapters you can turn your next innovation project into a quicker, more efficient process that will give you a greater chance of success as the end result.

The final chapters discuss the practicalities of Rocketing in the real world, such as the approaches to take if you really want to innovate quickly – not just cutting a chunk off the standard 18-month timeline, but doing the whole thing from start to finish in a

few months. It's also necessary to avoid the pitfalls that inevitably crop up in every large organization – from getting past the “yes, but. . .” people in every meeting to avoiding ideas being stymied at birth ‘by proxy’ because someone doesn't think the boss will like them.

Innovation is the life-blood of branded business and today it is not delivering enough oxygen to the corporate heart. It's being stifled by too much admin, too many processes and too many corporate antibodies and it's got to stop. Your ideas deserve better.

There is a way of doing innovation that fits today's corporate cultures *and* produces successful ideas. This book is dedicated to laying out how you can get more for all the resource you put into innovation. In short, it tells you how to get a better return on your ideas.

