

The Ten Faces of Innovation

Tom Kelley—2005

Chapter 1: THE ANTHROPOLOGIST

- Anthropologists keep “bug lists” or “idea wallets.” Anthropologists work a little like novelists or stand-up comics. They consider their everyday experiences to be good potential material, and write down bits and pieces that surprise them, especially things that seem broken. A bug list focuses on the negative—the things that bug you—while idea wallets contain both innovative concepts worth emulating and problems that need solving. Whether the idea wallet lives electronically in your PDA or is simply a low-tech index card in your back pocket, it can sharpen your powers of observation and your skill as an Anthropologist.
- Over the years, IDEO has developed dozens of tools for Anthropologists. We’ve documented fifty-one of them in a set of action-oriented cards called the Methods Deck. The interrelated methodologies are organized into the four categories of **ask, watch, learn** and **try**.
- Patrice was looking for people’s journey. She handed out “emotional stickers” bearing evocative words like guilty, healthy, satisfied, balanced, and stuffed to stick on their food map for the day. The words were meant to help express how people’s food choices actually made them feel.
- As they observed the crowds, they noticed a recurring pattern: In the minutes before trains arrived, people would stand on the platform. Look over their shoulder at the drink kiosk, glance at their watch, and then scan the platform for the incoming train. A casual observer might have missed the clue. But these budding Anthropologists realized that passengers were torn between wanting something to drink and not wanting to miss their train. So what did they do? They created prototype soft-drink displays boasting clocks so large that passengers could simultaneously watch the clock and the drink display. The result? Sales shot up in Warsaw train stations. The clocks reassured customers that they had time to buy a cold refreshment. That simple success made believers of these Poles. All inspired by watching a thirty-minute TV show.
- To anyone who feels immune to the energy field around magazines, let me offer a suggestion. Drop by the Universal News and Café on Eighth Avenue in New York City. Imagine a generously sized bookstore. Except that the more than 7,000 different titles reaching high up the walls are not books but glossy magazines.

Chapter 2: THE EXPERIMENTER

- T. Few people stop to consider where the name for the ubiquitous spray lubricant WD-40 came from, but it refers to the thirty-nine failed experiments in coming up with the perfect water-displacement formula before the company finally achieved success:
- In the last few years, we’ve opened up the range of what we consider to be a prototype. Take proposals. We prototype them too. Recently, a major American professional sports league asked us for a proposal.
- We thought about how low-resolution video clips—usually some form of parody of current events—seem to race through a corporate grapevine. Although we had never used a video in this context before, everyone was game to give it a try. We created a simple, funny thirty-second

video (accompanied by a one-page proposal) for the national sports league, capturing our own enthusiasm and the energy of the game

- The school's baseball team had a losing record. Ravizza, a renowned sports psychologist and professor of kinesiology, set out to change the way the Titans thought about mistakes. If players struck out. Hit into a double play, or had any other kind of morale-zapping failure. They'd come back to the dugout and literally "flush away" the mistake with a palm-sized, realistic-looking (and –sounding) toy toilet. At bat, they'd carry an image of the mini toilet in their minds. After a bad swing. They'd step out of the batter's box and mentally "flush" to clear their mind.
- Mary Doan, head of marketing and advertising for The Good Guys electronics retailer, told me a great story about an experiment she came up with to overcome this barrier. During a trip to New York, she became intrigued by the cool fold-out "Z-card" maps she saw there, and wondered whether some new twist on the elaborate fold-outs could help her store sell flat-panel TVs.
- It has some value, but two can be more interesting, and can start you down the path to more and more. The trouble with a lone prototype is that if you show someone your one-and-only bright proposal and ask expectantly, "What do you think?" their answer is muddled by what they think about you. If they're a friend, they'll likely shower you with encouragement regardless of the idea's merit. But suggest an idea to your nemesis, and you're bound to be met by a withering "I don't get it!?" At IDEO, we always try to present more than one prototype to guard against such fruitless responses. Battle-hardened Experimenters know that a variety of options makes possible a much more frank and positive discussion about the pros and cons of a prospective idea.
- Here's an example from outside the business world that may have a familiar ring. After dinner one evening, my wife says, "Honey, I bought a new outfit today," and disappears into the next room to try it on. A few minutes later, she returns in the new dress. "Well, what do you think?" Of course, it's a charged question. You've gotta love that dress, right? It's still a prototype, since the sales tags are still on it, and it's still fully returnable, but that's not the point. She's asking about the dress—with her in it. She picked it out, tried it on, paid for it, and brought it home. I've gotta like that dress, because she's already committed to that choice. With only one option on the table, I'm either on her side or I'm not.

Chapter Three: THE CROSS-POLLINATOR

CHAPTER 4 THE HURDLER

- Hurdling with a Blog
 - Diego Rodriguez is one of IDEO's boomerang staffers. He left IDEO to get a Harvard MBA, and then worked at Intuit for a while as a brand manager for QuickBooks Online. While part of the marketing team at Intuit, Diego had an idea that he thought would help draw attention and ultimately more customers—to his online service. Diego understood the power of blogging and wanted to apply it to his product line. Most of the marketing group didn't see much potential in blogging (just as, a generation before, many people pooh-poohed the value of the Internet) and warned Diego it was a waste of time. "It's not on our 'critical few' list," he was told, which is the Six Sigma-speak equivalent of "don't bother."
 - The blog cost a whopping \$13 a month to host, and that was more of a barrier than you'd expect—for two contradictory reasons. The first reason, almost unbelievable in a

company of Intuit's size and success. Is that it was beyond what Diego could get authorized going through normal channels. "It was near the end of the fourth quarter, and there was just no budget anywhere reports Diego. The second reason, ironically, was the opposite: "I didn't think I could convince anybody that something really important to our marketing efforts would cost only \$13 a month." One Friday at lunch, Diego got a friendly executive to put the charge on his personal credit card, although virtually no one else in the company knew what he was up to. Diego spent the weekend writing a few dozen entries for his blog. Meanwhile, he called a freelance graphic designer to ask if she could come up with some simple graphics by Sunday night. A few days later, he was up and running with a blog that discussed his favorite QuickBooks features and gave expert tips on using them. Diego somehow got a link to his blog onto a page of Intuit's main Web site. In the first couple of days, he was gathering new visitors at the rate of about one a minute. He sensed he was on a path to something great. Or about to get fired.

- Intuit's corporate marketing department put out an advisory that the company would not be getting into blogging, apparently oblivious to the fact that they already had an active one. The "blogosphere" was a pretty close-knit group back in 2004, so when blogging luminary Robert Scoble noticed that Intuit (or at least one renegade there) had a blog going, he praised the company for being an innovation leader and created a link from his site to Diego's. From that moment, Diego's little blog developed a life of its own.
- More and more customers started finding it and leaving positive feedback, writing things like "This is so cool." Like many Web-savvy companies, Intuit sometimes pays to have their site listed among the paid search results on Google. But suddenly their Google hits went higher, as more bloggers and other sites linked to Diego's QuickBooks blog. By the time Diego's management team tumbled to the fact that they had a blog at all, it was already a phenomenon. Everyone loves a success, of course. Diego's managers came around to thinking it was a darned good idea too, even if they quietly worried about his end run. But the point is, Diego is a Hurdler. If Diego had taken no for an answer the first time, if he hadn't had the heart of a Hurdler, it would never have happened. And that is the spark that a Hurdler brings to their team.
- Part of the Hurdler's role is trying to find the silver lining in every cloud. Setbacks aren't problems, they're opportunities. Here's an example from Yoo-hoo, the New York-based maker of retro-chic chocolate soft drinks. One day a Yoo-hoo beverage van was stolen on the streets of New York. What possible good could come out of such a theft? Well, the folks at Yoo-hoo, known for their whimsy, posted a mock all-points bulletin on their Web site. They put up a hefty reward—two years' worth of chocolate Yoo-hoo, encouraged visitors to their site to download "Missing" posters, and generally turned a routine misadventure into a marketing opportunity. The campaign might have lasted longer if the New York police hadn't located the abandoned van a few days later

CHAPTER 5 THE COLLABORATOR

- But as I looked at the mass of competitive products from this stationery company, I told the curator of the collection that I noticed one significant omission. There was nothing from Japan. I've been to Tokyo more than two dozen times and never failed to visit a couple of stationery

stores, because I find their products so creative and well crafted. “That’s a great idea,” piped up the curator. “How would I do that?”

- Well, the way I would do it,” I said to her, “would be to call one of my friends in Tokyo and offer them a few hundred dollars of budget to buy the latest products from the remarkable Tokyo Hands store in the Shibuya district or Itoya’s Ginza stationery shop. They’d FedEx the stuff to me and I’d have a whole new collection within a few days.” The curator seemed to like that idea, and implied that she might ask me to do that for her. But then, as we were walking away, my host and tour guide for the day whispered conspiratorially, “You know, Tom, we have a big division in Japan.”
- I was stunned. The company had several hundred workers in Japan, but the curator at headquarters didn’t quite know how to call or whom to ask. It’s an example of how silos can hold you back. They’ve got plenty of resources in Japan but can’t seem to tap into them. Of course, we’ve often played the role of connector, helping to bridge one part of a client company to another. In a perfect world, companies wouldn’t need such help. But I believe you’ve got to do whatever works. Sometimes companies need a third party to help facilitate interdepartmental collaboration.
- But Neil Grimmer and Chris Waugh at IDEO may have carved out the ultimate niche in the world of radical collaboration: They triathlons with their favorite clients. Neil started the trend when he discovered that one of our clients at Mercedes was also a serious runner. The next thing we knew, Mercedes was sponsoring them both (complete with team T-shirts and other gear) in a triathlon in Germany, and Neil was doing early-morning training runs with Mercedes manager Manfred Dorn before every team meeting. Mercedes even scheduled the final presentation for the project to take place two days after the triathlon, so both companies could celebrate completing the event.
- We brainstormed ideas like having the handle glow from an internal light source, tallying a running count of drafts poured, or generating a mini light show during the pour. In a lighter moment we even contemplated an electronic “lottery” that periodically delivers the jackpot of a free beer, like the handle on a Las Vegas slot machine. In the end, we kept it simple—and economical: a cool blue translucent handle and a stainless-steel shaft “that stands out from every other tap handle in town.
- America’s entrants for the men’s 4 x 100-meter relay in Barcelona were Mike Marsh, Leroy Burrell, Dennis Mitchell, and the legendary Carl Lewis. Each of them runs the 100-meter dash in about 10 seconds, so you might guess that their combined time would be about 40 seconds, right? Sounds logical. Yet these four remarkable men, each running 100 meters and passing the baton three times, put together a combined performance of 37.4 seconds for a world record—averaging more than 26 miles an hour! But how is that possible? It’s possible because at the moment starter Marsh executed a smooth-as-silk handoff to Burrell, his teammate was already nearing top speed.

Chapter 6: THE DIRECTOR

- He’s inspired countless IDEOers, and now he is doing the same at Stanford, where he’s creating a new design institute (which some people are already calling the “d.school to contrast it with Stanford’s prestigious Graduate School of Business the “B-school”).

- One standout Director among the clients I've met in the past few years is Claudia Kotchka, Vice President of Design, Innovation, and Strategy at Procter & Gamble, who was recently described in Fortune magazine as “the most powerful design executive in the country.”
- **Among many other** initiatives, she helped set up a corporate innovation fund and then asked managers in P&G's global business units to suggest “problems worth solving”—the kind of things that kept them up at night. She rejected 90 percent of the proposals, mostly because she considered them “not hard enough,” but ended up with a great list of projects to move forward on collectively. We think P&G has created an innovation-driven strategy that's bound to produce results.
- **When I'm speaking** to business audiences, whether it's in Europe, Asia, or America, one of the most frequently asked questions I get about innovation is “Where should we start?” The innovation challenge can seem so complex and ambiguous that sometimes organizations have trouble kicking off the journey. If you find yourself in the Director role trying to get the ball rolling, I believe one of the easiest ways to get a quick return on innovation is to set off a chain reaction of brainstorming throughout your organization.
- **Mind the Playground Rules.** We've stenciled our brainstorming rules high on the walls of many of our conference rooms: Go for Quantity, Encourage Wild Ideas, Be Visual, Defer Judgment, and One Conversation at a Time. Even in a rule-averse culture, we've found these basic principles to be both instructive and empowering.
- **Number Your Ideas.** Numbering your ideas motivates participants, sets a pace, and adds a little structure. A hundred ideas per hour is usually a sign of a good. Fluid brainstorm, and even if the group is nearly out of steam when you hit number ninety-four, it's human nature to want to push on for at least half a dozen more.
- **Stretch First.** Ask attendees to do a little homework on the subject the night before. Play a zippy word game to clear the mind and set aside everyday distractions. Borrowing from the world of improv, we often start with some form of warm-up, like free association, where I toss out a word or idea and another person quickly builds on it and tosses it to someone else. Athletes stretch. So do brainstormers.
- For Americans (the biggest peanut-butter fans in the world), the name—and the sound—is reminiscent of some of the nicer memories of childhood. And as for unlikely names, there's a bike race in California that shows you can't always trust your intuition about what will work in the marketplace and what won't. Twenty years ago, this grueling annual ride (129 miles and four mountain passes) had a limited appeal to only the elite few willing to brave the strenuous course. But then the organizers renamed it the “Death Ride,” and it enjoyed a surge of popularity. Apparently, the grim name appeals to the tough-as-nails psyche of the long-distance cyclist. Now each year something like 6,000 applicants vie for “only” 2,600 spots available at the event. It's doubtful that you have something you want to call the “Death Ride,” but if a quirky, distinctive name could get people waiting in line for a chance to participate in what you have to offer, it's worth investing some time and money in the search.
- **For example, professional** namers like Lexicon founder David Placek would tell you that consonants like v and z connote speed, while letters from the middle of the alphabet like, m, and n are slower, more comfortable sounds. Consumers can tell you that a car named Viper is faster than a Lumina before any other part of the car is designed.

- Only recently has the idea occurred to us that with a good nap in the middle of the day, perhaps you could get two peaks, like having two mornings in the same day. We haven't done any scientific experiments yet, but it seems worth looking into. Certainly, some of the most prolific and creative people in history have been daytime nappers. Luminaries from Thomas Edison to Winston Churchill have sworn by the rejuvenating powers of a good nap. Churchill began his day with a five-hour morning shift. Smack in the middle came the hearty lunch and ample nap, followed by an evening of work and meetings that often ran till 2 a.m. Albert Einstein said that naps "refreshed the mind" and helped make him more creative. Brahms napped at the piano and Da Vinci between brushstrokes. Today, while the vast majority of corporations consider napping unconventional at best, science has come down firmly on the side of the power nappers.
- Several years ago, Craig Yarde, president of Yarde Metals in Bristol, Connecticut, noticed some of the workers at his 330-person company taking catnaps in their cars or at their desks. Instead of firing them—or even firing off an angry e-mail—Yarde polled the employees and asked them if they'd like a comfortable place to snooze. The employees said yes (of course), and now they have a "nap room" with semiprivate recliners they can use anytime.
- Still think napping during working hours weird? Nikola Tesla reportedly slept as little as two hours a night, making up for it with frequent daytime naps. Thomas Edison slept about five hours a night, plus naps. Margaret Thatcher, John F Kennedy, and Buckminster Fuller were all power nappers.

Chapter 7: THE EXPERIENCE ARCHITECT

- **My advice? Too** much time standing in one place is bad for your corporate health. Drive, run, or walk to your customers with technology, information, and personalized service. Wait too long to take the first step and somebody else will get there first.

Chapter 8: THE SET DESIGNER

- Of course, corporations that more fully embrace innovation can do a lot more than just relax a few rules. For example, Procter & Gamble has recently embraced the power of design and innovation, and decided it needed a special place to nurture fresh new innovation initiatives. We helped them design a space they call The Gym, a 10,000-squarefoot innovation center. One key decision was to build The Gym in a location near the majority of P&G Cincinnati employees—in other words, they wanted an "off-site" to be built "on-site."
- Suddenly, Cleveland's "Bad News Bears" had, for most of that season, the best record in American baseball. As luck would have it, the 1994 baseball strike canceled that year's playoffs. But in 1995, for the first time in more than forty years, the Cleveland Indians won the pennant, disproving the theory among many Ohioans that the Indians were waiting for hell to freeze over before they'd get to the playoffs.
- Like many of us, Tom owns one of those big, thick, unabridged dictionaries, which he kept for many years high on a shelf in his home office. Once every two or three months, he hauled the massive tome off its perch and laid it on his desk to look up a word. Then, one day at an antique store in Palo Alto, he found one of those classic maple library-style dictionary stands that hold a reference book open and ready on a moment's notice. Now, Tom reports, he looks up two or three words a day when he's working at home. The simple act of leaving his dictionary open and on a

more convenient level instead of closed up on the shelf caused him to look up words nearly a hundred times more often.

Chapter 9: THE CAREGIVER

- We all crave a good Caregiver. Why else would personal trainers be so popular? Why are some hairdressers in such high demand? Think of that great waitress or restaurant owner who shines attention upon youth Caregiver who makes you feel you are the only customer in the room. Caregivers have empathy. They work to extend the relationship. They show rather than teach. And they are very good at guiding your choices.
- **A few years earlier**, our San Francisco office had made up “baseball cards” for its IDEO team to help new clients keep track of who’s who. Building on that idea for the DePaul project, we suggested using the baseball-card concept for their Caregivers
- Invite Customers to “Join the Club.” Loyalty programs have become an extremely powerful tool for Caregivers in industries like airlines and hotel chains, but the model is still extensible into many other Industries and settings. You don’t need to hire a management consultant to tell you that it’s good business to identify your most loyal (or most profitable) customers and give them “special customer status,” whatever that might mean in your business.
- When I double-click on the icon for my Web browser, for instance, sometimes nothing happens for five or ten seconds. No hourglass, no progress bars, no “Please stand by” Just my computer screen staring blankly back at me. Left out in the cold, I double-click again, just to be sure, and in doing so, I make my situation worse.

Chapter 10: THE STORYTELLER

- **Denning says** that business stories have focused purposes like sparking action. transmitting values, fostering collaboration, or leading people into the future
- **Jane doesn’t ask** for instant insights and she doesn’t jump to conclusions. She doesn’t ask yes-or-no questions, either. She goes into the field and finds interesting people (and almost everyone seems interesting to Jane). Instead of asking questions like “What do you like or dislike about your mobile service?” Jane will start with “Tell me a story about a time your mobile let you down.” In the ensuing conversation. She’ll uncover plenty of likes and dislikes, but she builds a better personal connection and gains deeper insights by basing the discussion around stories.
- And they use storytelling as a tool. One of their senior executives told me that whenever the team needed a spark, they would simply bring in patients—or the children of elderly patients—and say, “Please tell us a story about how a Medtronic product changed your life.”
- “Wouldn’t it be fun if our report were like one of these magazines?” suggested one of our team members, flipping through one of the dozens of women’s magazines that had accumulated in our project space. The attraction was obvious: The chatty, familiar, and casual editorial. The bouncy self-help tone. The sexy design, emphasizing photographs and design over text.
- The right medium can certainly support and amplify your intended message. Just as you craft your message. Give attention to what medium is most likely to get your point across.
- You introduce skepticism or controversy, air common doubts and worries, and then knock down the objections one by one. Snicker all you want, but most corporate videos aren’t nearly as comprehensive or persuasive as infomercials.

- There's nothing wrong with their classic look, but it certainly doesn't promise culinary delight or even comfort-food indulgence. So what explains their enduring popularity? Why, the fortune, of course. Fortune cookies are about 10 percent cookie, 90 percent experience, and we all love the ritual of figuring out who belongs to which cookie, then breaking them open with a crisp, satisfying snap and reading the fortune
- So have you noticed the fortune-cookie phenomenon spreading to other venues?
- Having jumped from East to West, fortune-cookie wisdom then jumped from food to drink. In case you haven't noticed, most high end juice and iced tea drinks—especially the ones in glass bottles use the inside of their metal caps as a tiny media opportunity. Honest Tea taps into wisdom of the ages like a fortune cookie, though the quotes are a bit more contemporary than Confucius.
- Jumping on the storytelling-anywhere bandwagon, IDEO suggested it might be possible to print riddles or interesting facts on a Pringles potato chip using food-based inks. Sure enough, P&G came up with a clever way to do it, teaming up with the folks from Trivial Pursuit for some of the content. It's a small step in the chain of innovations that sprang from the fortune cookie, but it did turn eating Pringles into a fun social event. And it increased their market share by 14 percent in the first year.
- Storytelling creates heroes. The observations that inspire so much of our innovation work are often grounded in the stories of real people—customers or would-be customers with needs that aren't met by today's products or services. These individuals give a name and often a face to the design objectives of a project. You'll often hear team members say, "Would that help Lisa?" Sometimes we'll combine elements of these real people and, as in the movies, create a composite embodying most of our objectives in one fictionalized character. These characters give us a hero—someone to innovate for.