

Innovation rules!

**A roadmap to creativity and innovation for
not-for-profit organisations**

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What's in here?

Section 1: What is this thing called innovation?	4
Debunking innovation myths.....	4
Section 2. Innovation and the voluntary sector	6
The innovation edge – six drivers to innovate for not-for-profit organisations	6
Section 3: The foundations of the innovation engine: vision, mission, values, culture and strategy	13
Section 4: A step-by-step guide to systematic innovation	16
Section 5: Idea cultivation and management	20
Three methods to help you extract good ideas from staff and nurture them	20
Managing ideas for maximum success	23
Section 6: Opening up your thinking: Radical approaches, ‘can-do’ attitudes and solution mentalities	25
Section 7: Fostering responsible risk	28
Four steps to a responsible and effective relationship with risk.....	28
Section 8: Rising to the innovation challenge	31
Intercepting innovation killers.....	31
The charity challenge: calling all innovators.....	35
Some final innovative thoughts	39
Summary of key points	40
References	41
Appendix One: Interviewees’ details	42
Appendix Two: The contents of the Innovation Toolkit	44
Innovation and creative thinking workshops	45
<i>Workshop 1: Effective idea development: Creativity and innovation for individuals</i>	45
<i>Workshop 2: Maximising team capacity for innovation: A workshop for team leaders</i>	45
<i>Workshop 3: Innovation away day for CEOs and senior managers</i>	46
<i>In-house innovation facilitation, brainstorming and creative thinking sessions</i>	46
About nfpSynergy	47
nfpSynergy’s reports and articles	49

A word of warning

We do not pretend that this document is the first or last word on innovation and creativity. While it contains many excellent ideas, the vast majority are taken from other people. Our aim here is to produce a (free) report that will help not-for-profit organisations turn their innovation rhetoric into reality. The best way to use this guide is to read it quickly (in less than an hour), highlight those sections or ideas of greatest value or relevance, and then determine at least two or three actions that you can take to get the ball of innovation rolling within your organisation. Reading a guide such as this is the easy part; turning its contents into actions that transform your organisation is much harder. The rewards, however, are an organisation that makes every pound go further, is resilient in turbulent times and transforms the lives of those it exists to help.

We would like to extend a special thank you to the 15 innovators, recommended from within the sector, that agreed to share their experiences and insights surrounding innovation in the voluntary sector. It is their knowledge and ideas that made this report possible. A short biography for each can be found in Appendix One.

Introduction

What is the point of a voluntary organisation if not to make a difference? Thousands of people in the UK (and around the world) work for free or for a reduced wage because they believe that the causes or charities they work for are changing people's lives. They believe that the for-profit world fails to deliver solutions for the nation's many injustices and inadequacies and that a more determined, impassioned force is therefore needed. Does this not sound like the ideal foundation for innovation? Does this not sound like a group of people who would happily put their necks on the line to find new and improved ways of operating so that they could deliver better solutions to their beneficiaries? So why is it that in a time of rampant competition and fast-paced change the voluntary sector is not leading the way when it comes to innovative practices?

We would like to think that part of the problem is that too few people have specifically addressed the voluntary sector's potential for innovation. While there are thousands of books and websites to help the commercial sector understand the advantages and processes involved with innovating, the voluntary sector is often left feeling that the only time they can afford the 'luxury' of innovation is when a funder specifically asks for it. It is our hope that this report will provide charities with a greater understanding about what innovation could do for them on a day-to-day basis. We have also put together an Innovation Toolkit (please see Appendix 2) to help you master some of the practical skills involved in systematic innovation. (Please email reports@nfpsynergy.net if you would like the toolkit).

We have broken the report into eight sections, each of which is related to every other section. (You will begin to understand that innovation is all about connecting ideas, experiences, processes and mindsets in a way that produces an electrifying experience.)

Section 1 stresses that the way an organisation views innovation will determine how successful it is at using it and points out that noted innovators generally see innovation as a multi-faceted tool for solving problems and affecting change. It also explains that with the right tools, anyone can become an innovative force.

Section 2 examines why innovation is so important to the voluntary sector and highlights our research findings about the sector's current innovative 'fitness'.

Section 3 looks at why an effective voluntary organisation needs to integrate vision, strategy, innovation and brand for maximum impact.

Section 4 shows that innovation can be systematised and gives organisations a step-by-step process to do this.

Sections 5, 6 and 7 focus on how to build a culture of innovation within your organisation. Section 5 highlights the importance of encouraging all staff to contribute to the pool of ideas and suggests mechanisms through which organisations can encourage and manage the growth of effective ideas. Section 6 again stresses the importance of 'mindset' when it comes to innovating and encourages organisations to value more radical thinking and 'can-do' attitudes. Section 7 addresses the issue of risk and provides four steps towards responsible risk-taking that will help ensure your organisation explores its full potential without violating the trust of key stakeholders.

And finally, section 8 prepares organisations for the obstacles they will face when trying to innovate and poses a number of challenges for the charity world.

Section 1: What is this thing called innovation?

What goes through your mind when you hear the word ‘innovation’? Do you roll your eyes and perhaps think about a time when you have had to ‘sex-up’ an existing programme to look ‘innovative’ to funders? Or do you get excited and think about overcoming challenges and discovering revolutionary new services and solutions? This is an important question to consider, as the way that you and your organisation think about innovation (your motives for innovating) will affect how able you are to innovate.

One thing that stood out about our interviewees was that they all saw innovation as a tool for overcoming constrictive resources, obstacles and mindsets. Innovation can help an organisation punch above its weight. This is demonstrated by the collection of quotes below.

Perspectives on innovation

“Innovation means thinking without barriers and using inspiration as a springboard to achieve solutions.” (Fiona Dawe, YouthNet UK)

“Innovation is the ability to see through problems and come out the other side with exactly (or close to) what you wanted.” (John Crawford, Camden Society)

“Challenging pre-conceived ideas is frequently a part of innovation – particularly in terms of looking internally at the organisation and asking, ‘we’ve always done it this way – why? Is it really valid? Is it the best way of doing it?’” (Stephen Dawson, Impetus Trust)

“Innovation is about having to make things work with limited resource, having to get the best value out of what you do. On that basis, charities should be leading and not following!” (Charlotte Goodman, Action for Blind People)

At its core, innovation in the workplace is about examining the way things are currently done with a view to finding new and better ways of doing them. It can be applied to any element of the business, from the nature of the services offered to clients, to the systems used for filing or payroll. It does not have to be original, nor do its effects have to be earth shattering – it can simply be the extension, modification, or combination of already existing ideas in a way that improves existing functions. Indeed in many ways innovation is relative: if an organisation adopts a certain method of working for the first time, that method is innovative for it, even if the rest of the world is already doing it.

In the following section we debunk some common misperceptions about innovation.

Debunking innovation myths

Myth 1: Innovation is just creativity dressed up

The words ‘innovation’ and ‘creativity’ are often used interchangeably. This is partially because when businesses want to talk about creativity without appearing too flighty, they talk about ‘innovation’, and partially because the two processes are very closely related.

Creativity is the more fundamental process (defined as “having the ability or power to create”); innovation is more about building on what already exists. A creative person will make new connections; an innovative person will find a way to apply these connections. (The creativity consultancy ?What If! defines innovation as insight plus ideas plus implementation.)

Although in a business setting, it is obviously more efficient to innovate than to create (why have your own ideas, when you can use other people's?), the two processes are essentially symbiotic. Being able to generate new ideas is of little use if you are unable to visualise how they could be applied to existing systems. But innovation does need to be founded on creativity, i.e. the generation and manipulation of new ideas. This means that in order to maximise innovation, your organisation will need to embrace creativity and develop effective systems for managing the flow of ideas. For this reason, this handbook will focus on innovation, but will also look at how to stimulate and manage new ideas.

Myth 2: Innovation belongs to the private sector

It is tempting for voluntary organisations to imagine that innovation belongs to the fast-paced world of the private sector, but it is actually not-for-profits that should be most concerned with new services and solutions. Consider for a second why it is that we innovate. While innovators of all varieties are partially motivated by the joy of seeing their ideas succeed, the principal motivation of a business is obviously profit. Surely then, when your principal motivation is not to create profit, but to make the world a better place, the drive to innovate should be even stronger. The more impact your organisation can have with the same resources, the more effective it will be. Furthermore, as charities become more competitive and business-like, voluntary organisations need to innovate in order to build a sustainable supporter base. Service providers, fundraisers, marketers, campaigners, press officers and even finance officers need to continually assess and update the way they work in order to ensure that all elements of the charity remain 'cutting edge' and relevant.

Myth 3: Innovation and creativity are magical and elusive forces reserved for a select few

There is a strong temptation to consider innovation as being the realm of the 'innovators', those rare people who have the inspiration, passion and dedication to push through an idea. While this does have some truth to it – those who regularly succeed at innovating do often possess a combination of certain qualities – the reality is that the potential to innovate lies within us all.

In his book *The whole brain business book*, Ned Hermann tells the story of how the Chief Executive of a major publishing house was desperate to work out why some of his employees were creative and some were not. In order to crack the mystery, he employed a very expensive group of psychologists to work with the staff and identify what it was that made some staff more creative than others. After much exploration, the psychologists reported that the only obvious difference was that the creative employees believed they were creative, while the others did not! The previously uncreative staff underwent a course of creative training and subsequently started producing more original ideas than their creative peers. The lesson here is that perception is often reality. Those people who are recognised as creative or innovative are different from others in one main respect: they believe in their ideas and their ability to achieve them and are therefore more passionate in pushing them forward.

If we all have the potential to be innovative (or at least to be involved in the innovation process), it follows that innovation can be systemised and is therefore not elusive. In the following sections we will begin to understand that effective innovation is a lot like genius: inspiration constitutes only a small percentage of the process. The rest of the process is about having the right people and procedures in place to ensure that potential innovations do not fall by the wayside.

Section 2. Innovation and the voluntary sector

The following section draws on interview and questionnaire research conducted within the sector to highlight why innovation should be an integral part of voluntary sector working. It will also demonstrate that the voluntary sector is not always as innovative as it thinks it is.

The innovation edge – six drivers to innovate for not-for-profit organisations

“And in such a period of rapid change the best – perhaps the only – way a business can hope to prosper if not to survive, is to innovate.” (Peter Drucker, 1994)

The world is changing. In the UK, we are becoming more educated and affluent, more connected (just think how accessible lines of information and communication are on the internet) and more widely travelled. We have a growing service economy, higher expectations and burgeoning aspirations for our leisure, family and personal lives. In this dynamic new world, being able to scan the environment and respond to change is key to success. The following six drivers to innovate illustrate why innovation needs to be a part of your organisation.

Driver 1: Adapting to a rapidly changing environment

“The market in which we are operating is changing rapidly. For example, a lot of charities are moving from campaigning to service delivery; funding structures are changing rapidly; government funding is moving from grant to contract; and let’s not even start on new communication technology.” (Debra Allcock Tyler, DSC)

“Practice is constantly changing, the nature of the problems is constantly changing, technology etc. is changing, and all of this provides both new ideas and solutions. Innovation is about keeping your eye on the ball and matching these new solutions to the new or old problems.” (Adam Sampson, Shelter)

“Expectation has changed – donors are judging charities on commercial expectations e.g. service, transparency.” (John Grain, Our Lasting Tribute)

“We stand still at our peril, which is the same for anyone in a competitive market place.” (Charlotte Goodman, Action for Blind People.)

Charities do not operate in a vacuum. In 2003, nfpSynergy circulated a report highlighting the wide reaching implications that demographic shifts and socio-economic trends would have for charities. (The report, titled ‘Five key trends and their impact on the voluntary sector’ can be obtained by e-mailing reports@nfpsynergy.net.) When the more immediate effects brought in by changes in government policy, legislation, regulation, information and communication technologies and funding pools (to name but a few areas of rapid change) are added to this, it becomes clear that those charities that are interested in longevity will need strategies in place that enable them to respond quickly and creatively to changes in the external environment. Innovative charities will capitalise on change, seeing it as an opportunity to respond quickly and effectively.

Driver 2: Giving service users ‘best value’

“We owe it to our service users to not simply do things the way they have always been done. We live in the information age; people don’t just have needs, they have expectations and rights. We want to be delivering services that people want rather than need. (The latter is the traditional view of charities.)” (Charlotte G, Action for Blind People)

It was suggested throughout our interviews that merely addressing a service user’s most urgent needs is no longer good enough. Our interviewees argued that the voluntary sector should be spearheading a movement for more creative and holistic solutions for beneficiaries.

Driver 3: Delivering extraordinary results

“I think the voluntary sector needs creativity and innovation more than any other sector, and the reason is that it needs to deliver extraordinary results.” (Tony Elischer, THINK Consulting)

Unlike the corporate sector, the voluntary sector does not have a product or service to offer supporters in return for their money and allegiance. Nor does it have a reliable stream of income that it can use to remove problems or realise solutions. Despite this, there is an expectation that charities should be able to turn small amounts of finance into big returns for their beneficiaries. As such, the voluntary sector, more than any other sector, needs to find inventive ways of making a lot happen with a little.

Driver 4: Becoming thought leaders and policy pushers

“Innovation is important to us because we have taken a position as a leader in the field. This means using our expertise, our influence and our muscle to stay ahead of the game. We have no aspirations to be mere providers of state-funded services. Our hope is to identify new solutions to problems, to test them, to use our brand and ability to gain publicity and command attention for these new innovative solutions, and then to hand them over to other agencies and the state to deliver.”(Adam Sampson, CEO, Shelter)

“Finding new solutions is a positive way of being challenging. You can criticise and criticise what’s going on, but it won’t do much good unless you provide an alternative.” (Shaks Ghosh, Crisis)

It is good if charities can make an immediate difference with specific beneficiaries, but it is even better if they can use their accumulation of new knowledge and successful action to affect widespread change. Campaigning charities in particular should take very seriously their role in identifying new solutions and disseminating change.

Driver 5: Increasing employee satisfaction and retention

“There is something exciting about working in an innovative organisation that transfers to staff and supporters, and not just to those directly involved in innovating. The buzz transfers through the whole organisation. Even admin get the feeling that they are working in an exciting and dynamic environment, and this results in them feeling more satisfied in their workplace.” (Shaks Ghosh, Crisis)

Offering all volunteers and employees opportunities to influence the way the organisation works makes for more impassioned and committed staff and volunteers. It also increases the chances of creating fresh and effective ideas and fosters an atmosphere where anything feels possible.

Driver 6: Increasing organisational profile in a competitive market place

“There’s an awful lot of look-alike charities where there is no real differentiation. This is confusing for donors and volunteers etc., as they forget whom they’re supporting and what they’re supporting.” (Derek Humphries, THINK Consulting)

“We have 189,000 charities in the UK – competition can only increase. How can you differentiate yourself in the market place? It’s not just about cause; it’s about how you do things, how you treat your donors, what you offer them – this needs creativity and innovation if you are to have any chance of standing out.” (Tony Elischer, THINK Consulting)

Innovation that is carried out effectively is memorable and creates a unique identity. People who come into contact with innovative charities remember them because the organisations created an experience or impression not offered by others. They respond to client, beneficiary and supporter need in a new way. Good examples include BandAid, Jamie Oliver’s restaurant, Fifteen, and The Big Issue.

Box 1: A new challenge – social entrepreneurs

“At the moment, it (the voluntary sector) thinks innovation is a ‘nice to have’. I don’t think it notices that because social entrepreneurs are changing the market and because there are now more alternatives for people to give their money to, charity funds will dry up.” (Kristina Mullins, ?What If!)

Not only are there thousands and thousands of charities in the UK competing for public funds, social entrepreneurs have also entered the fray. Their combination of business with charity provides a constructive and highly transparent mechanism for helping people to rebuild their lives. Examples include The Big Issue (magazine), Fifteen (restaurant) and Aspire (furniture refurbishing and window cleaning). It also offers people a way of giving that is experientially rich and mutually beneficial (for example, diners at Jamie Oliver’s restaurant, Fifteen, can treat themselves to an expensive meal knowing that the proceeds are going to a good cause and seeing first-hand the kitchen staff who have benefited).

A number of charities such as the Princes Trust, the Camden Society and Thames Reach Bondway have started to develop services based on the principles of social entrepreneurship, and it is only a matter of time before the whole array of charitable causes develop self-funding strands. (For example, imagine a theatre where famous actors donate their performances and all proceeds go to cancer research; or an animal sanctuary where schools can pay to take the children on an ‘animal excursion’.)

Just how innovative is the voluntary sector?: results of our survey

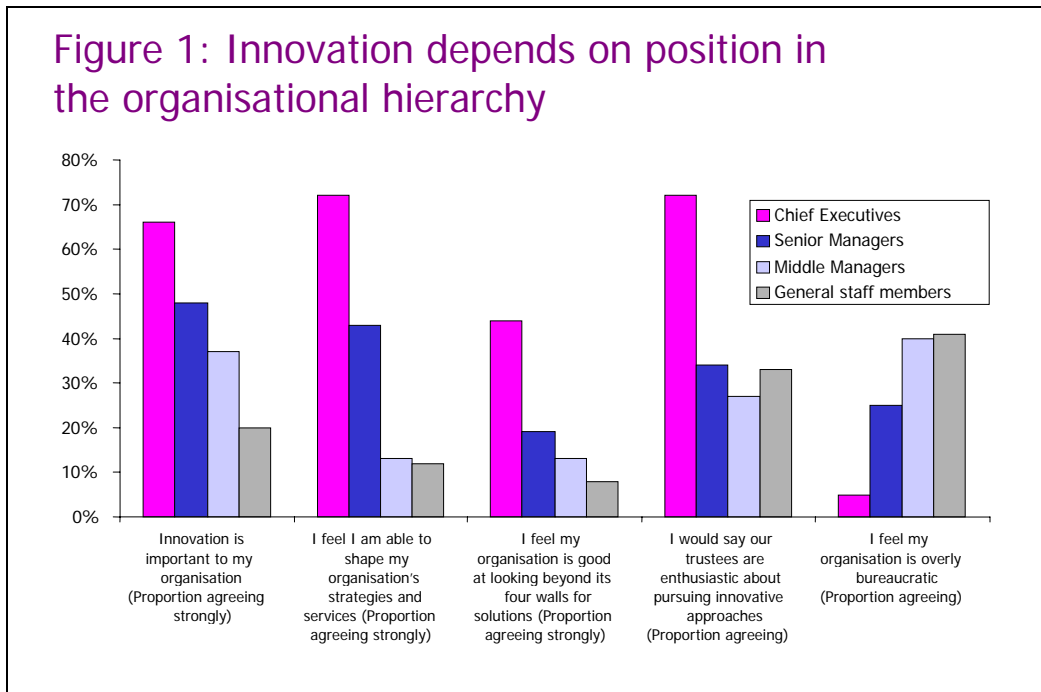
We invited 700 people from the UK voluntary sector (working in a wide variety of roles and organisations) to participate in an online survey about innovation. The 192 respondents were evenly spread over the different areas of concern (for example, health and medical, child welfare etc.) and 19% were Chief Executives, 56% were senior or middle management, 18% described themselves as a staff or project team member, 2% were trustees, and 3% were consultants. We also interviewed 18 key innovators from within and outside the voluntary sector.

It was interesting to discover that most respondents were very positive about the level of innovation in their organisation. However, on closer analysis of the results, and after discussion with our interviewees, it soon became apparent that many organisations were seeing their level of innovation through rose coloured spectacles.

Questionnaire - headline results

- 87% of respondents agreed that “innovation is important to my organisation” (44% agreed strongly).
- 82% felt they were able to “help shape my organisation’s strategies and services”.
- 89% said that their organisation actively encourages new ideas from staff.
- 63% agreed that their organisation was good at looking beyond its own four walls. However, 21% did not.
- 25% of respondents felt their organisation was too risk averse, while a further 21% were “not sure”.
- 70% said that their organisation regularly reviewed its services to make sure they were in line with the organisational mission; however, that still means that 30% of organisations do not.
- 44% of respondents feel that the funding structures available to the voluntary sector inhibit innovation; a further 26% were not sure.
- 80% said their organisation was good at working in partnership to meet the end user’s needs.
- 60% said that their organisation treats failures as learning experiences.
- 67% felt that their organisation was becoming more innovative.

These results look very positive, but a different picture emerges when the results are analysed by job title (see figure 1). It becomes clear that the higher up you are in a voluntary organisation, the more likely you are to feel positive about your organisation’s ability to innovate.



This would indicate that voluntary organisations are still operating as traditional hierarchies with most of the key ideas and decisions being imposed from the top. The problem with this is twofold. First, it means that ideas and innovations will tend to come from the same people and will therefore tend to follow repeated formulae. Secondly, it means that staff lower down the management ladder will feel frustrated by their lack of input and control and will therefore be less committed to any implementation of ideas. The other issue to consider is that those who are involved or interested in innovation may be more likely to respond to a questionnaire about it. It is possible that the 500 people who did not respond were less enthusiastic about the topic.

After speaking to those within the voluntary sector who are known for their innovative qualities, it became clear that the picture painted by our survey – of organisations better at believing they were innovative than at being innovative – was the result of insulated and subjective ideas about innovation. We would argue, along with many of our interviewees, that charities’ innovation strategies are inadequate; many only try new ideas out of necessity or even desperation. As a result, they are not reaping the maximal effectiveness that a more systematic approach would bring and often end up with reinvented wheels or ideas that never quite make it to fruition. This picture of the sector’s patchy approach is highlighted by the quotes below.

“Innovation is something that is claimed by many of the organisations I work for as a freelance consultant. However, the only organisation I have come across that was really innovative in its approach is BIBIC, a charity for brain-injured children and their families.” (Questionnaire respondent)

“The voluntary sector is not as innovative as it likes to think it is. Often organisations are reinventing the wheel instead of doing background research.” (Questionnaire respondent)

“We are rich in the sector with good ideas, but poor in making them happen. This is because of culture, risk aversion, budgets and many other market forces.” (Tony Elischer, THINK Consulting)

“The sector is incredibly variable – I couldn’t even say that it’s the big or the small. It varies with the ethos of the organisation and which trustees and chief executives are leading it at the time.”
(Julie Spencer-Cingoz, BIBIC)

“Yes and no. They are good at innovating through necessity (as opposed to making innovation a priority past the point of necessity).” (John Grain, Our Lasting Tribute)

“In terms of processes and realising how important innovation is, the charity sector is miles behind. If I had to put them in order, it would go private sector, public sector, voluntary sector. It just doesn’t do much. Who fundamentally changes the model? When there is innovation in the sector, it usually comes from outside e.g. John Bird, Jamie Oliver.” (Kristina Mullins, ?What If!)

“A lot of the time clients say they want something really innovative and then say, ‘how do you know it would work?’” (Derek Humphries, THINK Consulting)

Happily, the feedback was not all negative. Most commentators agreed that the voluntary sector’s limited resources, ability to work in partnership and commitment to the cause meant that it could potentially be the greatest of innovators, given the right culture and processes.

“I think it’s pretty good, probably because it is better at working in partnership than other sectors, and this is where a lot of good ideas come from.” (Ben Thomas, Prince’s Trust)

“The voluntary sector can be quite innovative at a grassroots level, where funding is tight and volunteers work as a close team and have a high awareness of the impact of their work.”
(Questionnaire respondent)

Smaller, younger charities can often be more innovative, as the person who founded it is still there driving the organisation with their passion and personality. That’s why to me, Breakthrough Breast Cancer has been so successful. It’s a young organisation that has strongly harnessed the passion of its donors. (Derek Humphries, THINK Consulting)

Box 2: Five minutes with James Dyson, entrepreneur and innovator

So that readers might glean some inspiration from the experiences of a renowned innovator, we posed some questions to James Dyson, inventor of a multitude of successful household appliances such as the Dyson vacuum cleaner, the Dyson Contrarotator™ (washing machine) and the ‘Ballbarrow’ (a wheelbarrow that uses a large ball instead of a wheel and is therefore less prone to sink into soft or damp ground). For more information see ‘About Dyson’ at <http://www.dyson.co.uk>.

What does the word innovation mean to you?

Solving problems, creating new technology and new solutions, doing things differently and better.

How important is innovation to what you do you?

It is vital. Dyson design engineers are constantly looking at the things around us that we use everyday in the home and asking whether they really do provide the best solutions. We have a team of 350 scientists, designers and engineers all engaged in the core activity of developing new technologies and creating new products. For us, design is not about styling, but about how a product works, performs and what it is like to use. Innovation is at the heart of everything that we do - we would not bring a product out unless its new technology or design solution meant that it worked better.

Do you have any interesting mechanisms for managing the flow of ideas?

It is not so much about managing the flow of ideas as making sure everyone involved in designing and engineering new products works together to improve on existing solutions and creates new and better ones. We have scientists, engineers and designers working together across all the teams. The environment within the Research and Development centre is open plan to encourage sharing of ideas, and we encourage discussion and debate wherever possible.

Innovation is often seen as the realm of the private sector. Do voluntary organisations need to take innovation seriously? Why?

Thinking creatively and developing innovative solutions is something that everyone in all walks of life could and should be encouraged to do. That is why I am so keen on the Design and Technology course in schools. It teaches young people to solve problems; it encourages them to harness new technologies and engenders an innovative spirit in the next generation.

In your mind, what are the barriers to innovation, and do you have any advice about how these could be overcome?

Often the biggest barrier is other people’s doubt and cynicism. People told me I would never be able to make a vacuum cleaner without a bag and that it would never sell. You need to have a lot of hope, the ability to take calculated risks and above all a capacity for endurance – it was 15 years after I had the idea for the Dyson Dual Cyclone vacuum cleaner that I finally produced and sold them in the UK. Two years later, it was a best seller!

Section 3: The foundations of the innovation engine: vision, mission, values, culture and strategy

“It does not matter if the cat is black or white as long as it catches the mouse” (Deng Xiao Ping – not interviewed for this briefing)

“No charity should write a strategic plan unless it has a dedicated section that recognises innovation and creativity as a dedicated activity. This is going to be critical.” (Tony Elischer, THINK Consulting)

“Being seen as innovative/ingenious is a recognised part of Oxfam’s brand values/culture. (John Palmer, formerly of Oxfam)

“We had trouble with innovation in the past at DSC because we lost sight of our vision – we got stuck in what we do instead of looking at why we do it. Our vision is to enable a thriving voluntary sector, but we were continually putting out the same sorts of publications, running the same sorts of events etc. in the way we always had. When we decided to go back to our roots and re-examine our vision, it completely changed the way we do things. It caused us to examine what we do and why and if it was the best way. If you are thinking strategically, then you are asking, ‘Is what we are doing right, and is the way we are trying to do it right?’” (Debra Allcock Tyler, DSC)

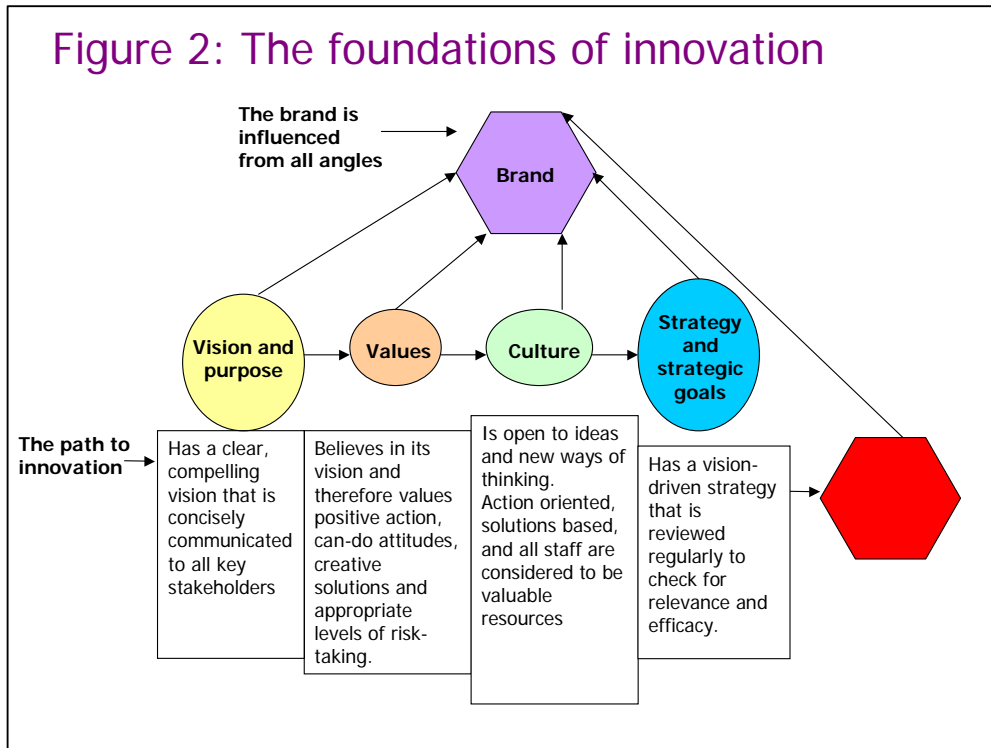
“RNLI has made huge innovations in its service delivery over the last two years, as it has been very mission-driven. It realised that its mission is not to drive a lifeboat service but to save lives at sea – so it has established a beach rescue service down on the beaches; it has hovercrafts etc. This was huge innovation through saying, ‘there are other ways we can fill our remit’ – it will mean having a good business case, dealing with contentious issues e.g. paying people to do beach rescues.” (Derek Humphries, THINK Consulting)

“We’re problem solvers for the families that come to us, therefore we have to think outside the box.” (Julie Spencer-Cingoz)

This section has one simple theme: if charities are to be able to adapt to the changing world and create new ways of tackling old and new challenges (i.e. innovate), they need a vision, a mission, values, a culture and a strategy that lets them do that. Too often the roots and history of a charity (and sadly the trustees too) shackle them to the past, rather than acting as a source of wisdom for the future.

This may sound fanciful. But consider the example of two charities (which had better be nameless). The chair of the first charity stated that it could not do campaigning because its charter did not allow it. The charter, however, was written in the Edwardian era. The second organisation, an animal charity, did not allow pet sterilisation, or even the treatment of fleas, because its Victorian founding statute said it dealt with ill animals, and pet sterilisation and flea treatment were for healthy, not ill animals.

These may be extreme examples, but if an organisation’s work is hindered by its past, rather than by current pressures, it is not operating effectively.



In the early 1960s, Harvard Business Review published an article by Ted Levitt entitled *Marketing Myopia*. The key point he made was that businesses and organisations needed continually to ask themselves, “what business are we in?” The question is important because in changing times the wrong answer can leave an organisation unresponsive to the changing world in which it works. The example that Ted Levitt gave was the American railroad companies at the turn of the century. As the private motorcar developed, the railroad came under pressure as a means of transport. The railroad companies saw themselves as being in the railroad business, rather than the transport business. So they failed to respond to this new threat and neither embraced cars and buses as part of their business nor provided more competitive services to rival cars. And so the American car culture was born, and the railroad entered a decline, that lasted for at least half a century.

The relevance of this for charities is not hard to see:

- Are cancer research charities in the ‘cancer research’ business or the ‘stopping people dying from cancer’ business?
- Are homelessness charities in the ‘hostels and shelters’ business or the ‘empowering people to take hold of their own lives’ business?
- Are animal welfare charities in the ‘helping sick and abused animals’ business or in the ‘keeping animals healthy and loved’ business?
- Is the RNLI in the ‘running a lifeboat service’ business or the ‘making the seas safer’ business?

As the quote at the beginning of this section illustrates, the RNLI is already making the transition in deciding what business it is in. Ironically, and crucially, the business that charities decide they are in is often intertwined with the services that they provide. The services become the business – even if the services were those that evolved in response to particular needs at key points in the organisation’s development, and are no longer as relevant as they were. *Are the services that your organisation provides those that you would have if you were starting today?*

Systematic innovation is much easier and greatly enhanced when the vision, mission and values of an organisation allow for continuous re-evaluation of what works best for current clients and needs.

Getting the foundations right for systematic innovation

The Vision. An organisation's guiding star is its vision. It defines what the organisation believes in, and the kind of world it wants to see created. Visions are altruistic, in other words they define not what the organisation's role is, but what ultimate success looks like. Visions are usually much bigger than what any one organisation can achieve. For example, the NSPCC's vision is "*a society where all children are loved, valued and able to fulfil their potential.*"

The Mission. If the vision defines the end-point, the mission defines the way that the organisation aims to play its part in reaching the vision (the NSPCC's mission is "to end cruelty to children", which is the part it sees itself playing in achieving its vision). Sometimes the mission will achieve everything that the vision holds dear, and sometimes it will not. It is often the mission that determines how the organisation does its job and directly or indirectly inhibits innovation. While an organisation may keep its vision for many years, even decades, the mission is often worth revisiting more frequently.

The Culture. Culture is often the most difficult part of an organisation to define or even understand, let alone change (ask any company that has tried to merge two divisions with different cultures). However, culture is a vital part of stimulating or inhibiting innovation. Cultures are not the product of what is written on paper, but of how people behave in practice. One good way to understand culture is to listen to stories people tell about the organisation or to examine what happened last time someone tried to innovate or challenge the status quo. If you want to make the culture more innovative, be prepared for a long, hard slog and lot of symbolic demonstrations that make clear what kind of behaviour is encouraged (continually praise innovative employees or make departments with 'can't do' attitudes redundant en masse).

Values. Values, like the vision and mission, are often written on paper, but the real work involves putting them into practice. Senior Managers need to identify and encourage those values that support targeted behaviours and activities. It is good to have a value of 'being innovative' (as many charities do), but it is 100 times better to spend a lot of time and energy encouraging innovative behaviour.

Strategy. Charities love to spend huge amounts of time on strategic planning (but sadly not so much time on sticking to them). Any good strategy should provide the foundations for delivering services and activities faster, better, cheaper and with more impact, and innovation will be one of the ways to do this. Read a good strategy, and it will be clear what the strategic innovations in the plan are, when they will happen, what they might deliver, how much they cost and who is responsible. Read a bad strategy, and it will look just like last year's.

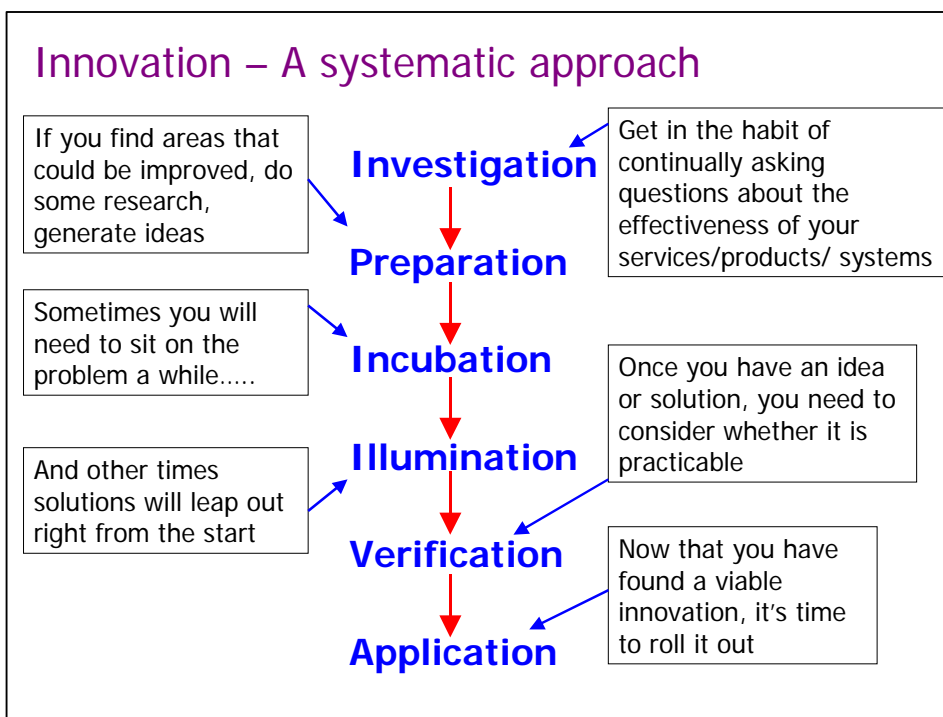
Section 4: A step-by-step guide to systematic innovation

“Innovation, when done sensibly, is the way to work, as you can always improve. However, when done without planning or thinking things through, it can be catastrophic.” (Questionnaire respondent)

If you know how to harness it, you can make innovation a systematic part of the work done by your entire organisation, thus ensuring that your organisation is well positioned to reap the benefits outlined earlier.

Systematic innovation: *“the purposeful and organised search for changes, and the systematic analysis of the opportunities such changes might offer for economic or social innovation”* (Peter Drucker, 1994)

Innovation is about much more than coming up with good ideas. It is a complex (but manageable) process with six key phases – investigation, preparation, incubation, illumination, verification and application. This is not always a step-by-step process – sometimes you will be struck by a great idea without having done a great deal of investigation or preparation – in which case you will need to go back to these steps to ensure that the time is right for your idea. You may also find at the verification phase that the idea is not viable, in which case you will need to adapt the idea or start the process over. Below are some tips to start you along the innovation process.



Investigation

“Employees need stimulus and challenges. They need to be provoked to think about ways to do things better. Always there are ways to do things better and new ideas to explore.” (Stephen Dawson, Impetus trust)

“Innovation is linked to a charity’s ability to reflect on its strengths and weaknesses critically. Many do not do this, as it is perceived as unproductive among a world of practical, action-oriented people.” (Ian Farthing, Tearfund)

Investigation is the starting block for systematic innovation. It is the point at which you explore how the different elements of your work could be done differently. This could be done by considering specific problems, for example, “There is a whole cross section of society that we are not reaching. How can we adapt our services to appeal to them?” You could also adopt a housekeeping approach, for example, “We have always done it this way, but is it really the most efficient and effective?” If you have completed the Identikit exercises, you have already started this process of investigation.

To reap the greatest benefits, the entire organisation should be involved in the investigation part of the innovation process. Regardless of whether someone works in service delivery or admin, there is a good chance that if encouraged, they could come up with at least one way to improve their own efficiency or effectiveness. There is also a good chance that they will have a fresh perspective on how other issues within the organisation could be addressed.

By creating a culture where everyone within the organisation is encouraged to ask, “What is not working as well as it could?” and “Is there something I could do to improve my performance?” you also give staff a stronger sense of satisfaction and ownership.

Box 3: Activity – ‘Organisational refresh’

This activity is designed to identify those areas or issues in greatest need of some va-va-voom in an organisation. It is most likely to be successful with the backing of a CEO or Senior Manager – so the first step is to get a senior figure on board (if that is you – great!). Explain what you would like to do, how much time you would expect it to take, and the advantages you expect it to reap. You may even want to suggest that they evaluate the ideas with you. Once you have the blessing of someone with sufficient authority, distribute the Identikit or personal development questions from the Innovation Toolkit (please see Appendix 2) to all staff and encourage them to spend at least 20-30 minutes drafting some answers.

Once you have gathered the responses, find one or two colleagues to help you with the following:

- 1) Prioritise the issues raised. For example, priority level 1 may be those issues that are in urgent need of attention; level 2 may be those that are not so urgent, but easily fixed; level 3 may be those that could wait until a later date.
- 2) Highlight any viable ideas for addressing these issues.
- 3) Draft a simple strategy of attack. Include recommendations about which issues should be prioritised, how they should be addressed, and who should be responsible for addressing them. Try to include the member of staff who raised the issue/idea wherever possible.
- 4) Take this strategy to your CEO and get agreement about which elements should be taken to the next level.
- 5) Give staff regular feedback to ensure they do not feel their ideas have dropped into an abyss.

Now you have some areas in need of innovation and some ideas to pursue, it is time to move onto the next stage – preparation.

Preparation

Some of the issues raised during investigation may be quite straightforward. For example, it may be that admin find the current filing system time-consuming and cumbersome and already have ideas about how the system could be improved. In this case, you could skip to the verification stage and then hand responsibility for 'application' back to admin. However, when the solution is not as clear, you will need to be creative. Below are five tips for effective preparation:

- 1) Get yourself/your team into a creative frame of mind:
 - Do something energetic.
 - Change your routine behaviours (see Box 5: Extending your idea zone).
 - Use some creative thinking techniques (see page 21 for more details).
- 2) Ask friends and colleagues for their ideas and advice regarding an issue (ensuring that the parameters are clear):
 - Start an animated conversation around your issue.
 - Send a group e-mail.
 - Organise a brainstorming session (see the Innovation Toolkit for Brainstorming Guidelines).
- 3) Do some research in the following areas:
 - Your specific cause (e.g. child welfare, the environment etc.)
 - The wider social welfare and voluntary sector.
 - The private sector.
 - Academia (e.g. psychology, sociology, housing, etc.)
- 4) Find a preparation technique that works for you.
- 5) Allow time for contemplation and relaxation.

Incubation and illumination

During incubation, you stew on the ideas and information you have gathered until a viable solution pops into your head (illumination). The reality, of course, is that neither of these stages is clear-cut. Incubation really starts from the moment you become conscious that there is a problem or inadequacy. There is simply more chance of productive incubation once you have done some preparation. Illumination, too, could happen at any time. In rare cases, it may be that you did not even realise there was a problem until the solution presented itself!

Verification (and evaluation)

Now you have a possible solution, you need to consider how likely it is to be effective and whether it is right for your organisation. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do we have a clear idea about how this innovation will work?
- Has it been done before? (And if so, what do the results tell us about how it would work for us?)
- Are we confident that it will make a difference for our clients?
- What are the obstacles? Could they be overcome?
- How can we evaluate this change in practice?
- Is the time right for this innovation?
- Do we have the skills and resources to implement it effectively?
- Is it cost-effective?
- Does it feel right?

If at this point you realise that your current solution is not going to work, it may be worth considering whether you could tweak it to make it more viable. What do you like about the idea? Is there another way to achieve the same benefits?

Application

Once you have found a viable solution, it is time to bring in the idea practitioners and make that idea work. Where possible, always try to involve those people who helped you during the innovation process, particularly in situations where you have run with someone's idea. By giving everyone a sense of ownership, you ensure that the application process meets with minimal resistance.

And remember...

systematic innovation should not be confused with the frenzied search for the 'next big thing'. Innovation is a rigorous process involving a good deal of investigation, contemplation and verification. The changes it brings may be either earth shattering or subtle, but they will be lasting and effective.

Box 4: Ideas formation – The benefit of diversity

Where do ideas come from? An idea is formed when a person's mind makes a connection between two or more concepts in order to form a new concept. The greater the number of concepts an individual is exposed to, the greater the number of possible connections they can make. So if the same individual is also exposed to the experiences, information and ideas of a range of other people, the pool of concepts available to them is widened again, and the chance increases that a truly useful connection will be made. This is why it is so beneficial to pool knowledge and ideas from both within and outside the organisation.

Box 5: Extending your idea zone

We tend to develop a repertoire of habits and behaviours that we become very attached to. Most of us will take the same route to work everyday, watch specific TV programmes and read books of a specific genre. We do this because it is efficient and safe. We find a formula that works and we stick to it.

The problem with this is that our ideas are likely to become formulaic too. (Ever noticed that once you have had a good idea, your future ideas tend to be anchored around the same area?) If you want to think outside of the box, you need to live outside of the box. You can start by occasionally challenging some of your 'safe' behaviours. Challenge your own status quo:

- Move outside your comfort zone when it comes to books and TV. If you only ever read non-fiction, try science fiction. If you never watch comedy shows, try Friends.
- Talk to people outside your normal social sphere. You never know, your local butcher may have some fantastic ideas about your cause.
- Talk to children – they will not try to complicate things unnecessarily.
- Feed your travel bug. There is a world of rich ideas just waiting to be transferred.
- Subscribe to a trade magazine from a different sector.
- Identify an area of learning that appears unrelated and find five new insights (what can Shakespeare, astronomy, or Greek myths bring to your party?)

As you gain your new experiences, think about whether any of the new ideas or information that you have been exposed to could be adapted for your work.

Section 5: Idea cultivation and management

If ideas are the seeds of innovation, the ways in which you look after is the flowerbed. If you sow your flower bed with the seeds from just a few plants, the slugs will eat some, the frost will kills others and the aphids will happily munch on what survives. If you do not water the seeds as you drop them into their pots, or plant them in barren soil, your endeavours will be fruitless. If you do not tend to your flowerbed regularly, you will end up with a haphazard tangle of plants (and weeds) rather than a bright diversity of poppies, dahlias, tulips, gladioli and other flowers.

Through this overstretched analogy, we can see that if we want our organisation to be a truly remarkable garden bed of innovation...

1. We must seed it with ideas from many different sources (people).
2. We must grow the individual ideas under the right conditions (working environment/processes).
3. We need to plan and manage ideas so that the right ones are grown in the right places at the right time.

The following section looks at how organisations can better cultivate and manage ideas.

Three methods to help you extract good ideas from staff and nurture them

Method One: Increase the number of idea contributors through attitudes and processes

“I worked at a charity that had a suggestion scheme and submitted a suggestion to speed up the support service. I got a note back saying thanks very much, but I wasn’t senior enough to make a suggestion! I spent the next 2-3 years feeling that there was no merit/value to any ideas that I had, and so I just stopped having any. Until I changed jobs, I didn’t feel that I was a creative person”
(John Grain, Our Lasting Tribute)

The first and foremost way to increase the diversity of ideas feeding into an organisation is to ensure that everyone within the organisation is encouraged to put forward their ideas without fear of censure. This is largely the role of the CEO and other Senior Managers, who need to show staff that they are open to ideas, but it is also useful to create processes and structures that encourage staff to question the way things are done and submit any ideas for improvement. Below are some of the mechanisms innovative CEOs use to encourage and manage the flow of ideas:

Innovation friendly structures and planning

- A strong emphasis on innovation in the strategic plan.
- Strategic planning that is done by the whole organisation.
- Project working using different teams from different departments.
- Monthly manager ‘focus days’ where 1) innovation is highlighted and 2) different project managers get together and work on each other’s projects.
- Quarterly away-days for staff to review how projects are going, how they could be improved, etc.
- Frequent horizontal meetings across the organisation.
- Small project teams that give individuals greater autonomy.
- Feedback sheets for staff that enable them to challenge what is going on or suggest new ideas.

Encouraging new ideas

- Regular brainstorming sessions involving people throughout the organisation.
- An intranet section devoted to new ideas.
- Weekly service bulletins where client-facing staff can raise issues.
- An ‘ideas’ table in communal room (‘ideas in progress’ are displayed so that others can comment and contribute).
- Training in creative thinking techniques.
- An ‘innovation target’ of two new projects a year.

Reviewing Ideas

- A ‘new solutions group’ that gets together regularly to review ideas.
- An innovations panel: The panel filters the ideas that come in from staff and works out how the feasible ones can be implemented.
- An away-day that focuses on the creative evaluation of new ideas and works out how to take them forward.

Actioning ideas

- Staff assigned to ‘nurture’ new ideas (i.e. do the legwork, negotiation etc. to get the project off the ground).
- A group comprising ‘lateral thinkers’ from the voluntary and corporate sector to ‘make ideas happen’.
- Funds earmarked for innovation.
- An innovations store where excess ideas are held until the right time.

Method Two: Increase the individual’s access to information, experience and ideas

“Always use windows, not mirrors – you can’t rely on good ideas to come to you just sitting at your desk – you have to go out and get them.” (Questionnaire respondent)

You should not assume that everything you need for your next good idea can be found within the four walls of your office – you need to be actively looking outside for inspiration. This brings us to the next method for growing ideas: increase employees’ access to what is going on outside their immediate remit. There are many ways in which this could be done:

- Increase the level of internal and external knowledge sharing. For example, have monthly meetings where staff talk about what they are doing, what they need help on etc.
- Allocate time for research and environmental scanning.
- Encourage staff to look outside obvious sources of information and ideas. For example, look to science, nature, other charities and other countries.
- Invite ‘outsiders’ to help you tackle your problems. For example, invite other agencies, corporations or academia.
- Create a library of non-cause specific literature (for example, social science journals, social action newsletters, books about fundraising, marketing, new technology, social entrepreneurship etc.) in a space regularly used by staff.
- Organise ‘work exchanges’. For example, where staff members from different agencies swap organisations for a week in order to experience different ways of doing things.
- Send staff to ‘creativity’ workshops where they can learn different approaches to problem solving.
- Create a more stimulating physical environment (see the ‘About nfpSynergy’ section on innovation workshops and seminars at the end of this report, for more information).

Method Three: Train staff in creative thinking techniques

When looking for ideas or solutions, we tend to stick to well worn thought processes and reach for ready-made associations. Creative thinking techniques help us to break away from our standard thought processes and guide us to hidden treasure (unique ideas) within our minds.

These techniques can range from the very logical, left-brained approaches (*divide your service into its individual elements and then consider how each element could be improved*) to the more right-brained, ‘artistic’ approaches (*Become the issue. How do you feel? How do you look? How do you want to be handled? What are you trying to hide?*)

When trying new techniques, remember that they may feel awkward at first because you are training your brain to think along new lines. Like a child learning to walk, the more you practise and become familiar with the process, the more successful you will become. Having said that, different people will find that they have their greatest success with different techniques.

Want more information?

- For Brainstorming Guidelines and an exercise in creative thinking, see the Innovation Toolkit.
- For training and experience in various creative thinking techniques see the ‘About nfpSynergy’ section on innovation workshops and seminars at the end of this report.
- For an introductory directory of techniques, go to: www.brainstorming.co.uk

Box 6: Key tips for beginners

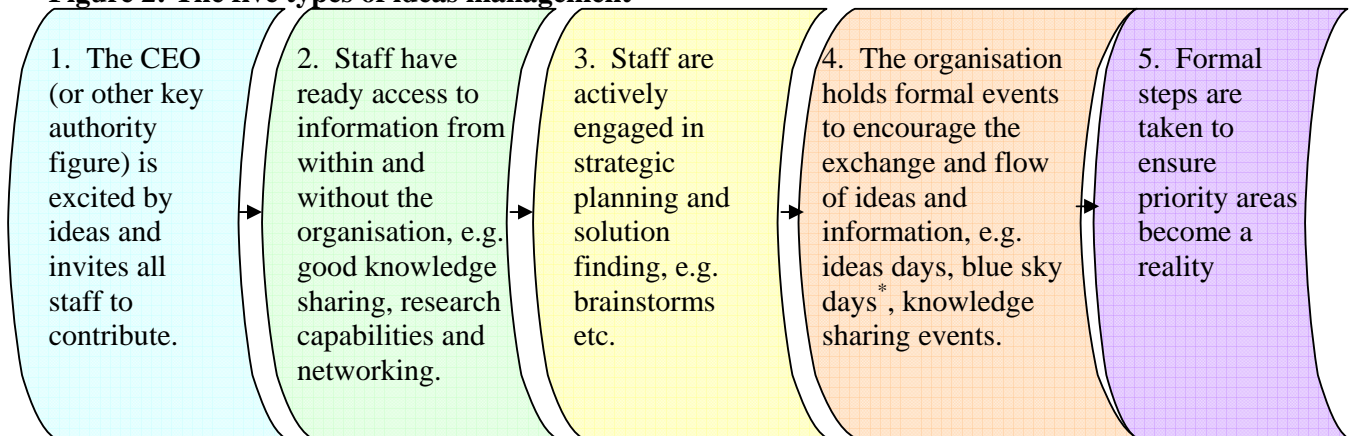
If you are in the early stages of trying to build an ideas culture and feel slightly intimidated by all this information, concentrate on getting these fundamental building blocks in place:

- Start by getting key people on board – this will help you to build momentum
- Make the most of your existing resource and mechanisms. For example, BIBIC, an organisation supporting the families of children with brain injuries, uses staff appraisals and exit interviews to extract any ideas about how the organisation could be improved. Similarly, if you already have a staff/volunteer intranet, try adding an ideas section.
- Make any learning explicit (i.e. write it down and share it with others so that it is not lost). For example, after sponsoring a number of innovative ‘partner projects’, Crisis put out a series of briefings highlighting the ‘lessons learnt’. You could also try having monthly ‘knowledge share’ meetings where people within the organisation could talk about their successes, failures and experiences and the things they have learned along the way. This will work best if you nominate a staff member or volunteer to organise the session and recruit speakers.
- Give staff a degree of autonomy and space to think. (3M encourages its staff to spend up to 15% of their time on projects/ideas of their choosing.)
- Involve all staff. This will not only ensure you get a range of ideas but will increase the chances of staff buy-in during the implementation phase. (The Greenpeace ‘fiasco van’, a van stocked with environmentally friendly freezers and parked outside supermarkets to show shoppers that such technology was available, was conceived by one of its receptionists.)

Managing ideas for maximum success

Figure 2 shows the five types of idea encouragement and diversification. As an organisation moves along this continuum of facilitating new ideas, ideas management will become more and more important. Events such as ‘ideas days’ and ‘blue sky days’, for example, can generate a great deal of excitement and energy among staff. In order to ensure that the ideas are not lost and staff enthusiasm does not fizzle out, organisations will need to provide staff with an ongoing ‘ideas receptacle’ so that they can submit any ideas that happen after the event. Ideas receptacles could include a section of the intranet; an ideas box; an ‘ideas manager’ with whom people can e-mail or have lunch; or a whiteboard in the staff room where project staff can invite suggestions for specific problems. Organisations must also ensure that staff can see that ideas are actually being implemented.

Figure 2: The five types of ideas management



Box 7 Ideas management case study: Too many good ideas? The Skyzone# Ideas Day

The problem with hitting level four on the ideas encouragement scale is that an organisation can easily become overwhelmed by the quantity of ideas produced. If the organisation is not prepared to manage this weight of potential innovation, many of the ideas will go to waste. This is what happened when one British company, Skyzone, held its first ideas day.

Skyzone is well regarded for the ‘thought leadership’ it provides around consumer needs. In order to broaden the range of ideas feeding into Skyzone’s corporate strategy, the Directors invited each staff-member to put together a five-minute presentation highlighting an unexplored consumer trend. The day proved to be an exciting event, with staff producing a plethora of fascinating new ideas. The problem was that the ideas were so wide ranging that no one was quite sure how to start incorporating them into the company’s work. As a result, the ideas were used in a fairly haphazard fashion and many good ideas fell by the wayside.

The next year, the company learnt from its mistakes and set much clearer parameters for the ideas day presentations. Staff were asked to critically examine a number of consumer trends, addressing the following issues:

1. Is the trend still relevant? Why/why not?
2. What are the ways in which this trend could affect our corporate clients? Break your responses down by client sector.

Before presenting their findings at the ideas day, staff were asked to summarise their responses on a standardised form. In this way, responses could be collected and turned into a manageable database, which project staff could then start actioning.

Name changed to protect the company’s identity.

From the Skyzone experience, we can formulate some basic rules for getting the most out of the large quantities of ideas generated by events such as ideas days or drives.

1. Be clear about the day's objectives and specify idea parameters. The ideas will seem a lot more manageable if they are structured according to a particular agenda.
2. Ensure that all ideas are recorded. It is best if this can be done in a standard format, as this will make the collection of ideas easier.
3. Nominate a team of idea evaluators to give the ideas a priority rating (Priority 1 ideas should be carried out as soon as possible; those allocated a lower priority can be kept in an 'ideas store' and allocated rough dates for revisiting.)
4. Nominate a team of practitioners to implement the ideas, as they become a priority. Involve the 'idea generator' where possible.
5. Ensure that there is a system of early evaluation in place so that any 'lessons' (good or bad) emerge while there is still time to take them into account.

Section 6: Opening up your thinking: Radical approaches, 'can-do' attitudes and solution mentalities

"There is a better way of reaching your organisation's goals, and if you look hard enough, you will find it. But you cannot look in a new direction if you are staring hard in the one in which your business is focussed." (Sloane, 2003)

Something that was common to all of the successful innovators with whom we spoke was a willingness to challenge the status quo and an unerring belief in their ability to bring a good idea to life. Organisations that are serious about building an innovative organisational culture need to make it clear to staff that radical thought and 'can-do' attitudes are valued.

Radical approaches

'The best assumption to have is that any commonly held belief is wrong.' (Ken Olson, Founder, Digital Equipment Corporation)

Throughout history, humankind has been bound by incorrect assumptions. For example, it was once believed that leeches were the best treatment for many illnesses, that the world was flat, and that people in cars would suffocate at speeds above 30mph. Consider where we would be if no one had had the courage and insight to question these beliefs.

It is not enough to innovate within your organisation's current framework because that framework might be based on incomplete knowledge and incorrect assumptions. Think about some of the assumptions that underlie the work your organisation does. Imagine that they are incorrect and consider the following:

- What would be an alternative 'truth'? (Do not be afraid to consider controversial ideas.)
- What changes would this create within your organisation? (Consider mission and approach.)

Organisations wanting to expand their staff's ability to think beyond the status quo could try using the 'Revolution' creative thinking technique included in the Innovation Toolkit or the 'Exploring alternative truths' exercise below.

Box 8: Exploring alternative truths

Imagine you are a children's charity and you are working under the assumption that the best way to stop child abuse and neglect is to detect problem parents through schools and communities. What if you challenged this assumption by hypothesising that the best way to stop child abuse and neglect is to identify parents who do not have the skills and/or support necessary to be a good parent *before they give birth*? This new assumption might lead you to campaign for a system whereby health professionals would have a duty of care to assess expectant mothers' needs in terms of support and parenting skills. Any parent lacking appropriate support networks or demonstrating an insufficient understanding of the skills needed to be an effective parent could be put in touch with the appropriate support services. This could lead to a paradigm shift whereby resource would be concentrated on providing support for parents before they fall down rather than on dealing with the consequences of poor parenting. Taking the process one step further, you might also campaign for a 'parent education' unit to be installed in the school curriculum in order to decrease the costs of later parent enrichment programmes. Though this may seem a preposterous suggestion, you never know. At some point in the future, we might be flabbergasted to recall the days when we allowed people to become parents without first ensuring they were equipped with the skills and knowledge base needed to do a good job.

Can-do attitudes and solution mentalities

“Always find a way to meet what you want, don’t rely on excuses for why you can’t.” (Julie Spencer-Cingoz, BIBIC)

“You need to know what you want to do and you need to grind through to the other side. Some people have said that in order to help us they would need to build their capacity, so we say, ‘okay, what can we do to help?’ Sometimes it’s easy, sometimes it’s bloody hard.” (Fiona Dawe, YouthNet UK)

As well as being focussed on a compelling vision, the innovative leaders we spoke to had something else in common: they dealt in the realm of solutions and possibilities. Not for them the excuses, “We do not have the resources” or “That problem is too ingrained.” Instead, they say, “We know where we want to get to, so how do we make it happen?” and examine the following:

- Whom do we need to convince?
- Whom do we need to empower?
- How can we tap into the necessary resource?
- What partnerships could we forge?
- What steps do we need to take?

Attitude and framing are everything. If staff, supporters and potential partners see that an organisation is coming from the ‘can-do’ corner, not only will they be more enthusiastic about jumping on board, they will also start to see problems as obstacles to be creatively tackled. To make this process more explicit, staff could be more formally engaged in identifying solutions to problems and challenges, for example, through the ‘Organisational refresh’ activity in Box 3.

Box 9: ‘Reframing’: Finding a positive in every negative

The way a problem or issue is framed strongly influences our ability to solve it. If a problem seems particularly impenetrable, try to reframe it in a way that highlights the achievable – this will help you to see past barriers and keep up staff morale.

For example:

<p>“We will never have enough housing in the south-east.”</p>	<p>Becomes</p>	<p>“There is plenty of housing in other areas of England. How could we make them more attractive?”</p>
<p>“We have some great ideas but do not have the money, time or resource to roll them out.”</p>	<p>Becomes</p>	<p>“These are such great ideas. There must be organisations or funders out there who are willing to support us in rolling them out.”</p>
<p>“The people in Morocco are too concerned about keeping food on the table to consider animal welfare a priority.”</p>	<p>Becomes</p>	<p>“If we could help the Moroccan people to see that well-kept animals are a greater asset than poorly treated ones, animal welfare will become a greater priority.”</p>

A great example of how an organisation has used reframing to enhance its service is BIBIC's 'Family Learning Initiative', which focuses on helping family member carers to see their role in a more constructive light. Chief Executive Julie Spencer-Cingoz says, "*We have been working with a local college to emphasise to families that no one is 'just a carer'. When they are caring for their children, they are not just helping their child, they are also helping themselves by improving their communication, observation skills etc. This all feeds into life-long learning and the potential to gain an NVQ. It's a project that could be replicated with any group of carers and broadens the perception about the traditional beneficiaries of our service (i.e. not just children).*"

By reframing the carer's role (from obligatory and oppressive to educational and 'door-opening') BIBIC manages to improve the parents' sense of self-worth and thereby guards against children having resentful and burnt-out carers. They are also injecting the carer network with experienced workers.

Section 7: Fostering responsible risk

“Two of the things the commercial sector understands is that you need to invest money in new projects and that a lot of them will fail. There is not much culture in not-for-profit around failure. People don’t talk about it – they don’t learn from it. If 2% of the commercial sector’s new products are successful, then that’s ‘great’ – but if just one fundraising project fails, it’s considered a failure. This means that failure is brushed under the carpet and they don’t learn from it.” (Derek Humphries, THINK Consulting)

In a society that has become increasingly adept at managing the risk involved in day-to-day life, for example through tools such as safety equipment, insurance policies and performance reviews, it is understandable that the very concept of risk has become rather unpalatable. Why risk the dangers of uncharted territory when we can loiter on safe, well-trodden ground?

It is true that when it comes to pioneering new ways of doing things, there is always a danger of ‘failure’ or ridicule. (No doubt the Wright brothers felt a little nervous as they embarked on their first flight, particularly given that their own father had three months earlier declared in a public sermon, “Fly? If God wanted us to fly, He would have given us wings; He would have made us angels; He would have made us birds. Let me assure you, you will not see people fly.”) We take a gamble when we try to change the world, but in many cases, the greater the gamble, the greater the potential payoff.

If necessity is the mother of invention, one would think that voluntary organisations, with their restricted resources and ambitious missions, would be at the forefront of innovation. This is not the case, and an adversity to risk is a big part of the problem. A number of our commentators contended that this problem often comes down to funding and archaic attitudes: it is not just that there is inadequate funding, but that when you have a limited source of donated money, you feel less able to risk failure. The problems caused by such adversity to risk are illustrated in the below quote.

“Trustees, volunteers and other supporters don’t want to see us ‘wasting’ money on new projects that might not succeed. They want guaranteed results, and so positive change within the organisation can sometimes take longer than necessary, and progress can be inhibited. Often they need to see that the idea has worked elsewhere before committing to support a new project – this can often stop us from being leaders in our field.” (Questionnaire respondent)

Though these concerns are justified, they can seriously limit an organisation’s impact. In the next section we highlight four steps an organisation can take to engage with risk responsibly. That is, in a way that allows the investigation of better ways of working without undermining the trust of supporters or beneficiaries.

Four steps to a responsible and effective relationship with risk

Step 1: Ensure that all staff understand the organisation’s vision and values

If the organisation has a clear vision and staff appreciate that positive action and a ‘can-do’ attitude are valued, a degree of dedication and personal risk-taking will naturally follow.

Greenpeace is a good example of how this can work. Cathy Anderson, Marketing and Fundraising Director, explains, *“If you look at our core values, they are independence and personal action. Lots of people take part in direct action e.g. I’ve been driving buses, in front of the cameras etc. You have to get used to the risk of doing direct action (as you might get arrested!). A lot of staff do take some personal risk for Greenpeace, which is a very empowering thing for the*

organisation. *There is a real culture of putting ourselves out there, and although our actions are very well planned, there is always that level of real personal commitment needed. If we're going to change things, we need to get comfortable with that. From direct action this approach extends to all areas of our work because it's such a core part of our way of working.*"

Step 2: Manage your risks

Though there is little progress without risk, this risk should be calculated, and there should be backup plans in place. It should be responsible risk that is monitored and evaluated so that any lessons can be learned early. Ask these questions at the beginning of each new venture:

- What are the worst possible outcomes if we go ahead with the venture?
- How likely are these outcomes?
- What can we do to minimise the risk of these outcomes?
- What are the potential pitfalls, and how can we prepare to overcome them?

Box 10: Risk management case study

One well-known UK charity (that wishes to remain anonymous) recently took a very creative and effective approach to risk management by involving the whole organisation, as well as a volunteer who had commercial experience in risk management, in a series of 'risk brainstorming' sessions. The idea was that by conducting the risk assessment as an organisation, rather than as individual departments, fewer risks would slip through the radar. It would also help all staff to consider and plan for different outcomes, ensuring that the organisation was not caught off guard.

Once it had a list of all the possible risks, they were categorised as high/medium/low impact and high/medium/low likelihood, which enabled the organisation to pinpoint which risks it should concentrate on. It also divided the risks up into 'external' and 'internal' and allocated responsibility for managing them to different teams, for example to finance, communication etc. Of the exercise, the organisation's International Development Manager, said, *"Lots of the risks identified were actually as a result of internal issues that needed improvement, and in some ways the exercise has served as a health check of the organisation through the eyes of the marketing team, much more than we originally set out to do. The output was refreshingly relevant to the day-to-day operations of the organisation rather than being a theoretical strategy document that sits on the shelf."* Examples of some of the external risks follow:

High Chance, High Impact

Under-resourcing new projects (Directors given responsibility for management)

Making do with inadequate resources for new projects can mean that they fall at the first hurdle. Although short-term savings can be made, the risk is that the initial investment of time or money is more likely to be wasted in the long run.

Medium Chance/ Medium Impact

Over-diversification (Directors given responsibility for management)

Diversification is not a strategy for risk mitigation; by diversifying into new areas you take on a new range of associated risks. The danger is that the organisation risks diluting its efforts by over-diversification.

Low Chance/High Impact

Lack of internal communication (Directors, communication/branding & international development teams all share management responsibility)

As the organisation grows, it is harder to keep up with what is going on, particularly with such a geographically disparate team. Without good internal communications, the organisation risks duplication of effort and missed opportunities.

Step 3: Communicate possible futures to key stakeholders

Why are ‘comfort zones’ so comfortable? Because within our comfort zones we know what to expect and we know how things will likely turn out. As Dick Brown, Chairman and CEO of software giant EDS commented, *“People are not afraid of change, they are afraid of the unknown.”* So what if you helped your key stakeholders to visualise the ‘possible futures’? What if you helped them to appreciate that there were also risks in standing still and that a change in trajectory held the possibility of a far greater impact? If you were to make it clear that, yes, there are risks involved but that these are outweighed by the possible pay-offs, if you were to communicate that a risk assessment has been undertaken and that there are procedures in place to cope with failure, stakeholders would more likely behave like well-briefed, suitably equipped explorers, ready to journey into new territory and excited about what their adventure might hold.

Step 4: Embrace failure as a learning experience

“Innovation means never having to say you’re sorry as long as the learning is greater than any of the mistakes you have made.” (Victor Adebowale, Turning Point)

Charities often feel that ‘failure’ signals a misuse of donors’ funds and is therefore not acceptable, but this is not necessarily the case. In charity work, as in life, it is only by testing the boundaries and learning from our mistakes that we can discover our full potential. It could be argued that charities owe it to supporters to make and learn from mistakes so that over the long term, greater knowledge and productivity are achieved.

A good example of where celebrating failure enhances the working of an organisation is Greenpeace’s annual ‘The Dog’s Bollocks’ ceremony, where staff from all around the world come together to celebrate their biggest ‘bungles’. The staff with the greatest story of disaster are presented with the ‘Dog’s Bollock’s Award’. By encouraging staff to spotlight their failures, Greenpeace is achieving two key things:

1. Helping staff all around the world to learn from each other’s mistakes.
2. Demonstrating to staff that a certain level of risk and failure is acceptable, as long as the lessons are publicly acknowledged and not swept under the carpet.

This award ceremony is alternated each year with a ‘fundraising Oscars’ ceremony, which celebrates the brilliant, to show fundraisers the equal value of learning from mistakes as well as successes.

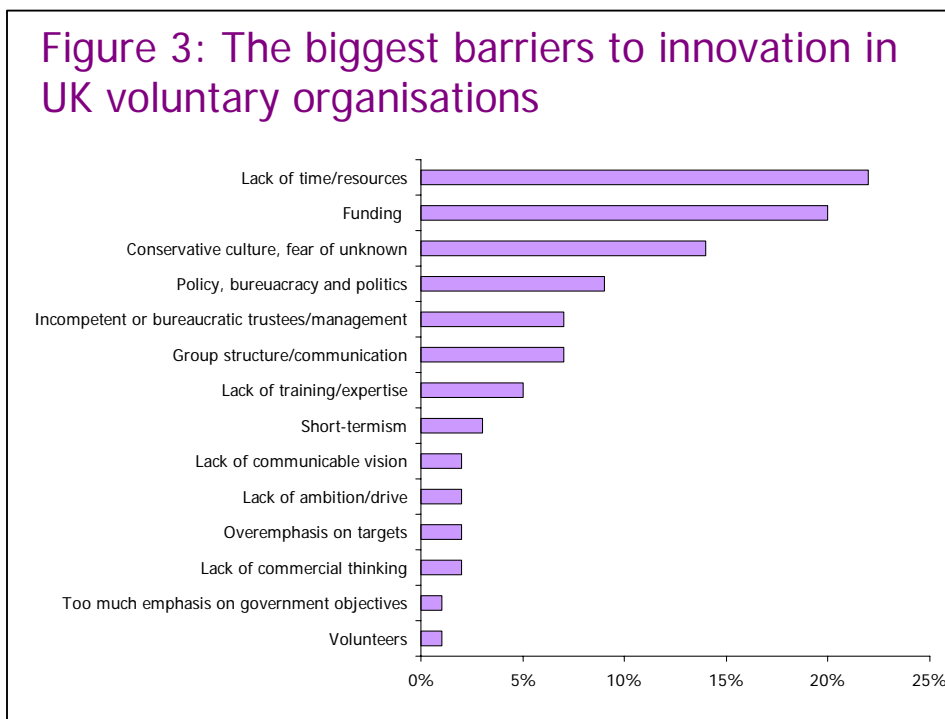
Derek Humphries from Think Consulting suggests that organisations should regularly record any ‘lessons learned’ from projects that did not work as planned. If a project or idea is not successful, ask these and any other relevant questions:

- Why did the process/idea fail?
- Thinking in retrospect, did we take any actions that we would avoid in the future?
- Would it have had a better chance of success had we done some things differently?
- Is there anyone that we should have involved/consulted but did not?

Section 8: Rising to the innovation challenge

Intercepting innovation killers

Now that you have set your innovation code-frames, i.e. embraced an organisational vision, adopted a solutions-based ‘can-do’ attitude, become risk savvy and created an ideas culture, you are well on the way to intercepting any potential innovation killers (i.e. barriers). Figure 3 reveals the most common responses given by our survey respondents to the question, “What would you say is the greatest barrier to innovation within your organisation?” In the following section we look at some of the key challenges these innovation killers may throw up and provide some ideas about how they can be overcome. The solutions offered are by no means definitive or exhaustive, and we would encourage you to explore your own solutions. It is our hope and intention that this section will help you to start framing appropriate ‘key challenge’ questions and solutions around any barriers you encounter.



Innovation killer 1: Lack of time and resource

Figure 3 shows that lack of time and resource was considered to be the single biggest obstacle to innovation within the charity world.

“There are many times when I think of brilliant ideas involving our client group, websites, accessibility etc. using IT, but I simply do not have the time to truly explore them.”
(Questionnaire respondent)

“The biggest obstacle as I see it is finding the time and energy to lift your nose from the grindstone to think about things and do the research necessary to convince someone to give you the money to try it.” (Questionnaire respondent)

Key challenge: How could you create more time and resource for your staff to explore innovative solutions?

Possible solutions:

1. Explore the ways in which volunteer skills could be used

Are you making the most of your volunteers? Do you know what skills and experience they could contribute to the running of your organisation? Why not include a ‘skills, experiences and interests’ section on your volunteer forms so that you can keep track of which volunteers would be able to help staff with some of their core duties and which might be interested in helping the organisation become a more innovative place. For example, you could find a volunteer with training experience or an interest in lateral thinking and ask them to research a number of different creative thinking techniques so that they can run training and creative thinking sessions with staff.

2. Explore the ways in which supporter skills could be used

Many of your supporters will have valuable skills and experiences that your organisation could tap into – why not give them the option to contribute more than just money? Not only will you expand your organisation’s pool of expertise, your supporters will also feel more involved with and committed to your cause. A good example of an organisation that has done this is the Thames Reach Bondway ‘Big Ideas Group’, a group that meets once a month to look at how homeless people’s ‘big ideas’ could be realised. Regular attendees include TRB’s Chief Executive, a number of TRB frontline workers, representatives from other voluntary organisations and representatives from a number of TRB’s corporate supporters, including KPMG.

3. Explore possible strategic partnerships

If you have an idea for a wonderful new programme or service but do not have the resource to follow it through, why not explore a strategic partnership. For example, when Youthnet UK, a ‘virtual’ youth charity, wanted to create an online database of volunteering roles for young people, it realised it would be very resource intensive to keep the database clean and up-to-date. Rather than give up, it looked at what it could do with its available resource (provide partner agencies with volunteer management software, computers and appropriate support) and considered who would be well positioned to maintain the database (umbrella volunteering organisations). It then approached organisations that had ready access to the data it needed, built its ICT capacity so that it could more effectively manage this data and arranged for it to all feed into the Youthnet UK web service ‘Do-It’.

Innovation killer 2: Conservative culture/fear of the unknown

Streetshine, an independent enterprise currently supported by Thames Reach Bondway and the charitable trust A Glimmer of Hope, is an excellent example of how rigid thinking and value systems could potentially sabotage a project that is both appealing and beneficial to users. The idea behind Streetshine is that through contracts with companies such as KPMG ex-homeless people will be employed to provide a shoe-care service for their staff. Despite considerable interest and enthusiasm from clients (who could see the benefits of secure employment), the project met with resistance from staff members: they considered it demeaning for homeless people to be involved in such an exercise. In some circumstances, this would have spelt the end of the project. Fortunately, in this case the idea was being championed by the organisation’s Chief Executive, which meant that the staff were encouraged (with gentle authority) to give the idea a chance. They were invited to attend a presentation by the Streetshine founder and encouraged to ask their clients for their perspective. As a result, many of them came on board and the project is now up and running.

Key challenge: How can we encourage staff to move out of their comfort zones and adopt a more open style of thinking?

Possible solutions:

1. Use the 'Four steps to a responsible and effective relationship with risk' (section 7).
2. Challenge mind-sets. This could be done using role plays, debates where staff are encouraged to argue a point of view at odds to their own, or with 'revolution'.
3. Encourage staff to explore solutions from across the world.

Innovation killer 3: Structure, management and communication

"Bureaucracy aimed at efficiency and equality and consulting everyone has led to too many committees and unclear lines of responsibility and decision making. Innovative ideas usually get lost in a sea of committee papers, or by the time they have jumped through all the necessary hoops they're watered down and unrecognisable." (Questionnaire respondent)

"Our biggest barrier is the time it takes to take action; we talk about things in endless meetings and then we miss the boat." (Questionnaire respondent)

Debra Allcock Tyler, Chief Executive of the Directory of Social Change, talks about the way it reduced bureaucracy to form a more dynamic organisation, *"We used to have a very hierarchical structure where all the important ideas and decisions came from the top, but the reality is that the people at the top often don't have all the relevant and appropriate information. We now give managers lots of training about how to engage with their people, for example, rather than saying, 'here is what we are doing' they say 'here is where we need to get to – how can we get there? Managers also have to produce their own strategic plans that need to connect with the organisation's master strategic plan."*

Key challenge: What can we do to ensure that innovative solutions do not drown in bureaucracy?

Possible solutions:

1. Flatten hierarchies and give departments/project teams greater autonomy (this increases communication and empowers individuals to make decisions).
2. Direct goals rather than executional details from the top, leaving the 'how to' to those on the ground.
3. Ensure that roles are clear but flexible.
4. Implement an ideas management process.

Box 11: Trustees – moving you forward or holding you back?

“The biggest obstacle to innovation is trustees. It tends to be out of their fear that it might damage the organisation or that it’s a risk too far. It can also be down to internal trustee battles – trustees may differ on where they think the organisation is going and what risks they are prepared to take.” (Debra Allcock Tyler, DSC)

“The thing about charities is that the ultimate authority rests with trustees who are mixed but can be quite risk adverse. They also show a comfort factor – ‘we’re doing okay, why change?’” (Tony Elischer, Think Consulting)

Key challenge: How can we prime our trustee board for innovation?

Possible solutions:

1. Help them become more comfortable with risk (see section 7).
2. Ensure they have access to appropriate knowledge and skills.
3. Give them the opportunity to explore creative solutions.
4. Ensure all trustees share the same, inspiring vision of the future.

Innovation killer 4: Overemphasis on targets

“Our biggest obstacle is trying to gain statutory funding for projects that add value beyond those set as ‘hard’ targets.” (Questionnaire respondent)

Key Challenge: How can we help funding bodies to see the value we deliver beyond hard targets?

Possible solutions:

1. Find a way to measure and present soft outcomes. Soft outcomes are those that cannot easily be measured or quantified, for example, improvements in self-esteem, enhanced sense of community etc. See <http://www.esf.gov.uk/evaluation/> for more information. Also, you could do regular interviews with clients and chart any observed changes in attitude or behaviour using quotes to illustrate your point.
2. Paint a ‘possible future’ for funders (see section 7).
3. Take funders on a project tour so that they can see first-hand the more intuitive benefits of the service.

Innovation killer 5: Lack of training/expertise

“One of the biggest obstacles we face in terms of innovation is an insufficient understanding by trustees of wider issues regarding social inclusion, disadvantage and the social economy, all of which require innovative responses.” (Questionnaire respondent)

Key challenge: How could we better equip our organisation with the expertise it needs to move our agenda forward?

Possible solutions:

1. Consider job swaps and secondments.
2. Encourage staff to participate in external training days.

3. Buy books/training packages in areas of desired expertise (for example. innovation, HR, counselling techniques, sustainability etc.) and allocate appropriate staff ‘reading’ days once a month.
4. Invite volunteers and supporters to contribute (see Possible solutions 1 in Section 8 for an example of how to do this).
5. Select more motivated staff members to educate themselves and others in appropriate fields, for example, make it someone’s role to keep track of changes in the external environment or to investigate user involvement models etc.

Innovation killer 6: Short-termism

Short-termism is highly related to an overemphasis on targets. In focussing on meeting short-term goals in order to satisfy funders and key stakeholders, charities often lose sight of their greater mission.

“Charities have really short-term targets e.g. fundraising teams have very short-term targets and they have trustees and Directors who want results ‘yesterday’ breathing down their necks. Short-term (12-month cycle) budgeting does not help either. To develop an idea and take it to fruition takes more than 12 months.” (Derek Humphries, THINK Consulting)

Key challenge: How can we shift the organisational culture so that staff, managers and key stakeholders are more focussed on our ultimate goals?

Possible solutions:

1. Get projects to fill out the ‘Aims and objectives’ pro-forma in the innovation toolkit. This will help put the focus back onto the organisational mission.
2. Campaign for longer-term and more flexible budget cycles.
3. Use Step 4 of the ‘Steps to a responsible and effective relationship with risk’ (possible futures).

The charity challenge: calling all innovators

“Lot’s of people have been disillusioned by the voluntary sector and are really questioning the way we help people. If charities don’t change, they are going to be left behind.” (Kristina Mullins, ?What If!)

Our interviewees identified many areas of working within the voluntary sector that are in need of innovation. These include fundraising; user, volunteer and donor involvement; recruitment and HR; implementation of ideas; and use of new technology.

For each of these areas, we have provided case studies, quotes and ideas in order to get your innovative juices flowing. Then it is over to you:

- What are the issues that this raises for your organisation?
- What are some of the key assumptions your organisation makes about these areas and what are some ‘alternative truths’?
- Do you have any ideas about where your organisation could take these issues? (Do not be afraid to think radically!)
- Can you think of any other areas in which the voluntary sector could be more effective?

Fundraising

“The sector needs to think of new ways of generating its own income e.g. training activities. We need to grow the pot. As we get bigger, the pool of funders won’t be enough to go around, and we need to be able to maintain independence.” (Fiona Dawe, YouthNet UK)

John Grain, Managing Director of Our Lasting Tribute, contends that charities can be very unimaginative with their fundraising innovations – they often copy techniques without adapting them to suit their mission, values and strategy. He uses the Oxfam television campaign as an example, *“I was at Oxfam when they started a TV advertising campaign where they were asking for a £15 donation straight up. It was really bombing, and as a last ditch, the Director suggested they turn it into a low monthly giving ask (£2 per month) – the response rate shot through the roof. Now every charity is asking for £2/£3 a month without examining why. It’s possible that they could be asking for more or asking in a different way.”* Similarly, when Amnesty sent a pen out with its direct marketing material asking people to help them turn an instrument of torture into an instrument for good, other charities copied the mechanism (i.e. including a pen with direct mail) without adapting the message.

An example of a charity that *can* lay claim to having an original approach that reflects its mission and values is Sense. Children who are deaf and blind are often tactile defensive, that is, they feel overwhelmed if they are suddenly picked up or cuddled, as the sensation is unexpected. Their parent/carer might therefore place a whistle in their hand to let the child know they are going to play ball, a piece of chain to show that they are going to play on the swings, a piece of cloth to warn the child that they are going to pick them up or hug them. Sense face-to-face fundraisers take these materials with them and ask donors to close their eyes and imagine what it is like for a deafblind child. By helping donors to experience and understand what it is like for their beneficiaries, Sense is making the cause more tangible and moving. Head of Direct Marketing, Michael Newsome, says of the programme, *“All our research showed a terribly low level of public understanding or familiarity with deafblindness. Through this approach, we hope that even those that don’t sign up go away with a glimpse into the lives of the 23,000 people in the UK that are both deaf and blind. This is something that we attempt to do through all our direct marketing work, whenever possible. For example, we have sent out packs with scented bath salts to show how smells can be used as a way to communicate and have also sent out reflective card mobiles to demonstrate how Sense workers can use even simple toys and tools to stimulate any residual sight that a deafblind person may have.”*

User, volunteer and donor involvement

One thing that became clear after speaking to our innovators is that the voluntary sector is not taking full advantage of its unique pool of users, volunteers and supporters. This is illustrated by the quotes below:

“Service users have been largely excluded from the decision making process. Now as user involvement becomes more strategic, perhaps that’s where the real innovation will come from.”
(Charlotte G, Action for Blind People)

“Use of volunteers is one area where voluntary organisations could do better. We have about 10,000 volunteers, and we don’t put much resource into volunteer management. We don’t really have the skills to use volunteer skills. We tend to just tell them to do whatever needs to be done.” (Questionnaire respondent)

Something that happens in the corporate sector but not the voluntary sector is involving stakeholders outside of the organisation, e.g. Early Learning has an area where the kids can test out toys. I don’t think we involve donors and beneficiaries in innovation. There are many donors who are highly skilled marketers etc. and organisations could benefit from them. Maybe they could have an innovation group that involves people from in and outside the organisation.
(Derek Humphries, THINK Consulting)

These quotes highlight that volunteer management and stakeholder involvement are both in need of some innovative thinking. Here are two ideas to get you started:

- **Skill drives.** For every new project or programme, charities could put together a list of the ideal skills and experiences project workers would have in order to execute the project effectively. In order to make up any shortfall, a skills/experience appeal could be sent out to all key stakeholders. Such an appeal should include details about what will be achieved through the project and what type of time commitment is required.
- **Co-operative problem solving.** Faced with a tough problem? Struggling for good ideas? Why not invite users, supporters and volunteers for their thoughts and ideas? This will not only bring in fresh ideas and innovative solutions but will also evoke stronger feelings of commitment and ownership in key stakeholders.

Implementation of ideas

“Some organisations are at risk of generating ideas and innovations without following through into implementation and benefiting end users.” (Questionnaire respondent, medical charity)

“My organisation is full of ideas, but lacks people to take them forward – and this leads to frustration.” (Questionnaire respondent, HLG)

The first step to ensuring ideas are actually implemented is to manage them more effectively (see section 5.2) Try using the Idea Implementation Form in the Innovation Toolkit.

You are also more likely to get the buy-in you need to make an idea happen if you can make your idea real for key stakeholders. John Grain describes how he learnt this the hard way when he was with HFHI, *“We were doing a CD-ROM to promote Global Village, a project where corporate teams go to somewhere such as Romania for a week and build houses. We invited a company that was sending a lot of its staff overseas to sponsor the CD. They didn’t feel it was a good PR opportunity and declined to be involved. When we later showed them the CD-ROM, which had video footage, they said they had no idea it was going to be so professional. If we had showed them what it was going to be like earlier in the process, they would have gone for it. So that was an opportunity missed, and another example of where it would have helped to make the idea more ‘real’.”*

Use of new technology

“As someone keen to see charities exploit the internet effectively, I remain surprised how in 2003 so few are using it in an innovative manner. A national charity publishing an e-mail newsletter for the first time is sadly still newsworthy!” (Howard Lake, Fundraising UK)

Here are just a few examples of how new technology is being used to make non-profit organisations more effective. Are there any ideas or principles that you could adapt from any of these to improve/revolutionise your organisation’s working?

The Medtronic ‘Carelink’ system for patients with chronic heart disease: By holding a small antenna over their implanted cardiac device, patients can collect data about their health status. The data is then transmitted down the phone line and onto the Carelink network, where physicians, patients and other caregivers can check their own data over the internet.

Virtual church

In recognition that the internet has become a primary source of information and communication, a number of Christian churches have launched Virtual Churches, giving people all over the

world access to prayers, religious articles, words to hymns, Christian fellowship and in some cases 3D sermons, where visitors can move their virtual self around the church. (See www.shipoffools.com/church/ and www.virtualchurch.org/ for more details.)

BIBIC video conferencing

BIBIC (The British Institute for Brain Injured Children) is piloting video conferencing for the families of brain injured children. Through a unit on top of their TV (not a computer link) BIBIC therapists can connect to families in their home, eliminating the need for travel and allowing therapists to see how the family interacts in a more organic environment. BIBIC hopes that in the future it will be able to expand this mechanism into a peer support network, whereby parents will also be able to connect to parents of other brain injured children.

Oxfam music download service

Oxfam has recently launched a music download service at www.bignoisemusic.com where 10 pence from every track downloaded (at a cost of 75-99 pence) goes to Oxfam.

Justgiving electronic payroll scheme

Justgiving has created an electronic payroll giving scheme whereby employers can sign up through a company branded 'charity zone' on the organisation's intranet. The package is designed in such a way that all of the necessary spreadsheets are generated automatically, making it much easier for employers to administrate (www.justgiving.com) .

Box 12: Challenging questions to get your organisation innovating

- What are the fields in which we currently offer training? How could we expand this?
- Could we improve our services if we increased the level of staff expertise?
- Could we use our knowledge/skills base to service a different market segment? (For example, would our current services be appropriate for another client group?)
- Are there client needs that we are not currently meeting?
- How will emerging trends affect our organisation? (For example, the ageing population, increase in student debt, increasing affluence, changes in expectation)
- Is there a smart way to capitalise on the technology that other industries are adopting?
- How can emerging service principles be woven together to create something more holistic and noticeable?
- How could we combine our services, knowledge, resources or skills with another organisation, product or person (for example, a celebrity) to form an innovative service?
- What is the minimum level of service your customers can expect?
- Are your vision and values obvious to all staff members?
- How can we get more people to connect with our cause?
- What is our vision/mission, and how is it different from other charities?
- Are there any areas that we could investigate to find out how to meet users' needs?
- Where do we interface with stakeholders/donors, and how could we make this experience more memorable?
- How do we recruit new staff and new donors?

Some final innovative thoughts

Prosaic as it may sound, innovation is a lot like love. Despite the different interpretations surrounding what it is, and the fact that many people's experience of innovation is completely different, deep down we know that innovation, like love, is a powerful force with the potential to change our and other people's world. And just like love, innovation can be taught and used as a tool for change, a tool for making the world a better place. So to finish off here are our five rules of innovation:

Innovation is relative

Much of what we have written could be seen as a eulogy for 'cutting edge' work. However, innovation is relative: if it is new and different and scary for an organisation, it is innovative, even if the rest of the world did it a decade ago. In short, innovation is about the organisation moving forward, irrespective of the competition.

Innovation is hard work

Very few organisations leap out of bed in the morning and do innovative things. Most of them have to learn relevant skills, or have innovation written deep in their organisational culture. So while innovation may not cost you much, it will take much more hard work once you have digested the ideas in this guide. Perhaps most importantly, you will need to identify the people who will champion innovation.

Innovation is free

Innovation does not require huge budgets or massive fundraising campaigns. Done right, innovation can help organisations make their money go further. It allows charities to do more with the same amount of money. The innovation challenge is as much about changing your organisational culture as it is about spending your way out of a crisis. It takes time, energy and commitment to innovate, but it does not have to cost a lot.

Innovation is infectious

The best way to reap the benefits of innovation is to root it in organisational culture. Because so many charities love task forces, working groups, trustee sub-committees, and all the other bureaucratic paraphernalia, the challenge for innovative ideas and their champions is to make sure that they do not get stuck in the quicksand of charity bureaucracy. That is why one of the goals of any innovator must be to change the organisational culture – preferably starting with the CEO.

Innovation is better than a month at a health farm

It is hard to imagine a better drug. Take one sluggish obese charity, add to it the ingredients of innovation, and the organisation can suddenly begin to do more with less. It can try out new ways to make existing services or expenditure more effective. Innovation can help an organisation's staff to find their jobs and their lives more rewarding and more enjoyable.

It is our hope in putting this report together that voluntary and community organisations will be filled with the energy and spirit of innovation and thus motivated to go forth and make their organisations even more effective, more challenging and more capable of delivering better value.

Summary of key points

Section 1:

- ◆ Innovation involves examining the way things are currently done with a view to finding new and better ways of doing them. It is about putting creative ideas into action.
- ◆ It is a tool for overcoming constrictive resources, obstacles and mindsets.

Section 2:

- ◆ Innovation allows organisations to respond more effectively to changes in both the external environment and users' needs.
- ◆ Innovation has the potential to empower charity clients and key stakeholders, improve service delivery and increase employee satisfaction and retention.
- ◆ Innovation belongs to the entire organisation – each staff member has the potential creativity to address problems.

Section 3:

- ◆ A compelling vision that all of the staff believe in is the first step to breeding a culture of innovation. The next is to ensure that the mission and strategy beat an effective (and regularly reviewed) path towards the vision, and that can-do attitudes, creative thinking and responsible risk-taking are encouraged.
- ◆ Innovation will be more effective if it reflects the organisation's mission, vision and values.

Section 4:

- ◆ Systematic innovation involves regularly examining the ways in which the running of an organisation's services could be made more effective. It will be most successful if staff are encouraged to question what they see going on around them: why is it done that way? Is it really the best way? What are the alternatives?

Section 5:

- ◆ Staff will come up with a greater quantity (and quality) of ideas if they are regularly exposed to external stimuli.
- ◆ Innovative staff ideas are made more likely with 'idea friendly' processes and environments.
- ◆ Effective idea management and evaluation will make ideas easier to implement.
- ◆ Sometimes it is not enough for organisations to improve what they already do – paradigm changes need to be considered.

Section 6:

- ◆ Organisations should be encouraged to look at their work in terms of what they *can* do (not what they can't). In achieving their vision they need to internalise the adage, "where there's a will, there's a way".

Section 7:

- ◆ Charities can be very unwilling to take even measured and responsible risks. This often prevents them from being pioneers in their field.

Section 8:

- ◆ Obstacles should be seen as opportunities to innovation.
- ◆ Key areas that were identified as needing innovation were fundraising; user, volunteer and donor involvement; implementation of ideas; and use of new technology.
- ◆ Users, donors and volunteers should be considered as a rich source of innovation.
- ◆ Making your ideas 'real' for key stakeholders will make it easier for you to get the buy-in you need to move towards implementation.
- ◆ There is a whole world of new technology just waiting to be used by the voluntary sector.

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- <http://www.innovationtools.com/>
A website with all the latest innovation news. Readers can sign up for weekly e-mail updates.
- <http://www.brainstorming.co.uk>
A website that provides training in an introductory selection of creative thinking techniques
- <http://www.thinkcs.org>
THINK Consulting's website contains a number of engaging, free-to-air articles aimed at increasing creativity within the voluntary sector.

Appendix One: Interviewees' details

Lord Victor Adebowale – Chief Executive, Turning Point

Victor was Director of the Alcohol Recovery Project and then Chief Executive of youth homelessness charity Centrepoin before taking up his current post in 2001. He is a member of the National Employment Panel, the DEMOS Advisory Council, the New Economic Foundation Board and the Institute for Fiscal Studies Council. In 2000, he was awarded the CBE in the New Year's Honour List for services to New Deal, the unemployed, and homeless young people. Victor was in the first group of people to be appointed as People's Peers.

John Crawford – Director of Services, The Camden Society

John's 18 years of voluntary sector working have been primarily within housing, education, vocational training and employment services for those with learning disabilities. He has 12 years' experience as a strategic director and has developed new and innovative approaches to organisational development, community business and employment agency services for people with learning disabilities.

Stephen Dawson – Chairman, Impetus Trust

One of the first venture capitalists in the UK, Stephen's last 18 years have been at ECI, a venture capital company specialising in mid-market buy-outs. He has been a non-executive director of five companies that achieved a stock market quotation, including Guardian iT. He is Chairman of the newly set up Impetus Trust, which is believed to be the UK's first general venture philanthropy charitable fund.

Shaks Ghosh – Chief Executive, Crisis

Shaks has had a number of jobs in local government and the voluntary housing movement. She has also worked for the National Housing Federation, Centrepoin, Community Housing Association and the London Borough of Islington. In May 1997, Shaks took over as Chief Executive of Crisis, the homeless charity.

Adam Sampson – Director, Shelter

Adam has worked as a probation officer and as Deputy Director of the Prison Reform Trust and in 1997 he became Chief Executive of RAPt, a national drugs charity, which subsequently won a number of awards, including an international community safety award for innovation. He has represented the UK on three official trips to Iran to discuss drug policies. He has been appointed to the Government Task Force on Home Ownership, and has chaired the Users group sub-committee. He was appointed Director of Shelter in January 2003.

Jeremy Swain - Chief Executive, Thames Reach Bondway

Jeremy is Chief Executive of one of London's largest homeless agencies, Thames Reach Bondway. He chairs an ACEVO group that is developing the concept of a Leadership Centre as well as a group comprising Chief Executives of the seven largest homelessness service providers in London.

John Grain – Managing Director, Our Lasting Tribute

John began his career by running his own software business from school and has since worked at Oxfam and held senior positions at Intermediate Technology Development Group and Children's Aid Direct. While Director of Fundraising for Western Europe for leading American charity Habitat for Humanity International, he was selected as one of *Professional Fundraising* magazine's 12 Fundraising Gurus of the Future. Since September 2003, he has been Managing Director of Our Lasting Tribute, the innovative new In-Memoriam fundraising programme of Whitewater Creative Services. From September 2004 John is now a freelance consultant.

Ben Thomas- Policy and Development Officer, The Prince's Trust.

Before entering the voluntary sector, Ben graduated from Cambridge University and then studied in Japan for a year. In his three years of voluntary sector working he has been a marketeer at conservation charity Plantlife, and a Public Sector Fundraiser at Prince's Trust. He now works to ensure that the lessons learnt from any new projects in the various regions are shared throughout the organisation.

Tony Elischer, Managing Director, THINK Consulting Solutions

The founder of THINK Consulting Solutions, Tony is an internationally regarded expert on fundraising, having extensive experience of helping charities worldwide with strategy, fundraising, management and troubleshooting. In the last 12 months he has worked in over 15 countries. Tony is an accomplished presenter, trainer and writer. He writes extensively, and has regular columns in several magazines. Internationally, he is on the board of the Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing, the Resource Alliance and is former chair of the International Fundraising Congress. He is a Fellow of the UK's Institute of Fundraising.

Kristina Murrin, Partner, ?What If!

Kristina Murrin is a partner at ?What If!, the world's largest specialist innovation and creativity organisation. She was educated at Cambridge University, where she read Social and Political Sciences, specialising in child psychology. She worked for several years in marketing before helping to establish ?What If! in the early 1990s. She now splits her time between researching and developing new children's products, and working as a government consultant. She is co-author of *Sticky Wisdom* and is married with three young children.

Julie Spencer-Cingöz, Chief Executive, BIBIC

Julie's career background encompasses senior management roles in the elderly care sector, a period as a regional medical sales manager, and owning her own business, as well as starting her working life as a nurse. Julie is a published author on care and health and safety issues. She was the first person in Somerset to be awarded a National Training Award, was runner up in the UK Best Boss awards 2001 and was awarded UK Charity Principal of the Year 2002.

Fiona Dawe OBE, Chief Executive, YouthNet UK

Fiona has over 20 years' voluntary sector experience, encompassing young people, disabled people, volunteering and ICT and has always been keen to find interesting and effective ways to help social change. YouthNet is the UK's first virtual charity. It creates platforms for young people to learn, support each other and participate in society on their own terms, individually and collectively. With a pro-active contemporary approach, harnessing the use of technology and working collaboratively, it provides high quality content for young people, when and how they need it. It operates www.TheSite.org, the Guide to Life website for 16-24 year-olds and the national volunteering database, www.do-it.org.uk.

Charlotte Goodman, Head of Marketing, Action for Blind People

Charlotte worked at the NSPCC in marketing and TV advertising before beginning her current role at Action for Blind People, where she is Head of Marketing and Public Affairs with responsibility for marketing and production, media relations, internal communications and parliamentary lobbying and campaigning.

Debra Allcock Tyler, Chief Executive, Directory of Social Change

Before working at DSC, Debra was Director and co-Founder of 'from small acorns' Ltd, a training and consultancy company working on organisational culture change and individual development. She has worked in the fields of insurance, management consultancy, training and campaigning and spent a large part of her career at The Industrial Society (now The Work Foundation). She spent a year working with Youth at Risk and was the first female Director of the Runge Effective Leadership programme, the UK's leading programme for senior managers.

Derek Humphries, Director and Creative Strategist, THINK Consulting Solutions

Over the past 16 years Derek has delivered the strategic and creative elements of campaigns for more than 100 NGOs, from small local names to international causes. He writes and presents widely on issues of brand development, communications and creativity. You will find him at derek@thinkcs.org.

Appendix Two: The contents of the Innovation Toolkit

An Innovation Toolkit, which contains practical guidelines and exercises through which an organisation can increase the quantity and quality of its innovative solutions is available as a separate document (in pdf format) – please email reports@nfpsynergy.net if you would like a copy. The contents of the Innovation Toolkit can be reproduced for the use of your staff.

◆ **Brainstorming guidelines**

Because of ineffective techniques, most brainstorming sessions are not as productive as they could be. The brainstorming guidelines will help you to ensure that your brainstorming session stays on track and avoids being undermined by people's egos*.

◆ **The innovation identikit**

The innovation identikit will encourage you to challenge your organisation's status quo and will trigger ideas about how your organisation could be more innovative.

◆ **Applied creative thinking: Challenging your service elements**

The creative thinking technique, 'slice and dice',** requires users to dissect the issue at hand into its individual attributes. The idea is to then focus on each attribute separately, challenging the accepted belief about what it involves. The aim is that by pointedly challenging the status quo, new and improved ways of doing things will emerge.

◆ **Personal job development**

The overall effectiveness and dynamism of an organisation can be increased by allowing individual staff members greater efficacy in their day-to-day work. If encouraged to question, challenge and reform the way that things are done on their own turf, staff will become generally more innovative and will tend to feel more empowered and satisfied within their roles. All staff, from Chief Executives to administrators, can begin to identify ways in which they can improve their services and increase their impact by answering the personal job development questions.

◆ **Identifying your innovative team**

When we talk about innovation, we tend to put all the emphasis on the 'ideas people'. It would, however, be a mistake to assume that these are the only people an organisation needs in order to create systematic innovation. If an organisation wants to be well positioned for innovation, it will need to involve and cultivate the skills of not just its 'ideas people' but also its leaders, planners, negotiators and frontline workers.

◆ **Idea implementation form**

The idea implementation form is a tool to help your organisation manage the implementation of ideas. When an organisation is looking for a solution to a particular problem, the form can be distributed to all staff members so that a full range of strategies and ideas can be considered.

*In his book, 'Managing the people side of innovation', Jeet Chopra argues that people's ideas are subconsciously integral to their perception of self. If these ideas are criticised or dismissed, they will react either by withdrawing (holding back any further ideas) or counter attacking (finding fault with other people's ideas).

**See Michael Michalko's *Thinkertoys* (1991) for more details.

Innovation and creative thinking workshops

Workshop registration forms can be obtained online at <http://www.nfpsynergy.net/WorkshopRegistrationForm.pdf>

Workshop 1: Effective idea development: Creativity and innovation for individuals

Target audience: Everyone from the CEO to the receptionist but particularly valuable for development workers and those responsible for new solutions

Designed to help individuals bring out the creative genius within, this exciting workshop debunks the myth that only certain people can be creative. Through a series of fun exercises, participants journey through a process of generating groundbreaking ideas that lend themselves easily to implementation and buy-in from key stakeholders. Participants will:

- Uncover the importance of creativity and innovation for their organisation
- Gain strategies for increasing their creativity
- Overcoming idea barriers; and
- Practice overcoming barriers
- Discover how to package ideas in ways that get ‘yes’

A highlight of the day is a 2-hour session focussing on learning and applying a selection of effective creative thinking techniques which can then be utilised within their organisation’s brainstorming sessions.

Workshop 2: Maximising team capacity for innovation: A workshop for team leaders

Target audience: Team leaders who want to increase their teams productivity and resourcefulness

Someone within your organisation could be sitting on an idea that will revolutionise your work. Do you know how to make the most of his potential?

Designed to help leaders engage their staff in more systematic innovation, this full day workshop is a must for anyone who wants to enhance their team’s ability to produce and implement good ideas. ‘Maximising team capacity for innovation’ aims to guide team leaders along the full process of innovation, from learning how to stimulate creativity in their staff and co-workers through to selling ideas to key stakeholders (e.g. funders, colleagues, collaborators) and seeing them through to implementation.

Throughout this highly interactive workshop participants will also:

- Discover the benefits of engaging the entire organisation in the search for new solutions
- Explore the environments that are most conducive to innovation
- Consider appropriate structures and procedures to implement within their team
- Learn how to run an effective brainstorming session
- Develop techniques for overcoming barriers
- Practise growing ideas and making them real for key stakeholders

Workshop 3: Innovation away day for CEOs and senior managers

Target audience: Organisational leaders (CEO's, Directors, Trustees, Senior managers)

A good idea does not an innovative organisation make. In order that an organisation may consistently find effective solutions to the needs of clients and supporters, leaders need to create the right conditions for innovation to flourish in every corner.

During this one-day seminar, participants will be given the opportunity to take a step back from the daily treadmill to consider the fundamentals of innovation as outlined in the 'innovators anonymous' 4 step process:

1. Ensure your vision is compelling and central
2. Espouse values that are consistent with innovation
3. Develop structures and processes for optimising your organisation's innovative capacity.
4. Enrich the working environment

In a hands-on journey through these processes, participants will consider strategies, structures and processes for inspiring the entire organisation towards a greater level of innovation and will have the opportunity to discuss the realities of the innovative process with fellow leaders.

In-house innovation facilitation, brainstorming and creative thinking sessions

Whether you are looking for a fun day to stimulate and invigorate staff members or cutting edge solutions to seemingly impenetrable problems, we can help. Armed with a wide array of group activities and stimulus materials, we can work with designated staff members on your site, at our place, or somewhere exciting like the Scout Association's grounds in Chingford (which are equipped with a climbing wall and on-lake team activities!).

Prices for in-house facilitation will vary, depending on the extent of work that would need to be put into tailoring a session to your organisation's needs and the number of sessions you would like us to run. Given that we have many sessions and exercises that are 'ready to go' you may be surprised at just how reasonable the cost of a fun, effective session can be.

Workshop details

Prices: Places will be charged at £250 each. Organisations wishing to send multiple staff to multiple workshops will get one free space for every four purchased. Discounts are also available for organisations with less than 50 staff members. Please contact Elisha Evans (details below) for more information.

Location: Details to be confirmed

Dates: Effective idea development: **28th January, 10th February**
Maximising team capacity for innovation: **3rd February, 16th February**
Innovation away day for CEO's: **22nd February**

Time: 9:30am – 5.30pm

For more information, please contact Elisha Evans:
(elisha.evans@nfpsynergy.net / 020 7750 5719)

About nfpSynergy

nfpSynergy is a think-tank dedicated to the voluntary and community sector and not-for-profit issues. The purpose of nfpSynergy is to provide ideas, insights and information to help not-for-profit organisations thrive in a changing world. Our services and activities include syndicated research, project work and independent research and policy work. (See below for further details.)

Charity Monitors

Charity Awareness Monitor (CAM)

The Awareness Monitor tracks the attitudes and awareness of the general public to charities, pressure groups and voluntary organisations eight times a year, four by telephone, four by paper.

Charity Parliamentary Monitor (CPM)

CPM tracks bi-annually the attitudes and awareness of MPs and the Lords to charities and pressure groups and their campaigns.

Charity Media Monitor (CMM)

CMM tracks bi-annually the attitudes and awareness of journalists who work closely with charities using both a questionnaire and qualitative interviews.

Charity Involvement Monitor (CIM)

CIM reviews corporate and charity fundraising relationships and aims to produce research that will help charities in a way that is usable in building, developing and maintaining fundraising strategies

Charity GP Monitor

The GP Monitor is a survey conducted every other year that investigates how much contact GPs have with medical and disability charities and their experience of dealing with them,

Charity Brand Attributes

This programme is designed to help charities find out in more detail how they are viewed by the public by researching which words or phrases the public associate with them.

Stakeholder Onion

A stakeholder audit product, the Stakeholder Onion (so named because it is multi-layered, versatile, comes in many shapes and sizes to suit your needs, and is such good value it will make you cry!), is designed to reach a much broader range of stakeholders, and cover both qualitative and quantitative research while keeping research costs lower than would normally be possible.

Independent policy and research work

nfpSynergy carries out a range of internally funded research and policy projects, the results of which are often distributed free of charge. Recent reports and commentaries focus on charities' internet use; payroll giving; gift aid; trust in charities; key trends in the wider social and economic environment and branding for charities.

Project and consultancy work

Of course, organisations often need tailored research or support to help them meet their objectives. We therefore regularly work with charities on a more focused and individual basis. We have recently worked with a variety of voluntary organisations on projects that include a communications audit, a series of seminars and briefings on the implications of the socio-

economic environment, an analysis of corporate relationships and influence, and a global staff survey (in 35 countries) for a development agency.

If you would like to know about any of the work we do, please contact:

Amandine Courtin (amandine.courtin@nfpSynergy.net)

nfpSynergy Ltd, 2-6 Tenter Ground , London, E1 7NH. Telephone: (020) 7426 8888.

nfpSynergy's reports and articles

nfpSynergy regularly publishes reports and articles on different subjects, all of which are relevant to the voluntary sector. A description of all our reports and articles is detailed below. For a copy of any of these resources please email reports@nfpsynergy.net or visit our website at www.nfpsynergy.net.

'Virtual Promise - From Rhetoric to Reality' - A report on charities' use of the internet between 2000-2004

What's really going on in the virtual charity world? This report is a culmination of four years of research into UK charities' use of the internet since the initial report from 2000 called 'Virtual Promise - Are charities keeping up with the Internet revolution?' There have been yearly updates since.

The report is separated into three main sections. The first features the results from a survey we sent out to 300 charitable organisations in the UK in November 2003 (as well as the results from previous years for comparative purposes), including analysis of these results.

The second section consists of a detailed write-up of a set of interviews conducted in mid 2004 amongst charity internet managers and web experts who deal with the voluntary sector in a day-to-day basis, outlining their views about various issues affecting the online charity world.

In the third and final section we sum up the findings of this year's results, offer up some recommendations on areas of improvement for charities, outline the advantageous position in which the third sector could find itself and make some predictions for the future.

'Touch & Go': The internet, digital TV and mobile telephony as tools for maximising the impact of charities – July 2004

This report aims to help voluntary organisations better understand the nature of the current technological revolution and plan for the future accordingly. A key theme runs through the report: new communications technologies, including the internet, digital TV and mobile telephones, allow charities to do more with less, to punch above their weight, to reach new audiences, to develop new services and to remorselessly achieve their goals more effectively.

The report is split into three sections. The first looks at the general public's access and use of key technologies; the second explores the use of technology in the workplace, highlighting lessons from the commercial sector. The third looks specifically at the implications of these new technologies for not-for-profit organisations, and attempts to help the sector weigh the risks of technological investment against its potential. In all of the sections we are careful to distinguish between access to technology and use of it.

Disgusted or delighted? What does concern the public about charities? – March 2004

A representative sample of the UK population was asked to think about "charities and the work that they do" and pick up to five issues from a prompted list that they found "off-putting, worrying or irritating".

Paid or unpaid? or how the public is more likely to think that trustees are paid than fundraisers – March 2004 - A representative sample of the UK population was asked to identify which of a variety of groups involved with charities was paid or unpaid. The results are illuminating and help to guide charities to communicate better with their stakeholders.

Share giving – sheer indifference – March 2004

A research report on the use of share giving by charities, a policy introduced in April 2000 that allows individuals to give shares and offset the value of the shares sold against their income tax liability and avoid capital gains tax liability. This report is the result of research into the ways that charities are using share giving (alongside Gift Aid – covered in a separate report) and their success in promoting it.

You can take a Gift Aid Horse to Water... – February 2004

A research report on charities attitudes to Gift Aid and its marketing that shows charities are not making enough of Gift Aid. The first report, ‘Looking a Gift-Aid horse in the mouth – July 2003’, is also available.

The power of dreams, the burden of leadership: Report on the *Britain’s Most admired Charity* survey – October 2003

‘The power of dreams, the burden of leadership’ is a report disseminating the ‘Britain’s Most Admired Charities’ survey’s data. It concentrates on a number of important issues for any charity that wants to increase its effectiveness, including the key attributes of successful charities; skill and expertise shortages; government initiatives that have affected (or not affected) the sector; and the key challenges for effective charities and charity leaders.

Innovation: A roadmap for homeless agencies – October 2003

The ‘Innovation Roadmap’ is designed to guide homelessness and other voluntary organisations towards a culture of more systematic innovation. It provides a sector-specific analysis of the innovation process, explaining why it is important, how it can be incorporated into an organisation’s culture, and what the barriers are likely to be.

Five key trends and their impact on the voluntary sector – May 2003

The impact of social and economic change on the voluntary and community sector is far-reaching. The trends examined in this first briefing are the ageing population, the changing nature of households and families and increased levels of educational qualifications and aspirations. The report hopes to stimulate thinking in not-for-profit organisations about the impact these issues could have on clients, on funding, on competition, on staff and above all on their own effectiveness.

Payroll giving: Big opportunities / big obstacles – December 2002 - A research report on charities’ attitudes to payroll giving and its marketing. Questionnaires were sent to over 600 charities ranked by income, and 136 completed questionnaires were received.

Trusted but misunderstood – November 2002

Is the public falling out of love with charities? Those operating within the voluntary sector may feel concerned that today’s public are growing increasingly sceptical about charitable activity. In order to investigate whether public trust in charities is waning, nfpSynergy has carried out research over the past year based on three different waves of research (using different methodologies and taking place at different times). This paper is a presentation and analysis of those results.

Polishing the diamond – October 2002 - A charity’s image is crucial to the success of every part of the organisation. ‘Polishing the Diamond’ uses case studies and examples from the NSPCC, Friends of the Earth, VSO, Diabetes UK, Barnardo’s, WWF-UK and a number of other charities to illustrate how branding in charities is handled in practice. Our most popular report.

Business with charities: The public’s perception of fundraising promotions for charities by companies – August 2002 - In February 2002 nfpSynergy carried out research into the public’s

memory of charity/company tie-ups and their attitudes towards them. The sample of 1,050 people was contacted by random telephone dialling and is representative of the UK population by gender, age and social class.

Virtual Promise – original research conducted 2001 and annually since then

nfpSynergy (when part of the Future Foundation Group) researched and wrote a report with Horwath Consulting called ‘Virtual Promise - Are charities keeping up with the Internet revolution?’ It was published as a special supplement for *Third Sector* magazine and was sent out in February 2001. The research has been repeated each year since, and an updated report with data from 2003 will be available at the beginning of August 2004.

The voluntary sector and outsourcing – April 2002 - This report examines the use of outsourcing and partnerships as a way of improving your business.

Any of these resources can be obtained by emailing reports@nfpsynergy.net or visit our website at www.nfpsynergy.net.

For further information about the work that nfpSynergy does, please contact Alexandra Denye either by telephone on (020) 7250 3353 or e-mail alexandra.denye@nfpsynergy.net.