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## Focus on Innovation

Focus on Innovation is a monthly electronic newsletter designed to provoke thoughts and ideas on how to bring innovation to life within the organizations in which we work.

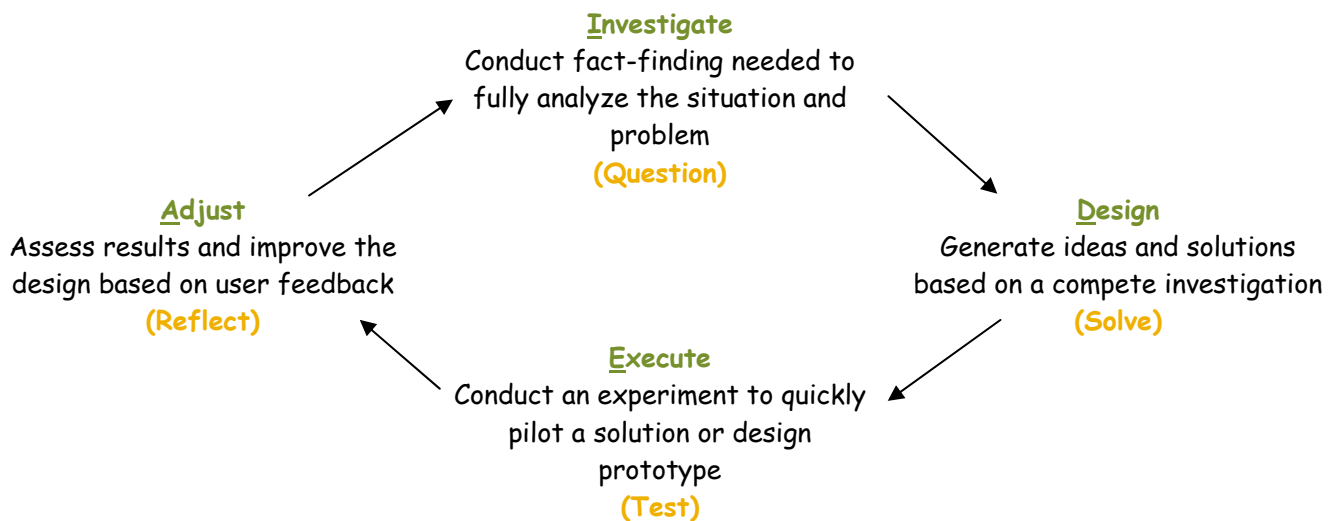
### For Those on the Run

Continuous innovation requires a strong discipline and rigorous process. This month's newsletter looks at I.D.E.A. Loops: Investigate-Design-Execute-Adjust, a simple tool that focuses thought and action towards innovation.

### Innovation Tool: I.D.E.A. Loops

*"Innovation requires knowledge, ingenuity, and, above all else focus."  
- Peter Drucker, 2002*

One of the reasons that so many people find it hard to be creative and so many organizations find it hard to innovate is that they lack a consistent approach to addressing problems. Let's face it we all have problems, challenges and/ or opportunities that need to be solved. Our challenge is to be able to replace our fix-it thinking with more expansive, innovative thinking. *I.D.E.A. Loops: Investigate-Design-Execute-Adjust* form the heart of a systematic approach to innovation and employ the kind of thinking used by scientists, engineers and designers. The IDEA Loops method looks like this:



The great thing about IDEA Loops is that they can apply to all situations. Investigation, Design, Execution, and Adjustment are the universal common denominators to successful innovation. At each phase focus on these few key questions:

- Investigate**            What are you trying to do and why?  
                                  What are the facts and issues?  
                                  What's the problem and cause?
  
- Design**                    What does perfection look like?  
                                  What ideas exist for achieving it?  
                                  What is the best solution?
  
- Execute**                    What do you expect will happen?  
                                  How will you test the solution?  
                                  What is the scope of impact?
  
- Aadjust**                    What worked, what didn't, and why?  
                                  What adjustments must be made?  
                                  What are the next steps?

IDEA Loops capture the central cycle behind real-world innovation in an intuitive way. It is a tool that Toyota has incorporated into their day-to-day way of doing business from the assembly line up. For more on the application of IDEA Loops and Toyota's success in mastering innovation, read is Matthew E. May's book *The Elegant Solution: Toyota's Formula for Mastering Innovation*, New York: Free Press, 2007 - this book is definitely a MUST read for anyone wanting to truly master innovative thinking and business innovation.

### What's the Bottom line

We all know the power of process. IDEA Loops is a simple method that helps drive a fast learning cycle of testing, experimenting, piloting, and prototyping.

**Source:** This newsletter was adapted from *Chapter 4: Let Learning Lead* of Matthew E. May's book *The Elegant Solution: Toyota's Formula for Mastering Innovation*.



Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to others.  
If you would like more information about the ideas and topics listed in this issue, contact Judy Laws, Ph.D. at [jlaws@foursightconsulting.com](mailto:jlaws@foursightconsulting.com).

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