



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Supporting Transformative Innovation

Moderated by David Massey, Digital Experience Director, UPS

Growth Innovation Leadership Council Member

Council members joined a brainstorming session exploring how organizations can cultivate transformative innovation by empowering teams to think boldly and act with a founder's mindset. The group shared practical strategies, real-world examples, and common challenges around driving entrepreneurial behaviors inside large enterprises while effectively engaging stakeholders to build alignment and momentum.

Key Brainstorm Challenges

- **Encouraging risk-taking and experimentation in environments built for predictability**
- **Building early and ongoing stakeholder buy in for innovative ideas**
- **Sustaining founder-like energy, ownership, and urgency throughout the innovation lifecycle**

David Massey began the virtual session by asking members to briefly introduce themselves and comment on whether they were acting with a founder's mindset as it pertained to innovation. AI defines a founder's mindset as a proactive, owner-like approach to business characterized by extreme ownership, a relentless focus on the customer, and a passion for overcoming obstacles. It involves thinking in decades rather than quarters having a deep, personal commitment to the company's success.

Member responses included:

- ✓ My organization is very solid ... we've achieved innovation at scale.
- ✓ We have an AI-first mindset and follow Society for AI in Competitive Intelligence (SAICI) frameworks to share curated information within the organization.
- ✓ We currently have an innovation and customer development team.
- ✓ This is an exciting time...we're transforming the organization by connecting processes.
- ✓ We have a founder's mindset and are part of transformation! There is ownership in the sense that product managers stay with the product, rather than handing it off.
- ✓ We are looking at Generative AI. Exploring but de-risking explorations.
- ✓ It's all about human capital. Everyone should get up to speed on AI and everyone should have a founder's mindset!

CX designer and thought leader David Massey briefly shared how he successfully improved the user experience (UX) at UPS, using tools like collaborative problem-solving calls, which provided a springboard for product managers, engineers and others to better understand customer issues and to pilot solutions. The approach was very successful and is still being utilized to optimize CX at the enterprise.

Massey noted that some organizations are more open to a founder's mindset approach than others and referenced a book, *This Might Get Me Fired: A Manual for Thriving in the Corporate Entrepreneurial Underground* by Greg Larkin. The work includes stories and tools from a seasoned corporate innovator and advocates for fast product development as well as a guerilla mindset.

The Council members were asked a series of questions throughout the brainstorming session and shared some of their insights and challenges with others. Highlights of the engaging Q&A – and members' varying perspectives – can be found below:

What innovation roadblocks are you encountering as you try to “break the mold

- Technology has outpaced our ability to assimilate it. We now find ourselves trying to solve what we don't know with problems we don't know exist (yet). It's very difficult to keep up. Sometimes we need to slow down and create some stability and tangibility rather than chasing all the shiny objects. We're focusing on one type of learning experience at a time, starting with open AI.
- Innovation is becoming 90% GenAI. This is good but can be limiting.
- You need to be aware of people barriers...find the “yes” person. If your team is trying to accomplish something, try to create the conditions to make it happen. There are so many options with AI now. Sometimes you need to adjust the corporate mindset.

Who are the biggest “no” people in your organization? Tech? Legal? Ops?

- It could be anyone, but usually it's someone interested in protecting the status quo.
- The frozen middle management layer often doesn't want to change and can be a sticking point.

How to get fellow employees on board with innovation initiatives?

- I've had success creating innovation learning communities through tools like webinars and discussions. It's all about creating a growth mindset in the organization. But you need to be a collaborator, not a threat. And you need alignment.
- We started with a small team and a shipping app. We showed what it could do and created a kind of partnership with another group. It was a positive first step and now that group is a big champion.

How do you reinforce innovation in your company? Any tips or guidelines?

- Get a meeting with the VP! Brief them and be ready. Don't oversell but be prepared.
- Sometimes the old “managing up” is needed.

- I agree with the collaborative approach. Also, internal innovation is easier than innovating with external partners, relatively speaking. You need internal people to champion and socialize those initiatives.
- It helps to have executive agreements. Most importantly, ask, *What are the strategic goals around innovation and transformation?*
- Innovation must be in the culture! Not a box check.

Any other thoughts about championing innovation efforts?

- Be provocative! Innovation is becoming inevitable. Transform or you won't be relevant.
- Innovation should be centered around human capital and change. Your data and tools are only effective if you can get your people on board. It's bigger than just the innovation team. It's the next generation of growth. It's inevitable change.

How do you create space for innovation in larger organizations?

- We have short projects. We try to know our audience and their motivations.

Lastly, the inevitable question about AI and innovation...where is it all going? How are you integrating technology?

- I'm a product manager by discipline, but part of an AI group. We're working to understand and build out AI applications. For instance, digital twins representing products. We're expanding our model and using AI to improve processes.
- Right now, a big challenge is to use high performance computer capabilities to match virtual ones. We need senior tech people to bring this to fruition. These are billion-dollar exercises that use modeling and simulation. Rapid prototyping is often required.
- Tools can create what the future is! There are different challenges for different companies, some challenges are much more complex than others.

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