

How to Innovate Fearlessly: Community Notes

Libraries Research & Innovative Practice Forum

June 14, 2018

Panelists: Sharon Epps, Kate Dohe

Moderator: Rebecca Goldfinger

Contributions to these notes made by session attendees

Session Description: A few barriers to innovation include not having a safe space to experiment, fear of failure, and big egos. Panelists Sharon Epps and Kate Dohe will discuss how to avoid these barriers. A moderated group discussion will follow on how we can promote innovation at the Libraries.

Questions for the panelists and audience:

- 1) What is innovation? How do you define it?
 - Culture of innovation: needs a safe space for brainstorming
 - “Yes, and...” -- the idea (derived from improvisational theater) of encouraging team members / departments to work with each other by building upon each other’s work and ideas
 - Internal value
 - Versus creativity, which is more about creating from nothing whereas innovation can grow from precedence
 - We should avoid innovating for innovation’s sake- the goal of innovation should be to provide a new product or service to our users or provide an existing product or service in a better way

- 2) What does it mean to fail? How do you define it?
 - Real-life examples that at first blush sound like failure: not meeting a deadline; “sometimes it doesn’t work,” but if they yield new knowledge, then they are valuable.
 - Opportunity to learn, including sharing mistakes, tenacity is needed
 - Trying again (differently) can yield better results.
 - Tolerance of iterative process needed for developing new processes, services
 - Failure is a natural part of trying something new - not everything succeeds
 - We only truly fail when we don’t try anything new

- 3) How can we change our attitude towards “failure?”

- 4) How can we change our organizational culture to accept failure as part of the process?
 - Encourage ideas and idea development in the support of the progress
 - Leaders and managers create culture that is not protecting the present or the past
 - Promote continual growth

- Listen to what our users want and need
- Build an atmosphere of trust and honesty, in which people feel free to express their opinions. This includes listening to others.
- Practice “yes, and” -- listen and build on suggestions

We didn't get to discuss the following questions in group, but please feel free to leave notes on these questions, as well:

- 5) How can we promote people leaving behind their egos?
- 6) What is a safe space to experiment? What would that entail?
- 7) How can we promote creation of safe spaces to innovate and a culture of innovation?
- 8) Does anyone have other questions or suggestions about innovation and how we can promote it?

Resource List

[Barba, J. \(2014\). Ed Catmull's thoughts for managing a creative culture. Game-Changer.net.](#)

[Barba, J. \(2018\). The 15 Enemies of Innovation. Game-Changer.net.](#)

[Bariso, J. \(2018\). Google Has an Official Process in Place for Learning from Failure - and It's Absolutely Brilliant! Thrive Global.com](#)

[Dohe, K. & Pappas, E. \(2017\). Lessons From the Field: What Improv Teaches Us About Collaboration. *Library Leadership & Management*, 32\(1\), 1-16.](#)

Gino, F. and Pisano, G. Why Leaders Don't Learn from Success. *Harvard Business Review*, April, 2011, 68-74.

[Glassman, J. \(2017\). THE INNOVATION FETISH AND SLOW LIBRARIANSHIP: WHAT LIBRARIANS CAN LEARN FROM THE JUICERO. In *The Library With The Lead Pipe*, 1.](#)

McGrath, R. Failing by Design. *Harvard Business Review*, April, 2011, 76-83.

[Mellahi, K. and Wilkinson, A. \(2010\). Managing and Coping with Organizational Failure: Introduction to the Special Issue. *Group & Organization Management*, 35, 531-540.](#)