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New book offers five-step guide to innovation process

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Recommended Citation

University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "New book offers five-step guide to innovation process" (2006). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 19979.
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NEWS RELEASE

Sept. 29, 2006

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NEW BOOK OFFERS FIVE-STEP GUIDE TO INNOVATION PROCESS

MISSOULA—

Have you ever thought about how different life would be without your computer mouse? Or how that computerized voice on the other end of the line understands your spoken requests? And who came up with those ideas?

William Wilmot, University of Montana professor emeritus, can answer such questions.

For the last six years, Wilmot has worked with Curtis Carlson, president and CEO of SRI International. SRI is the company that pioneered the computer mouse, speech-recognition systems and many other successful innovations – new or improved products or services – such as hypertext, robotic surgery and high-definition television.

Wilmot and Carlson have written a book that outlines the systematic approach that led to SRI's success: "Innovation: The Five Disciplines for Creating What Customers Want."

The book was released by Crown Publishing Group in August.

"The idea that innovation begins with a lone genius who comes up with a great idea that leads to immediate success is not realistic," Wilmot said.

Innovation is a collaborative process, he and Carlson tell readers, and in the book they share the time-tested approach that has been successful for them.

"To make your career worthwhile, focus on important projects rather than ones just interesting to you," Wilmot said.

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Success starts by identifying important customer and market needs, he said, and only customers determine value.

Once the important needs and the value to customers have been determined, the project needs a champion.

“No champion, no project, no exceptions,” Wilmot said. “If you don’t have a person who will take ultimate responsibility for a project and volunteers to push it to fruition, it won’t be successful.”

The success of any innovation requires tapping into the genius of teams, Wilmot said, and those teams must be interdisciplinary, with a shared vision, complementary skills and shared rewards.

And finally, after the team is in place, you must align the structures and processes throughout the enterprise to maximize customer value.

“You can’t create enough value by yourself,” he said. “You have to cooperate with others to add value.”

The five disciplines needed to create and deliver successful projects are presented by the authors in a flexible format they call NABC – needs, approach, benefits per costs, and competition or alternatives.

Wilmot is director of the Collaboration Institute, which offers workshops that use the NABC format and the five disciplines from the book to help participants shape innovative plans to fit their needs.

Information about the book and the workshops is available online at <http://www.collaborationinstitute.com>.

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