FourSight helps teams develop their innovation capacity with a thinking system that can scale throughout the organization.

Creating & Sustaining IBM Innovation Teams

The following is an exerpt from a research paper written by Dr. Casimir DeCusatis, an IBM Master Inventor with over 70 patents and co-leader of the IBM Academy of Technology study "Innovation Ecosystems."

With the increasing emphasis on radical innovation as a differentiator, many businesses have begun to invest in building innovation teams without a clear understanding of the specific strategies which make some types of teams more likely to produce useful innovation. We have investigated different structures for teams charged with producing innovative results, including genius teams, improv teams, virtual teams and FourSight teams.

FourSight Teams
It is fundamental that a successful team will include the required skills and expertise to address the problem at hand. This same approach can be applied to the formation of innovation teams. A more structured approach to building innovation teams involves measuring team members' preferences and balancing the team accordingly. Because every individual's personality and temperament differs, their supporting metrics are completely subjective. Instruments such as Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), Hermann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) and DISC (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, Conscientiousness) Assessment are some of the most widely known instruments for measuring personality type/ temperament and cognitive thinking. The FourSight Thinking Profile differentiates itself from these instruments by measuring thinking skills alone. The FourSight breakthrough thinking process, unlike psychometric instruments, is comprised of a series of discrete, repeatable steps that people regularly engage in a variety of circumstances. This means its measurement is objective. Further, the breakthrough thinking process is validated as a democratic, universal process by over 50 years of study in the field of creativity and creative problem solving (Puccio, Murdock & Mance, 2006; Ackerbauer, 2008).

Because it is an objective measure, the breakthrough thinking process is one we can learn and intentionally replicate. If we can replicate it, we have the potential to sustain, and even scale, the results of breakthrough thinking. The more scalable (or the greater the impact of) our breakthrough thinking, the more innovative people and teams can truly be. While the creative process is universal, each step requires unique mental skills, and most individuals prefer some skills above others. Such biases show up as strong points and potential blind spots when solving problems.

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There are four basic preferences recognized by the breakthrough thinking model:

1. **Clarify the situation:** Clarification requires data gathering, understanding the context of a situation and asking numerous questions. Clarifying a situation can be time-intensive, because it requires a significant level of detail to ensure there are no assumptions that could derail potential solutions.

2. **Generate ideas:** Generating ideas, or fluid ideating, requires divergent thinking. Divergent thinking is about looking at the big picture, and playing with potentially abstract concepts that stretch our imagination. Ideation, therefore, requires a more intuitive approach.

3. **Develop a solution:** Developing a promising idea or series of ideas into a workable solution is about giving ideas the support required to stand on their own. Developing a solution includes comparing and analyzing several noteworthy ideas in order to prioritize and strengthen one or more, then planning for their implementation.

4. **Implement a plan:** Implementing is nothing more than putting the plan into action. Being able to successfully implement a solution requires persistence and determination. And because implementation generally requires engaging a variety of stakeholders, implementation lends itself to reiterating the breakthrough thinking process.

Conflict may arise as a result of differing approaches to problem solving. When teams are aware of their preferences, conflict can be diffused or leveraged as creative tension,

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IBM reserachers constructed a comparison of Innovator Traits and Team approaches. See below.

Traits of Gen-Y Innovators	Genius Teams	FourSight Teams	Virtual Teams	Improv Teams
Continuous learning	High	High	Medium	Medium
Team decisions/no strong leader	Low	High	Medium	High
Balance mixed generation team members	Medium	High	Low	Low
Achieve self-actualization	High	High	Low	Medium

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producing a potentially more synergistic result. Teams exposed to the breakthrough thinking process have a higher likelihood of approaching problems deliberately. The more conversant teams are in the dynamics of breakthrough thinking, the more confident they are likely to be in compensating for preference gaps in the strengths of their team. Preference profiling tools such as FourSight can lead to self-awareness of a team's relative strengths and weaknesses, and provide opportunities to balance the team membership to increase the prospects for long-term success.

References:

Ackerbauer, M. (2008) FourSight and the Breakthrough Thinking Process. Proc. 2nd Innovation and Creativity Management Community Meeting, Buffalo, NY.

DeCusatis, C. (2008). Creating, growing and sustaining efficient innovation teams. Creativity and Innovation Management, 17(2), 155-164. To read the complete article, please go to FourSightOnline.com and click on "Blogs."

Puccio, G.J., Murdock, M.C. and Mance, M. (2006) Creative Leadership: Skills that Drive Change. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Case Studies in FourSight Teams

Dr. Casimer DeCusatis

Although the FourSight profile does not predict performance, it does provide awareness of how teams would otherwise prefer to perform given the appropriate environment. FourSight has been administered to almost 300 people within IBM. Approximately half of those have been debriefed in a formal workshop where the breakthrough thinking process was described and explored at length. In such workshops, participants are taught the breakthrough thinking process and then given their survey results. The remainder of the workshop consists of a detailed breakdown of each of the four elements of breakthrough thinking by preference name (Clarifier, Ideator, Developer and Implementer), and an introduction of critical thinking tools for leveraging that preference.

The performance of this IBM team [see graph] bears out the profile, in that there was a great deal of challenge exploration and a rich forum for sharing thoughts and ideas during the study meetings. However, when it came to taking action and submitting the sub-team findings, there was more emphasis on ensuring ideas were captured in raw form than in a coherent summary of findings and recommendations. A series of late revisions addressed this lack of preference in idea refinement (note this is an implementation statement, proving that preferences do not necessarily predict performance). Education on how to prioritize and evaluate ideas, followed by driving them to closure, would have proven valuable to this team. By providing this type of preference list as part of a debriefing session, teams have immediate awareness of collective strengths, and are compelled to engage other team members so as to augment their preference gaps in the breakthrough thinking process.

The IBM team above shows a high preference for ideation and also for clarification.

FourSight gives teams instant awareness of peaks and gaps in their energy for driving innovation.

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