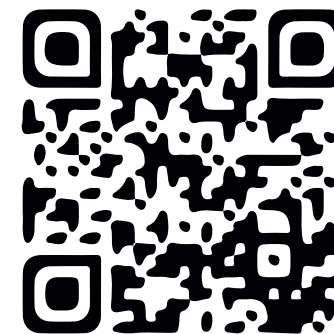






**EYE-NOVATION**



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Eye-novation by GROUPE ZEBRA

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# DESIGN FICTION

*Mumbai, 6 January 2032*

Dieter Bloch, Urban mobility business leader for Siemens is on stage!

3 pm

I am presenting the latest technology in town centre parking intelligent robots to the Brand's top 30 influencers and 200 of our managers through video conference.

Each participant has his/her own electrode headphones and will be experiencing this according to his/her own emotions, interests.

Philip, from Singapore, wrapped up in the film, is discovering more about the history and the different stages of this innovation. Diana, from Canada, is bored due to the time zone difference. Interested in working conditions on site, she is shown at the same time, the major advances in ergonomics of this new robot and the speed at which vehicles are handled.

I am an old hand at these presentations, I know that the launch scenario is only in its infancy... I am starting to measure the impact of my words, rhythm and reasoning and will adapt the holographic projections according to the audience's reaction.

5 pm

I am leaving my shared offices in Branda Kurla to go home to Santacruz. I am taking off from the office roof top and in 20 minutes I get home aboard a TATA taxi drone. A few minutes flight above Mumbai, my daily treat... I am in weightlessness with Mozart, to the sound of Stoika Milanova's violin, it is Divine!

5:40 pm

A slight vibration on my wrist interrupts me On the screen Alison and Noah's faces... They'll be wanting something ... Again! I start my in-ear receiver.

"Dad, tonight, Brain is on the TV, on Amazon Event! Say? Can we use your holographic screen with the neighbours? Come on Dad! In any case, we don't have school tomorrow, the coding teachers are in holovideo all day with the Vegas middle school and we won't have our German immersive video until 1..." Accepted... Disconnect.

8 pm

Nice dish of Koshihikari rice prepared by the volunteers in our building's community kitchen. This now famous plant, capable of growing on extremely salty land, that has allowed the Japanese to once again use the 20000 hectares of land flooded during the tsunami... is now ubiquitous along the coasts in India, in Africa...

A wonderful dish produced next door and bought loose, with no useless packaging, at the bottom of our building. Birgit really does think of everything.

10 pm

Birgit is just back from her yoga course. It's old fashioned but she loves it...

She is about to launch a collaborative platform based on AI developed in France. YOGAAN, in partnership with Danone, will offer tailor-made programs according to your needs and linked to healthier eating. A self-learning system that will evolve with each person.

Every night we have a quick talk about the project... Her unbounded entrepreneurial energy is tiring but we find this sharing time with a glass of Chardonnay in our hands essential to a good night's sleep...

7 am

I see Birgit getting up, walking past the connected mirror of the hall... I know she has always disliked the idea of facial recognition... But you have to agree it is pretty cool in the morning...

I hear the kitchen waking up, the radio has just switched on with the latest news flash... Since last night, cubed coffee is in the Nespresso set to arabica, long and sweet, just the way I like it.

Our tech mad world has its good sides, for a long time now, our ponderous foods have been compressed to avoid the need for packaging.

This morning, cricket flour cake prepared by Noah. Alison has already turned on the 3D printer to make the pasta she will eat for lunch at school... Without asking her brother if he wanted any... It is all about her, as usual...

9:30 am

I am involved in reviewing the project of the future production plant of Michelin sneakers in Boulder, Colorado. My numerical twin is broadcast from a private cloud into a virtual meeting room where each participant comments on choices made with regards to work station layout and discusses forecasts, production rhythms and schedules...

It is the 5<sup>th</sup> totally automated “Advanced Shoe Factory 4.0”, developed especially for the brand that for the past 4 years has produced all its sneakers “local to local”. Unbelievable really that I was able to get this category into my portfolio! Shoes today are considered part of mobility, one walks so much more than before, it’s brilliant!

12 midday

Another vibrating jingle on my wrist I know this one well, it’s my Boss, in Amsterdam... His hologram quickly appears in the room next door...

Time for me to switch on the “discreet” mode when it comes to sound.

2 pm

This afternoon I’m free! Off to a good session of e.Pickleball with my three pals from university, even if time and business have separated us... however distances do not exist anymore. It all really started in 2020 after the famous COVID-19 crisis, the one that devastated the world economy and put e-sport firmly on the map.

It may be time to rethink my equipment, Paul mentioned a new racket with no carbon due to world shortages linked to the explosion in production of wind turbines...

A strident sound. A sound most unpleasant to the ear...

An unending sound...

I open an eye, lying on the sofa, I gradually awake...

My book on my belly.

Birgit? Yes? Where are you? I fell asleep?

I had a funny dream...

# WHEN SCIENCE FICTION MEETS DESIGN

## **Dream or projected reality?**

A possible future? Science-fiction or fruit of a brain aware of the latest scientific discoveries?

Is this what innovation is about?

All this, after all, is only creativity, unbridled imagination and belongs to the universe of “Design Fiction” and its search for “personas”.

Innovation is Not the production of technologically perfect future solutions.

That sounds more like the race for technology, performance, and sometimes blind engineering we have known for 50 years!

But how can we know what will be recognised as truly “new” and appealing in a few years? How do we choose between the fantasies of a few gifted engineers, commercial incantation or estimates based on common sense, to prepare and control the future?

## **What do we mean by future?**

One is lead to believe that the future is a faraway concept, still unknown but already in existence, inhabited, organised.

A unique place: we refer to The future and not futures. A hidden future (why, by whom?) that, as we progress through existence we will discover gradually.

A place where each of us already has a defined role, towards which we haphazardly tend, blindfolded...

But THAT is not the future.

It is not a collection of predetermined facts, even unknown ones.

## **The future is not already there... It will be born.**

It will be born of the succession of thousands of combined factors, and history shows how difficult it is for man to anticipate that.

“Design fiction” or “anticipation design” is still in its infancy. It attempts to formulate credible futures.

Originally proposed in 2009 by the essayist Julian Bleeker (Design Fiction: A Short Essay on Design, Science, Fact and Fiction), this approach, a method mixing design, futures studies and creativity has since expanded in specialist circles and we have enjoyed applying it ourselves for the last few years to accelerate transformation projects in companies and in the integration of futurist technologies.

You intentionally speculate on new ideas or solutions using the combined techniques of design, engineering, prototyping and of course, storytelling. Just as we did in the introduction about Dieter, Birgit and their adventures in India, we get you to live in detail a credible future without the gimmicks of science fiction.

You mix possible solutions with the mundane in order to

create intimacy, a contact with an almost acceptable potential normality laced with a dose of discomfort, a drop of disbelief, that hints at the fact that nothing is yet decided...

The best tool for this, the best way to make you feel the unknown is Video! And our innovators thus become scriptwriters, capable of projecting acceptable futures, creating emotions and eliminating fear, so the audience can get to grips with the next normal... The Dieter story is a possible deliverable of the Eye-novation process.

At Groupe Zebra, PowerPoint has long been replaced by video. Why do marketers ask their clients to project themselves into the future? Why are we always trying to estimate the future growth rates of markets? Why do we ask managers what they are thinking of doing in the future with their product range?

Because we are not so much attempting to “predict” as to fix a credible course of events. It is not about what is awaiting you but about what you intend to do.

**It is therefore in the present that the future has a value.**

It is because the future is exciting that you and your teams act today and when it darkens doubt can creep into an organisation.

It is not so much about predicting as dreaming hard and strong and wanting the dream to become true. It is this wish that is at stake!

It is this want, this eagerness that you want your teams to have, that you test in your clients and potential clients, that you look for in senior management.

“A man of clear judgement remembers the past, accommodates himself with the present and anticipates the future”. (Dictionary of Danish proverbs 1757).

Jacques Attali, French economist, writer and editor of l' Express magazine, recently commented:

there is a difference between “predicting”, where one attempts to grasp what is going to happen with no hope of acting upon it, and “anticipating” which means that you want to understand the future and act upon it.... Understanding what is going to happen to you allows you to accept or shape it, to act as a filter of events, as a radar for weak signals.

If one cultivates the anticipation of one's own future, it acts as an ice breaker, it opens up the road “

Danone's brand mission released in 2017, reveals “the power of the fairy tale”:

***One Planet. One Health.***  
**Bringing health through food to**  
**as many people as possible!**

It reveals a vision according to which human health is inseparable from the planet's. “It is a call to all consumers and everyone who has a stake in food to join Alimentation Revo-

lution: a movement aimed at nurturing adoption of healthier and more sustainable ways“ declared Emmanuel Faber its chairman in 2018.

### **Using business to make a better world, wishful thinking?**

Apparently not for the 2800 companies worldwide B Corp. certified.

B Corp (Benefit Corporation) was born in Philadelphia USA in 2006 thanks to three entrepreneurs: Bart Houlahan, Jay Coen Gilbert and Andrew Kassoy.

Their objective? To certify private companies that in their “purpose” include their economic model, their staff numbers, their products or services, social, societal and environmental aims.

We detect here the birth of a company model which does not look to be the best company in the world but the best company FOR the world. What a shift!

Patagonia, Innocent Drinks, Bledina, Alessi, Bjorg, Ecover, Laboratoire Expanscience, Veja, Ben & Jerry's... these companies are B Corp. certified and hold the same ambition: Using business as a force for good!

It opens up a path, a preferred future, hundreds of innovative projects including management ones.

It is a constraining framework, a start in working together.

The same causes leading to the same effects, one better understands the success of a company like Decathlon under the banner: « Make sport accessible to many ».

It stands apart from the majority of, so called, “Expert Brands” that concentrate on an ever more exclusive offering for the best and who hit the wall following the myth of ultra-personalisation for the passionate few. In the last few decades Decathlon has made us all practice sports and is now looking to invade the “expert” territory with strong design teams and specific Brands...

Fear of Amazon forces Decathlon to maintain high footfall in its stores through an attractive offering and the sale of products not available on the web.



## **A word of warning before going any further**

We are interested in almost all ideas related to the field of innovation, future studies, creativity or the transformation of organisations. We have opted for a less than conventional and normalised approach to you, our reader. No detailed linear plan. No clear chapters. No predictable sequence and sub-divisions of our hybrid thinking. No long, argued, documented context before drawing a one and only conclusion. No absolute need to refer to the scientific academic texts. We have chosen to share our experience, either lived first hand or provided by others. We see ourselves as an antidote to theoretical texts with a lack of practical know-how.

This text is not intended to be top down and immutable; it is an invitation to share.

**If anything in this book inspires you, if certain comments irritate you or even better, make you to want to add to, or if they remind you of something you have lived through, do share your reactions with us on:**

**[www.eye-novation.fr](http://www.eye-novation.fr)**

Any relevant enriching comment or personal experience you will be kind enough to share with us on Eye-novation. fr will certainly enrich our “next normal” when it comes to innovation management.

**Let us take the time to hybridize experience and knowledge with a less linear and dogmatic but more holistic vision of innovation issues.**

## **CHAPTER 1**

# **HYBRID THINKING**

## When it comes to innovation, the project is The Boss!

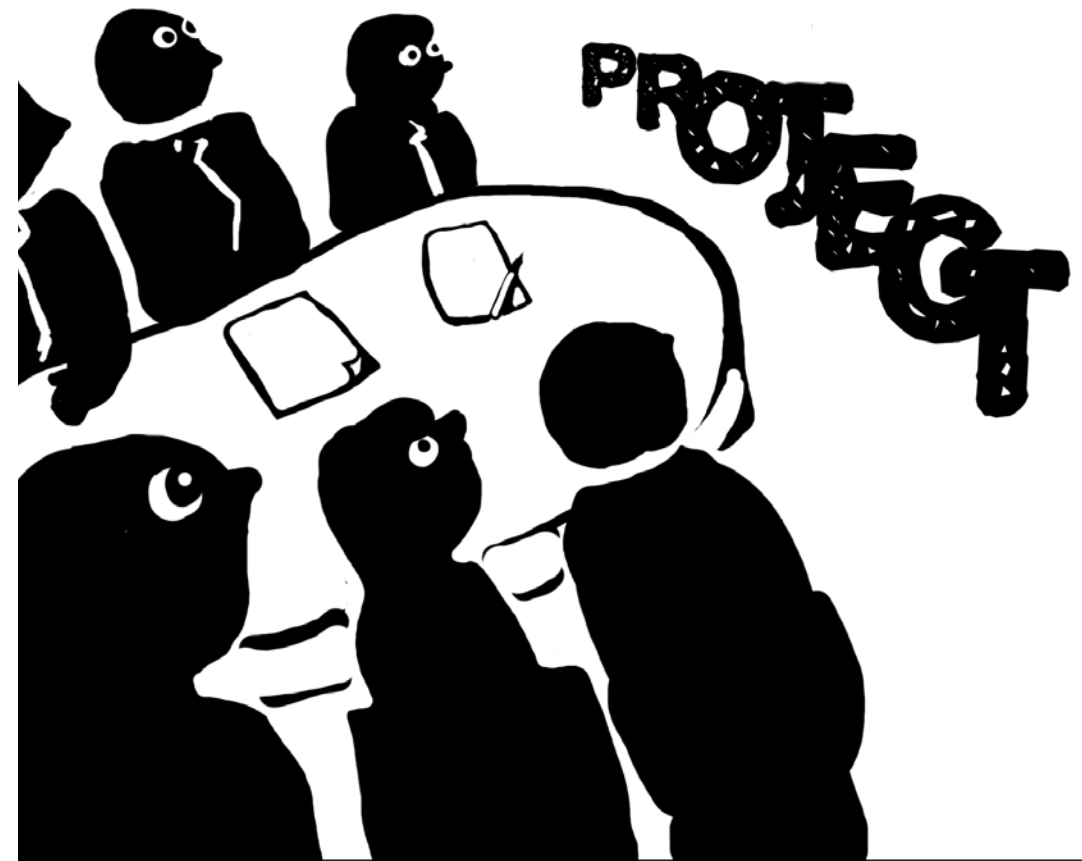
In most companies, starting and managing an innovation project involves setting up a work group with a representative of each department of the organisation in order to be inclusive and collaborative in the generation of more or less disruptive ideas and in bringing them to life.

It is certainly not the high road to success in innovation... One does not prepare the future as one manages the present, and innovation is not just another task that can be added to your schedule.

It is not easy to concentrate on the future when daily tasks beckon.

Not easy to give up on an existing business in order to impose a new blueprint.

Even if outside partners can provide the “uncluttered minds” so important in “breaking the mould” as well as the right methodologies, they do not always have a precise enough knowledge of your company and its ecosystem. They also need internal expertise and talents to contribute to the process... But these people, deeply involved in daily tasks and sometimes inhibited by mental barriers, find it difficult to confront the sea of uncertainty that awaits...



# THE PROJECT IS THE BOSS

Innovating means accepting a package of uncertainties and gradually eliminating them as the project moves forward. Innovation means accepting the idea of making mistakes along the way because not making them is no guarantee of success!

Think of Joseph Campbell's 1949 essay 'Hero with a Thousand Faces' which has given rise to one of the most common storytelling models in existence today: a hero's journey.

Certain scriptwriters have become experts at this! "Lord of the Rings", "Star Wars", "The Matrix", "The Dark Knight"... I bet you will never again see them in the same light once you have finished this book.

Innovating requires ambition, a willingness to work, solid team members, involved and dedicated internal stakeholders.

Together with external experts, they will be your **"magic team"**. A team capable of driving the process from beginning to end despite the pitfalls. A unit capable of formulating for your company a "preferred" future, approved and valued by your customers, not a future imposed by outside forces.

The Eye-novation model involves both the right and left brains...It does not divide rationality and intuition. It does not favour the expertise of some over the intuition of others.

At Groupe Zebra we work on the principle of 50/50!

Eye-novation lets you reconcile both aspects and gives you tools to control the non-rational elements sometimes so alien to Cartesian thinking.

In this approach, the foundations, the structure of an organisation or a company are fundamental right from the start of the project. From the initial phases of observation, immersion, and understanding of the surroundings, the organisation's posture and its "mental maps" are the first reason why the project may fail due to myopia and a lack of openness.

Cognitive bias can lead to failure in the early stages of the project just as it does later in the test and implementation phases of the foreseen innovation in the market.

The Eye-novation model we propose, ensures greater efficiency in all aspects of the project, freeing organisations from their over linear thought process made up of certainties and somewhat castrating habits.

We propose a conquering posture where all the "right" ideas can immediately be put to good use. This approach means all energies must be focused in the same direction for a given time, deliberately forcing the project leader to envisage alternative positions to his own on the given subject.

Of course, without a strong involvement of those in charge whoever is responsible for innovation will not be able to help the organisation succeed. But without methodologies,

a governance adapted to managing new risk, tried and tested processes, the right tools to judge progress and with no experience in facing the accelerating hyper-uncertainty which will be coming their way, your internal teams are going to find it difficult to transform their ideas into business: to move from creating value to the more virtuous “capturing of value”.

Ladies and Gentlemen managers, change your points of view, abandon your certainties and let yourselves be influenced by the experts in design management. Initiate yourselves to the virtues of ethnography, discover the power of a rethink of user experience and what experts in cognitive science can bring to your transformation plans.

All these people think differently and a good thing too!  
Our world is moving further away from the one we were born in every day.

**An innovation project is a living thing; non-sequential, evolving, needing to become more credible AND emotionally powerful over time in order to be sure it will reach the heart of your future audience and maximise the innovation experience within your company.**

**The innovation project is autonomous, it has its own rhythm and life.**

**You will need to accept that, when it comes to innovation, the project is the boss!**

**Eye-novation is the latest leg on a journey we started 30 years ago following the path of *OBLIQUE VISION*\*.**

Learning through doing over a period of 15 years has lead us to the approach we use, day in day out, to innovate in services and industry alike.

\*ALL YOU NEED IS L.O.V.E. Live the Oblique Vision Experience. 2009, Mag Editions

## OBLIQUE VISION

How many companies have a clear Strategic innovation plan and an innovation strategy capable of serving that plan?

How many companies are aware of the **Clincher** in their market? How many companies have a strong **Ad.vantage** point to structure and give direction to all the teams in charge of innovation?

Do you? [www.eye-novation.fr](http://www.eye-novation.fr)

Are you certain the Brands or organisations where you work still deliver undeniable value, a value recognised by all and especially the younger generations?

Is your service still relevant in the digital age?

Do you think the innovation fields your organisation is looking into cover the real issues?

Is your technological edge still a real trump card in global markets?

Do you ever wonder if the apparent strength of your Brand means you are not always as demanding as you should be when it comes to innovation...

A **strategic Innovation Plan (S.I.P.)** is a guarantee of reliable “briefs” when initiating projects. It is also the real time dashboard of the innovation projects that underpin your preferred future.

In 2009, we described Oblique Vision as a process aimed at

defining the conditions necessary for innovation, notably detecting market conventions from the outset of the project: the “lemming instinct” typical of shy marketing departments using standard analyses when producing something new.

**There are 3 major building blocks within OBLIQUE VISION.**

The first phase consists in analysing the competition in order to find and validate where to create value.

First of all, you have to find the outlook characteristic of all players in a particular market in order to detect the key element in value creation in said market:

## THE CLINCHER

The clincher is common to the entire market, and is recognised as the main factor of interest by stakeholders; around it we build a new « OBLIQUE » way of looking at things, a new outlook:

## THE AD.VANTAGE POINT

**Of your organisation in said market**

The Ad.vantage point, phase 2 in the process, is a posture (we will return to postures later when we explain the Eye-novation process), preferably unique, from which you build a new playing field, new innovation streams in which your

Brand is relevant, interesting. A decisive argument to capture value... as long as you have chosen your Ad.vantage point carefully; based on your real know-how, your story, your structural and operational capacities.

You can then, and only then, move to phase 3 and define your major innovation streams and the succession of steps necessary to reach your goals with your:

## STRATEGIC INNOVATION PLAN (S.I.P.)

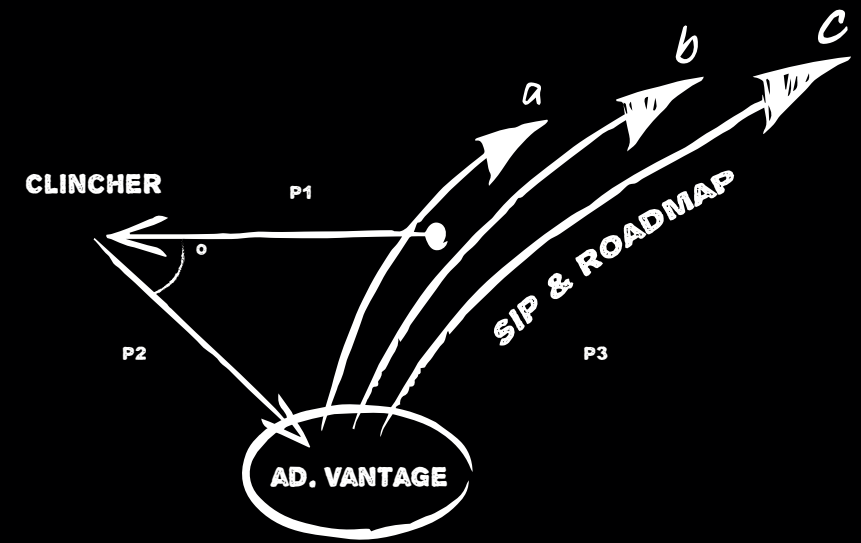
A strategic tool that guides teams in charge of innovation by giving them a framework and key stages.

### To summarise:

**P1.** Deep dive into the setting with usage and anthropological approaches coupled to market observations in order to find the value creation **CLINCHER** of said market.

**P2.** Identification of a unique and fully owned **AD.VANTAGE** point which will act as a guide for innovation projects. It must remain a well-guarded secret.

**P3.** Classification and ordering of projects to build the **STRATEGIC INNOVATION PLAN (S.I.P.)** serving company strategy with the innovation roadmap: priorities, stakes, resources, KPIs.



**SIP = STRATEGIC INNOVATION PLAN**

# OBLIQUE VISION

Ever since its creation, Groupe Zebra has applied the Oblique Vision approach to varied markets and, faced with real life examples, has built up its tools in response to both practice in the field and theoretical research.

Confronted by hundreds of different cases every year, on local or world markets, we have been forced to structure our approach. Approach we have used in all industries and continents to produce waves of innovation relevant in their markets and for their end users. This has led to a sustained increase in sales, our innovations have guaranteed a quick return on investment and reinforced brand image for our clients.

They are the tools and methods we will present in the following pages. Obviously a most « *Oblique* » approach, an approach that requires breaking the mindsets with which we all have traditionally approached innovation... possibly upsetting a few.

For the past fifteen years we have campaigned for an awakening of organisations in the face of the foreseeable destruction of value. Deep transformations driven by the digital revolution but also the acceleration in scientific knowledge, technological progress and direct access to users.

Our analyses and convictions have sometimes put us at odds with powerful clients of hegemonic Brands considered impregnable and who did not see the enemy coming, be it from without or within...

One needs to face up to such difficulties and find the right arguments to restore sight.

**IT IS THE OFFERING  
THAT MAKES  
THE BRAND**

**THE OPPOSITE  
NOT**



## Does innovating mean taking risks?

**What is it that makes a manager take the plunge, that gives him the strength to launch an innovative product or service, to go for a clean break despite all the security associated with going for the umpteenth version of what already exists?**

What if it was simply the conviction of having in his hands a solution capable of provoking new usage?

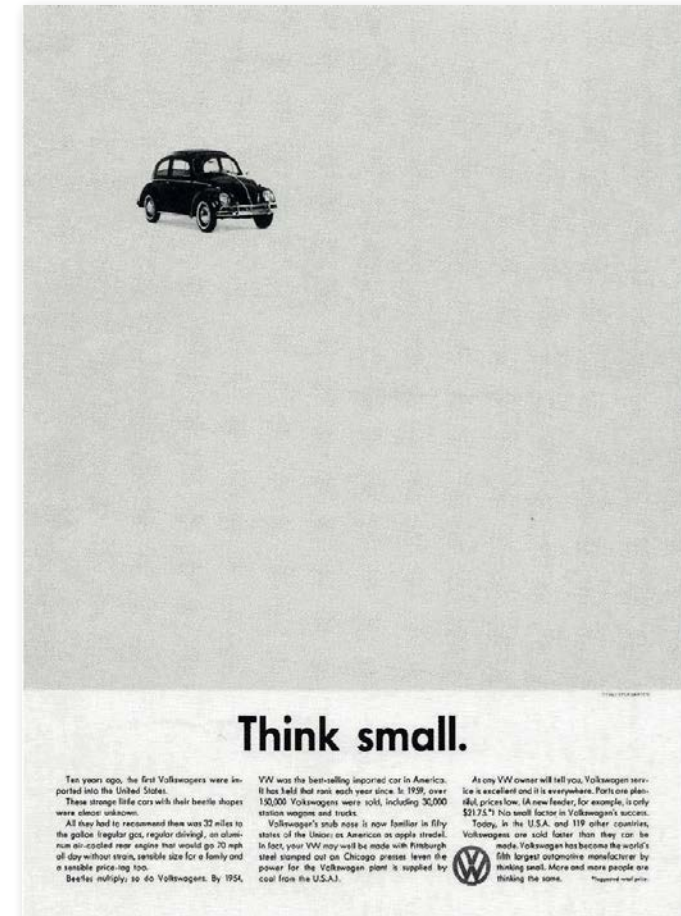
An edifying example: 1959, Volkswagen launched the Beetle on the US market. In a society dominated by the American dream the car was at its pinnacle. There is was a cult of the car as a “sculpture” an “aircraft”, huge, voluptuous, well endowed with steel and shapes.

The car was a clear sign of opulence.

Originally a propaganda tool for the national socialists, in the land of Uncle Sam, the Beetle quickly became a symbol of anti-conformism. Women, craving for greater independence, and looking for a more attractive, manageable and less ostentatious car made it their own. The oil crisis following the 1956 nationalisation of the Suez Canal was the coming of age for this type of low consumption vehicle.

To launch this alien product the choice was made to wrong-foot the market.

THINK SMALL! The campaign said.





**Focus was on usage, practicality. The driver was the smart one not the manufacturer!**

Volkswagen was offering a truly alternative approach to the icon of the American dream, the car.

A huge success!

A phenomenon that Disney latched onto for box office hits.

10 years later, at the height of its glory, the aesthetic of this “thing”, this Beetle, was sometimes criticised.

When the Apollo 11 spaceship was launched, Volkswagen did it again with a campaign that literally said: « It's ugly, but it gets you there », at a stroke taking advantage of the reliability and credibility associated with NASA.

In 1972, with a rather basic car, the Beetle beat the record for number of cars sold, unbeaten since the FORD T! Four cylinders, underpowered, noisy, a rough suspension and an austere interior... not a perfect product, a desirable one!

The Beetle's success resided in its capacity to propose at the right time an alternative which resonated with the aspirations of the public: to propose a desirable future. A proposition strong and exciting enough to make you want to change your habits... To create a new normal!

Innovation is defining “possible futures” for the field under observation, focusing studies towards “desirable futures” then calling up other teams and defining a pathway to the future

considered “preferable” for the company. Once this is done, it involves using any means of communication necessary to make a reality which is still only fiction perceptible to all so they can adopt a new posture.

**Building the conditions favourable for your public your audience to buy-in. The first public of course, being insiders, and first and foremost top management, always calling for vision but sometimes worried if it is presented as “intuitive”. Intuition, however, is often the sum of digested experience.**

Massive internal buy-in and particularly buy-in by those most resistant to innovation will therefore depend on the innovator's capacity to project a form of normality into the fiction which hides, at least temporarily, the fact that it is a fiction given fiction is well known to frighten decision makers.

It is the capacity to plunge your public into another credible reality, another normality, almost palpable, that will turn the innovation project into a programme, a desired object or service, obvious, useful, that you cannot live without... so that your public can live an experience close to that reality and commit faster and more serenely to it.

Innovating is looking to define a new proposal that will quickly appear as essential and be on the way to becoming tomorrow's norm, wanting to take the lead and be: “the obvious next everyday” (O.N.E.).

It is true that when you approach tougher subjects, paradigm change, technological breaks or even a change in work methods or governance, you face greater resistance; faces twitch and enthusiasm is replaced by scepticism.

To change is to go forward in an uncertain world.

Managing doubt, changing habits, breaking with acquired knowledge, reallocating power, is an adventure in itself. Innovating does not mean permanently chasing the latest hip technology only to realise two years down the line that it is out of date... no more than it is going after unexpected niche offerings, disruptive but futureless.

**The question is the same for all leaders whatever their branch: what will THE next normal be?**

And more crucially still: who will benefit the most?

What will be the most obvious reality, and who will benefit from it? This next normality, obvious, possibly universal, is hidden in nooks and crannies and much more difficult to find than the reassuring Darwinian evolution of an existing product or service.

In little more than 30 years, our teams have encountered many cases, in services and traditional industries, B to B, B to C and B to B to C.

The experience being shared here is no fixed theory. It is more of a proposition based on reality, a lived through reality, kneaded and grinded by women and men of different cultures and skills; sometimes in pain when thought processes had to change, guided by who knows what hunch or intuition.

It is the result of our permanently renewed quest for what could be the new normality, our next convention: « Our Next Normal ».

And, once we all agree about this new normal, innovation is about deciding on how to be recognised and preferred by our audience, clients, targets, amongst and above the competition in order to become the hero:

The aim is to be Number 1.

**The hero of the next normality, the reference.**

# SUCCESSFUL INNOVATION IS HITTING THE BULLSEYE

## Thinking tomorrow means living today differently.

One prepares the future more than one predicts it.

Thinking tomorrow means establishing probable scenarios and preparing for them or acting to increase our chances of success in these possible futures.

When it comes to public policy, the scenarios appear simple and often remain rather classical (too much so?).

Every major shift in the world is based on the same three pillars: Information or knowledge, energy and transport. It is therefore not surprising to see nations, today as yesterday, invest massively in renewing their infrastructure to give their people solid ground to move towards a probable future.

But are politicians capable of projecting a preferred future, a project for society, a constructive vision? Is the total void in their proposals and projects what causes our collective fear of the future and the majority opinion that tomorrow will be worse than today?

Can the future be represented? Is it possible to bring to mind what is not here yet?

Of course, in certain cases it appears easier: Nature's laws, through their regularity, allow for an understanding, a representation of certain future phenomena. Clouds bring

rain, wind and the sun back again and that is likely to continue...

In certain cases, in order to predict, science bases itself on the use of a fundamental principal: determinism. With certain conditions arising, a specific phenomenon will occur determined by said conditions.

Unlike meteorological phenomena, human behaviour is not subject to determinism. No predicting of human actions, therefore, as precisely as the actions of mechanical or natural objects. In humans the same causes do not always produce the same effects, therefore the future is difficult to apprehend.

Please refer to the works of Philippe Silberzahn, professor at EM Lyon Business School, on how organisations manage discontinuity and situations of extreme uncertainty.

What actually occurs is rarely predicted by experts (think of how the world is managing COVID 19) and what was predicted does not happen very often...

Humans can build their destiny, so can a group of humans i.e.: a company. It is obvious that when one makes important choices for a company it inevitably brings about consequences for its future.

When we mention important choices we mean decisive, existential ones (not little ones like choosing a product's name or a new workspace layout which will be challenged two years down the line...).

Strategic choices in its innovation policy.

Choices that will define your position in the next normality. Will you be a major player? Or a simple participant? Or even a forgotten memory...

Choices consequence of, or influenced by, your posture in the world you are addressing.

Power has changed hands, people now drive expertise.

It is a fundamental difference.

We preach an approach to innovation projects based on a mix of skills and talents rather than the classical accumulation of expertise often organised in a logical sequence and therefore incapable of the agility and iterative uncertainties that are required.

The hybridization of knowledge and skills that we advocate is at the heart of the collaborative Eye-novation process. A process guided and enlightened by complimentary and sometimes contradictory knowledge and that follows its own path. This process, neither linear nor sequential, needs a leader rather than a project manager. A leader of men open to all types of knowledge preferring team work to the individual feats embodied in the all invasive KPIs.

**HYBDRID THINKING will be to the XXIst century what engineering was to the XXth. An approach structuring the conception of what to offer, based on the hybridization of different expertise and processes.**

You will now follow the process that has lead us to the definition of Eye-novation, developed over the last 30 years as went about actually producing and developing innovations. A hybridization of sometimes well known, sometimes less well known, theories and practices to build a new house with existing blocks.

Two of the essential blocks in our hybridization are well known to many nowadays under the names of DESIGN THINKING and LEAN STARTUP.

Two approaches that have shown their strengths but also their limits.

# TO HYBRIDIZE TO CROSS 2 VARIETIES



# OR 2 DIFFERENT SPECIES

## Is Design Thinking Innovation's “next normal”?

Design thinking was first formalised 30 year ago by Rolf Faste from Stanford University.

He insisted on the user's central role and on adopting a multidisciplinary approach.

Then in 1987 G. Rowe, Harvard professor, published Design Thinking.

In it he defended the idea of design thinking as a method for conceiving buildings and public spaces to be used by urban planners and architects.

Gradually, Tim Brown (founder of IDEO) extended the process so it could be used in conceiving products and services and Nielsen Norman Group (NNP) added a sixth major step to the “ideal” process: implementation.

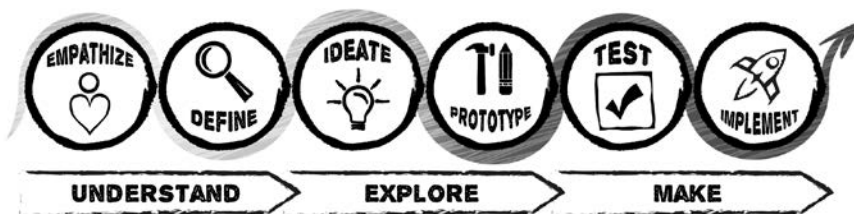


Diagram of the Six-Step Design Thinking process

If the success of this approach is now generally accepted, the general public (or managers) only really became aware of it with the digital revolution that imposed a different approach to innovation.

### What can we learn from Design Thinking?

**Marketeers taught us to show interest in the customer's needs which is good. We know, however, but do not repeat enough, that we must stop asking him...**

He “lies” or at least answers one way, thinks another, and, at least sometimes, acts differently. Be it through omission, lack of interest, narcissism, lack of knowledge, social status, conformism.... though it may not be intentional there are numerous biases in what he says.

Neurosciences are advancing, invading marketing, and gently discovering the role of the unconscious in decision making and the buying process. The customer, and it was about time, is seen as a person with feelings and emotions that guide his moves and human decision making is far from rational. Decisions are rarely made through conscious planning. In truth, both you and I spend our time making decisions under the influence of emotions emanating from our limbic brain and rationalising post hoc.

We reassure, comfort ourselves, but the decision is none the less taken under the influence of emotions.

In B to C as in B to B we make do with the subjective aspects of our choices.

How did you choose your accountant, your lawyer? Your IT services?

Your staff?

Does this remind you of a specific example?

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Why not read Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman?

Design Thinking has been popularised recently, unfortunately sometimes becoming a bit gadgety; being reduced to an exercise in “regenerating” creativity starting in open minded mode and finishing with a Post-it competition managed by an “agility manager” with novel vocabulary.

Do you see what I mean? It is as if 3M were the concept's sponsor, they must have watched Post-it sales go through the roof...

Amusing examples? Appalling examples?

**www.eye-novation.fr**

Design Thinking is not one or two creativity sessions but rather an approach that intelligently links together phases of divergence (finding ideas) and of convergence (selecting and improving certain ideas).

It is a very relevant process that has been fundamental to Groupe Zebra since the 90s.

To this day too often overlooked by companies, it is far from being a simple succession of more or less enjoyable “creative sprints” for those of us centred on the needs of the final user in innovation management. The process is incredibly effective in institutions stunted by bureaucracy and silos.

How many companies discover, thanks to a proper Design Thinking approach, that they have as customers real human beings that they hardly know - and that they are trying to sell them technologies when customers are waiting for advantages, answers to their problems, stimulation?

**A big step forward is yet to be taken though as humans are not only users they are also living animals under the influence of emotions.**

**After thirty years of concentrating on the final user, good professionals have changed their focus to be human centred, beyond usage.**

**Emotions in the form of the “soft” sciences -their importance having been established over the last few years- have been added.**

Emotions change considerably one's behaviour, actions, statements, reactions to a group, to the environment.

Add to this cognitive bias -of which more about later- and you will understand why a usage centred approach reflects pretty



well a designer's thinking and rather less well that of a psychologist, philosopher, sociologist who study more 'volatile' phenomena than usage...

In many cases, we have seen the benefits of the inputs from experts in the "soft", or more correctly, "human and social" sciences, contributing as much though at different times as those from the "hard" sciences.

This art of bilateral thinking is difficult as the project manager's past experience invariably pushes him towards one or the other.

With rationality, here in the West, tending to be valued more than emotion...

You should therefore always keep in mind the need to balance the two in order to avoid useless comings and goings.

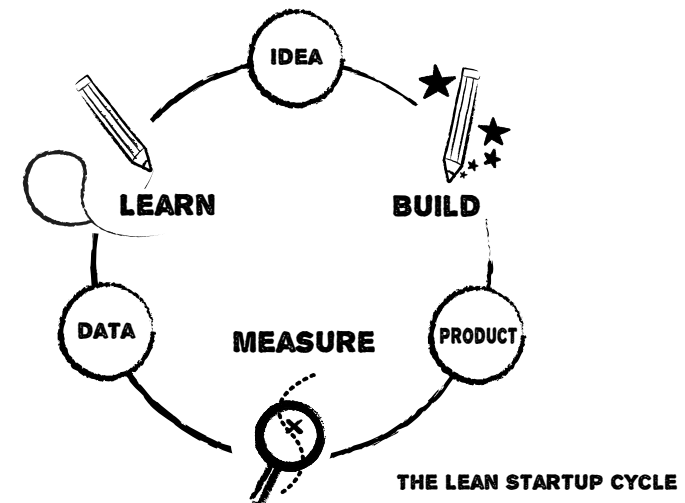
The power of an innovation team is also derived from this synergy.

### Lean Startup, another building block...

This approach came onto the scene, in France at least, with Eric Ries in 2008. Originating in the lean thinking of silicon valley Hi-Tech companies, it is based on "validated learning" (checking the validity of concepts) and works rather well for computer science and digital projects.

Two processes are at play for the teams in charge:

- A learning process: the team attempts to produce sufficient value for future clients to show interest.
- A deterioration process: confrontation to market reality and gradually diminishing resources.



Lean Startup considers a project as the production process of a continuous flow of propositions or product parts rapidly prototyped to get "confirmations", validations, lessons as quickly as possible.

Intuition is considered a poor guide until it has been rigorously "confirmed". Quite rightly - we have witnessed it hundreds of times - the author admits that the confirmation is to be given by consumers / purchasers who have the greatest of difficulties in expressing their exact needs. Marketing studies are sometimes



reductive, misleading and unfortunately too often based on answers given under the influence of huge cognitive biases (sociological, cultural, environmental, or simply behavioural).

**To resume, according to Lean Startup you must not look to formulate a definitive, intelligent, global proposal before confronting yourself to the market. Some even say it is the main reason for startup failure: they have no economic model and think it will materialise going forward...**

But the time factor is undeniable.  
Lean Startup gets things moving faster.

Let us add, none the less, that before you get cut up by target customers not fully involved in your project and blinded by powerful cognitive bias that will only give you partial answers, do choose your lab. rats carefully!

Remember the first consumer tests of the Renault Espace, did not predict a rosy future for the "People carrier". In the end it was one of the Brand's greatest successes and it has had a long-lasting effect on the global car market.

A clear message however: better a hurdles race than a marathon. Let us favour multiple quick prototypes, confirmation, modification and getting on with it. It is a fruitful method in certain cases and we use it frequently. So frequently, that we have spotted some of its limits.

The temptation for a quick prototype can give the sensa-

tion of an upbeat project, very agile but sometimes leads the team into multiple experiments rather than concentrating on rethinking the solution originally conceived. You solve a problem with a solution that creates two new ones.

Pablo Picasso used to say: "Every act of creation begins with an act of destruction" It is written large in our offices!

Obviously, every failure is an experience from which a lesson can be learnt. Unfortunately, a succession of mini failures can undermine a team, create noxious dissent and simply use up resources.

The short segment approach has none the less many advantages, notably, projects have to given a scenario, further defined or modified. The process allows you to better apprehend the danger or dead end towards which a project is heading and lets you make any change of direction for the project or the whole company in a less castrating manner than arbitrary decisions. Though fundamental, "Pivoting", the initial Lean Startup concept giving it the right to change direction rapidly if badly received, has unfortunately lead to many excesses. Pivoting has become an easy excuse for startups that fail and radically change project.

Changing direction appears to us as an easy way out for those who did not choose wisely. When sailing you change tack respecting weather conditions without changing your overall direction.

The Lean Startup approach is most relevant to test and improve an existing product or opportunities for a patent. Use this method to improve or enhance an offering you are already selling, or to give greater value to an existing asset or technology you already own.

If on the other hand you use it to run an idea past potential clients you get the same result as when exploring space: either you find a new planet whilst looking for Mars... or, you get lost in open space.

In truth, as is often the case, extrapolating the concept of Lean Startup to other businesses is problematic.

The agility in computer science development is very different to that in machine-tools or industrial product or even a service for companies. Development times are not the same, the use of multiple subcontractors leads to major process modification and the novelty cycle is totally different from one business to another.

When it takes 18 months to get something new onto the market and for your sales and distribution to understand the need for such “innovation” you avoid doing it too often. Indeed, you cannot afford to change every couple of years for fear of losing the whole sales force through permanent changes to their pitches.

Whereas novelty needs rhythm to survive and thrives on short cycles, technological innovation often needs a long time just to be understood, accepted and then adopted.

## In “Lean Startup”, there is “Lean”

Lean: without excess fat.

Lean management was created by Toyota who introduced it into its factories in the 1970s. It is a methodology focused on zero waste management. Mainly used in car manufacturing, Lean management is a mindset and actions that can be applied to all types of companies, industries and services.

Lean philosophy looks for performance (productive, quality, time and costs) through permanent improvement and the elimination of waste in order to satisfy customers. To simplify, Lean methodology allows you to do great quality work with a minimum amount of money, resources and time.

**As we see it, the main overlap between Design Thinking and Lean Startup is the notion of getting out there in order to fully understand what is going on (genchi genbutsu in Toyota speak).**

As a summary, Lean Startup as a process is relevant if you design software and that you are surrounded by “old school” computer scientists used to long and self-centred processes. When, however, it comes to innovation in general, one has to admit that it is difficult, sometimes, to jump far by hopping...

It is the idea of Minimum Viable Product as a systematic solution that we are challenging here. MVP is not always the miracle solution to validation in innovation.

Even if it is a very useful (traditional) technique to validate interest or attractiveness of a new feature in incremental innovation. A new name for a way of validating a new feature, an improved product, a new function...

In no way could this have helped you validate that touch screen was about to replace keyboards on phones or that the sucker on kids' toothbrushes would transform the market, or even if electric scooters are the future stars of urban mobility rather than the next financial black hole for investors under the influence of hallucinogenic substances.

There are many fields where innovation cannot be separated into different functions for progressive validation but where it depends on the grouping of various intertwined functions, some of which emotional and therefore much more difficult to judge without a clear picture of the complete "product". A state of affairs not really compatible with the notion of MINIMUM VIABLE...

**In truth, innovation often needs "MAXIMUM DESIRABILITY" and does not leave much chance to minimum viable...**

It is the case in most mature markets where habits are legion and difficult to work round.

To test too soon or to introduce into the process an "unrefined" idea will often lead to failure, to a lack of acceptance. Fear of what is different will act as a reason for refusal.

## In "Lean Startup", there is "Startup"...

So, if you are a startup look into it.

If you are not, if your company is mature, you should possibly look elsewhere for the keys to a successful innovation project. If you are big you are heavy and slow but if you are small you are nimble and fast.

A cognitive bias we happen to disagree with!

It is supposedly common knowledge that as a company grows it loses in agility and therefore in creativity whereas startups are faster, more agile, mobile and committed.

Beware of short cuts, it is actually all a question of power! A balance of weight, muscle and fat.

A world class sprinter is not what I would call small and agile but rather a concentration of muscles combined with exceptional explosive power. The different forces need to be balanced and that is what gives a sprinter the edge.

For a long time it was presumed being tall would be a disadvantage for a sprinter. Standing at 1,96m, Usain Bolt is living proof of the opposite. His long legs allow him a far greater stride than his competitors. On average it takes 44 strides to cover 100m. Bolt only needs 41! Taller than his competitors he is also heavier but has compensated for this with muscle development in order to be able to move his mass.

The result: he has far greater propulsion force than his competitors. A winning asset, "as running fast is not a question

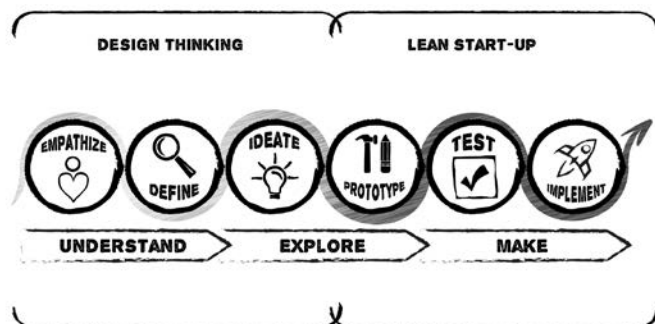
of how fast you move your legs but how hard you push on the ground” to quote Peter Weyand expert in the mechanics of running and co-author of a study on the key to sprinters’ speed published in the Journal of Applied Physiology in 2014.

“How hard you push” is the right expression when it comes to introducing innovation onto a market: you need to push as hard as possible on the market! A large company has a far greater capacity for pushing, but one needs to be aerial to win. Speed does not like contact - decision making time, validation time, budget allocation time in large companies - the shorter the time on the ground, the better the performance!

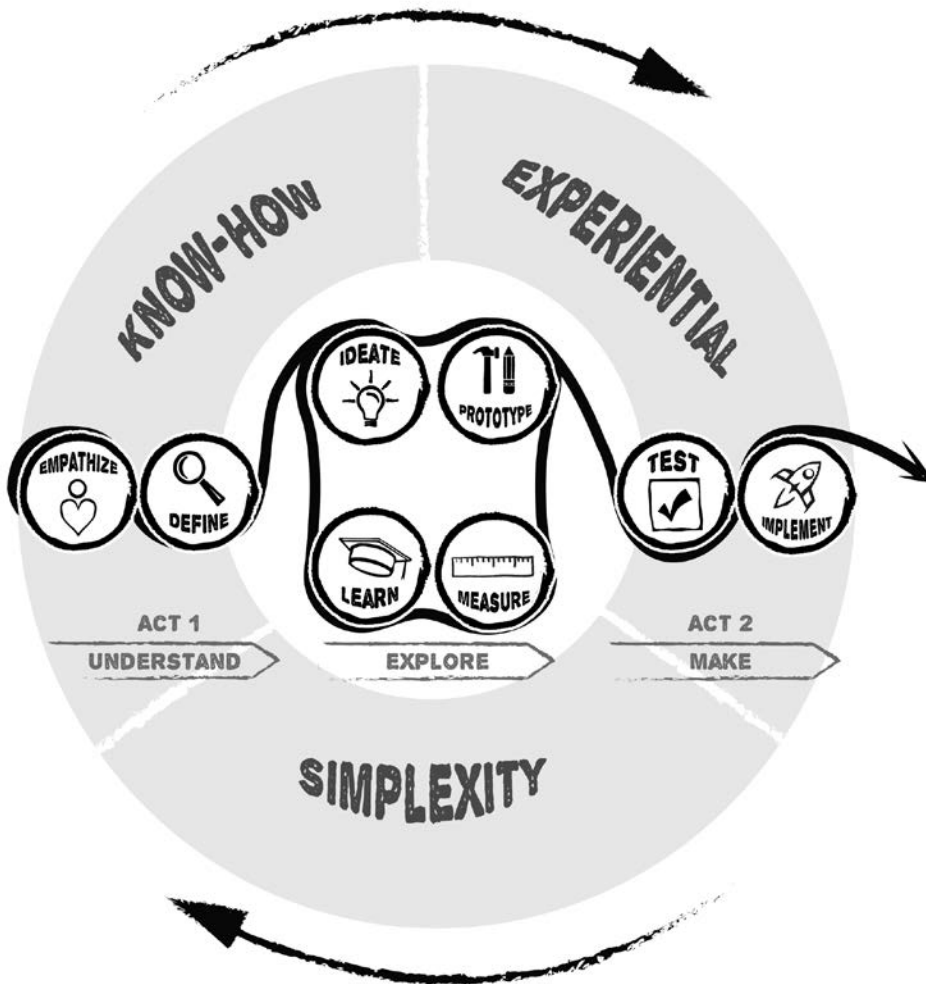
Lean Startup is above all a state of mind. This approach, together with Brand (or company) posture that we use in the Eye-novation process gives structure to the materialisation phase of innovation to make it more relevant.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE EYE-NOVATION MODEL



Design Thinking & Lean Startup : hybridization of 2 complementary models.



**THE EYE-NOVATION MODEL**

Or Augmented Hybridization of the 2 complementary but incomplete models: Design Thinking and Lean Startup.

## The Eye-novation model

**Design Thinking** (rather effective when it comes defining issues) and **Lean Startup** (for problem solving) are two weapons recognised today for their performance, so much so that even engineering schools are taking notice!

In both approaches, Design Thinking and Lean Startup, rhythm and speed are favoured with rapid cycles of immersion, problem identification, ideation, prototyping, trials and tests in iterative mode... Prototyping phases to refine, refine, and refine again, gaining in precision, collecting knowledge and reaching perfection through successive phases.

Design Thinking is undeniably of great help in identifying the issue, in defining collectively the subject needing to be addressed. It is a huge step forward in any innovation approach.

One correctly defines what is the issue, looks for potential solutions, prototypes and tests them, again and again.

But the prototype is not a product or service in itself, it is only a very partial representation of the overall solution.

Engineers work with this notion of prototyping by function...

In numerous cases, it can simplify problem resolution but is of no great help if you are working on breakthrough innovation.

Also, Design Thinking will not give you precise information about marketing, the importance of the Brand in the perception of the innovation, managing cognitive bias, provoking and controlling buyer emotion.

Lean Startup, starting from an envisaged solution (and not the need to define an issue) is better used in the refining phase of your solution. Lean Startup seems to fit most startups and innovators who already hold the centrepiece of their project, a clear vision of their offering, and who are looking to meet their public, their first clients, as quickly as possible, using amongst others, the “test and learn” technique.

Basically, on the one hand you have Design Thinking, an approach when one is looking for a new idea, to give greater satisfaction or meet a new need; and on the other Lean Startup a tool to better perform when you already have the big idea, the vision.

Despite these two approaches as we have seen over the last few years startups are highly likely to fail. 8 out of 10 have problems getting past the 5 year stage.

Many startups are built on a “utopia”, in an “Ideal society” far from reality and blinded by the brilliant and innovative idea that did not work.

Too many startups forget they are involved in a series of sprints, that there are competitors in the race that can pop up

from anywhere.... from another startup or a large company less agile but with other strengths.

Too many startups have problems monetising their value proposition even when brilliant: is one ready to pay for weather forecasting? Traffic news? What price do I put on an app. that tells me what my pet should eat?

A surprising new idea does not necessarily mean there is money in it! In that case it is the size of the community that is drawn to it that brings value, or is the source of value...

Most leaders that make things happen in the “old economy” are not startups, however, and what they can put forward is their courage, commitment, organisational capacity, and unrelenting dedication to delivering innovation based on a story, a history, facts and for the lucky ones: a Brand!

**The crucial influence of the Brand on whether a value proposition is relevant and its acceptance, is totally overlooked in Design Thinking and Lean Startup.**

**The world is not entirely made of clear problems and obvious solutions... The subconscious, emotions, beliefs, social status, the influence of your environment and competitors are decisive, crucial even, in the acceptance of your value proposition.**



There are two acts of focusing in the Eye-novation process.

## Eye-novation: Act 1

“Focusing” during the UNDERSTANDING phase (see drawing p.64) is essential at the start of any innovation process.

“Focusing” is often used in everyday language to mean to turn your attention specifically towards.

**Focusing in photography is the action that consists in making the image clear.**

It is also what you do when you want to highlight a certain detail or person through increased clarity.

On a camera it is straight forward you can choose between automatic or manual focus.

When it comes to innovation you use manual, it is project you have to drive! Maybe one day artificial intelligence will bring us innovation autofocus... who knows!

One masters the uncertainties in the perception of reality by focusing in turn on different details of the subject using different field depths, rather than on a single somewhat fuzzy global picture.

Focusing is “adjusting the distance between you and the reality under observation”.

In optics focusing consists in concentrating the rays originating from a certain point onto another with mirrors, lenses and other optical equipment. The action of collecting the rays on a large surface and then concentrating them on a specific point allows for a greater signal...



How do we define this better?

Simply by knowing what you want to put forward on the photo. You can (as if often the case) deliberately focus on a precise detail of a flower, an object, a person in order to highlight it. The rest will often be fuzzy. And so it goes, every time you change focus point.

**During the first phase of your project, force yourself to turn the ring on your “observation lens” (drawing Eye-novation n°1) so as to observe your environment according to postures different to yours.**

Later we give details of the three most frequent postures in the world of business: KNOW-HOW, EXPERIENTIAL, SIMPLEXITY.

These three postures you will use to challenge yourself in your innovation project, to keep an open mind to other points of view.

**It is the first major methodological input we bring to the UNDERSTANDING phase - EMPATHISE & DEFINE - of Design Thinking.**

**Though centred on the definition of the issue (DEFINE) it sorely lacks the notion of Brand. Yet the Brand (or company posture) plays a predominant role in understanding a situation, a context and in collecting information during observation.**

**An example in case: The observation of a tennis player on court (EMPATHISE), through the prism of Brand postures and their consequences.**

If I am a company built on technical know-how, I will have a “know-how” posture. Naturally, I will be more interested in dissecting movements, how soles of the shoes react, precise gestures, the speed and frequency of contact points, racket reaction on impact, ball trajectory...I focus on the details that come to mind naturally.

If I am a company built on an intimate knowledge of fashion and the social side of the tennis world,

I will have an “experiential” posture, and therefore, quite naturally be attracted by the colour of the clothing, its cut (slim or loose), the coordination of colours with the shoes, graphic messages, the wearing of a cap versus a bandana, the screams when hitting the ball, sounds... I will focus on the signs of belonging to a tribe or on behaviour.

If I am a company loosely tied to the world of tennis and its technology but more into selling equipment with a casual link to the sport, I will have a more distanced posture which will tend to simplify the complexity of the previous two... My posture of “Simplicity” (simplification of complexity) will lead me to look at what the public sees, is the player aggressive, defensive, why does he always look for a specific ball when serving, why such rituals and ‘tics’ before serving, why does he adjust his strings every time he changes sides, how does he concentrate when changing his grip during the match?

In all three cases I am watching the same scene but focusing on very different things.

This same scene can be looked at differently by the same observer if he is properly prepared thanks to initial “Claims” previously drawn up by the project team.

**Eye-novation enriches and directs this initial phase of dynamic observation in the light of company policy, its vision of the market and its Advantage point on said market.**

Let us now look at the postures in detail and the advantages of preparing observations.



## **The Brand (company vision, its “posture”) is a powerful filter when observing a market or subject.**

In the quest for knowledge, in the fine observation of what actually happens, not taking into account the notion of Brand, so critical when it comes to wanting to differentiate yourself, is a major source of bad calls and increases the risk of failure in innovation projects.

A new service or product is borne by a company, an economic entity, that can be a very well-known or simply a “significant” Brand, in B to B or B to C.

Everyone, in his own professional sphere, is aware of the impact of reputation, of image, of the cognitive bias the image of a company or institution can bring. Be it in, science, consulting or precision mechanics the aura, the halo of light surrounding your company is a factor in the acceptance or refusal of your new offering even before one mentions intrinsic merits.

This new offering only makes sense if it finds a favourable echo in buyers, distributors and end users.

An echo linked to the innovation itself, to the creation of a novel interesting proposition that acts upon a precise function, a service, an experience for a community... but an echo also relevant to the evolution of the organisation.

Brands exist between a “thing” and what is said about that thing « entre la chose et ce que l’on dit de la chose » (Luc de Brabandère - Le sens des idées - Dunod 2004). They need to be talked about at regular intervals, and to show their clients evolutions from simple improvements to wild diversification... aligned to their mission and values... Brand essence!

It is therefore indispensable for Brands wishing to evolve and innovate durably, to analyse the conditions of acceptance or refusal of something new and therefore show a keen interest in the evolution of consumption in order to pre-empt or precede the aspirations underlying the next normal.

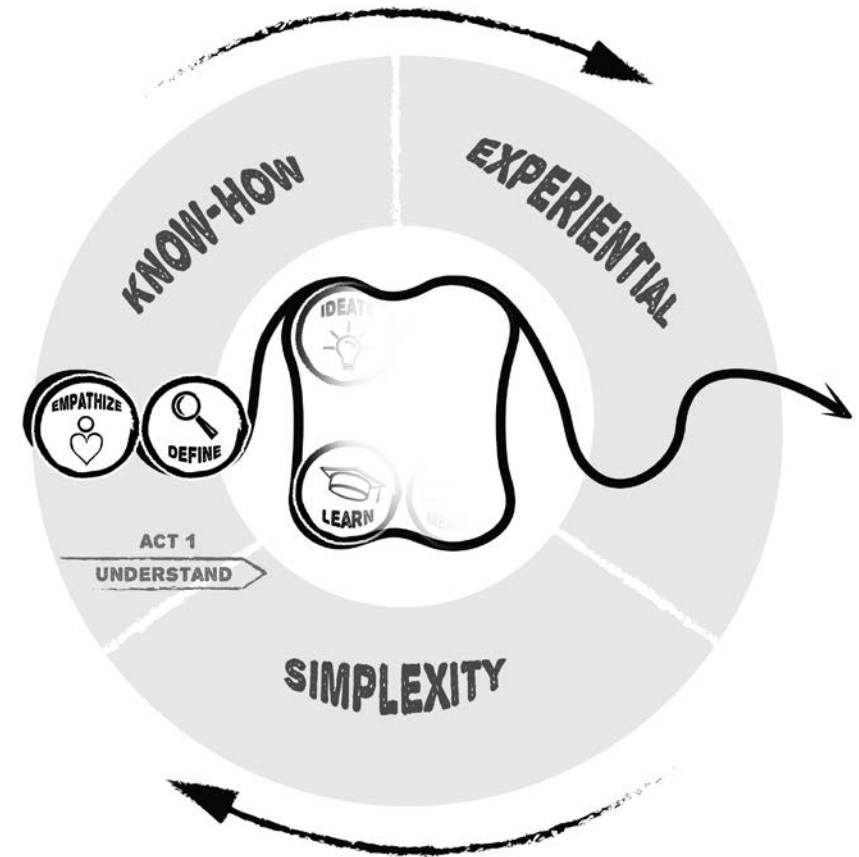
To imagine possible futures as well as the probable future, the one which will be the norm (The Next Normal), and then envisage one’s role within it (the Obvious Next Everyday), a company, an institution, a Brand must first understand past and present normality, the ones in force today.

At Groupe Zebra, all team members have charts they use to identify the most effective mechanisms in creating something new.

We distinguish three major postures that have appeared successively since the dawn of the industrial world. These three Brand postures are the symbol in any market of a certain form of normality.

- **KNOW-HOW**
- **EXPERIENTIAL**
- **SIMPLEXITY**

Far from classifying them according to taste the aim is to understand them properly, see how they affect the behaviour of clients, buyers or prescribers, in order to establish the necessary prerequisites for something new to be successful.



Drawing of the Eye-novation process act 1  
Observation in the 3 postures in the UNDERSTANDING phase (Empathise and Define).

For an “innovator” knowledge of the posture of the organisation he is working for allows him to aim better, be more relevant, more effective. It is a case of aligning upstream two notions often mixed up by inexperienced project leaders: Brand posture (what I am and what I claim) and Brand image (how I am perceived).

And it is sometimes much harder than it appears to define your own identity when taking into account that of the competition and market interpretation...

In other words, as the person in charge of the future of the company, should I offer something new that defends and reinforces my identity, my beliefs or should I accept the idea that my vision of the world is only partial.

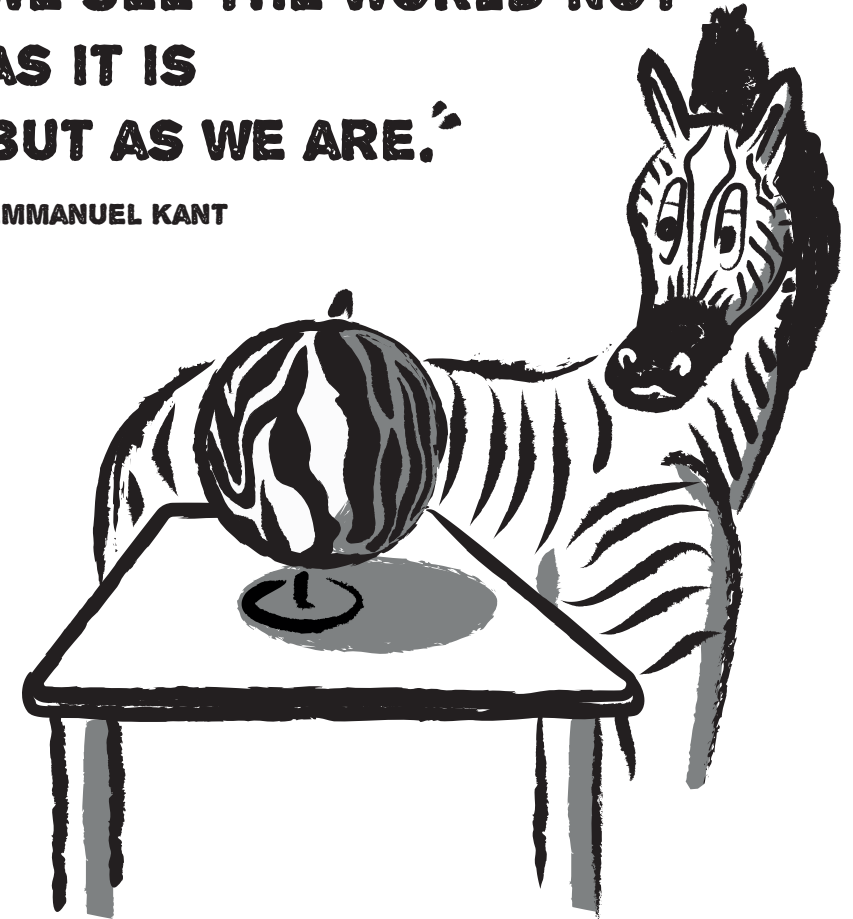
If you hold 20 to 30% market share in your domain, you can consider that you are a leader in a comfortable position and that you are making the right choices; you can also consider that 70 to 80% of clients have chosen an alternative option to yours; i.e.: an overwhelming majority!

Have you or your partners ever tried to be in your competitors' shoes? We often do this exercise in positioning workshops. There is a lot to be learnt and it is always surprising to discover how badly one knows one's competitors. Sometimes it is due to over-confidence, most of the time it is more a lack of respect and sometimes just negligence.

But the world is not exactly as you see it.

**“WE SEE THE WORLD NOT  
AS IT IS  
BUT AS WE ARE.”**

**EMMANUEL KANT**



We often say: we do not see the world as it is, we see it as we are!

Should one imagine the future based on today's strengths or decide on a preferred future and stick to it whatever the structural and financial costs? Or, more generally, what areas should I innovate in and how, given I stand in one posture rather than another?

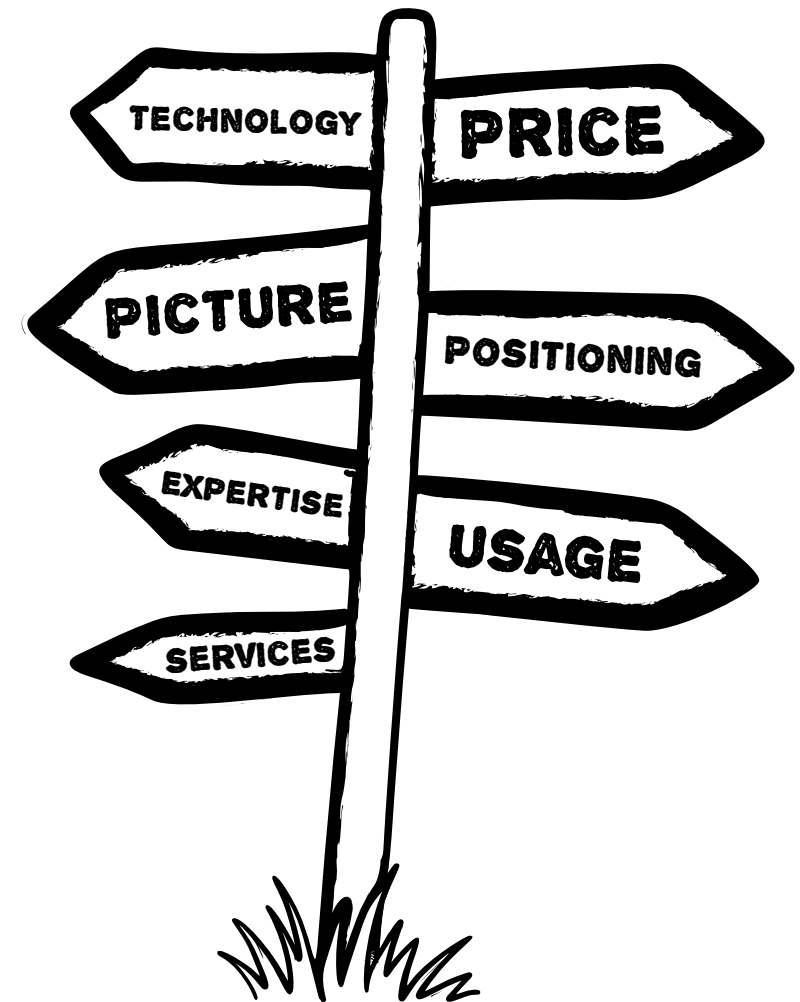
What assets should I use?

How do I guarantee impact on an audience which already has a -more or less fixed- image, a representation of the company of its credibility and has expectations and taboos, doubts and preconceived ideas?

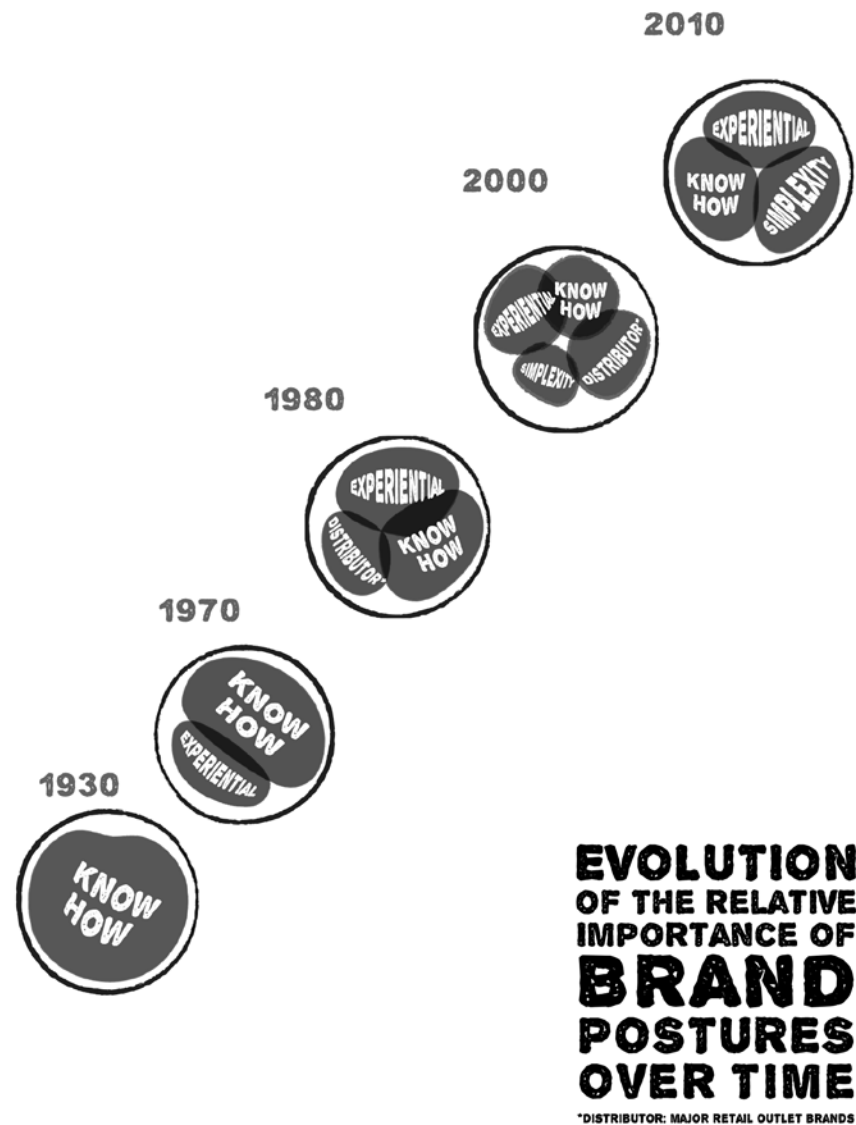
In the following pages we will dive into “Brand postures” their respective universe and their rights and obligations when it comes to innovation...

This phase of strategic scouting necessary to define the innovation potential of the company or institution should take place before the classical and sometimes castrating benchmark phase (comparative analysis, too often backwards looking, and that sometimes shows overcrowded -hence “unusable”- routes, whereas they are in fact only full of identical offers of no particular interest to the end user).

Getting to know current normality in order to attempt the definition of the next one.



How to make a difference on a saturated market.



## The KNOW-HOW posture

Brands as we know them today appeared during industrialisation which allowed for large scale production and commercialisation of standardised products. At the time many got their Brand status by mastering a know-how, a particular expertise, inventing, producing and commercialising a “unique” market offering through its production process or functionalities.

The KNOW-HOW posture based on a notion of experience proven through time or technical mastery is a model where your offering is at the heart of the system giving “concrete” value.

The Brand contributes to this and hence benefits.

Up to the end of the 80s this was the dominant posture and many “know-how” Brands surround us today. Their way of evolving and the opportunities for them to produce something new is probably better understood as we have been surrounded by them for many generations.

This is the historic world where engineers and inventors rule, and the move up from mere producer to Brand is often reached through what at Groupe Zebra we call an iconic object.

By bringing something truly new and providing consumers a with a new approach, its success made it the emblem of the Brand.

SEB, a French Brand of small electrical household products is a great example of this posture. SEB stood for « Société d'Emboutissage de Bourgogne » (Press forming company of Burgundy) up to the day that it started offering something truly revolutionary, an alternative to what was on offer to housewives at the time: the famous pressure cooker!

This product, received with enthusiasm by its users, who saw in it a real improvement when it came to cooking, allowed the company to become more than an industrial producer amongst many, it became a Brand.

The main value given was material, a functional identity, a concrete existence, but it also benefited from a more subjective, immaterial value of service rendered, pleasure, hence increasing its trading value.

In no particular order, listed below are a few examples among many to illustrate the point.

Sony the Walkman  
 Microsoft Windows software  
 Vuitton the travel case  
 Knorr dehydrated soup  
 Ford Model T  
 Atari games console  
 Kodak the throw away camera  
 Michelin the detachable tyre  
 Babolat tennis racket strings

Created around an iconic product or service the status of these Brand is warranted by their repeated inventiveness.

They can then hope for strong organic growth through geographical expansion, being the first in the market (a well-known commercial advantage) and by concentrating, for a while, on managing production (using to the full copyright and other legal protections).

Surfing on the success of the iconic product, often representing more than 20% of turnover, technical development of the original model is rigorously pushed and the benefits of the headway over the competition are reaped. What is new is only the old improved!

It is a very comfortable position... for everybody... industry and distribution which has the time to improve sales pitch and knows at every new incarnation of the product how to bring the decisive argument to the end consumer.

This period of expansion has created in our collective imagination a very strong belief that tomorrow will be better than today, that progress is technology!

Everything new is presented to, and received by the public as progress... That is what makes its value, whatever the cost! Difficult to refuse progress presented as the quest for a better, facilitating world...

Together with these innovating Brands, in the “know-how” posture, you also find certain historic players, almost legends, that have, for years, been developing a unique product

and have succeeded in giving value to it under the label of “authenticity”. In France, products from the region of Savoie (cheese, sausages etc.) are an example of this category as is the Dijon mustard; by extension let us also mention Italian furniture, Swiss watches, Belgium chocolates, German cars, Asian electronics and Swedish design...

Aren't we dangerously close to cognitive bias, here?

These “know-how” Brands are currently on the up again as they give the consumer the sensation of liberating himself from industrial transformation and globalization and reliving the would-be idyllic times of his ancestors.

In food especially, this guarantee of “authenticity” is often used to relieve stress. Simple and local are the characteristics of natural products, “local to local” is a winner, as are “home-made” recipes as commercialised by Brands unknown or supermarket such as Leclerc's “C'est du coin”, Tesco's “Local Choice”, Marks & Spencers' recycled cardboard for organic vegetables... Recently, “produced not far from here” has joined “organic” as valuable in consumers' minds, where proximity and quality can sometimes get mixed up, but where the environmental aspects are valued more and more.

**For KNOW-HOW Brands “new” is not a must have unless it is part of an overall logic tending towards the ideal solution, that is to say that it brings to the consumer a service, a tangible proof of value that can be measured when purchasing and when in use.**

The logic of “contribution” to the ideal solution currently drives R&D departments in many large companies.

It underwrites the rules of step by step (incremental) innovation so reassuring to our western Cartesian minds.

1. State of play of the environment (empathy).
2. Analyse findings the pains and expected gains.
3. Find what to correct and improve through ideation.
4. Define the new proposition by highlighting the value of said new contribution with regards to the past.

A world that would appear made to measure for innovators...

From a success based on something truly new, Brands, over time, become the symbol of tradition. And they create what we call “belief systems”.

To show their know-how and technological advance, Brands feed the faith through large R&D projects and by communicating about their advanced technology, making sure not to rock the (successful) boat. Hence the relative homogeneity of the products surrounding us... Or even a remarkable similarity that destroys perceived value and eats at margins.

These cosy beliefs showered upon consumers can be shattered, or at least shaken, by audacious Brands ready to ignore market conventions thus rising quickly to fame topping it with public sympathy.



It is the Dyson story who revolutionised the world of vacuum cleaners by going against the beliefs established by Hoover, Bissel and others that using throw away bags made eliminating dirt both simple and hygienic... this may be true... but is obviously no match for the pleasure of watching the dirt accumulate in the see-through container; electrifying proof of the effectiveness of my excellent (and very expensive) purchase...

### **Know-how Brands tend to displace the “new” from the whole to parts thereof...**

Ford and its Model T is a typical example of a know-how Brand. Especially well known for its mastery in producing a hyper-successful car model. Just imagine the energy required, the talents necessary to create such an industrial set up... based on a single offering! Even the colour could be chosen “as long as it was black!”

In a few years, these pioneers in car production, thanks to their know-how, brought down assembly time to 6 hours per vehicle at an unbelievable rhythm of a car a minute coming off the assembly line.

This mind-blowing era, is very representative of the deep change in workers' activities.

Complete, artisan know-how jobs disappeared in favour of production tasks. In shoe making, Taylorisation meant the shoemaker's Job was replaced by the fragmented tasks of

stitchers, pattern makers, last makers, assemblers, bevellers, etc...

The production of something new was no longer in the whole but in the parts within, and engineering thus became the star of our industrial world; organised in small groups of experts protected in well-resourced R&D centres!

This division of labour obviously lead to a splitting of knowledge, a concentration of the overall know-how into very few hands and at the same time a major opportunity to envisage something new in each sub-part: each specialisation was able to individually make changes and therefore provoke a potential multiplication of the offering by “layer”.

Industrialisation has, paradoxically, multiplied both our capacity to reproduce the original object identically and the faculty to produce derivatives (ranges).

It was the beginning of incremental (step by step) innovation. Nowadays, however, in many domains, production costs are fully controlled and therefore any “contribution” has a cost which the Brand looks to pass on to consumers.

Ironically, we end up creating extra cost not increased shareable value...

Let us recall that the commerce between Brand and consumer/client is nothing more than barter where each party needs to bring to the table something of equal and justifiable value:



if the cost is no longer in line with the value, given or perceived, barter becomes impossible.

Could this explain the difficulties encountered by certain Brands in maintaining their prices and their diminishing market share?...

Answers are up to you!

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## **Birth of EXPERIENTIAL**

### **Let us break the mould; individualisation rules!**

In the 60s in industrialised countries a new social model appeared: “personal success”.

It came from a deep-seated change in what people aspired to within society, as the great majority moved from a position of need to wealth (spending power doubled between 1950 and 1968, a dream by today's standards). Let us not be blinded, a period often remembered for its challenges to authority was above all one of great progress, of increased wealth.

Until that time working-class boys became blue collar workers just like their fathers, a middle-class boy aspired to a white-collar job. Within large families, children wore the same hand-me-down clothes in dark green, burgundy red or navy blue, from the eldest to the youngest and an almost “tailor made” fashion existed only for the very wealthy.

But with democratisation and education for all, children started attending the same schools, eating together at the canteen... and rebelling as they came home at night, their tastes being different to those of their parents' social class.

This melting pot, this new wealth led to generalised objections and it was precisely the “anti-model” that became the new model; through consumerism one could break the mould: individualisation was born!

The individual was no longer to be solely a member of his community of origin. He started dreaming of something different, he had a personal life project, symbol of his independence, and as a consequence wanted to show his success as a validation of his project. This project was to be the driver of his rise in a de-constructed, cosmopolitan, geographically unstable social environment...

The imposed model, community of origin and the past, were no longer the reference; know-how, no longer the ultimate guarantee; what was valuable was diversity, ambition, excess, sometimes just the cult of freedom, mobility and the creation of visible wealth, appearance (money, media visibility...).

There lies the origin of “extimity” a concept so pervasive in today’s social media... one publishes into the exterior what is intimate as an act of singularity. A new normality seen as exhibitionism, narcissism or a sign of recklessness by the older generations.

### **Tell my what you buy and I will tell you who you are!**

Challenging established principles was the norm: “As a general rule, all that was new was better!” Given that we were in an era of change, or rather of acceleration of change, made possible by the speed at which information travelled and the explosion of science and technology.

The digital revolution is flattening everything in its wake.

### **Brands now highlight the differences between individuals and no longer between the brands themselves.**

There lies the true revolution!

They no longer totally belong to their owners, they have become the property of individuals in search of signs of identity, of new founding myths.

It lead to the development of a new Brand posture: the “Experiential” posture.

We are in a logic of belonging and what is new is a bringing together for some, a showing where they belong for others... The new sometimes will bring nothing more than the feeling and certainty of what is most important in our world of symbols: to be part of it! To be part of the group or to be totally excluded!

Mass market and hence “medium hot” Brands for the more traditional individuals; for the best ones, trendy Brands or “red hot” signatures.

The spoils of war are worn on the wrist: Breitling or Rolex Brands once, now days managers get the latest generation Sunnto or Apple watch.

Today, who can honestly claim to have never read the people pages of magazines where what is currently being worn by movie stars, footballers or rich heiresses on their way to the ball is explained in great detail?

### **The “experiential” Brand model often works like a religion...**

In reality these Brands are the symbol of idolisation, it is not the object that matters but the prophet who owns and vindicates it.

As a consequence, these “religions” have their symbols their ‘logos’ proudly worn to show the faith and make new believers. Closer to the “people” the apostles (opinion leaders, trend setters, so called stars, bloggers, influencers...) spread the word and appear in full pomp as proof of their belonging and belief.

For years strategies along these lines have been appearing and, here again, the digital revolution is providing acceleration... Instagram my darling!

A basic principle of all religions are places of worship. Retail Design (architecture and layout of sales surface) has flourished in innovation for the past 40 years.

Believers and “novices in need of conversion” can meet in these true places of worship surrounded by precisely “studied” subliminal messages. They can meditate next to the Gods of sport in Nike Town or Nike Lab. There, you will see their creed their “Amen” « Just do it » for Nike.

There you find relics (Cristiano Ronaldo or Messi’s shirts, Michael Jordan’s shoes) a few icons (Mr. Dior’s portrait by Bernard Buffet in the Paris Dior shop), the confessional where

one is alone to face one’s demons and sins (the mirror in the changing room).

These Brands also have big get-togethers, they take advantage of the biggest sports events to conquer the most beautiful places on earth and appear there as Adidas did on the Arc de Triomphe in Paris in 1998 after France won the world cup. These large masses broadcast the faith and messages to believers.

**Some “experiential” Brands do not claim any specific know-how, their claim is to represent a certain way of life, they are vectors, messengers with a highly coded visual language and with repeated new collections.**

All industries, even the most technology centred, have adopted retail: car makers of course, but banks too as well as most producers of industrial goods with large annual meetings -professional trade shows- and dedicated showrooms.

Does that remind you of other industries?

Have you spotted a surprising industrial showroom? An unconventional presentation in an experiential place of worship?

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Many of these Brands have as a strategy to dominate their disciples with offerings presented as premium, as superior,

to the competition. Others have a seduction strategy offering more personalisation, variety according to targets, more scope for evolution. In businesses linked to fashion, innovation comes from “collaborations”. Partnerships, some deeper than others, with artists or trendy creators are multiplied to get Brands into the current groove... with many excesses where non-fashion “weak” Brands try to be “trendy” through collaborations with stars and at best get a little buzz, at worst major commercial flops...

Here again, as in R & D, searching is good, finding is better! This Brand posture echoes a societal evolution relayed in the media where “doing as you please” has become the new creed. More living space, more fun together, more pleasure, more games, more health, more ME...

Nothing is too good for the consumer (“I deserve this product”, “it is the one that best says who I am”). Over exploiting social needs of Maslow’s pyramid is a very risky strategy as it puts the Brands following it in a position of over-promising, deviating from reality and slave to the trends of fashion...

See what happened to Lacoste’s famous “Become what you are”... become WHAT? what I am?!

Lacoste has since 2018 changed course with success, by aligning itself with a more contemporary and proprietary value, the timeless, “Life is a beautiful sport...” Much truer, much stronger.

Those who have pushed furthest the EXPERIENTIAL model rely on a strategy of so called “Reliance” first coined by Robert Rochefort ex director general of the CREDOC (leading French market research company).

Reliance describes the need of consumers to be linked, connected together in interpersonal relations (associations, tribes, communities, social networks...) at a time when traditional groups, families, political parties, trade unions, religious communities, are falling apart.

As Individualisation became too heavy to bare we became conscious that we could not do without other people: “I also belong to a community, a tribe, a biotope, a clan, I have responsibilities for the planet I inhabit, I am looking to meet people that have something in common, that can enrich my life...”.

With ultra-nomadic individuals, Brands act as markers, connectors that let people spot their peers, those with the same tastes, values, passions...

And in our mosaic society one obviously witnesses a multiplication of alternative Brands, so called tribal or community brands: they are often only local and highlight the phenomenon of an ever more schizophrenic youth wanting both statutory Brands, symbols of success but who are also addicted to alternative confidential Brands that are “Soooo cool”...

In other words, the younger generations are reproducing the phenomenon of “personal success” at the root of

EXPERIENTIAL Brands whilst looking for their own turf, their own demands, their difference... And that, overall, is very encouraging!

When it comes to “all new and shiny”, certain thinkers or “Brand strategy gurus”, in the last few years, have enjoyed creating or bringing to our attention new models.

**More spiritual, more social, more inclusive, and also more nature, more ethical, more transparent, more truth!**

These trendy subjects, secondary dimensions for creation and innovation, are not always significant in the organisation needed for conceiving products or services offering.

## **The latest posture SIMPLEXITY Managing complexity to make things easy...**

For the last 20 years slowly but deeply, western capitalist society based on productivism has been shaken to its core; individuals are denouncing the way they live, move, love, consume, eat...

In the last 4 or 5 years no more shaking... It's literally been exploding! Enough with the destruction of the earth and its resources, enough with overconsumption, enough with obeying the diktats of the powerful, the politicians, and therefore the dominant Brands, enough with complexity, acceleration, destruction...

**Innovation has become societal, community based, supportive, social! One is a very long way away from last century's engineering... innovating at a lesser cost.**

A groundswell leading to some Brands -those in a posture of “simplicity”- being loved and seen as essential by consumers: Google, Decathlon, Amazon and more recently all the highly regarded Brands, symbol of the collaborative economy, that came into our lives overnight thanks to the digital revolution: Airbnb, Uber, BlablaCar, Instagram, Waze, Shazam, Spotify, Kickstarter or Wechat & Didi hegemonic in Asia...

**Their intelligence, their capacity to manage complexity is measured in how good they are at making things easy.**

When hyper individualisation reaches its limits...

In the 90s the economic slowdown was long lasting in western countries. It instituted an era of distrust of our hyper dominant and egotistical consumption society; a society, paradoxically, interested only in itself as a system and with no regard for individuals, an over globalised system, no longer human enough... detached from its host planet.

It is in this “hyper” context where our economic, ecological, and intimate spheres are in danger that collective consciousness has kicked in. In response to globalisation, hyper-consumption, the acceleration of our world, the amazing speed of technological, scientific and digital progress, the fast rotation of trends, ever tighter schedules and growing uncertainties about the planet's future...

We attempt to slow down to control our destiny.

We look to save time in order to take some or even waste some! We and our loved ones take centre stage.

With only one call to arms: Be yourself, simply!

Replacing idle times with good times, and protecting yourself and those around you as much as possible, it is a case of appreciating everything according to its position on a scale of fruitfulness.

Consumers, as many experts have said, have become “Consum'actors”... having lost faith in Brands, customers

have adopted the simple philosophy of “I want to make sure I get my money's worth and want to spend a minimum on things I consider non-essential”.

**With spending better now core, value has replaced price for the consumer.**

The best price, is the right price, not necessarily the lowest. It is the notion of “premium”.

Out with the logic of a price on a label, in with the logic of where the consumer places the price on his personal scale of values. Perception of price is thus increasingly personal, everyone is free to invest at will.

The phenomenon is blatant in the USA, Europe or Japan... more than ever, deciding where to spend your money is an art! One spends as much as before but our priorities better reflect our sympathies.

Of course, all sectors and products are not equally impacted. In the not particularly emotional everyday spending, the consumer decides to save money buying cheaper products of comparable quality.

There is a twin objective to this new buying logic. One, is to simplify shopping when faced with hyper-choice by going for the cheapest, what is on sale or the obvious product; two, is to save money on products you value little to redirect it towards highly valued ones.

The world of cars so full of signs and symbols of virility, social status and always being renewed on the basis of more technology was revolutionised by Dacia's success; a small but growing Romanian Brand...

In fifteen years, the Brand went from totally unknown to centre stage thanks to the Logan. No advanced technology or connectivity...  
but yours for 5000 euros! (for the Towny model)

## Less is more !

### **Innovation is no longer looking to always do more.**

As they were going through their needs thoroughly, consumers for whom a car was solely a way of getting from A to B were extremely impressed by the new offering; it was closely followed by two further models Sandero and Duster.

What will the next normal be for the automobile given urban youths for whom a car is no longer a must-have but more of a drag?

Is electricity with hydrogen going to be the next normal in powering our future means of locomotion, whatever they may look like?

In the same vein, regular physical activity no longer necessarily means buying from “star” Brands considered must haves until very recently.

When you take into account that 70% of sports products never actually see a sports field, you easily understand the success of distributor Brands that make no claim to “miracle” technology (useless if hardly ever used!) but highlight to a not overly interested general public basic functionalities, or the fun aspect, at the right price.

It is certainly one of the keys to explain Decathlon's (French sportswear) success in creating over the last few years its own Brands for most sports. Brands typical of the new “simplicity”

posture such as Tribord for water sports, Quechua for the outdoors, Kalenji for running...

We are moving from a product-based approach to the Brand to an ethics in the relationship: the Brand is not required to be the best technically nor does it need to show its superiority. It is legitimate because it is close to its clients, their aspirations, and their wanting to be in good health... it covers the overall experience, describing the different levels in the sport and presenting its products according to these levels so each user can choose according to his needs!

Its main value is in its perfect understanding of the person wanting to be in good shape without being a sportsman.

It has often been said that aggressive buying techniques and a lowering of the technical quality of what they offer means that distributors are gradually choking manufacturers.

One could look at things differently and see that through the years the challenge Decathlon was faced with and had to answer with its own Brands was a new and specific requirement of individuals wanting to consume sports and leisure.

Less technology, overpowering for most people, but greater comfort and ease, as well as increased turnover leading to lower prices and the fun of changing your gear regularly; the pleasure of being a sportsman in the mind not necessarily in practice.



Decathlon has changed the rules of what is normal in sports and leisure and is recognised today by the general public as an innovating Brand...

Who, even 5 five years ago, would have bet on them being a leading sports Brands? Quite a shock!

**Customer centric Brands are recognised as the most innovative.**

In parallel we frequently observe that consumers are ready to pay the price of a product or service in so far as it corresponds to their expectations. Consumers will probably continue to buy “signature” products for clothing, cosmetics, cars, etc... The iPhone, for example, is not a price offering yet its success is considerable as is more recently the iWatch.... a worldwide craze.

This new somewhat schizophrenic approach to purchasing has rapidly established itself thanks to the younger generations. The 15/30 age group is the most likely to consume paradoxically for those who lived through the good old days of overconsumption. They do not buy as predictably and as permanently as their elders.

**Please note that for this age group most “know-how” Brands have not done anything extraordinary enough to entice them! The fact that these generations even know them is thanks to them having been part of the world of consumption since their birth, like a family heirloom...**

Intensive advertising ensures some individuals at least, bear them in mind but there is no personal bond, no emotion... with no ties, no Brand equity... these Brands did not “change their lives” as they did those of their grand-parents and parents!

Some manufacturers as well as B to B players have adapted to this new approach to innovation; design, management of variety, customisation, client service and experience are all aspects that are growing in importance. Tractors, farming equipment, machine tools have shown imagination and creativity for years...

Function and usage partake in this profound movement towards SIMPLEXITY.

Michelin, a Know-how company if ever there was one was faced with growing difficulties in getting their professional customers to value technical progress at the right price, they operated this particularly striking shift.

A few numbers for context: leader in Europe, 20 countries, 260 000 vehicles managed, 3200 service points.

Originally the Michelin business case was very classical: the manufacturer sold its tyres to wholesalers, who sold them to distributors, who sold them to road hauliers who looked after tyres with a varying degree of competence. But tyre maintenance has a major impact on performance. If they are not fully pumped up then vehicle consumption can increase

by 10% and tyre wear is greater: easy to understand the impact of tyres on hauliers' results.

With Michelin Fleet Solution (MFS), a service Michelin started offering road hauliers in Europe in 2010, it worked round the price issue by replacing tyre sales with cost per mile: a usage sale. It did it by adding service: life cycle management, advice and maintenance.

MFS presents the service as follows:

- **Simplify your management:** concentrate on your core business and priorities to be more competitive.
- **Accelerate your economic and ecological performance:** maintenance and best use of tyres guaranteed, fixed cost reductions (personnel, administration), improved fuel use.
- **Optimize fleet availability:** improved maintenance planning, reduction in downtime, high performance breakdown rescue in 20 European countries.

In other words, the haulier externalises the “tyres” aspects of his business to a specialist who takes over tyre management over the whole life cycle (maintenance, re-treading, recycling, etc.). The chosen model was, at the time, audacious, innovative but logical: the tyre remains Michelin property and the client is invoiced per mile. Another commercial promise is made possible: “Adjusting costs to your income”.

The tyres cost you only if the trucks are on the road...

MFS is a remarkable example of reinvention of a business model in a traditional sector. It is part of a logic of increased added value offered to clients. This involves going beyond the buy-sell relationship and becoming a purveyor of added value in the client's own value chain. “I'm not just talking technical, I'm talking service, here!”

Major changes had to come about for it to succeed: skills, management and invoicing systems, client education, etc.

But after all, is it not simply a reinterpretation of the business model imposed long ago by Xerox?

Back then Xerox defeated a price objection by replacing the sale of goods by the sale of their usage (photocopies sold by the unit rather than selling the copier).

Xerox did it by remodelling its value chain upstream of the product sold: the photocopy.

They kept ownership of the copiers in order to manage their life cycles.

Is it not a small step to imagine this business model being used in the world of machine tools, injection moulding, robots (coming soon to a factory near you), sports gear, home furniture, household electrical goods... ?

Try imagining it in your industry?

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### **Internet, the trigger for the phenomenon of Simplicity!**

The World Wide Web has created a global infrastructure giving access worldwide to information and communication and profoundly modifying the global economy.

The internet has become our everyday number 1 tool, and both in work and as a consumer, it has totally changed the way we see the world, we get information, we work and we buy.

Internet has become unavoidable in information gathering.

### **Information, reassurance when it comes to the quality of a product is rendered possible through contact with other consumers.**

Reassurance also when it comes to price with the colossal use of price comparison sites.

We are reaching a stage where the opinion of any unqualified source is becoming more important than that of experts (even in finance or in health as we saw during COVID-19...). So, to recommend a product nothing is better than a friend's advice, MSN Messenger, Instagram post, comment on a blog, visit of a forum, an influencer...

This word of mouth is particularly difficult to manage online and leads to unbelievable success or unmitigated disaster. On a more complex and ideological level, internet allows keen individuals wishing to find meaning in what they buy

to check the reputation of a company and the coherence of Brand messaging.

After having bathed in advertising based on dreams, emotion and personal fulfilment, consumers have become true detectives and require companies to show all.

Beyond the standard buying criteria, they want to check industrial, management and employment practice, supplier relations, financial management and approaches to sustainability.

Hence the reason why companies' Social Responsibilities are making headlines in the economic press and are fundamental to the transformation of organisations.

Web 3.0 and consumers' eagle eyes can just as easily heap praise on a Brand as nail them to the wall a few months apart... boycotts will proliferate as easily as any social gathering...

### **Soon the capacity to listen to the crowd, measure underlying movements, hear alarm bells and detect weak signals will be big, big business... HYBRID THINKING lets innovation take on board the digital world...**

At Groupe Zebra the driving idea is that objects no longer have the same subjugating power over the individual as in the post war years.

The clincher in "wanting to own" is much less perceptible, much more volatile.

**We know that we are not conceiving an object or a service but a multi-sensory experience highlighting either a know-how, an experience or simplicity... or even a mix of the three!**

During the wonderful years of “more and more, and always better” the object itself had an aura. Everything new brought a real, new service, increased freedom, a reduction in household chores, a simplification in production, improved functionality...

In other words, it filled a need... and needs were legion!

Ask your grand-parents!

The first tractors, combine harvesters, cars, the miracle of shrinking distances, freedom to travel. The first cell phones. The first washing machines, time was gained, chores disappeared. The first kitchen mixers: affordable simplicity and diversity. The first readymade soups and their effect on simplifying daily life. The first bicycle derailleur that made climbing easier. The first Personal Computers and their calculating powers. The first shower gels and their ease of use... the first factory robots.

We could quote hundreds of new ideas that appeared as something new for the consumer within the space of a few decades.

For everything new a sense of “magic”.

Just the fact it existed gave it value!

All these ideas, coming out as products or services changed the way we lived, affected our behaviour, traditional, cultural and social habits.

Over the decades, industrialisation brought improvement to these revolutionary products.

But today, in a society submerged by choice, consumers are not interested in something new that is merely something “more”.

Buyers do not automatically want the new evolutions or the new products or services driven by strategies they do not follow, long term R&D or marketing plans that don't concern them. We see it clearly: to be relevant for the new generation - buyers rather than consumers - it is not enough to fill needs, it is necessary to anticipate attitudes, behaviour, to suggest attractive buying and consumption scenarios.

More philosophically but just as essential in understanding the changes in our position as innovators and Brand managers, one can say that we need to move from an essentialist approach of Brand to an existentialist one. From Brand as a divine substance that holds all values to Brand as a project or part thereof that needs to fit, for a while, a fragmented identity.

Yes Sir! Our system of identity is fundamentally changing! And this is how new Brands are making headway.

DO IT, RATHER THAN SAY IT..  
LIVE IT, RATHER THAN CLAIM IT...

For a “simplicity” Brand (one with real but discreet technical mastery aimed at simplifying the act of consumption) value is above all in the simplicity of use, the ease of relation, and dependence comes from the level of service offered...

**The price is essentially built on “fair usage value”, the quality and fit of the overall solution as decided by the client.**

In the 30 years that we have worked for major Brands all over the world and in practically all types of industry, from services to mass market products, we have never, ever, felt such a fundamental groundswell!

It is difficult to accept but the postures of “know-how” and “experiential” which have driven so many Brands, so many strategies in the last few decades, and that are the twin backgrounds of so many managers, have entered a phase of accelerated ageing.

Value is inexorably moving towards aspects less based upon specific mastery or status than upon the adaptation to real everyday needs, therefore, totally upending the playing field for even the most experienced innovators.

After years of hyper consumption we are, in certain ways, going back to the beginning of the industrialisation process and the birth of Brands. By showing their difference, their intelligence, their true service some are commended as Brands and therefore credited with commercial and emotional value,

whilst others cannot justify their price and see their market share drop.

The idea is not to say that the initial postures, KNOW-HOW and EXPERIENTIAL, will disappear but that neither know-how nor belonging are an end in themselves any more when it comes to consuming.

A fundamental notion needs to be introduced into the innovation process and hence into the minds of those in charge: **the fact that society is asking more and more that the client and his choice of behaviour be the drivers of change and no longer the opposite!**

**This reversal in mindset is absolutely key for those of us involved in the creation and management of market offering and transforming organisations.**

This type of customer chooses Brands based on values and tend to privilege values of belonging over those of projection inherent in the Brands with an “experiential” posture.

Let us take time to note that innovation in this posture is not necessarily linked to price increase.

Innovation sometimes leads to a decrease in price seen as an issue in current offering management systems.

One can also reduce costs and still find justifications to increase prices if you choose the right criteria.

A new era is opening up for Brands who need to take the lead again, reinvent their offering, prove their worth through

usage, merit their value and hence price premium, that or disappear at great speed.

We are living particularly interesting times as we are pushed to rethink major concepts in numerous product and service categories free from past references.

Of course, it is also very destabilising for organisations and managers, long used to pushing the “more and better” type of innovation, to be faced with competitors that do not respect the rules, that do not occupy the same space and use a different language...

Sometimes they even fail to understand them.

A new offering that upsets long established marketing plans: the market sometimes grows and opens its arms to the newcomers and the “experts” question and test... and sometimes they join in!

Faced with such change, it takes years for know-how Brands, stuck with a culture and beliefs that once made their success, to change posture, attract new talent, recruit designers and other managers attuned to different approaches, to conceiving an offering more adapted to clients that are less technical, less interested and with less time available... overall less concerned by the “thing” itself.

It's a brutal change in culture, the language is different, aims way different: take Quechua and its approach to outdoor sports: no records or high summits to reach just an easy fit,

comfort, good storage, respect for the environment, fun, sustainable...

This is how successes such as the “2 second tent” or “Easybreathe” masks were born: A distinctive approach to the product and a totally different way to push it.

It is not the performance or the type of material which are put forward but easy breathing or setup speed.

ease...

The expertise and the value are no longer within the product itself but in its ease of use. Obviously with such products we are not only targeting the usual, interested clients; we are creating a new customer base by highlighting novel aspects...

We are opening up, engaging! We allow everyone to “reinvent life with...” as Renault once claimed.

**It would be unforgivable to ignore one of the best examples of “simplicity”: Apple.**

A Brand that revolutionised the austere and cold world of information technology and its number crunching machines, then the more glamorous one, though just as impressive, of music, before brilliantly taking on the world of mobile phones as well as, more recently, watches...

Some will scream when hearing this! “What? Apple a simplicity Brand? No, no, no!

It is an experiential Brand!!” Well no! We insist on our reading of Apple’s success.

Apple is at the very pinnacle of the posture of simplicity! And that is why it has become iconic.

A major reason for the **iPhone**’s success lies in the fact that Apple, long before others, understood the need to link its handset to a content offering to create a entire consumer experience increasing in the process visibility for both products through synergy.

The major players in the mobile phone market, too busy designing the most advanced handset, did not see it coming; they failed to grasp the quasi -philosophical change Apple was proposing.

**Here the concept is clear: it is the handset that adapts to the person’s life and evolves for him thanks to the apps and not the opposite.**

A smart phone is, in a single handset, a mobile phone together with classical computer functions: internet access, software, multimedia, games, banking services, photos...  
Social life!

What users have chosen is being able to easily access their preferred functions, even organising them on screen according to their wishes.

We have been saying for a while now that Apple’s original project was, in fact, a touch screen portable television!

Its structure of glass (touch sensitive) and aluminium casing is just like your flat screen home television.

The channels (apps), whose job it is to manage complexities as seamlessly as possible, appear on screen as icons like the mosaic of different channels on your TV screen.

The screen is the access portal to programmes conceived and provided by others, proposing: news, games, video content in ever increasing quantities...

And obviously, all these apps are available, exclusively on iPhone before others... “iPhone-only Apps” as they used to say.

**The symbol of this posture, so well mastered by Apple, the symbol of the total understanding of this new world is in the “NAMING” of its products: I (yes me) I mac, I phone, I tunes, I pad, I watch... I’m the O.N.E.**

It is also a phone which ensures you always have it with you and nowadays it is also a camera or the “mode of permanent exposure” for the most connected.

We have all noticed that “simplicity” does not rime with “low price” but rather “right price” for the available functions and services rendered.



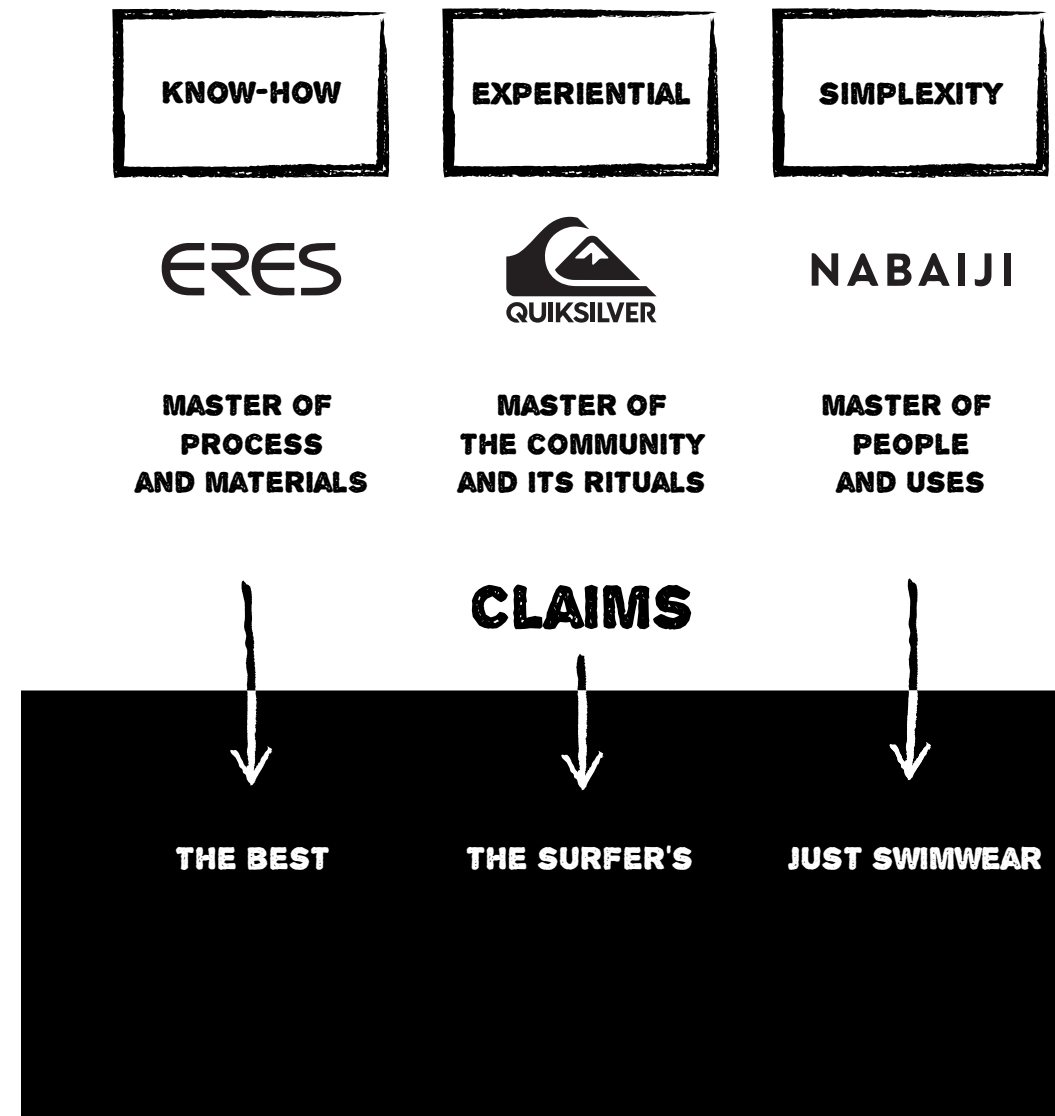
Apple is one of the best examples of this and its reputation as an expensive Brand proves it.

Let us not forget that it can be expensive business to make things simple when it comes to apps or web development.

One finds within each of the postures (KNOW-HOW, EXPERIENTIAL or SIMPLEXITY) high end and entry price offerings.

## ★ POSTURES ON THE SWIMWEAR MARKET

### COMPANY POSTURE





**It is important to note that this classification into the 3 postures does not mean preferences or price points.**

**The Brand posture does not imply a price range but its mission, vision, and the services and products that it intends to offer.**

It is also important that this sub-division remains non-exclusive. An innovative company must master all three postures and their intrinsic rules. The art is in balancing all three according to your current project... in order to become and remain a machine capable of producing and satisfying a complete and valued experience.

Once this (fundamental) fact of the three Brand postures has been taken in, one can start looking into “possible futures”, for a company or Brand, in a structured manner.

**In reality, as we have seen, each of the 3 major postures (there are others but they are marginal and ephemeral) has a different interpretation of the same world. The two more recent ones having defined themselves by extension of and in opposition to the one preceding it, answering or echoing the quest for something new and exciting, the premise to the new normal.**

A new normal that will once again set codes. This is true in all industry sectors and particularly visible to all watching in clothing, physical appearance and behaviour.

So let us start a fun list of a few dominant codes:

**When it comes to physical appearance:**

- **Visible underwear...**

“Saggy” started in the mid-seventies with jeans with US prison inmates, the true “early adopters”... with no choice involved! To stop inmates committing suicide in their cells, they were forbidden belts as some used them for just that. The prisoners’ trousers, not a perfect fit to start off with, appeared even looser and showed part of the underwear. Ex-prisoners publicised their new look when leaving prison.

Soon artists latched on to it as a gimmick to look like Bad Boys... and saggy came to be a symbol of urban culture in the USA.

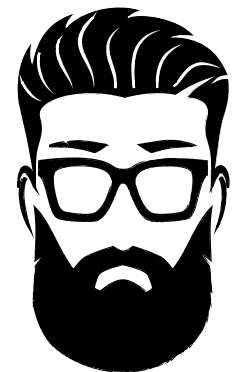


- **The beard**

On men’s faces it has become what Stan Smith is to Paris streets: something seen again and again.

Too much of a good thing?

And yet everybody still wears it. We used to think it was reserved to “hipsters” or “yuccies” with more or less incomprehensible job titles for the older generations (product owner, scrum master,



agile coach... not forgetting the Chief Happiness Officer), and yet has spread like wild fire all the way to the chins of men with more traditional jobs. Students, sportsmen, bankers, lawyers, TV hosts, and government ministers as well as the countless others we see wearing a beard. Adolescents do it to appear a little older or hide a still adjusting physique, young managers to gain authority... through hair, men are rebelling!

The beard seems to reveal your soul, to strengthen your personality and above all, for some, save time! With a well maintained and trimmed beard (once or twice a week depending on hair growth) no need to shave every day...

### **When it comes to business:**

- **The startup**

Before there were companies now there are startups. What's real difference? None except that:

“a company is organised to run a business model whereas a startup is organised to look for one!” some have said in jest...

Since the beginning of 2000 the world of startups has become the new universal dream.

The American west coast dream as epitomised by worldwide icons (Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos in the USA, Jack Ma in China, Xavier Niel in France), it is the dream of self-accomplishment through innovation and a clean break with the past.

The new normal for a startupper is to challenge an established model rather than improve it as was done before.

- **Open innovation**

Born under the pen of American professor Henry Chesbrough in 2003, he further refined the definition in 2006:

*“Open innovation is the use of purposive inflows and outflows of knowledge to accelerate internal innovation, and expand the markets for external use of innovation, respectively. [This paradigm] assumes that firms can and should use external ideas as well as internal ideas, and internal and external paths to market, as they look to advance their technology.”*

The company no longer solely looks inwards to its R&D department but, quite the opposite, opens up to a variety of outside people (researchers, laboratories, partner companies, clients, designers, experts...)

It is amusing that it was precisely the foundation stone for Groupe Zebra in 1987, a concept that earned us the Jacques Douce prize for company creation in 1986!

In less than 20 years a new normal has been established much to the displeasure of those convinced that integration is the way forward.

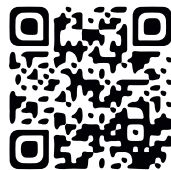
It is the end of the « Not Invented Here » syndrome!

As time has gone by similar and varied words have appeared: open innovation, co-creation collaborative projects, networking, collaborative digital transformation, etc. just like when a new market appears, expressions and players multiply and together, build new models for the future of our companies.

Do any come to mind?

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Let us ask ourselves where we are heading, what next normalities await.



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Eye-novation by GROUPE ZEBRA

## **Brand posture as the key element to determine the focus points for observation, focus points we call:**

### **CLAIMS**

A few years ago, we discovered a key step in the Eye-novation process, a step to be undertaken well before any observation: the need to establish 'focus points' that we call "Claims" according to the three postures before doing any actual observation and through which we investigate, under different angles. The Claims reflect our knowledge of the natural bias of the observer or our client.

Contrary to what we are told, the observer cannot be naive. As this often leads to seeing nothing apart from the superficial, the obvious, the basic.

### **Rather than be slaves to natural bias we control it!**

And it becomes a platform for discoveries, like changing lens on a reflex camera it brings new information shows unexpected details.

Now let us try something.

Concentrate on what is surrounding you at the moment. You have two minutes to find the maximum amount of clues that show you are in a work environment... Write down quickly each visual, graphic and formal clue... list them.



2 minutes

Don't cheat, close this book for now!

How many did you find?

5, 10, 15, 20 ? (well done you have a keen eye).

Now close your eyes, really... and think of how many yellow objects you saw during those 2 minutes.



30 seconds

Don't cheat and close the book again.

How many did you find? 1,2,5? Was it not more difficult?

Your brain was not tuned for this observation. So, it did not "See" well. The brain works by simplifying its surroundings and it is by conditioning your brain that you prepare a good observation.

A brain works like a computer: no programming means poor functioning.

Finding Claims is the art of establishing presuppositions, alternative convictions, "oblique" points of view, to be tested during step 1 of the Eye-novation process, (UNDERSTANDING through dynamic observation).

The postures divided into the three categories (Know-how, Experiential, Simplicity) are the different angles that structure this step are. You must attempt to define Claims based on all three postures. This is necessary to avoid poor observations or even worse... blindness.

We formulate Claims in the light of the postures without pre-judging their relevance and we will test, contradict, detail or invalidate them during observation. The Claims act as filters, scene enhancements that allow for more subtle and complete empathy whilst reducing naivety or bias (bias linked to past experience, culture, long held certainties, expertise...).

**Step 1, UNDERSTANDING thanks to "dynamic observations" and well-chosen Claims, is the quality assurance in identifying the numerous problems, issues, clues, that will serve in the ideas generation phase (step 2 EXPLORATION).**

The Claims approach, like different lenses and focus adjustments on your camera, allows you to get a complete, more exhaustive, vision of the subject, not just the one linked to the company's initial posture.

It amplifies truth not just your truth.

So, don't forget to change the posture setting!

Mastering this requires experience and practice to avoid wacky propositions or revolutionary adolescent dreams but after a few years a good professional is fearsome at this game.

Dynamic observations mean action and movement not standing still. Agility starts here, at the very beginning when defining Claims...

They will be your eye-enhancing goggles once in the field. They will open up a world you have never seen and be the basis for generating ideas.

Though field experience and regular practice in a seasoned group brings fluidity one of the main criteria for success resides in group cohesion and diversity which ensures that the proposed Claims are relevant be they structural, functional or symbolic.

With practice it is possible to subdivide each major posture further developing observer acumen, that is to say their capacity to discriminate two stimuli be they visual, tactile, auditive, temporal, situational or structural.

Another crucial challenge lies in the actual rollout of dynamic observations.

We have defined two major types:

- Observation of uses, generally in situ.
- Observation of markets or “business anthropology” which takes place in different research fields.

## The Business Anthropology approach

Our economic environment is getting more complex and at an increasing rate. Everyone can see the effects of globalisation, price pressure, the breaking up of traditional value chains, the sudden entrance of disruptive players, of new technologies or can just observe buying practices being fundamentally changed by the philosophy of use replacing that of possession...

French companies were slow to take an interest in anthropology unlike their anglo-saxon counterparts which started in the 80s. In telecommunications, politics, food, banking or even cosmetics and more recently the digital economy, “anthropological” expertise is making headway.

A major challenge for organisations is to reconnect with the true needs and motivations of their clients as well as all stakeholders in the value chain...

Revisiting the conditions underlying the success of your offering also involves:

- Identifying, the necessary conditions for market access, the organisation and functioning of the sub-contractor network now and in the future.
- Looking at how profit margins are structured for all participants and spotting possible disruptions.

- Observing the selling process of all intermediaries, internal and external, their respective roles and their legitimacy.
- Analysing, with a cool head, alternative technologies that are in direct competition or indirectly disruptive and thus reducing your value proposition.

**NO MORE ASKING  
QUESTIONS FROM  
THE MARKET  
& CLIENTS**



Contexts can be very different:

- Opening up new market segments
- Potential diversification through the introduction of a new technology
- Wanting to expand internationally on markets unknown or dominated by a local competitor
- Expected shift in the business model to be checked out
- Interest in a strategic alliance with a partner for a new offering

With globalisation and the explosion of multi-channel distribution, companies are confronted with multiple culture shocks and find it hard to harmonise their approach.

Considering possible futures cannot be done from your desk studying the literature...

A Business Anthropology approach is a delicate matter as it combines many different expertise in the phases of immersion into the context, detailed comprehension of the different value propositions of each stakeholder involved; and in the phases of observation in situ, digital screening to detect weak signals (through enlightened data mining not mindless compilation of data).

Both being enriched with qualified interviews of experts from within the whole value chain under study and by an immersive approach to websites and to specialised blogs...

Without strong drivers, without initial Claims, it is very

difficult to extract meaning from within the over abundant information available in our pulsating globalised world.

And the consequence is visible in marketing departments blinded by constraints and the accumulation of data that tend to show that any move will be difficult...

Any examples in mind?

A department in your company which is blocked, faced with an insurmountable obstacle? Not knowing where to turn?

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The Business Anthropology approach, more than any other, requires a hybridization of expertise, talents and methods given that it sits at the crossroads of anticipation (processes developed in our prospective design lab for use by our clients' innovation or design teams) business investigation techniques, data compilation, field observation and expert interviews.

It requires forced-march hybridization to avoid paralysis or trench warfare between departments which often stem from the daunting tasks ahead.

**At Groupe Zebra we often repeat: “the project is THE boss”!**

No silos, no power struggles, no career plans, no organisational constraints given that our teams only come in for a while. Just



like scouts we give tactical and functional answers whereas the world of strategic consultancy lays down macro-economic and structural issues.

We act like a tug in a harbour helping ships in their mooring manoeuvres with a small crew, huge traction, and open to outsiders (harbour captain) during certain critical phases of the procedure.

With daily practice the pilots of such vessels develop specific qualities and techniques for manoeuvring the vessels in tight water and restricted areas sometimes surrounded by dangerous reefs.

They sail day or night, in rough seas and thick fog, avoiding costly delays and loss of income for the owners.

The Business Anthropology approach allows a captain of industry to compensate for the lack of manoeuvrability of his company busy running its ongoing activities. With such intervention, from his command post, he can make sure things do not come to a stop when faced with difficulties as too often happens. A hybridization of different expertise and points of view allows for concrete action plans, adapted to the structural capacities of the organisation.

We perform this type of intervention both for large groups in the process of transformation and fast-growing middle-sized companies looking to streamline opportunities, to align their teams and plan large investments with greater peace of mind.

As an example, a large Moroccan company, a global player, pondering what the future holds for its speciality of offshore externalisation of client relations given hyper fast technological evolution.

Should they believe the prophesies about ever increasing technology and invest millions (robots, vocal recognition, chatbots, AI...) to remain competitive, or are there other routes based on their subtle and complex understanding of humans?

Another example is Babolat, a great French sports Brand, racket specialists wanting to expand into the notoriously difficult Chinese badminton market and somewhat baffled by the apparent cost of such an operation, the total dominance of local brands (Yonex), but which discovered thanks to our Business Anthropology approach that there was an alternative way into the market not using historically standard methods but by cunning infiltration.

Or even a major French bank which after repeated failure in the insurance sector discovered, thanks to our mission, that it could take a new tack to credibility and gain its clients trust through dialogue about insurance in specific physical spaces where people are guarded but available...

**Every time hybridization of expertise and process showed the complementarity of the classical approach used by major strategy consulting groups based on data (rear**



**view mirror) with the Eye-novation approach based on observing context and markets differently (binoculars) to then formulate possible futures and find the conditions underlying the preferred one.**

The latter is more tactical, closer to the field, more operational, combining viewing skills and effective analysis in the field and using the collected data to build a practical and operational Strategic Innovation Plan (SIP) that defines the major objectives of the innovation programme and the necessary steps to get there...

## The observation of uses approach

Taking into account “how it is used” is no longer a novel approach when adapting a product or service to improve it.

Uses observations are obvious when looking for problems (the “pains” in design thinking) and seeking improvements. Nonetheless most companies we meet never do it!

In research labs or R&D offices there still is, paradoxically, an overarching trust in the experience of the boss or respected expert. As the person's knowledge is an established fact, it is considered in bad taste to challenge his/her authority. As a consequence, right from the start of the project, what is often ignored is the fact that the end user and intermediaries face in their daily lives constraints and requirements beyond your product or service.

That the product works technically and provides the required service reliably is the minimum that is required!

Does it, however, really fit the use to which it is put where and when the client uses it? Are we addressing perfectly well all contexts in which it is used?

To answer these questions we need to go back to basics: the user in context.

A value analysis, i.e. a knowledge of how the value is truly distributed, should systematically start with a uses analysis. Observation of the user during all points of contact: before the act of buying, in the critical decision phase, when buying,

during and after actual use...

And of course, though often overlooked in conventional approaches, the observation is not just of the user himself but of his environment and how it interacts with your offering. He is not alone on stage.

As you know by now, the indispensable prerequisite to dynamic observations is finding your Claims, your focal points to be sure all your cameras are ready to go.

**Make sure all three Brand postures have been taken into account to avoid the usual trap of looking for a quick compromise, very reassuring, good for unity but so often subject to bias:**

“we will observe the following targets as they represent 30% of our business and these others as we see them as critical...”

“we will go there as it is easy access...”

“we will choose these people as they tend to be collaborative and are always available...”

“we will go there on this day and at that time because we know they have time to see us...”

No! Choices for field observations must be driven by our Claims. When you know what you are looking for you have a better chance of finding it and where and how to look for it. Fixing a course does not mean choosing the first one you agree upon. A course is an ambition not a finishing line close to the departure.

Once you have your Claims, then comes the field work.

As a general rule collected data is first and foremost qualitative and direct as that is why we were there. Note taking, photos, anything can be used but video has become a powerful weapon that allows for dynamic information processing and better presentations. (thanks to innovation and the ubiquitous smart phone we are all quickly becoming budding video makers).

On top of it, with video the experience can be relived many times and by many people with different views and cognitive bias. It is often then that an extra clue appears that will validate, invalidate or add a Claim.

You generally end up finding more than what you were looking for. It is the -surprising- experience of serendipity, of being able to find something by chance that you were not necessarily looking for thanks to being in the right state of mind.

This definition is somewhat ambiguous and this is echoed when we talk about serendipity as either “the gift of finding things” or “finding by chance something you were not looking for” or even “finding things without looking”.

If the principle of chance discovery does not fit your Cartesian thinking please note it is not at all farfetched and that numerous scientific discoveries were made “by chance”: penicillin, VELCRO, POST IT the magical tool for creative workshops...

The most famous cases of serendipity were the discovery of America by Christopher Colombus and gravity by Newton.

“Applied to the internet, serendipity is all the hidden treasures - articles, software, songs, videos- that we find on the end of a link. *Web 2.0 tools encourage this fruitful zapping. [...] Though apparent opposite these two words are the two sides of a single behaviour. By procrastinating on the Web you can very much be “serendipating”. Conversely a long Web session claiming serendipity can lead to nothing more than procrastinating.* » (Xavier Biseul, French journalist « Tu sérendipites ou tu procrastines ? », 01net, 8 mars 2011).

We have just been at it! Thanks for the wake-up call M. Biseul.

Do you have any relevant examples?

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Claims serve precisely this purpose, to prepare the observer to accept the incongruous, the unexpected, to detect weak signals by sharpening his senses and avoiding procrastination... it is a phase of conscious gestation, of relating the acquired data to bring together the conditions for serendipity.

**Detecting inspiring insights with Claim centred observation and ideation.**

Ethnography appears as an ever more important discipline in innovation, a good investigative approach to capture, in a subtle and usable way, habits of consumption and uses in social economic context when exploring new business models or new uses.

It is not with 360° observations that you will guarantee relevance, but rather through the repeated observation of the same scene from different angles, that you will detect the relevant weak signals. You will avoid seeing reality through the skewed lens of your personal history, status, beliefs, habits, certainties, personal posture...

The same scene can be looked at very differently by the same person thanks to the initial Claims prepared beforehand by the project team.

Observation techniques, notably passive observations have shown their worth. There are numerous examples.

At Groupe Zebra our first experience of in situ video observations was in your bathrooms!...

To discover the habits of children when using their toothbrushes. Unbelievable adaptations with certain children putting the toothpaste directly onto their fingers and rubbing teeth and gums directly... whilst others would rinse the toothbrush before use as they believed it to be dirty, placed as it was in a stained glass and replaced there after use, all dripping fresh from the rinse... others brushed their teeth in “20 seconds flat” when in the same family an older sister followed the 2 or 3 minute rule given by the dentist...

That is where the project entrusted to us by Elida Fabergé / Unilever for Signal was acted out! We mention the Brand as



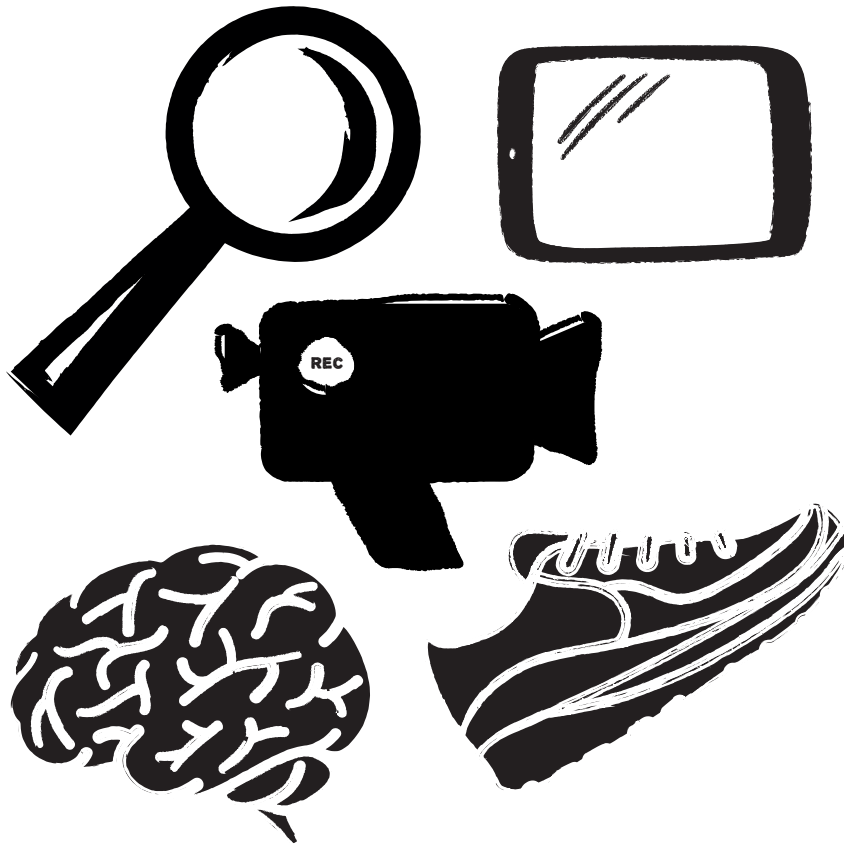
the year was 1991! Signal is a Brand if ever there was one! An impeccable reputation when it comes to toothpaste, less so for toothbrushes at the time. Those responsible for the Brand qualified it as a “family Brand” we placed it in a simpler, everyday posture as we had no name for “simplicity” at the time.

This is when the concept of “Claims” really made its appearance. Before going in situ to observe we knew that in what is a time of stress for both children and parents wanting to educate them in dental hygiene, we wanted to understand how to create a bond, proximity, ease and fluidity as well as a “touch of fun” if at all possible. This in a world where the supposed benefits are years away and the children cannot grasp them... cavities and gum problems, luckily for us, do not appear overnight...

Unilever and its toothpaste Brand Signal, in a “Know-how” posture of experts that “wash whiter than white thanks to science”, were to meet their new flagship product soon to become iconic.

This required accepting a thought process outside the framework and biases of washing products experts and watching how current products did not fit anybody’s needs... neither the needs of the children transfixed by this aggressive and repetitive act, nor the needs of the parents looking to teach a habit with benefits a long way off... a notion somewhat impossible for a child to grasp.

## OBSERVATION KIT



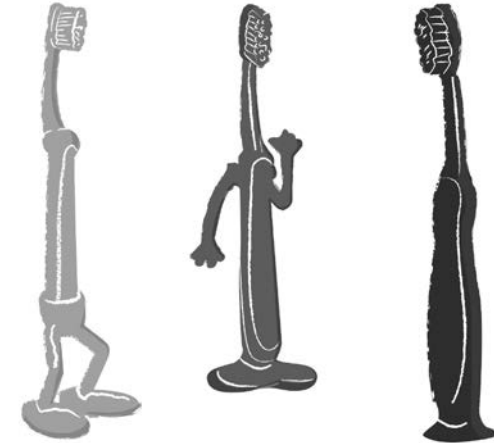
A realisation that a bond was missing... a go between the annoying parents and incredulous children. A bond of trust between the faithless child and a functional brush, a piece of plastic, and a spicy paste you need to stick into your mouth... that you do not want to swallow but that you are allowed to spit... and that is fun! finally a bond with adults very keen to teach the basis of dental hygiene but with little time to spare.

The very experiential possibility of fun, gadget toothbrushes, (Mickey Mouse or princesses, dragons, and others...) was not chosen as it would have disturbed parents very keen on the serious therapeutic aspects of the act (know-how posture).

What was chosen was a Claim identified in our preparation workshops: "What if this dreadful moment could happen as if by magic... Bang!" (Simplexity). A snapping of the fingers and the teeth are clean and shiny and not brushed by some clinical contraption.

Back from the observations, in early ideation, we knew we had to find a new "interaction" with the object, not just functional, clinical, but rather linked to the act of taking care. What if my toothbrush and I started to take care of one another...

What if we gave it friendly human characteristics, a trusted accomplice in the act, not a real human, however, or even an animal or a character from a comic book which you would not want to stick into your mouth...



**WITH FEET...**

**THEN A SUCKER !**

## THE *Signal* TOOTHBRUSH SAGA

**Anthropomorphism** Anthropomorphism was therefore of interest. (Anthropomorphism is bestowing human behaviour or form to other entities such as gods, animals, objects, phenomena, even ideas).

This could create proximity, confidence and even a form of respect for the object, making it alive to make the act of brushing less dramatic without perverting it.

The toothbrush comes to life, it does the hard work just like Mickey Mouse's broom cleaning up the mess all by itself in Walt Disney's Fantasia !

Very quickly the teams imagined a body (the handle) and little fee, and "over human" legs later replaced by something less figurative but that added a new function: the sucker.

A function that acts as a signal (no pun intended!), "I'm always ready, proud, strong, fearless and you, the child, can choose when we should meet..."

This is how famous toothbrush with a sucker was born (1993)!

It is clear here that the IDEATION and PROTOTYPE phases of Design Thinking or Lean Startup (Phases 3 & 4) strongly benefited from the "postures" approach.

The signals picked up in the field thanks to the Claims are the triggers for the proposals and solutions of IDEATION. All innovation processes (and they are many) invariably need an creative phase...

**Creativity is a subject often discussed. Famous and skilled experts have developed many tools aiming to help in the production of ideas.**

**And yet the sticking point is always: is it the right idea?**

Back to the hard truth of where you started.

However good a work process, one that generates all possible ideas, uses digital support methods, pass gates validation systems and classification tools, it is and will always remain just a process...

You could, in actual fact, work for months on the wrong basis for value creation. You could be spending a fortune and not get the winning concept, the one which will resonate in the market and become the next preferred everyday of your audience.

Some will say it is a case of pinning down the right INSIGHT, a slightly vague notion. A notion some use to shine but difficult to grasp for the novice. Furthermore, it is not exactly the same concept for the psychologist, marketer or advertising expert.

It comes from a perception, an assessment, a problem, or a consumer dilemma.

Insights are observations or salient features "recognised as true", they are therefore a truth or a belief. In any case they fit a generally accepted idea and hence provides cohesion in the target group.

Whether this would help you find the concept of the toothbrush with a sucker is another story... Claims and dynamic observations are a much better bet. They give structure to the various points of view, they organise what is blurred.



Each Claim is the source of new ideas, solutions and creativity for the **EXPLORATION** phase of **IDEATION** and **PROTOTYPE** (steps 3 and 4).

The three postures will help you get a balanced set of ideas taking into account the visions and aspirations of others. Nonetheless ideation is a key phase with its own rules and recipes and for this, mixing different skills is paramount.

**FOR UNBOUNDED CREATIVITY  
CHOOSE ONE OF THESE BOOKS  
FROM YOUR FAVORITE BOOK SHOP**



**HOW ABOUT A ZEBRA  
IN YOUR STABLES  
TO FOCUS BETTER?**





## Eye-novation: Act 2

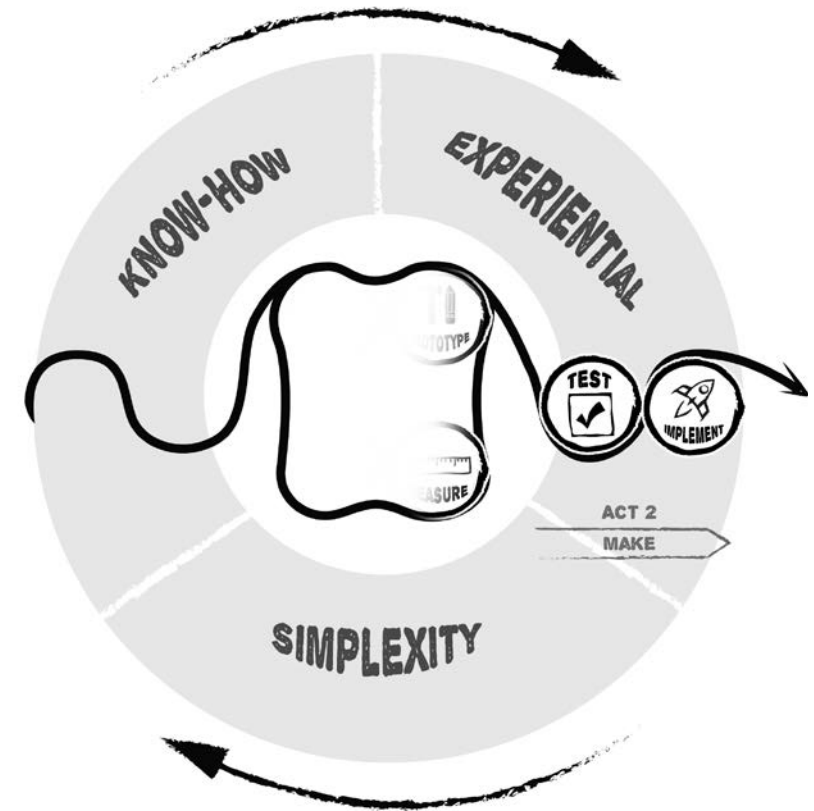
Now you have your “big idea”, time to move to the MATERIALISE phase of classical Design Thinking with steps 5 & 6 TEST & IMPLEMENTATION.

**The Eye-novation process requires here a second focusing phase** (yes please think photography).

In any case once the “big idea” exists in its different incarnations (all the ergonomic, physical, aesthetic and sensory aspects of design are done) you need to go out and test it.

**Act 2, MATERIALISE, the second fundamental act after UNDERSTANDING, takes place after the ideation and fast prototyping steps of your project, when, as you test and implement, you need to decide on a situation, an offering and a message as clear and convincing as possible: Your launching pad for the ‘future innovation’.**

**The same postures (Know-how, Experiential, Simplicity) will be your filters once again to measure the degree of acceptance of your innovation.**



Drawing of the Eye-novation process, act 2.

Focusing according to the 3 postures during the UNDERSTANDING phase of dynamic observations (Empathy and Definition), created the right conditions for effective EXPLORATION (ideation & prototyping) followed by a second focusing of the potential offering through the postures' filter when MATERIALISING.

Whilst searching for the best way to tell the story for the test and implementation phase, you will be looking for the specific detail that will resonate in the ears of your targets or better “audience” (concept that includes the direct and indirect environment of your target).

Marketing experts know well the phase when, for the same product or service, by adjusting your text, you shine light on different angles, different aspects to measure the vibrations and how the concept resonates.

Focus is also fundamental when one is about to enlarge the photo (i.e.: full scale launch of the innovation that will cost a lot) from the ‘negative’, basis for all other prototypes.

Warning! the negative in itself is not the final prototype but the initial one that needs careful refinement through various prints (prototypes) to be as close as possible to target expectations in order to obtain the perfect image, the one to be mass produced.

It is the way to ensure value is captured. Just like “capturing emotion in a picture”.

Now all you need to do is get you teams in gear and use the well-oiled “Go to market” processes... but with a clear picture for all involved!

This clear, shared, picture will boost the sounding board

helping to create emotion and ensure your innovation is adhered to.

**Test your projects under different angles, not only economic return but also to learn how far it will be adhered to.**

**To discover its best vibes, the ones that will best fit the market.**

**Use the posture filter (Know-how, Experiential, Simplicity) once again during the implementation tests, and you will discover that sometimes it is not the idea behind the project that resonates best...**

**Adopt all three postures in turn and force yourself to formulate different propositions, different arguments for the same idea, to measure the relative impact of the same idea when presented according to the three different postures.**

Let us continue with the Signal example.

The toothbrush with a sucker is a strong product concept, based on simplicity. A concept rather distant, at first glance, from the Brand's initial posture (know-how) but very much closer to actual users (parents & children).

How do you sell such an idea into the market? Or rather how to you talk about it to make sure it is recognised then bought by the interested parties?

How do you present it, contextualise it, so that it becomes the obvious next everyday of children?

It is in the adjustment phase that the Experiential posture revealed a surprise notion: Freedom!

Faced with the tedious, repetitive action of tooth brushing we were paradoxically, claiming freedom, or empowerment in today's words.

A notion encapsulated in the sucker and its capacity to stick anywhere: on the wash basin, the walls, the mirror, and even your friend's forehead just like an arrow! Which is what the advertising at the time centred upon...

Nothing about function or hygiene (know-how). Just a call to tender complicity.

The child is empowered over the act and his parents.

Thus a total and attractive solution was born, as strong emotionally as functionally which allowed marketeers to set

a price that was way beyond the one envisaged in the initial brief.

**As we have said: value needs to be caught! And this value is not necessarily caught by adopting the same posture at the beginning of the project and during the launch.**

**There is a lot of value to be captured by the one who knows how to fulfil his clients' needs. Incremental innovation cannot justify ever increasing prices (we have seen that it can destroy value by considerably increasing certain costs for very little perceived improvement).**

On a market as open as toothbrushes it is difficult to avoid the market price and difficult to build margins.

Unless you are really helping parents that is!

The Magic team at the time (Signal Marketing and Groupe Zebra) saw the opportunity and seized it with enough courage to set the price way above the competition.

Hybridization of expertise and skills to Eye.novate (innovate right) not just innovate.

The toothbrush with the sucker allowed the Brand, and this all over Europe, to very quickly become the "obvious new everyday" for a multitude of children.

Still the dominant concept in your supermarkets to this very day, 25 years later.

You will also notice that since then nothing has happened in these aisles and that the various players are having problems pinpointing to the next normality... as the patent is now in the public domain, after years of undisputed reign everybody has now followed suit.

It is no longer as obvious for SIGNAL to be people's "preferred obvious everyday" as in the good old days!

Who will be king of the next normality?

This project lies at the root of our HYBRID THINKING: a hybridization of expertise for the sake of the project and a structuring of observations through Claims. We did not know at the time how fundamental this was.

Web 2.0 by transforming us all into content creators has opened up new ways of questioning the consumer and getting him to contribute in the test phases.

Indeed, he has become the reporter of his own life.

And new types of online surveys have appeared that we use in test phases known as "confrontation with the observee"

When shown the concepts imagined in EXPLORATION (steps 3 & 4 of ideation and the first prototypes), consumers can react without the interference of an interviewer thanks to their smart phones, on their way to work, for example, or by commenting in a blog specifically created for the occasion...

No more borders, less expensive... more diversity, less bias.

This last act of focusing is an amplification of "perception" not just of your truth.

Ever since the toothbrush with the sucker all our design work has been undertaken using the principles of dynamic observation. It has also served the economic development of Groupe Zebra which has been able to work on a success fee basis.

Royalties on sales for many years...

**Our INNOVATION FACTORY in full swing!**

## CHAPTER 3

# WAITING FOR THE WAVE...

When you take an interest in innovation in the usual sense of the word, “the introduction of something new likely to change usage” the fundamental question that is raised is about its long-term effect.

The word “new” has been used so much (new recipe, new concept, new generation, new business model, new technology, new packaging, new uses...) that it has lost all clear meaning. No longer a trustworthy indicator.

In practice, it is used to present a break with the past, however recent, the fact of being new is itself short lived and beholds within itself a transformation gene.

New beckons a further new and so on and so forth...

The issue is the continuous or sequential character of innovation and, of course, the renewing process in itself.

Many have studied and shown the irregularity of the phenomenon; alternating periods of intense production of things new (relatively short lived) with periods of relative stability during which nothing changes but when existing things are transformed. We leverage and improve what exists.

Like the ocean with every seventh wave a major one...

The study of the major waves of innovation (they are very rare, one can only hope to live through one or two in one's lifetime, hence the difficulty in finding innovation experts given it requires experience) has shown a two-step process:

- A first long phase of accumulation of new scientific or technical knowledge... often in the closed circuit of “those in the know”.
- A second much shorter and denser, of synthesis and creative harnessing of the knowledge to provide “solutions”. Products and services provided to society and individuals and received as progress.

This two-step phenomenon occurred during the Renaissance (creation of the notion of patent, principles of design, invention of venture capital, definition of humanism the ancestor of our “human centric”) then before WW1 during the Belle Epoque with the concept of progress, always faster, stronger, more diverse... This phenomenon is also occurring now at the beginning of the XXIst century.

The world we know was built upon the second wave of the Belle Epoque. It defined the outlines and the rules. The three, previously mentioned, traditional pillars of human development were involved: knowledge and information, energy, and transport.

Today our world is mutating. Certain see it as the end of a cycle, others as a structural crisis, others again as cultural, industrial and social revolution... Schumpeter defined it as a phase of “creative destruction”: a new world being born from the ashes of the preceding one.

Of course, “a falling tree is noisier than a growing forest” and

it is easier to see the massive destructions in the job market or old businesses failing than the promising, but still uncertain, shoots.

Everything around us is shaking, an uncontrollable mass of knowledge and technology is provoking the brutal arrival of a wave of innovation, a permanent flow of new things: structural, functional, digital, social...

### **Tomorrow's leaders will be “assemblers”.**

They will be capable of merging and meshing the best knowledge and technological advances without necessarily being at their root...

This is very different to what leaders today were taught to expect: innovation springing from within the company and often from the founder himself.

We should abandon the relatively stable world where control of technology provided a certain competitive advantage for a world that is on the boil. Another world where, quite to the opposite, being open to others (open innovation) -quickly integrating wide ranging technological bricks from without- will allow the rapid and agile evolution of our companies.

We are on the crest of a big wave, shall we embrace it?

## The paradox of excellence...

### The end of a cycle

Our way of organising things has had its day. It stifles initiatives, creativity, through its quest for excellence seen as a model... what a paradox!

Just think, in a little over a century we have gone from a world of artisans to a totally industrialised one. In a very short time of human history we have gone from artisan to mastering serial production, from a rural world to being 55% urban and, for the last 10 years, hyper-connected.

The reign of engineers and engineering in our companies dates back to this period of amazing expansion, when all our products and services were invented, industrialised, commercialised thanks to fossil fuel energy.

Intelligent commercialisation first by merchants, and more recently marketeers, through analyses, surveys, studies of many kinds, has given us deep understanding of the “human consumer” and how to better serve him through targeting and segmentation.

A little more than a century spent pinning down operational excellence! Not only has our world made incredible progress it has made it “duplicable”.

In many domains we have reached a remarkable level of excellence.

Our goods are reliable, cars self-park and attempt to self-drive... detergents let us have clean and comfortable clothes, cosmetics and cosmeto-textiles are our allies to hide the effects of time, we produce apples and tomatoes all year round, our planes never crash... or hardly ever.

Spectacles restore the sight of our youth, sometimes lasers can help... music is no longer bought (a great pity some will say!) it is consumed through online platforms with unlimited and immediate choice, the same being true of more and more goods and services.

We are in control of our near future and communicate with those around us thanks to collaborative applications which respond in real time. They are all easily available on our smart-phones, tablets and, possibly soon, we will do more of our consumption in virtual reality without having to move... going towards a permanent teleportation of man?... Wow!

Globalisation of trade has increased competition and now no one company is leader in small household electrical goods, tens of players across the world are producing the same things, with practically the same expertise, the same engineers trained in the same schools with the same theories, the same precepts, the same industrial solutions...

Strolling through a professional trade show can be terrifying for a young recruit, things being so similar from one booth to the next and there being so many booths...

Marketeers in all companies study the changes in the same



consumers using the same agencies asking the same questions and getting the same answers...

**Even though it may sound paradoxical we have now reached a form of excellence which in itself reveals the end of a cycle!**

We are facing an alarming truth for certain managers: our comfortable system has reached its limits! Markets are saturated with identical offerings and value creation needs a new start, we need to find it somewhere else, differently, to justify our prices.

The amazing industrial revolution of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is no longer enough for us humans...

Everything is normal, everything is expected. Why pay more for a product when an identical one from an unknown Brand seems to offer all the same functions?

Furthermore, the globalised industry has not always lived up to its promises. It has lost some of its credit: on the one hand record profits for companies with an eye on the stock market is in no way incompatible with massive lay-offs, on the other we get falsification of performance data by Brands considered beyond reproach until then... the buyer is not buying it anymore! Our system needs to find a new purpose, a different way to survive, advance, and be able to convince once more.

In this context of chaos and structural upheaval, Brands and company managers, whoever they may be, need to operate a mind-shift, accept deep modifications in how to please, get back to fundamentals: production of perceptible value, tangible advantages and the creation of a real, unique bond with the user that will make them be our next “daily essential”...

Exactly what at the time was achieved by Hoover, Ford, Sony, Marlboro, Levi's, Zippo, Michelin and, more recently, by Microsoft, Salesforce, Google, Waze, Apple, Instagram, Wechat, Amazon, Alibaba...

Create the difference, rekindle interest, justify price, set emotions going, rally the crowds... to induce preference, Or as some in FMCG (Fast moving Consumer Goods) say, you should be: “re-enchanting consumption!”

This total recasting of the role of industry and services goes hand in hand with defining new missions for companies, organisations and their managers.

How to get your offering accepted, how individuals bond with Brands and the process of capturing value are going to change fundamentally.

To find effective processes to innovate efficiently one must first understand the past.

We must understand previous conventions; learn from them and derive major principles for de-risking the innovation pro-



cess and guarantee, if possible, the success of anticipation procedures. Intelligent decision making is the new battle ground. It is certainly what is lacking in big groups busy ensuring the survival of their model when startups are busy proposing alternatives.

## Client experience: a new concept?

“Consumer experience” or client experience are today on every lip.

As if we were no longer selling products and services but experiences only! But where does the would be “client experience” come from? Is it not just a very convoluted way of stating the obvious, something that we have all known for a very long time?

When you buy a train ticket over the internet you do not only face a web site, be it good or bad! You are also facing the mischief of a well-oiled yield management system on the price of your ticket, price that is somehow always different to the one paid by your fellow traveller. (Yield management: system of price management according to availability; rooms in hotels, seats in planes and trains, aiming to maximise occupancy rate and turnover.)

You then face the reality of programmed departures; time and platform (which may change), and where on the platform you should be standing to be close to your seat (which is bound to change!).

Time for an interesting trip to the Bar (yes, open today and fully stocked....) which lets you appreciate how double ended queues are managed, and how stocks are taken when your favourite yoghurt is not available... and many more challenging things... especially when you are flying with certain airlines or having to deal with your broadband provider's customer service...

Customer experience is therefore a centuries old “discovery” -not to say millennia- and has today become central...

One quickly realises that a company does not only rely for success on the quality of its products or services but on a collection of items more or less linked to them as well as the usage context, the environment, and its representatives.

It is impossible to start thinking about innovation without first accepting that it may concern any aspect of the product or service and/or the entirety of the external factors that influence or affect it.

Client experience is not some dubious concept it is a very real state of affairs that finally has a name.

We are touching here an endogenous issue in innovation; its multi-polar, multi-cellular character, and its varied unpredictable origins; the fact its effects are visible only once brought into contact with the environment which itself is multiple and constantly changing.

Warning: this fact does not necessarily please Cartesian thinkers looking to construct easily applied and duplicated rules.

Seamless client experience is no longer an option! Whatever your business.

The arrival of the digital world has only served to make this even truer. Everything and anything is known, judged, shared, published... Innovation also means admitting the whole experience needs to be looked at to avoid failure.

## Innovation is a fulltime job

How has the concept of NEW changed over time? In a previous book (ALL YOU NEED IS **L.O.V.E.** –Live the **O**blique **V**ision **E**xperience) we dealt at length with the notion of NEW and of its sometimes dubious, sometimes incredibly attractive character depending on our daily habits and culture. New is also for companies a source of risk and very disruptive but remains the main tool in value creation.

It is generally agreed that 15 to 20% of mass market sales are of products that did not exist 3 years ago. It is undeniable that only through innovation will Brands keep their spots on the shelves.

Producing something new is the best way to show you exist, you are relevant, you are different from the competition, you are legitimate. What is certain is that producing some “usage changing new” -innovation- is at the centre of any and all possible shifts.

Our ideals change, the very principle of “Ideal” needs to be challenged. We need to recreate a sense of want, new perspectives, stimulate involvement, justify prices, generate interest, create opportunities for meeting.

In short, the uncertainty linked to innovation for a company is a fact but also a necessity. Mastering uncertainty is a must when building your purpose, your credibility.

And your influence within your eco-system is dependant upon it.

**Lack of certainty is very different to risk.**

# INNOVATION IS A FULL-TIME JOB



# NOT AN ACTIVITY

## De-risking innovation...

Two key missions in innovation for the leader of an organisation:

1. **Defining the conditions needed to breed success, by controlling risk throughout the organisation.**
  - Frameworks and teams
  - Operational excellence
2. **Managing as well as possible the uncertainties surrounding opportunities** and favouring innovation by encouraging some (not all!) to act...

When talking about driving innovation, as with any other process, we are talking about organising available resources, internal and external, in the manner best suited to producing results.

Besides the hierarchical company organisation chart, it is necessary to establish another type of organisation and specific processes; both necessary to manage profitable innovation.

The body in charge of innovation governance is fundamental but different depending on the size of the company and its industry.

The question is what is the ideal team to manage uncertainties and risk as well as to create attractive and relevant innovative propositions? What type of background? Is there an “innovator”

profile? Who is truly creative? The younger or the more mature? Rational brains or the more “elastic” ones?

It is shocking to see that in France the school curriculum takes no interest in creativity. Every normal person is expected to succeed in the noble subjects such as maths, physics, sciences... those that open up the high road to engineering, business schools, medicine or finance...

Failing that, in second position, come management and social sciences followed by literature, philosophy, languages, and at the bottom the so called artistic studies... We have all witnessed the black sheep of a family who having failed all entrance exams will not be taking the high road, being sentenced as follows: “he is the Artist in the family he will go to art school...”

The presumption (cognitive bias) that the less rational, less structured, least capable at solving complex equations are creative is still very much with us. Creativity is hence often associated with a certain amateurism, carelessness, a lack of theoretical reasoning and therefore reserved to non-conventional outsiders.

After 30 years developing Groupe Zebra’s innovation expertise as well as thousands of strategic and creative projects, it is quite amusing, really, to see that mastering innovative projects is much more about flexibility in the face of uncertainty, capacity for active observation and adaptation to context,

rather than managing processes, organising matrix and risk management techniques however reassuring these tools may be.

### **Innovation is the business of a multi-disciplinary commando.**

We need to be giving method to agile but uncontrolled brains... and heating up the frozen ones.

Our approach based on a close interaction of Marketing, Engineering and Design creates a process more centred on the relevance and efficiency of creation than on its artistic side. Thirty years of innovation and design and a few thousand products and services have lead to the development of a systemic approach in conceiving an offering.

A hybrid approach, human centred and rigorous enough to satisfy industrial, commercial and production contexts. An approach heavily influenced by the concept of Brand and impregnated with the hands on approach typical of small and medium sized companies and necessary, today, in large ones...

A close interaction between such different disciplines (not forgetting finance necessary for creating business models and managing the material conditions of the implementation phase) is a challenge in itself. A dynamic equilibrium difficult to maintain within organisations, established structures, where teams organised by department are generally involved in fighting for territory and career.

This type of blend of skills is generally easier in startup type structures, when setting up a company or in the early stages of new projects.

That may well be why when we think innovation today “startup” tends to come to mind...

It is true that in a startup managing a department is not an objective neither is the defence of an acquired position; the objective is creating something new from scratch.

Not quite “scratch”, as we have seen, the startup has a strong idea, a vision or a technological solution to start from. The obstacles are not structures, organisations or managerial positions but hurdles that need to be tackled together, sometimes with limited means.

## Open innovation as a basic principle

We believe in the virtue of team hybridization and encourage the partial and temporary externalisation of the teams in charge of innovation.

A company is not naturally designed to innovate! Innovation is a challenge to its current state, the one that feeds it.

We believe in turning to commandos trained to work in hostile environments who know each other well, have certain reflexes, and are held together with the bond of shared experience in difficult situations. A good knowledge of your men is a priority to get them to advance into uncharted territories and to manage them in high risk zones...

A good knowledge of the adversary, the environment too... experience lets you manage risk much more effectively but experience is rare when it comes to innovation.

These small groups, organised in **open innovation** mode do not conceive of innovation as a process born from wanting to develop a predefined product or service but as one with a much **wider scope aiming to capture value** from existing or possible ecosystems.

**And as over the last twenty years the amount of knowledge has grown exponentially (In 2016 over 5 million scientific papers and 1 million patents are expected worldwide!!) whatever your company and its industry, however big, you have to admit that most knowledge lies outside it,** including what will let you open up new markets and know-hows.

**In reality, “open company” is what this is about.**

We know today that to innovate better and faster the whole company needs to change... far from the “not invented here” syndrome that still holds back so many industries.

In team sports a necessary condition for success is building a squad. A sum of skilful individuals united in a shared ambition (objective), organised around a strict programme and directed by a leader. The same is true for Jazz improvisation.

When bringing up the notion of skilful individuals we face the problem head on: to successfully carry forward innovative projects, even non-breakthrough ones, do you need special off the scale individuals?

You will need strong, ambitious, persevering, communicative individuals capable of moving mountains and combining creativity techniques with a capacity for analysis, conviction, flexibility and rigorously organised to avoid chaos. You will therefore need to manage different egos...

Egos that have no titles as these jobs have no names! Therefore, no specific knowledge no recognised know-how... that which has no name does not exist.

Beyond the recently named "Chief Innovation Officer" often in charge of varied initiatives, there is nothing!

This shows the difficulty specialists are having in identifying and clarifying these skills in a world in love with continuity and order.

Even more surprising given the talent required, skills necessary and courage needed by these 'miracle makers' who are producing the future value of the company. It is important from now on to have and impose within companies new 'titles' for such "market scouts", "usage observers", "solutions developers", "prototype makers", "ideas scriptwriters", "value directors", "emotion hunters", "inventors of experience", "POC producers"...

To innovate effectively you need experience, methods and leadership, not just ideas, a certain willingness and communication skills.



CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER  
**LOOKING  
FOR PEOPLE  
WITH CAN DO  
MENTALITY**

## What profile to head innovation? What governance to innovate right?

### Brilliant inventor, visionary entrepreneur, mad creator...

First of all let us get rid of a few folk tales that need to be laid to rest.

### “Innovation challenges” can no longer be in the hands of R&D.

To the question: “is your company innovative?” many still reply: “We spend x% of turnover on R&D”, as if in doing so they were opening up the royal way to company development and future success... unfortunately researching does not imply finding!

And it appears that finding has never been so difficult.

Paraphrasing Langdon Morris a consultant and researcher at the University of Pennsylvania, and author of *Agile Innovation* (2014): “nowadays, after 150 years, and after that hundreds of thousands – or even millions- of engineers have, all over the world, spent days, months and years doing R&D we can say that all the easy ideas have been used. Basic chemicals have been discovered or invented, easy processes developed, accessible inventions have happened.”

Today already, tomorrow more so, innovation cannot be solely in the hands of company labs whose expertise is overwhel-

mingly technical and scientific.

It appears that science and technology in many domains have reached a plateau, the limit of what can be achieved by people working only in the lab. Therefore, tomorrow's innovations will not necessarily come from scientists isolated in their labs but from scientific and technical knowledge meeting those who have a very different world view as this meeting will produce new ‘ideas’ new ‘possibilities’.

If in many industries the R&D departments’ production of new things is no longer fast enough for creating value, it is also true their organisation and structure have hardly changed in a century.

It may well be why seasoned innovation professionals have introduced the notion of challenge into their approach to release the energies held back by slow conventional processes.

Our future depends, at least in part, on our capacity to define the major challenges awaiting us in our business.

Identifying precisely these major challenges is in itself a very complex matter and the subject of another book.

The concept of challenges is fashionable, we attempt to solve them with collaborative innovation, design sprints and with “hackathons” (originally events where volunteer software developers would get together for a while and work on certain aspects of programming in collaborative mode...which through successive acts of blindness have now invaded other



domains). A phenomenon upheld by the appealing idea that “whoever has studied creativity knows that most good new ideas come when people with different experience, pasts and objectives talk and work together”.

Those that work in innovation know that a large percentage of the best ideas developed in a certain domain came from people outside it.

“Novices are often innovators because they see things differently and bring to a certain domain, ideas from another” but working in a rush is no way proceed.

*“Stories about innovation are often enthusiastic, sometimes even prophetic, however it is important to remember that on a daily basis, the work is always modest, progressive, made up of setbacks, rectifications, adjustments and coincidence; innovation often muddles through, into the unknown and in imagination”.* (Pierre Musso, Laurent Ponthou, Eric Seulliet: Fabriquer le Futur volumes 1 & 2).

If on the surface big “conceptual shifts”, major advances, are consequence of these new agile and liberated collaborations the truth is, results are rather slim and that before all this “noise” great innovators proceeded methodologically, organising and structuring expertise and projects.

Please refer to the research on Thomas Edison the man who invented (or enabled the invention) of the alkaline battery, the phonograph, the electric bulb... A legend of industry! Foun-

der of General Electric and considered by many the father of the modern concept of innovation.

His first R&D centre was founded 1887 (Groupe Zebra, Innovation Factory in 1987!)

His “invention factory”, as he called it himself, brought together physics, chemistry and materials laboratories as well as a “plans lab” (industrial design before it got its name) with an array of machinery (today’s fablabs) together with a well-stocked scientific library (data room in our parlance).

It employed almost 200 people of varied backgrounds (a diversity we salute) certain were brilliant inventors like Nikola Tesla (the man with 300 patents who then worked for Georges Westinghouse the number 1 competitor), and many anonymous others.

The people were organised in groups of 10 to 15 for every project with the Wizard of Menlo Park as their agile leader; self-organisation was the rule. Edison, a good businessman, acted as a converter of inventions into innovations! Indeed, he has often been blamed for this recycling of other people’s inventions...

The results: more than 400 patents in under 10 years...  
Who does better?

**“Creating innovation” is not limited to the talent of a brilliant visionary clearly thinking about a revolutionary product.**



Think of Apple and the legendary Steve Jobs, his early partners do not at all remember him as the visionary thinker the legend would have us believe. In fact, somewhat the opposite, according to them it took a lot to convince him of the value of the Macintosh project over Lisa, another project at the time at Apple. For more information please refer to the works of California university professor, Andrew Hargadon.

**Innovation is complex and situation dependent.**  
**“Creating innovation” cannot be the consequence of a unique theory, of a simple blueprint.**

To innovate there are no fool-proof recipes... but we can attempt to define certain gates, unavoidable steps that punctuate the process, making it more secure, palpable, less uncertain. Nonetheless, each project, each innovation issue, requires the setting up of a specific way of thinking, adapted processes, specific means, and this perennial change in the overall organisation leads, at times, to existential stress for the teams.

In that sense, it is true that innovation is similar to artistic endeavour. The value (or lack) of art is judged over time, in the context of the artist's production, his environment (what he is living through both in his private life and in his relation to what is happening around him) and of what is fashionable. To innovate you probably have to start by feeling which moulds, codes, dogmas, you are more or less consciously prisoner of, and use your thinking power to flee the dominant mode of thought.

This appears fairly obvious but fails to calm the most rational amongst us who would like to master an established process. It should also encourage leaders to trust not just rigorous disciplined minds to manage innovative projects. Humans, and for this we should be grateful, remain central to the process.

**More dangerous than a classical project, innovation needs a “situation based” approach similar to an obstacle course.**

Like a soldier on tricky, treacherous terrain, the innovator must:

- Show great adaptability at every stage and in all circumstances.
- Find all potential routes not just the ones that appear the shortest.
- Know how to rely on others... and when to ignore them!
- Be incredibly determined to overcome obstacles but also have great listening powers.
- Be agile given that strength and technical knowledge cannot always be applied.
- Always keep track of time as others are in the race.

And that is exactly what those managing innovative projects are having to do today.

**The innovator is first and foremost an entrepreneur (be it inside an existing company or starting out).**

Each generation gets to write its own story.

We are not at the beginning of the XXIst century in the same situation as our illustrious innovating predecessors. We are, however, in a world of “innovation propaganda”. There is no doubt about that!

Deep tech,  
 Deep learning,  
 Blockchain,  
 IA,  
 Big data,  
 Industry 4.0,  
 Open data,  
 Additive manufacturing,  
 Digital synergies...

Some jargon to get used to!

Today, innovating is a different difficulty, not greater, just different! But the difference is huge.

As the projects have passed over the thirty years of work for companies and institutions of all sizes, our commandos of inventors, designers, product architects, marketeers, designers, our strategists in alternative investigation techniques, have been confronted to innovation issues on very different markets. They have been “pioneers”, often developing new practical tools; knowing how to adapt is a condition for survival in such jobs.

When it came to methodology, here too, very quickly, we had to develop specific frameworks and therefore our own tools for business modelling analysis as well as for the development of the creative process.

Only later, with experience accumulating, did we really understand the “weight” of the Brand or company posture not only when it comes to sales (which is obvious and has already been studied) but also when it comes to spotting opportunities, formulating and advancing the proposed innovation.

A predisposition (or lack) to certain types of new things consequence of the origin, the foundation of the Brand.

A capacity drawn from the internal culture (identity), the management but, of course, also from what the public perceives (Brand image).

## DON'T COUNT ON CHANCE!



## MAGIC TEAM or bust.

We have just mentioned the notion of performance in innovation.

Parallels between the world of sports and companies are legion...

You must have been at a conference where a sports star explained how close the two worlds are in their quest for performance.

Fascinating when the speaker is sincere but not very convincing when you consider that in a company not all employees are “super motivated”, looking for top performance and listening to the a highly prepared coach (manager) with high expectations. It is often interesting to listen to these stories but in the end rather distant from a much more mundane reality.

The high-level sports metaphor is, on the other hand, much more relevant to innovation. For here, there is indeed a quest, unmeasurable ambition, objectives unreachable to most, together with a precise goal, a medal to be had (success or market recognition).

Reaching this grail requires effort and collaboration. It is the only grace, in a world where too much expertise would need to be meshed to reach perfection. Your innovation “Magic Team” will need to be strong willed, attached to details and guided by a perfect knowledge of your body (structure of your company), your capacities (assets and know-how), of the

latest changes in many disciplines (open innovation), of your shortcomings that need improvement.

It will require doggedness at pushing the limits whatever the conditions (health problems, weather or any other outside issue such as a pandemic, easy to compare to your adjustment problems, the issues of timing of the launch your innovation or the sudden arrival of unexpected technology at the beginning of the project).

You will also need a detailed breakdown of the success criteria to organise the development plans. Not a splitting of the functions! As we know power and balance are inseparable for a sprinter, the same is true for the innovator. And then, beyond all that genetics remain crucial...

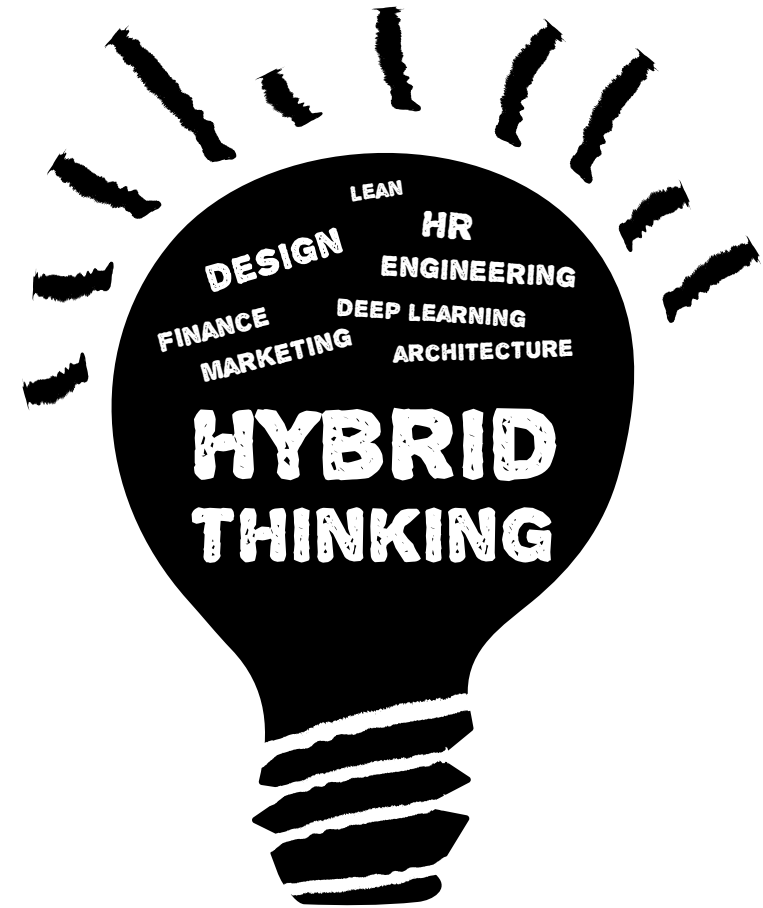
To innovate successfully you need power and a balance of forces. Team organisation is a subject in itself, and often the first reason for failure, especially in startups.

The different powers at play will include, working, thinking, forecasting, deep knowledge to ensure technical mastery of the subject and an impulse at the outset to find from without the skills or expertise not mastered within.

**The first thing is to start by imagining the “Magic Team” and accepting that it will not necessarily be fully made up of internal resources.**

The cardiologist, nutritionist or mental coach are not necessarily linked to the sports team... but without them no long-lasting performance.

The core team has to be built to balance the forces at play (always remember the sprinter).



## Putting in charge of the project an “expert in the field” upsets the balance.

How many projects were bound to fail from the outset because over-dominated by a designated “expert” who saw it as an opportunity to introduce a technology he had long believed in? The expert’s cognitive bias can be very dangerous when it comes to innovation, the opposite being true in a development project! “I always said this technology would be a game changer” “I’ve been saying this would come for the past 20 years...” or even “given where we are, I can say that the logical next step in the evolution is...” (oh!!! Darwin...).

Technical experts are, of course, totally indispensable in the innovation process but a thought process using more or less assertive “laws” is no guarantee of avoiding wrong turns at the start or at any validation stage.

Just as doctors are experts and therefore have a perfectly recognised “power” -most patients do as they are told by their doctors- so do companies have their experts.

Their titles are as numerous as their skills: jurist, financier, computer scientist, more recently CIO... and the organisation of certain companies is recast for the sake of a new Information System... one mutates, in a few words, from being a computing department acting as support to being an information system acting strategically... amusing but dangerous. The power of the experts needs to be controlled.

The notion of expert is frequent in professional jargon and within organisations: expertise is mixed up with function.

Often, expert is used as a hallmark guaranteeing quality. In exceptional circumstances you supposedly need an expert.

In books and studies the word is vague and wide ranging and the word’s etymology sends us back to its Latin origin EXPERTIS which is said of a person “who knows something very well through practice” (Larousse 1993). This refers back to experience, the one who has been tested (EXPERITI) and overcome passions and ideologies (Casella, Tanguy et Tripier 1988).

Experts are key in certain organisations, most notably those “selling expertise” such as laboratories, research centres, consulting and auditing firms, etc.

But are you sure your company is full of experts?

The possession of rare assets gives them a monopoly difficult to get around and places them in a position of power over those that surround them. The arrival of new technologies and the development of a knowledge-based society has only served to reinforce the phenomena.

But the status of expert does not exist as such! It is the result of an ongoing process. The expert is like a self-learning system. He deserves his power only if he stays at the forefront of progress or the top level of excellence. His power depends on

this permanent adjustment.

Is the company expert you have in mind a true expert or just passionate and competent?

Is he/she an expert or just a self-proclaimed or appointed “specialist”?

The specialist has a directory of resources essentially composed of tacit knowledge built up over time through contact with his peers and personal reflections on his experience.

One expects of the expert to act in different and everchanging contexts. He does not really use rules, no systematic following of procedure but evaluates a situation according to a few relevant indicators that his brain “spots” in record time.

Some people refuse to see the link between this and intuition... a most disturbing notion for rational thinkers.

The innovation expert is the one who knows how to intervene in apparently critical situations that he “simplifies” and for which solutions exist, knowledge is available and an answer immediately selected from a few pre-established possibilities.

Like a chess grand master, the expert is playing games he has already played without having to face all the uncertainty.

Like the expert from the insurance company who, after a water leak, can establish his report in an hour with a price for the works based on previous situations he has experienced. He combines his theoretical knowledge with the variety and richness of what he has already experienced.

Experts often have specific “PATTERNS” in memory that let them come up quickly with a good solution and avoid the tedious iterative process indispensable in engineering.

Tedious iterative process... Lean Startup... What should we think of the many startups founded on a great idea but with not a single expert in their midst? With no expertise and despite remarkable agility a lot of money is going to be spent imagining a succession of propositions and then pivoting.

If you have a striking example please go to **eye-novation.fr**  
You can now understand why your “Magic Team” will need to be made up of varied, complementary profiles that range from key experts to “hard” science specialists and people who really know their “soft” sciences.

Force yourself to bring together the team from the start and do question its composition quickly if you feel it is somewhat fragile or unbalanced. Remember the left leg is as strong as the right leg for a sprinter and the body steady.

**Your Magic Team has to be HYBRID but it needs a LEADER!**

**A leader, is someone which will get each member to grow not a boss to be obeyed!**



## What if our choices could change the world!

At a time of collective and unanimous realisation of our planet's fragility when we are starting to admit that after a century of outrageous exploitation of natural resources the necessity to show more responsible behaviour and practices, it is time to fundamentally change our development model in order to really take care of this wonderful creation and help its handing over to future generations under favourable conditions...

At a time of multiple disruptions of our civil societies, shattered by the rampant digitalisation of our economic, social or cultural structures...

...it is urgent to challenge many of our mindsets.

And this is true for the institutions that we serve, companies and Brands.

The oldest Brands we have inherited and we have over exploited them for the last eighty years! The economy is not growing as it did. The foundations of our system are shaking and power is changing hands in many domains. Historical leaders are losing market share to newcomers. Today, they are struggling to "exist" and to justify their prices.

Other economic powers such as the GAFA which only appeared a few years ago have conquered the world with a few

clicks and provoked real havoc in traditional value chains.

Whatever their origin they were born from the creativity of an individual, a vision, an inspiration, an innovation, a specific know-how, and a stance... but their origin, however intelligent and relevant, is no longer a guarantee of survival.

Just take a look at the number of startups in the same race... the rhythm, frequency, and activity of players around any new product or service is constantly accelerating. The simple example of self-service mini scooters or chauffeur driven cars reflects this infernal rhythm.

One must look to guarantee the company's future by making the innovation approach, the processes and results, more systematic and relevant in creating and capturing of value. For that, it is necessary to define the conditions of preference of one offering over another... not necessarily by throwing money at it, not necessarily by speed of reach as in the myth of the startup...

The industrial era defined the conditions for moving from artisan to industrial production. In a few decades we learned how to produce well and increasingly more efficiently. Operational excellence is no longer an issue.

Indeed, it is fully mastered in the many "workshop" countries in Asia, North Africa or South America where we have successfully (too much so?) moved our production know-how.

No need for long discussions to understand that in “industrialised” countries we are left with four major axes for growth:

Three are sector-specific:

- **Industries that cannot be relocated**
- **Industries where robotization is possible.**  
This recent evolution opens up new fields.
- **Services for companies and people.**  
And the fourth is functional:
- **Innovation**, as defence and as value creation.

Bringing back home relocated industries is in the news. But how can you imagine this for industries that were relocated to the other side of the world in order to be competitive and control production costs?

Faced with this political and somewhat demagogic idea, we have chosen to pick our fight and actually do something. We acted with the means at our disposal, at our own rhythm, applying Eye-novation to a sector that we have known well for the past twenty years: performance sports shoes.

A few years ago, together with French company Chamatex Group, we designed and developed a high-performance

material ([matryx-textile.com](http://matryx-textile.com)) that provides a major innovation to designers of sports shoes... a technology adopted by major Brands such as Puma in football, Salomon in trail, Babolat in racket sports and Mavic in cycling.

But to take this further and innovate even more, today we are developing with the same company a totally disruptive concept of intelligent factory (industry 4.0) dedicated to the automatic production of sports shoes... in France!

A highly automated production developed with industry leaders such as Siemens to produce the products where they will be bought and used (local to local).

Quite the opposite to the current Asian model, manpower hungry, and based on huge industrial operations requiring the oceans be covered with container ships and a minimum of 18 months “time to market” for Brands.

A.S.F 4.0 (Advanced Shoe Factory 4.0) is a « smart factory », a new industrial model, easily duplicated and sold under license. A “turnkey” model so that Brands can produce locally, satisfying much more quickly market and consumer demands and reducing the cycles of product elaboration.

We believe in the future development of micro factories set up locally at the heart of where the consumption will take place which will fundamentally change the carbon footprint of the industry. Major players from the world of sport have already joined this company to participate through open innovation in this industrial adventure and start a lasting revolution to generate different business models.



Salomon, Millet, Babolat are the shareholders and first clients of this innovative approach.

“Sustainable design” is certainly not limited to using a new bio-sourced or natural material. We believe in an eco-conception of industrial models in sustainable transformation and work every day to design actual industrial solutions.

A simplification of the logistics chain will of course make for greater reactivity at local level, but the other major asset of the flexibility offered by this new factory is in designing new models and the acceleration of the testing phase through short runs.

Innovating right (Eye.novating) in order to liberate creative energies.

Faced as we are with an over-reductive vision of eco-design, initiatives not totally free of green washing and the hasty development of “organic products”, we prefer to find sectors with a bright future, the ones that will bring value tomorrow, and imagine innovative solutions that make the location obvious when looking for sustainability. Here for here.

As is often the case, the issue is about understanding the true nature of the problem before thinking of possible solutions. It is important to use decision making intelligence before releasing the organisational intelligence we know well.



**TOMORROW**



Over the centuries which major factors have influenced the development of human beings on earth?

What were the pillars of the major industrial, economic and social revolutions?

We see three main ones:

### **Knowledge and information, Energy and Mobility.**

Each major step forward in one of these three created the conditions for a major revolution in our ways of life.

#### **This is where the stakes lie.**

Energy, towards a sustainable mix, renewable, carbon free, shared... a post petroleum era and its consequences on thermoplastics that have brought so much to contemporary society.

**Mobility**, towards a usage lead redefinition of collective and individual transport solutions well beyond the issue of their power source... and a drastic shift for the aero-industry to short and medium haul flights and planes powered by carbon-free energy, biofuels...

**Knowledge and Information**, towards mastering the fabulous digital tool (under all its facets) to turn the digital revolution into a weapon of development for human wellbeing and a more efficient, sustainable economy.

On these three major issues we can and we must 'LOCALISE' the know-how, the solutions, the expertise, the value, jobs for all through innovation. Starting by innovating on the means to get there.

Two other major pillars are currently on the boil: matter and life. They will provide fascinating transformations.

Nature, in all its diversity and renewable materials, has been used by man from the start. The bio-economy (as opposed to the petrol-based economy) is on the boil.

Tomorrow you will grow your own meat at home just as you do your herbs today...

Community based Bio-Hackers will appear and will use open source to bring on a new world!

### **With colossal repercussions on another challenge for our changing planet: agriculture and food.**

We are heading straight towards a deep rethink of agricultural models to fulfil the needs of our exponential demographics while respecting available natural resources and using major technological shifts...

Our answer is a great collaborative movement **NEOFARMING**, which brings together public and private institutions in order to anticipate the probable major evolutions and

maximise the de-risking of the innovative projects that need to start in many domains.

If you see yourself as part of this, join us:

**[www.eye-novation.fr](http://www.eye-novation.fr)**

**The above mentioned five pillars appear to be the necessary base for a “regenerative innovation approach” and could be the subject of a major innovation round table.**

There is an urgent need to get behind alternative models that combine Strategic Alliances and new business models based on visions that “amplify life” rather than a perpetuation of yesterday’s world.

What if we were at the premises of a more “inclusive” social business model?

A new generation rather than a slow evolution of the past. Heading towards socially engaged company and organisation models, deliberately generating “better ways of life” rather than exploiting yesterday’s world crumbling before our very eyes.



## **Eye-novation and Hybrid Thinking...**

To innovate is to suggest something that resonates for people in a changing world.

Anticipating change, possibly provoking or directing it, is the only path available to companies to ensure their survival and growth.

With a relentless growth of variables for new offerings, the next big evolution in management will come in the form of decision-making intelligence.

This is where the weakness lies because innovation needs experience and few of us have any. We have been hard at work over the last few years creating a solution based on artificial intelligence which will capitalise on innovation experience to give the right reflexes to as many people as possible.

The major principles of innovation management are yet to be established.

What is sure is that innovation involves organisations, processes, offerings and services, well beyond a “tech-centric R&D” vision and needs to head towards multi-expertise “human centric hybrid thinking”.

HYBRID THINKING is a must today beyond the juxtaposition and addition of services and expertise. Client intimacy has become a strategic weapon for R&D to be conquering and profitable.

But beyond building an agile, multi-skilled dedicated team, it is up to general management to show the way by encouraging every department to participate in this movement, increasing the company's general level of empathy for its public and surrounding itself with strategic partners.

Of course, without trust and a minimum of freedom it is impossible to motivate your troops. To encourage this and liberate talents, leaders need to set a course.

The capacity to project a clear vision and an innovation roadmap (Strategic Innovation Plan -SIP-) will make teams want to get involved.

A course with different possible routes “adjustable” to changing conditions and opportunities and with waypoints.

Agile organisations say nothing more.

And when facing headwinds, just like a sailing boat, the project is going to have to accept to tack, to sail close-hauled. But the course does not change with each new day!

At a time when not a single company or organisation can consider its employees, partners, public, clients as theirs for good and when transformations (sectorial, digital, organisational, technological, or of usage) are shuffling the cards for societies and business, “client intimacy” and “innovation” cannot remain the prerogative of a single department isolated in marketing services or R&D structures.

A company's capacity to transmit an innovation culture to all departments conditions its capacity to adapt to new market expectations and to reinvent processes.

For this, Eye-novation is a proposition, an attempt, necessary, legitimate, questionable too, like all propositions...

« Each one of us holds too dearly to his own truths to abandon them when faced with arguments that we only listen to through our own mindset concentrating on their weaknesses in order to justify rejecting them without taking into account the rest... », said Jean Bruller, also known as Vercors in a collection of essays published by Éditions Grasset in 1953.

All was said, all is said!

We have always conceived Groupe Zebra as a “non-fixed from”

a system in the gaseous state, a self-learning collective process in quest of an ideal. So, beyond this essay, this snapshot, we tirelessly and carefully continue to explore the fascinating world of innovation through different lenses and with great respect for alternative postures.

Our CURRENT approach does not claim to be the future.

**The future does not exist. We need to design it.**

## Thanks

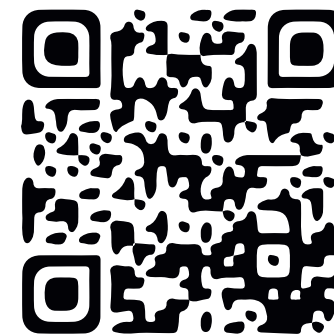
I particularly wish to thank Francis Lepage co-founder and associate of this fascinating structure today called Groupe Zebra. A solid companion for more than 30 years, a friend, a maker, a pillar without whom nothing would have been possible.

We wish to thank every single Groupe Zebra and Zebrand team member, from yesterday and today.

Thank you to our clients for pushing us further and further and acting as partners in regenerative innovation for positive growth.

And thankyou of course to all those who for so many years have shared our adventure in the land of innovation.

Finally, here is a list of a few people, some we know, some we don't, who have inspired us in one way or another. My thanks to Antoine de Saint-Affrique, Olivier Sibony, Pascal Roux, Eric Babolat, Mariella Bertheas, Jacques Faggianelli, Olivier Grenier, François Michelin, Jean Michel Aulas, Kirk Sabo, Jim Mellon, Johannes Tryba, Gerard Mulliez, Roland Tchénio, Michel Hazanavicius, Paul Millier, Rolf Faste, Michael Jordan, Elon Musk, Mostafa Terrab, Emmanuel Faber, Michel Serres, José Maria Arizmendiarieta Madariaga, Moulay Hafid Elalamy, Jack Ma, James Dyson, Noam Bardin, Ingvar Kamprad, Muhammad Yunus, Jacques Attali...



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