

# What Drives Innovation? A heuristic framework for corporate innovation

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## Introduction

If you ask, “what drives successful innovation?” you are likely to get these answers: “Desire for growth.” “Demand for increased profitability.” “People.”

While clearly true, these are superficial answers. There’s no clear way to link these answers to the factors that would lead to success in innovation – or the factors that lead to failure. Innovation is still regarded as somewhat uncontrollable and mysterious, though this perception is beginning to change. The idea that there are factors that, singly and in combination, drive innovation (successful innovation in particular) has just begun to be discussed. An effort to understand innovation drivers – those factors that motivate and shape innovation efforts, and in no small way determine their success or failure – seemed to us to be a promising way to discover what factors make for success and failure in innovation.

We interviewed a number of executives from across a wide range of industries, who either were or had been responsible for innovation efforts throughout their careers. Our goal was to find common innovation drivers that could be linked to successes and failures.

During the course of collecting nearly twenty highly diverse innovation stories, we realized these executives were telling us about something much more actionable than drivers. They told us about:

- Questions that were asked and were not asked.
- Issues that were addressed and not addressed.
- Decisions that were and were not made.
- Information that strongly impacted the innovation effort, but was discovered too late to alter the effort.

Ultimately, their stories pointed out that it was these things, rather than the initial driver behind the innovation, that led either to a successful or to a failed innovation. We refer to these critical things as “lynch-pin drivers.”



What determines the success of any particular innovation effort usually comes down to one or two critical ‘lynch-pin drivers.’ Our heuristic framework for innovation will help you discover those lynch-pin drivers and tailor your process to accommodate them.

**Figure 1**

**Stage-Gate or Phase-Gate Process**

Source: Cooper, R., Edgett, S. Kleinschmidt, E., Optimizing the Stage-Gate Process: What Best Practice Companies Are Doing - Part 1 (2002).

**Hypothesis**

All innovation, successful or not, follows some kind of process. Some processes may be formal and repeatable, such as the Stage-Gate® or phase-gate process, which is one of the oldest and most widely used (see Figure 1).

The strength of an approach such as this lies in its broad applicability and the ability to apply it to multiple situations.

Some processes are much less formal and not as repeatable, with their strong points lying in broad, thorough communication and widespread enthusiasm for the effort.

Based on our observations, we are not advocating a “best” innovation process to follow, nor even that a single process should be followed within an organization. Rather, we are asserting that, regardless of what process is followed, the chances of achieving a successful innovation can be increased by asking a series of questions – implementing a heuristic framework for innovation, if you will.

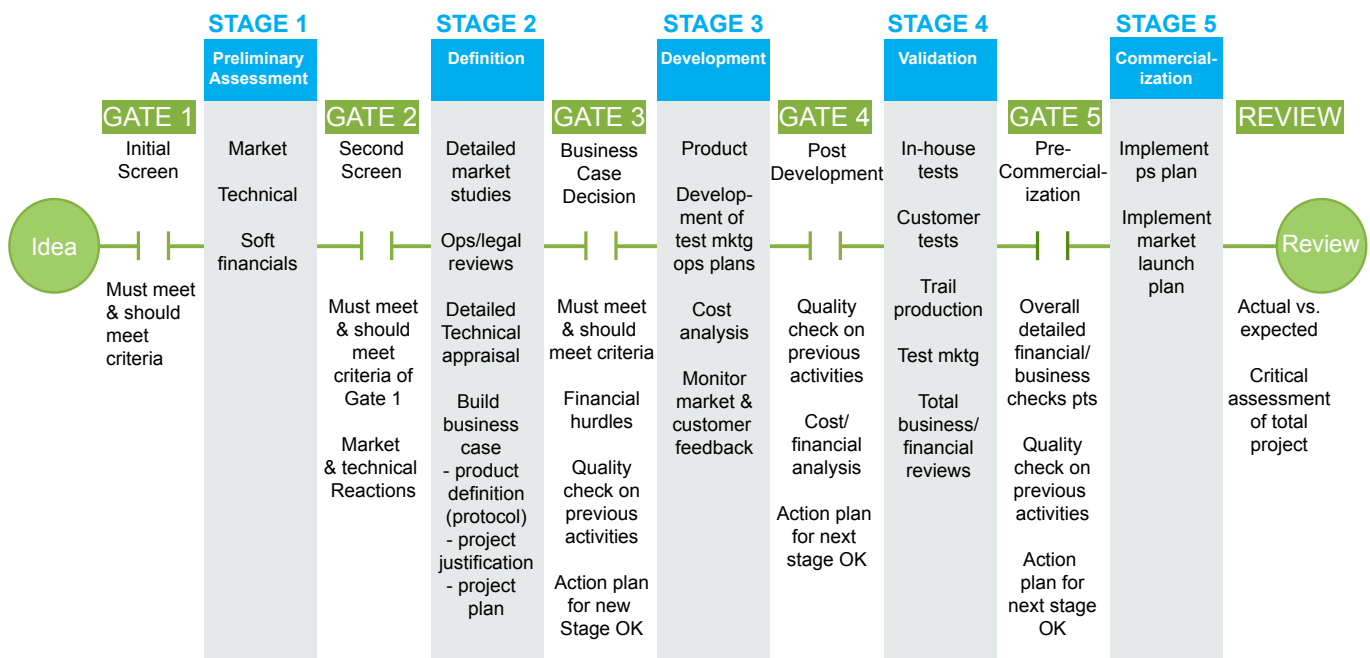
Our belief is that such a framework would help identify an innovation process appropriate for a specific situation by flagging lynch-pin drivers. Not only could the framework suggest how to undertake an innovation, but it could help tailor the innovation itself.

Additionally, we feel it could be beneficial to apply the framework at the very beginning of whatever innovation process is used – perhaps even before idea generation or collection begins. The thought is that the lynch-pin drivers identified via use of the framework could be used to focus the creation of ideas before they even enter the process.

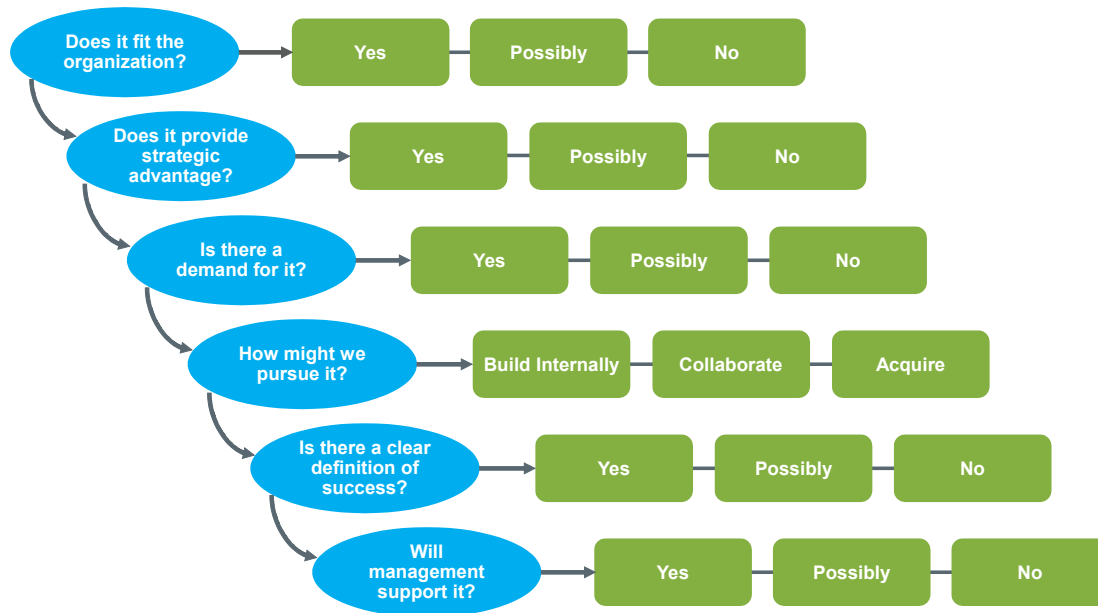
**Explaining the Heuristic Framework for Innovation**

The questions that comprise the framework are not meant to be answered through extensive research or in-depth analysis of existing data. Rather, this is a heuristic that can assist in making smart choices quickly, by applying minimal information within the context of the environment in which the innovation would take place.

**Dr. Robert Cooper’s StageGate**



**Figure 2**



**Figure 2**

The Heuristic Framework for Innovation: Six high-level questions to serve as ‘starters’ for your own exploration of what’s driving your innovation initiative.

It should also be noted that the framework is not a way to measure or otherwise determine success – it is a way to come to an understanding of how the innovation effort can be shaped so it will be most successful.

The framework, shown in Figure 2, is composed of six high-level questions (meant to serve as “starters” for your own specific questions) and possible responses about the innovation effort:

■ **Does the innovation fit the organization?**

Questions that can be asked here might be: Does it leverage our core competencies? Is it aligned with the mission and vision? Does the current organizational structure work? Is there a cultural fit?

■ **Does the innovation provide a strategic advantage?**

Questions that can be asked here might be: Does it help us achieve our goals and objectives (revenue, market share, brand presence, operational efficiencies, etc.)? Does it impact the competitive landscape? Does it shift the customer base?

■ **Is there a demand for the innovation?**

Questions that can be asked here might be: Will it address an under-served market? Is it an “up-market” product? Will it meet a stated need? Will it meet an unstated need? What will the adoption curve look like?

■ **How might we pursue the innovation?**

Questions that can be asked here might be: Can we build it ourselves? Do we need to partner with some other company in order to produce it?

■ **Is there a clear definition of the innovation’s success?**

Questions that can be asked here might be: How do we measure this innovation’s value? Do we use our current metrics and measurements? Do we need to create new metrics?

■ **Will management support the innovation?**

Questions that can be asked here might be: Are we capable of making these changes? Are we willing to make these changes? What road-blocks might there be? Is it worth the effort? What needs to be done to gain support?

The way in which the heuristic framework for innovation is constructed provides visual cues regarding the process by which innovation might be approached. The questions, shown in the ovals, represent the progression in which the questions should be answered. Additionally, the responses, shown in the rectangles, also represent a progression, with the “least risky” answer falling to the immediate right of the question, and the answers increasing in risk as you move to the right.

In all likelihood, there could be situations in which the order of questions and/or responses might need to be modified. For example, a particular company could be more familiar with collaborating with a partner in order to pursue an innovation than it was with building something internally. In that case, the order of the responses to the “How might we pursue it?” question probably should be changed. However, it should be noted that the structure shown above held true in all of our case studies.

A person who chooses to use the framework would begin by responding to the top question and moving downward through the queries. Responses falling to the immediate right of a question would indicate that particular issue probably would not hold any pitfalls in terms of executing the innovation, and therefore probably would not require special attention. However, as the responses fall to the mid- and far-right of the question, those issues probably would present increasing challenges to the innovation initiative. In other words, the further to the right a response falls, the more out-of-the-norm and potentially problematic the area in question could be to the innovation effort. Therefore, those areas probably would warrant special attention from the innovator.

This is not intended to be a complex diagnostic framework, nor does it need to be. It is intended to act as a heuristic – to stimulate quick, critical thinking that can help steer an innovation effort. It is designed to act as a high-level roadmap for how innovation might be approached successfully, flagging areas that could require additional attention or effort in order for the innovation effort to be successful. It should also hint at ways in which these areas might interact with one another, suggesting a hierarchy of the factors driving the innovation. With this information, the innovator should be able to better identify the lynch-pin drivers – the one or two key factors that could determine the success or failure of the innovation.

While clearly this information would be useful when starting an innovation effort, it could also be useful to loop back through the framework’s questions at various points in the development process, including at stage gates. Again, the purpose of the framework is not to determine success, but to gain a better picture of the conditions in which the innovation effort will be developed, so that either the

conditions or the innovation effort itself can be “tweaked” to ensure success.

How could something this simple hold the key to successful implementation of an innovation? It is common for an innovation to be derailed because of a simple oversight, such as not recognizing that a company’s standard performance metrics should not apply to an innovation effort because it is different from any past undertaking. Additionally, it is possible for a company to successfully execute a completely unfamiliar innovation because attention was given to some very basic but important issues along the way.

If it is so simple, why aren’t companies following a framework like this now? The answers are as diverse as there are companies, but the pressure to move quickly, and erroneous assumptions regarding the innovation itself are common themes. And a final question: Could a framework such as this really identify potential areas of concern for an innovation effort? We offer a collection of case studies for consideration.

## Case Studies

In early 2006, we interviewed a number of U.S. and Western European professionals from the fields of finance, technology, telecommunication, CPG/FMCG, hospitality, marketing and advertising, manufacturing, entertainment, retail, and academia. We asked them to discuss an innovation effort that they personally had played a key role in executing. Their titles were varied, including innovation director, vice president of marketing, senior vice president of innovation, director of research, senior advertising executive, marketing manager, author, and professor.

These interviews took place online and via phone, and we collected nearly twenty stories about innovation efforts. The interviews were qualitative in nature, and using the insights and understandings from these interviews, we developed case studies from which we formed the hypothesis stated earlier.

The five case studies presented here provide real world examples of how this framework could be applied, and illustrate ways in which the framework could provide an effective tool to direct innovation efforts within different industries and across countries.

## Case #1: Global Wireless and Electronics Corporation

### Challenge Faced

As one of the world's leading providers of wireless communications, semiconductors, and advanced electronic systems, components, and services, this corporation needed to constantly scan the horizon for new technologies.

In an effort to address this need, the corporation dedicated a group of individuals at the headquarter level to search out new technologies and share them with the corporation's multiple divisions. This team was given the resources and authority to buy companies and technologies, and to start new companies. The leader of this group reported to the president of the corporation, and was responsible for any of the start-ups that came from the efforts of his team. As a result, accountability resided not only within the start-up organizations themselves, but also at the corporate headquarters.

### Innovation Effort

In the 1990s the corporation established the goal of making its semiconductor information more accessible to smaller companies. The idea was put forward to launch a start-up that would capture relevant information from all the semiconductor manufacturers, including information from the start-up's parent company, and place it online for companies to access. Certain parameters of computer chip information would be collected and made searchable, making semiconductor information readily available to small companies for the first time.

In order for the service to be of value, the database of information needed to be comprehensive. This meant working with other companies to develop a substantial collection of information – companies who willingly participated in order to be more accessible to prospects.

Because this kind of initiative had never been previously undertaken, expectations regarding the scope and pace of the project differed significantly. There was disagreement about the amount of information to place online as well as on the length of time this should take, yet there was significant pressure to get as much online as quickly as possible. Additionally, there were no clear priorities as to

what needed to happen first in order to make the project successful.

In spite of this disagreement, performance expectations and measurements were put in place of the effort, and a small team within the start-up was designated to monitor progress regularly. As time passed, it became evident that the start-up would not be able to meet the metrics it had been assigned. But because of the earlier debate over what those metrics should be, the leader of the start-up chose not to share this information with the president of the corporation. Instead, he continued to push the organization toward the objectives. As a result, there was no opportunity to adjust the expectations of higher management. The performance metrics that had been assigned at the beginning of the effort remained in place, resulting in a flawed assessment of the project.

### Results

Eventually, the start-up failed because the leadership team could not agree on the scope of its goals and the order of its priorities – there was pressure to place too much information about too many semiconductors online too quickly.

Equally important, the opportunity to reassess and reset the expectations of higher management was missed, and the company ran out of resources and patience before the start-up could meet its goals. Finally, the start-up was sold to another company at a fraction of the cost.

### Lessons Learned

1. Agree to march to a single, reasonable drumbeat. Not only is the alignment of goals and expectations critical, but so is reaching agreement on what reasonable goals and expectation would be.
2. Don't shoot the messenger! Communication will not flow freely if fear of reprisal is present at any level of the organization.

### Framework Application

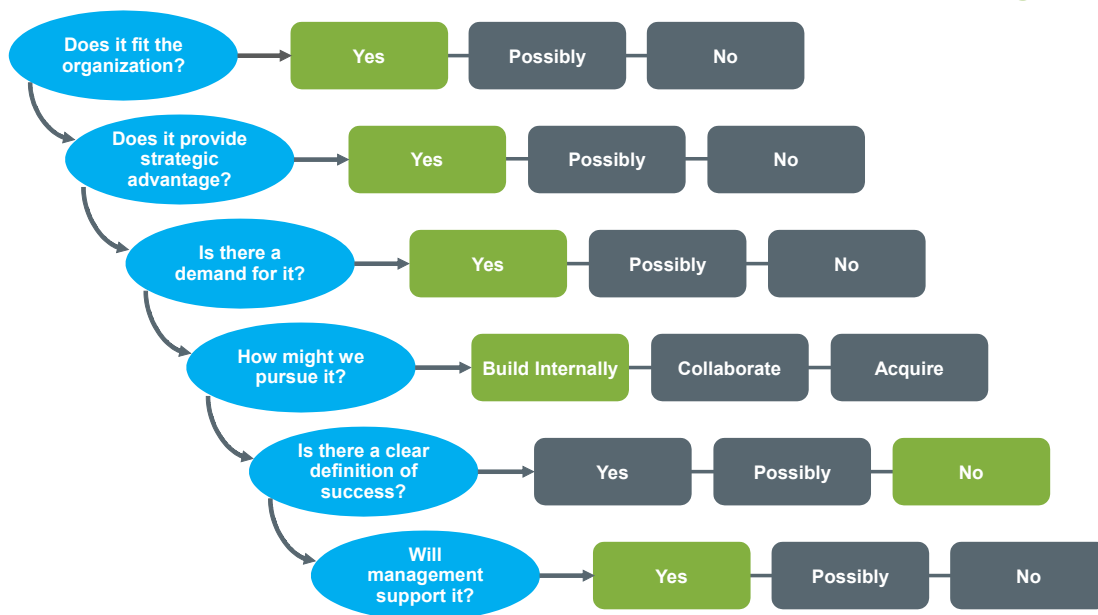
So what might have been done differently had this organization entered this initiative by using the proposed heuristic? Figure 3 provides a visual of how the company's answers might have looked in the framework).

In this case, the lynch-pin driver was the definition of success. Asking and answering the question, "Is there



**Figure 3**

**Case #1:**  
Asking and answering the question ‘Is there a clear definition of success?’ could have highlighted the problematic issue of measurement.



a clear definition of success?” could have indicated the issue of measurement as being potentially problematic. Reportedly, this effort probably would have been deemed a success had the appropriate measures been put into place.

**Case #2: World-Wide Soft Drink Beverage Company**

**Challenge Faced**

Until recently, the regulatory environment made it virtually impossible for a brand, even a well-respected one, to make its way into public school classrooms. The presence of branding messages, regardless of how subtle, were – and in some cases still are – seen as taboo in schools across the U.S. Nonetheless an independent bottler of one of the world’s largest soft drink beverage companies was determined to reach an untapped market in a way that would be beneficial to schools, students, and the company.

**Innovation Effort**

Before the Internet, it was difficult for students and parents to access resources to help with homework after school hours. If an assignment wasn’t understood or was particularly difficult, often there was no option except to wait until the next day to ask the teacher for assistance.

A local soft drink bottler saw this as an opportunity to extend the brand of its product into a new area – presence in the schools – via a branded homework hotline, designed

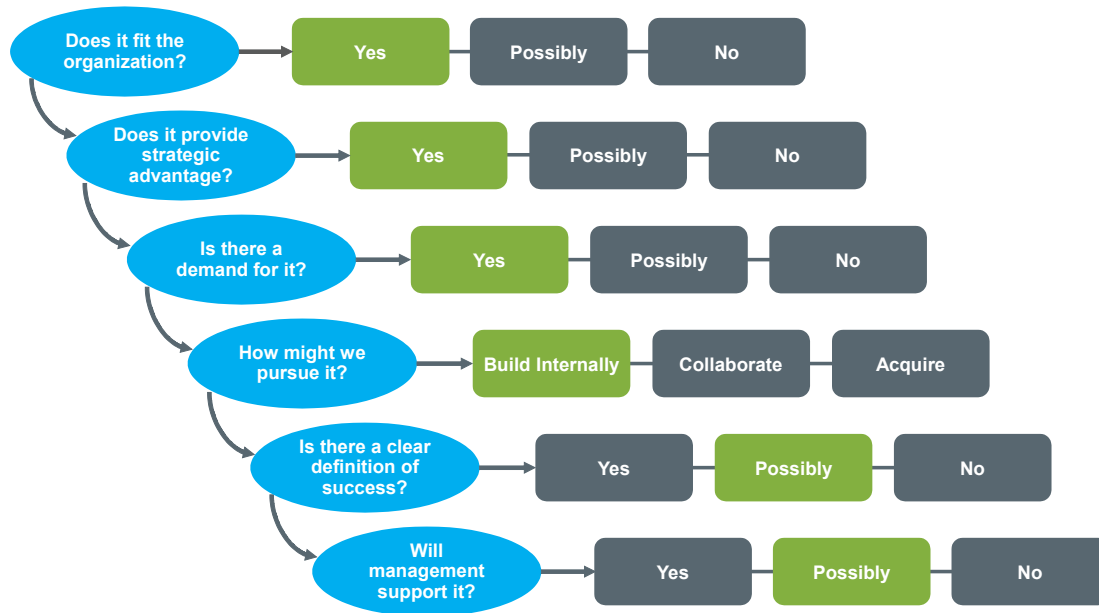
to be accessed by elementary students and their parents for help after school hours.

At that time, all of the brand’s marketing efforts were measured by a single metric – volume of case sales - and it would be difficult to link an increase in volume to a branding program such as the hotline. After much internal debate, the bottler’s management team decided the program would generate significant goodwill, and that the presence of the brand in schools could promote sales, if only indirectly.

As suspected, when the bottler approached the soft drink parent company about developing and launching the effort, it encountered resistance; the parent company did not believe there would be tangible benefits associated with the project, and declined to support the effort. In spite of this, the various managers within the bottler decided to fund the initiative from their own individual budgets, and the company was able to approach four school districts on its own.

The hotline’s format, content, and operational guidelines were developed as a collaborative effort between the school districts and the bottler. Each hotline was staffed by local schoolteachers and housed in local school facilities, and the bottler was responsible for providing the funding and promotional materials for the service. Hotline information was placed at all elementary school classrooms and libraries, sent home to parents, and placed

**Figure 4**



**Case #2:**

The innovator recognized the lynchpin drivers - the way in which success might be defined, and the lack of parent-company support - and had the foresight to garner support for the project within his company.

on billboards in each community. Additionally, thirty-second television advertisements of testimonials from students and parents who had used the hotline were produced by the bottler, and placed on access channels and in local television programming.

**Results**

The company successfully leveraged its strength of local presence to take the brand into completely uncharted territory – the classroom. The program continues to be operated by the soft drink company nearly two decades after its launch.

**Lessons Learned**

1. Adversity makes us stronger. Obstacles can often serve as the impetus for innovation. The lack of support from the parent company was seen by some as a restrictor, but by others as a source of motivation.
2. Keep a low profile. Sometimes, innovation needs to take place “under the radar” to give an idea a chance to grow and mature before it is subjected to evaluation and judgment.

**Framework Application**

Here, the issues of defining success and management support would have been recognized as potential challenges for the innovation. (See figure 4).

Accordingly, the innovator was able to develop a contingency plan for moving forward, and was able to successfully execute the initiative. Had he not recognized the lynch-pin drivers - the way in which success might be defined, and whether or not the parent company would support the project – he would not have had the foresight to garner support for the project within his company, and the innovation would not have moved forward.

**Case #3: UK Consumer Goods Company**

**Challenge Faced**

Packaged foods companies face intense pressure to come up with new products – pressure both from competitors and from the ever-changing tastes of a fickle public. Staying on top of trends, including trends in delivery methods (frozen foods, shelf-stable foods, etc.) and in tastes (healthy, indulgent, etc.) poses a particular challenge.

**Innovation Effort**

The company had the opportunity to partner with a large U.K. “slimming club” to come up with a chilled pizza (see endnote) that would fit within the club’s diet regime, thus allowing the company to “co-brand” the product with the club, and tap into a sizable market for chilled low-fat, low-calorie products. The company’s development managers worked with the slimming club’s marketing manager and brand development people to manufacture a chilled pizza

that fit within the club's diet plan and actually tasted good, unlike many diet foods.

As a manufacturer of private-label foods, the company was accustomed to 40% to 45% margins on its products. However, test markets showed it was possible to achieve only 25% margins on the chilled pizza product. Within the company there were some who felt that 25% was acceptable, since the project would be the company's first foray into a branded product, and because it would extract profits from a category that had not existed before. These executives also felt that it would be possible to increase the margin as the category grew.

In spite of these views, the financial director remained focused on margin only, and convinced senior management that it was not worthwhile to embark on the co-branded effort when a higher margin could be generated by selling a private-label slimming chilled pizza.

### Results

The project never went into full production, and instead was discontinued due to the low margins. The slimming club went to another manufacturer for a co-branded chilled pizza, while the company introduced a private-label brand of slimming chilled pizza, on which they did gain a 45% margin. Unfortunately, the competition from the slimming club's brand was so intense that the company's sales of slimming chilled pizza suffered.

Eventually, as a result of this experience as well as other economic pressures, the company no longer routinely discards products that don't meet the 40% to 45% margin goals, and recognizes that 25% of a large market could be better than 40% of a smaller market, or worse, of no market at all.

### Lessons Learned

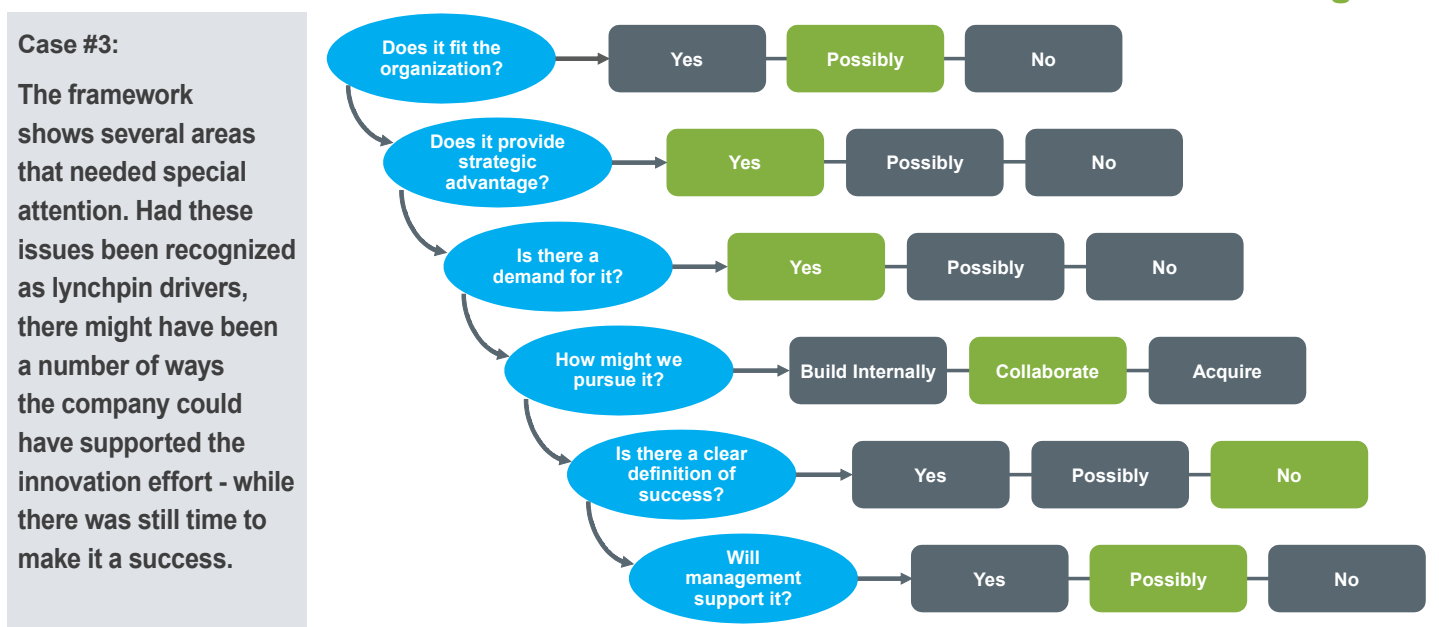
1. Rules were meant to be broken. The use of uniform or company-wide metrics makes some innovation efforts look less successful than they really are – sometimes new products and new ways of doing things also require a different set of metrics.
2. Keep a low profile. Innovation stakeholders must look at existing metrics and determine at the outset if their proposed project will be fairly or unfairly judged by those metrics. If the latter is true, it may be necessary to run the entire project “under the radar” until it produces a benefit to the company that's demonstrable enough to make the case for changing the metrics, either for the entire company or for the division where the innovation resides.

### Framework Application

In this case, several areas might have been identified as needing particular attention (see figure 5 on page 8).

The fit was a bit unusual for the company in that it would involve venturing into the world of branded products for

Figure 5





the first time, and the degree of collaboration needed to develop and market the product was beyond anything previously undertaken. Additionally, there was not a clear understanding of how success would be defined for this project – would a lower margin be acceptable? Had it been known there was not a clear definition of success, it might have been possible to predict that management support would be an issue.

Also, had they recognized these issues as lynch-pin drivers, there might have been a number of different ways in which the company could have supported the innovation effort. For example, the project leaders might have called a meeting of key stakeholders to quickly discuss the appetite for and ability to enter into a collaborative effort with another company. Additionally it might have conducted a cursory review of margins on branded versus private label products. Finally, it might have been possible to reach an agreement on a definition of success for the effort, and if one could not be reached, the project could have been ended before much money had been spent.

## **Case #4: Global Wireless and Electronics Corporation**

### **Challenge Faced**

The company was a pioneer in mobile phone technology and had quickly become well known for its innovative and reliable technology. Eventually, complacency set in, and the company began to be trounced by competitors.

The company wanted to recapture their past “glory days” at mobile phone innovation and pull solidly ahead of their competition. In order to do this they needed to recapture the attention and imaginations of the phone-buying public. They realized the only way to attract that kind of energy into their brand was to go beyond consumer’s needs and play upon a deeper understanding of consumers’ aspirations, emotions, and desires.

### **Innovation Effort**

But what did consumers want? Mobile phone handsets had become a commodity. In addition, carriers had set restrictions for consumers on replacing handsets, making it much more expensive to replace a handset before a two-year term was up. Handset makers were adding feature after feature to phones to avoid commoditization, but there

had been very few new features developed in the last five years that offered consumers a big enough incentive to upgrade their handsets more often. There seemed to be nothing else consumers needed in a phone. But perhaps there was an opportunity to try to make a phone so cool that consumers would desire it and aspire to own it.

Trying to predict what consumers might think is cool is a very high risk, especially for a big company. But such a risk was deemed worthwhile, not because senior management thought the resulting product would be a big seller, but because they firmly believed the product’s very existence as a style icon would energize the entire brand. This position was strongly supported by new leadership at the senior level, and the design team was empowered to execute such a product. The resulting phone was smaller and sleeker than any existing mobile phone, and a paragon of elegant design.

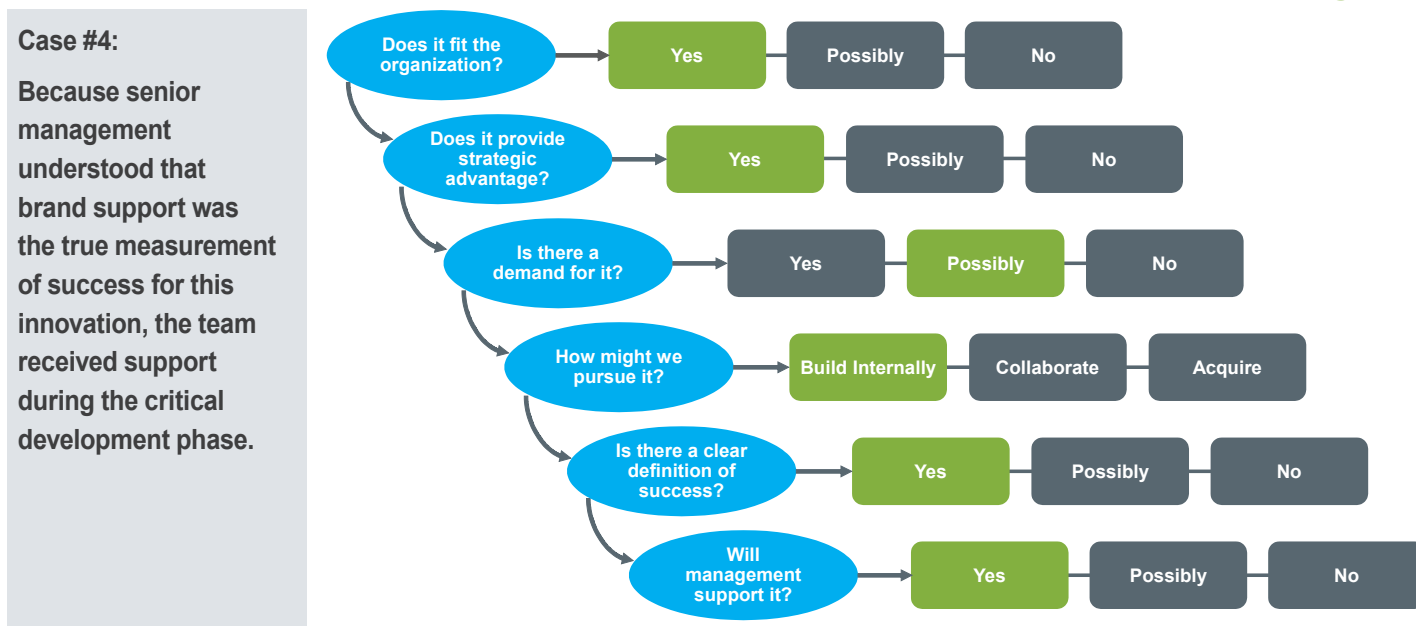
Importantly, the new phone was positioned internally as an experiment whose very existence would energize the brand, regardless of whether or not it sold very well. The expectation was set that the new phone would attract a great deal of attention, but rather than becoming a huge seller, it might end up as a beautiful, eye-catching, cool “loss leader” that would bolster the image of the company as a whole. As a result the team bypassed many of the existing innovation processes, because the product was deemed internally as an exception, not the rule – “the kind of project that the process was never intended to apply to,” said one manager.

### **Results**

The new phone was a huge success. The company experienced a big image boost, making it appear much more forward-thinking and trendy than it had been perceived to be in the last decade. It also sold more than a million units in its first six months, and left rivals scrambling to come up with something equally appealing and competitive. The new phone exceeded the company’s total lifetime projections or it in its first three months.

To keep its brand momentum, and the valuable buzz that accompanies it, the company continues to invest in the creation of “iconic” products in the hope that each new introduction will have the same marketplace impact that the initial phone did. So far it has worked, resulting in increased

Figure 6



handset shipments by 40% and increased global market share by 20% over the previous year.

**Lessons Learned**

1. The road less traveled. If the innovation effort needs to have a significant impact on the brand, it needs to be either disruptive or iconic in nature, or both. It may also need to be so different from “business as usual” that it needs to circumvent the usual innovation process.
2. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It’s best to understand when an innovation is different enough that it’s tough to bet on. Reducing or managing expectations upfront means a greater chance of being pleasantly surprised by (and recognized for) great success.

**Framework Application**

The framework shows that, in spite of the fact that there might not be large demand for this product, management would still support it because of its overall potential – lifting the brand to new heights (see figure 6).

Because this product was not necessarily expected to perform in the same way past new products had, the innovation team took care to speak about the effort in terms of its true measurement of success – brand support. And because senior management understood that this was the lynch-pin driver, the innovation team received the support it needed – during the critical development phase – to suspend the usual expectations of success from a new product.

**Case #5: U.S. Technology Company**

**Challenge Faced**

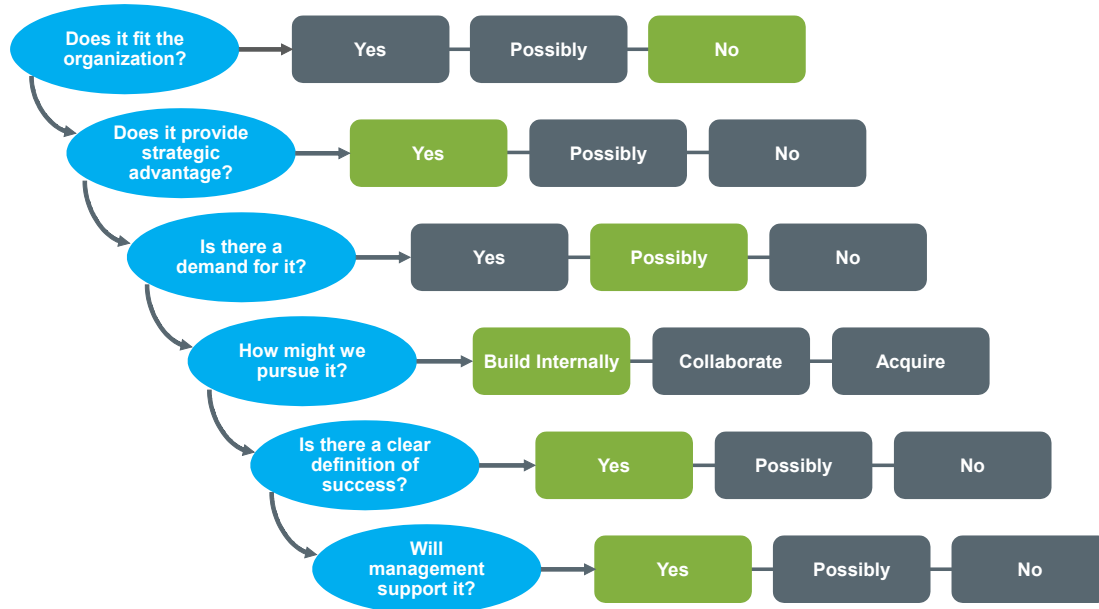
In the early day of the PC (early 1980s), disk drives were all sold directly to computer manufacturers, who installed them before the computers were sold to the end consumers. PCs routinely shipped with dual floppy disk drives and a very small hard drive. An enterprising engineer noticed that the IBM PC had an expansion slot for which an extra disk drive could be produced that consumers could buy and install easily themselves. The challenge was how to bring this product to market within the confines of a company whose strategy was focused in the opposite direction (the OEM market) and how to meet consumer needs when the product under consideration was new to the world.

**Innovation Effort**

Once it became clear that this was a promising opportunity, the company funded a spin-off which began working on the development of the product.

The spin-off was allowed to take a few key executives, but not more, so as not to raid its parent. These engineers and product managers set out to determine how best to execute the vision. As part of their leaning, the engineers observed focus groups so they could see first-hand the issues regular people had installing hard drives, and identify how they could solve the problems. Eventually they were able to develop a product that was completely self-contained and self-installing (using the DOS c:prompt).

**Figure 7**



**Case #5:**  
 There was not a fit between the organization and the proposed innovation initiative. The company addressed this issue by spinning off the effort rather than letting lack of fit kill a potential strategic opportunity.

There was a large manufacturing challenge to make a technology product that had to be so precisely correct that it would work for a layperson. The company ended up partnering with a well-known Japanese company, which helped design both the product and the manufacturing process.

The new drive was a success from the start; unfortunately, it was copied immediately by companies who within a week were offering greater capacity at less cost. The spinoff had to shut down their manufacturing and retool for a different product immediately.

**Results**

After unlocking a whole new business model for selling mass data storage to a different customer in an entirely different channel, the product eventually became a \$100 million business with 40% margins. Eventually the spin-off was spun back in to the parent company, and the president of the former spin-off became the president of the parent company, taking it from \$200 million to \$5 billion in revenue. The co-manufacturing process with the Japanese partner was so successful that the partnership was extended to the parent company as well, and lasted for 15 years.

**Lessons Learned**

1. A square peg won't fit into a round hole. By understanding from the start the alignment issues between a business and a promising opportunity, it is possible that a business opportunity that does not

fit the company's strategic objectives can be spun off and allowed to build slowly on its own. If it proves to be successful enough, it can provide not only money for its parent, but also such an influx of executive talent and manufacturing process innovation that the parent is able to adopt some of the innovations and/or buy back the spin-off.

2. The ugly duckling or the swan. It's important to avoid "false positive." Take into account the possibility of error in judgment in the early stages of assessing an innovation opportunity. Innovation efforts that don't measure up on internal evaluations might succeed if they are allowed to go outside and possibly find another business model or a different market. It's important to provide an alternative path.

**Framework Application**

As the framework shows, in this case there was not a fit between the organization and the proposed innovation initiative – something that one might expect would kill an innovation.

However, recognizing this as a lynch-pin driver and wanting to take advantage of a perceived strategic opportunity, the company chose to address this issue by spinning off the effort, and pursuing it outside the confines of the corporation. Additionally, the company knew prior to undertaking the effort that there might, or might not, be demand for the product it intended to offer. Accordingly, their approach included both time and a relevant method for

ascertaining whether the innovation would be a success. Finally, when the company successfully re-integrated the spin-off, it gained a great deal of value beyond the bottom line – a successfully tested manufacturing process and seasoned senior management talent.

## Conclusion

Admittedly, these case studies demonstrate application of the proposed framework in hindsight. However, the real power of the heuristic is not as backward-looking diagnostic tool, but in its ability to help scan a future not yet known and quickly plot an innovation path. The goal is to flag areas that might require attention, and ultimately identify the “lynch-pin” drivers whose successful management could determine the success or failure of the innovation. By answering these questions derived from the experiences of innovative efforts across the globe, innovators can swiftly identify potential problem areas before an initiative begins, and begin thinking about how those issues might be addressed.

One might argue there is not always sufficient information or time to answer questions such as these, particularly prior to the beginning of an innovation effort. But the simplicity of this framework is its strength. It requires few resources, and only a cursory review of what might be involved in undertaking an innovation effort. We would argue that the knowledge gained from applying this framework is worth much more than the small amount of time required to do

it – especially in cases where the framework’s application exposes problems that could be corrected early in the process much less expensively and more easily than they could be corrected later. And in worst-case scenarios, the knowledge gained from the application of the framework could illuminate certain failure – and that, too, is better understood before significant resources are committed to a project.

It is our hope that this framework, for all its simplicity, will be a useful tool for innovators, and that it can help drive innovation in a meaningful way.

## Acknowledgements

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## Endnote

1. “Chilled foods” is the term used in the U.K. to describe ready-to-eat or ready-to-cook foods, for reasons of safety or quality, meant to be stored at refrigeration temperatures (at or below 8°C, targeting 5°C) throughout their entire life. (Source: Chilled Food Association, <http://www.chilledfood.org/>)

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