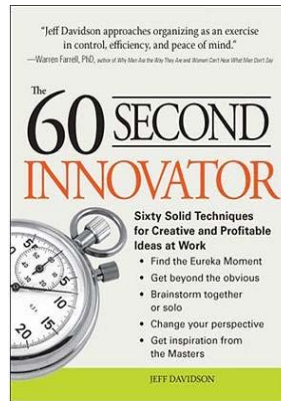


The 60 Second Innovator

Sixty Solid Techniques for Creative and Profitable Ideas at Work

About the Author/s

Jeff Davidson is the author of numerous books including *The 60 Second Organizer*, 2nd Edition, and *The 60 Second Self Starter* as well as *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Managing Your Time*. Davidson, a resident of Chapel Hill, NC, is also a noted professional speaker. Visit his website at www.BreathingSpace.com.



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■ The Big Idea

Innovation is your only road to success!

Are you scrambling for ideas to put yourself ahead of your competitors? Do you want to become an idea factory, generating innovations left and right? Are you ready to shine in your organization because of your original thoughts? If you are, Jeff Davidson has sixty succinct, humorous tips that will put you at the forefront of innovation. He will show you how to:

- Develop the qualities all innovators share
- Embrace change
- Learn creative brainstorming
- Find new solutions to old problems
- Kick-start your innovation in a team setting

Don't merely think out of the box. Pick up the box, turn it upside down, and shake out new ideas for profit and success!

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Reading Time: 2-3 hours, 166 pages

The 60 Second Innovator is a valuable resource and a daily action guide to help you become a more creative, resourceful and valuable member of your organization. In this summary, we shall feature some of the best tips drawn from the original list of 60.

INTRODUCTION

As with other books in the 60 Second Series, the tips contained in The 60 Second Innovator will sometimes overlap, sometimes build upon one another, and sometimes even seem contradictory. Hey, what works in one instance may not work in another, and vice versa.

So if you're ready, strap yourself into a chair, sit back, and enjoy the ride. It's going to be a stimulating and rewarding journey.

PART ONE: THE QUEST FOR A BETTER WAY

ADOPTING THE MINDSET OF AN INNOVATOR

In today's world, if you want to progress in your career, you must be an innovator. Someone who can approach problems creatively, devise solutions to recurring issues, and figure out better ways to get things done.

Innovators can march to the beat of the team leader's drum and to the beat of their own drum. When the innovator encounters an obstacle, he or she asks why nobody has tackled it before, and then reconfigured the system or eliminates the bottleneck.

The best companies in the United States and abroad seek to promote curiosity among their employees. Most encourage their staff to take risks.

WHOLE-BRAIN THINKING FOR OPTIMAL GAIN

Suppressing your emotions helps you make better decisions, and rational leadership requires the ability to ignore stress and feelings, right? Guess again! Recent findings suggest that effective thinking, surprisingly, is an emotional phenomenon. Your emotions give you valuable information and energy, helping you to make the best decisions under pressure. To make the most of your cognitive abilities, employ whole brain thinking. Use emotion as a thinking potion!

PART TWO: UPPING YOUR INNOVATION QUOTIENT

ASSESSING YOURSELF, BUILDING ON IDEAS

Is it human nature that we don't stop to assess our performance most of the time? We'd rather plow ahead, hell-bent for leather, to what's next, whether or not we're proceeding wisely in pursuit of a given task or goal. However, when it comes to generating innovative ideas, self-assessment is a valuable tool.

If you're in a meeting, especially one you're conducting, record the conversation for playback later, perhaps while you're driving! As you listen to what transpired. Ask yourself:

- When people suggest a new idea, are you cutting them off at the pass?
- What happens when you suggest a new idea?
- If your idea doesn't get an immediate warm reception, do you prefer to toe the line rather than rock the boat?

When you have some time, letting an idea marinate can help you gain perspective:

- Put your idea in a drawer. That is, put the notes, folders, documents, and what have you in a drawer and don't open it for a couple of days. Later, revisit the idea and see if it still seems as valid and worthwhile as when you first devised it.
- Bounce your ideas off of others. This activity is recommended throughout the book, as other people's reactions can give you valuable information about how good your idea is and what you may need to do to sell it to others.

- Give it a five-time review. Review your idea on five separate occasions. Anytime it seems as if it doesn't have sufficient merit, go ahead and chuck it. However, if it survives five intermittent reviews, proceed at full speed. You probably have something worth developing.

BRAINSTORMING FOR FUN AND PROFIT

Brainstorming is a wonderful technique to generate ideas, especially when you want to bust out of a rut or devise a new way of looking at things. Usually conducted with several people, the goal of a brainstorming session is to encourage participants to speak freely. A leader or moderator poses a question such as, "How can we accomplish XYZ?" Participants then speak up with their ideas.

The golden rule of brainstorming sessions is this: Do not criticize the ideas of others. You need to be open-minded to new suggestions. Encourage people to offer whatever comes to mind, because valuable bits of insight and wisdom might lie in seemingly off-the-wall ideas. So fear not – venture bravely into the unknown!

ALL TOGETHER OR SOLO

You have considerable leeway in conducting brainstorming sessions. You can work with a group or simply by yourself. With a group, you schedule the session and issue a challenge. Then, somebody begins taking notes or recording the ideas that flow forth. Here are some guiding steps:

1. Announce the problem that you want to work on or the question you want to answer and provide any criterion you need to meet. For example, "The project needs to be completed before June 1st." For the rest of your session, focus on the issue at hand.
2. Make it clear that there will be no criticism or judgment of the ideas presented and that everyone is welcome to freely participate. No "Negative Nancys" here! Let it be known that, especially for openers, no idea is too outrageous or outlandish. You want them all to pour forth, because each idea carries the seeds of other ideas, and prompts participants to think of yet other ideas on top of that.
3. Encourage everyone in the group to participate, even those who are meek, shy, or otherwise quiet. Great ideas often come from the mouths of those who rarely speak. At the same time, don't worry if a few individuals seem to be contributing the majority of suggestions. You're after volume right now, wherever it comes.

4. Establish an atmosphere of gaiety, mirth, and excitement. As an overly rigid atmosphere is likely to stifle creativity. It's okay if people have fun. Whatever generates ideas is worth pursuing.
5. Don't dwell in one area for too long. If you begin to beat a dead horse, suggest turning to something else.
6. Whittle down the many ideas that were generated and assess the value of what remains.
7. Combine any ideas that seem similar, and eventually work your list down to a handful of potentially useful ideas upon which the group can act.

PART THREE: CARVING YOUR PATH TO INNOVATION

WORKING WITHIN THE STRUCTURE

When you work within the structure or organizational climate that is all-encompassing, it may feel restrictive. Fear not! There are ways to be innovative that can lead to big pay-offs in big ways if you do it well.

Even when people know and understand that a change will be for the better, they still might resist because:

- Embracing the change will take time and effort that the participants might not be willing to invest.
- Taking on something new means giving up something else, and that something else is familiar, comfortable, and predictable.
- Fear or disruption may prohibit people from taking the first step, even when it is widely acknowledged that the net result will be to their benefit.
- If the change is imposed externally, as opposed to internally, resistance may endure as a result of ego issues.

PART FOUR: PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

UNDERTAKING SCENARIO THINKING

To prepare for the unexpected, employ scenario thinking. Instead of seeking to accurately pinpoint the worst possible or the “only” possible way, give yourself some slack and envision several ways a situation might unfold.

In place of figuring out the exact, correct path that will lead to a desired end, devise three potential scenarios:

In the best case scenario, no budget cuts would occur. Your project would proceed according to plan, although you’d probably stay on high alert.

In the mid-case scenario, budget cuts would occur, but they might not be severe. As you thoroughly review your project plan, look for places where you can save here and there.

In the worst-case scenario, severe budget cuts would drastically hamper your ability to proceed, let alone succeed.

SHAKE UP YOUR ROUTINE

If you follow the same routine day after day, you can land in a rut. Shake up your routine periodically to gain new insights.

1. Wake up one hour earlier. Why not go to bed earlier and wake up an hour earlier? In that extra hour, you can watch the sunrise, exercise, reflect, and maybe have an innovative thought or two spring forth. Try it, you’ll like it!
2. Work on your porch instead of in the office. When you change the scenery, you open up new vistas. At alternative locations, for some of your tasks, especially those requiring conceptualization or creative thinking, you’ll be more productive than usual.
3. Change your phone and mail reception routines.
4. Drop the 80 percent of your activities that are unproductive.
5. Eat lunch with someone unlike yourself – we tend to seek other people similar to ourselves.
6. Keep it loose. Step back and see the humor in your life; staying loose gives you a break in the action, makes things less tense, and puts you back in control.

PART FIVE: EMBRACING YOUR PERSONAL POWER

BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF

To embrace your personal power, practice positive self-talk. The next time you face a challenging situation, try these responses.

- I'm getting better and better at tackling tough situations.
- I have the capability in me, right now, to master this.
- I can generate an unlimited number of good ideas.
- I have the training, experience and wisdom.
- Creativity flows within and throughout my being.
- New ideas spring forth from me all the time.
- I can and I will.

Say to yourself, "I am more adept today at solving problems than yesterday. I expect to be better still tomorrow."

PART SIX: COACHING FROM THE MASTERS

DA VINCI STILL RULES

You've probably heard of Leonardo da Vinci. He painted the famous Last Supper, Mona Lisa, and other prodigious works. His contributions to art are more than matched by his prowess in mathematics and science. He was considered an innovator far ahead of his time, designing both civil and military machinery.

Born in the village of Vinci, near the Tuscan cities of Pistoia and Empoli, as a child, da Vinci showed extraordinary talent with music, art, and mathematics, as well as skill at sketching plants and animals. Young Leonardo demonstrated an uncanny knack for observation.

AGAINST ALL ODDS: COPERNICUS AND GALILEO

Copernicus and Galileo each upheld their dedication to innovative thought in the face of great risks. Nicolaus Copernicus is regarded by many as the founder of modern astronomy. Galileo Galilei, who embraced the work of Copernicus, lay low for years rather than incur the wrath of the Church. He was known for making contributions to astronomy, motion, and engineering.

THOMAS JEFFERSON: A MAN FOR ALL REASONS

Thomas Jefferson, one of our nation's most prolific inventors, was born on April 13, 1743, in Albermarle County, VA. As a philosopher, plantation owner, historian, and public official, he served his country for over five decades and is responsible for some of America's greatest political innovations.

THE VISION OF HENRY FLAGLER

Henry Flagler, born in Hopewell, NY, in 1830, has long been known to Floridians as an innovator. Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway has, in one way or another, impacted nearly every section of southern Florida.

MADAME CURIE RISES ABOVE

Marie Curie, a French physicist born in 1867 in Poland, was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize for her breakthroughs in radioactivity. Today, she is known for her discoveries of radium, plutonium, and the medical properties of radiation.

CHARLES KETTERING: AN INNOVATOR PAR EXCELLENCE

At the time of his death in 1958, Charles Kettering's accomplishments as a contemporary inventor were surpassed only by Thomas Edison. Kettering racked up several lifetimes' worth of achievements and patented over 200 inventions, such as the push button self-starter and an electric ignition system that revolutionized modern car engines.

MARGARET MEAD: BLAZING NEW TRAILS

Over fifty years ago, Margaret Mead wrote, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.

PHILO T. FARNSWORTH: AN INNOVATOR’S INNOVATOR

Philo T. Farnsworth, born in Utah in 1906, was responsible for an innovation that shaped the twentieth century and affects us every day: television. Farnsworth conceived the idea at the tender age of fifteen, while plowing his father’s field.

STEVE JOBS AND THINKING DIFFERENTLY

Steve Jobs, a California native born in 1955, co-created a personal computer that would revolutionize the hardware and software industry. Jobs and his friend Steve Wozniak built the first Apple computer in 1976, which changed people’s concept of a computer from a gargantuan mass of tubes and wires used only by huge organizations to a much smaller, manageable device.

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