

Conquering Innovation Fatigue

**OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO PERSONAL
AND CORPORATE SUCCESS**

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Preface

There is a personal side to innovation that is often overlooked. In our personal experiences and in our interactions and interviews with numerous innovators, we have found that there are many lessons from the “voice of the innovator” that are often missed when innovation is discussed. Innovation always begins at the individual level, in the minds of human beings. Standing between prospective innovators and success are a host of “innovation fatigue factors” that can discourage and hinder innovation. These fatigue factors affect both individuals—whether employees or independent inventors and entrepreneurs—and entire organizations.

After an overview in Part One, we explore the fatigue factors and their solutions in Parts Two through Four, corresponding to fatigue factors at three levels: individuals, organizations, and the external environment. Finally, in Part Five we explore broader “energizing factors” with further recommendation to individuals, corporations, and policy makers. Sprinkled throughout are case studies of the good and the bad, of the pains of innovation fatigue and the joys of successful innovation.

In addition to what we feel is an original perspective, we offer several original case studies and concepts that may be useful for others. These concepts include the innovation paradigm called “the Horn of Innovation™”—an innovator-centric model that turns the familiar “innovation funnel” around. We also present the “Circuit of Innovation™”—an electrical metaphor for bringing the energy of innovation to the market, “Da Vinci in the Boardroom™”—an approach to innovation that couples open innovation with multidisciplinary talent, and “Disruptive Intellectual Asset Strategy”—an effort to fill a gap in the literature on disruptive innovation by showing how low-cost, proactive intellectual asset strategy can overcome some of the barriers to pursuing disruptive opportunities or averting disruptive threats. (We generally prefer

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to speak of intellectual assets (IA) rather than intellectual property (IP), a subset of IA that lacks defensive publications and other valuable elements that are not strictly owned.)

Our work is intended for three groups: (1) entrepreneurs and innovators, including the often-overlooked corporate employee involved in R&D or other creative operations, as well as lone inventors, university researchers, and start-ups; (2) corporate leaders and strategists, including those developing strategies for innovation and intellectual assets; and (3) policy makers and influencers.

Through it all, we emphasize innovation at the personal level, seeking to help aspiring innovators find solutions in their spheres of influence. At the same time, we encourage business and political leaders to listen to the “voice of the innovator” and to consider unintended consequences that many tactics and policies may have on innovation.

We often invoke the metaphor of the innovator as an immigrant in a foreign land to describe the gaps that can exist between aspiring innovators and those who don’t speak their language or understand their ways. Leaders of companies, institutions, and even government agencies who learn to deal with the “foreign” nature of innovation can give needed help to “immigrant” innovators and realize added economic success. Open innovation, for example, is a concept based on learning to embrace the foreign. While many speak of it, few succeed because they fail to bridge cultural divides or make their processes “immigrant friendly.”

The story of innovation often involves a journey into unfamiliar territory where at least one person—sometimes an entire company or more—becomes the stranger in a strange land, facing barriers that can bring fatigue and despair. Others have made this tiring journey and can help us understand the path to success. The path of innovation does not need to be so difficult. As we discuss in our chapter on the “Horn of Innovation™,” innovation, like the cornucopia of Greek mythology (based on a goat’s horn that could turn wishes into reality), can truly turn the visions of the human mind into rich bounties that enhance life on this planet. There’s no reason to let fatigue get in the way.

Our quest to help others overcome innovation fatigue will be an ongoing effort. The blog at *InnovationFatigue.com* will provide additional thoughts, resources for readers, and a place to share your feedback and experiences. Please join us there as we seek to help more innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders find the path to innovation success.