

INNOVATION IS BIGGER THAN YOU THINK:

A PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK
FOR LEADERS, TEAMS AND
ENTREPRENEURS

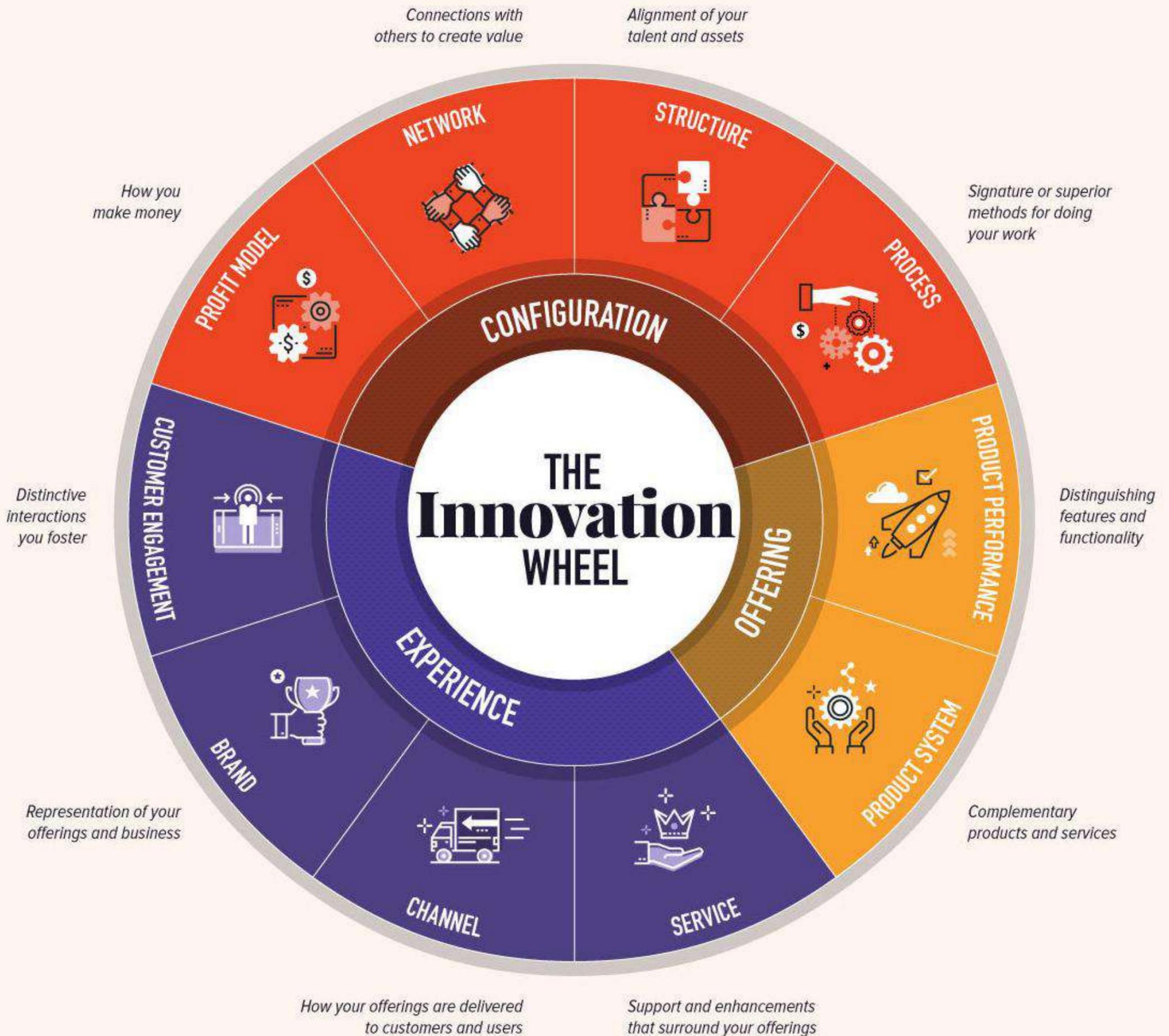
KEY LEARNING

- Innovation is not just about products - it spans profit models, structure, culture, brand, service and customer engagement.
- Leaders, teams and entrepreneurs can use Doblin's 10 Types as a diagnostic tool to identify where growth is possible right now.
- Sustainable advantage often comes from combining multiple innovation types, not relying on one breakthrough idea.

UNDERSTANDING THE 10 Types of Innovation

New products are invented from scratch all the time, but this is merely one way to innovate.

According to innovation firm **Doblin**, most big breakthroughs in history comprise some combination of the following 10 types of innovation.



By tactically examining these 10 different types of innovation, you may uncover exciting new product opportunities – or you may change the business world forever.

Overview

The innovation framework was built around a seminal discovery: that there are 10 distinct types of innovation that need to be orchestrated with care to make game-changing innovations.

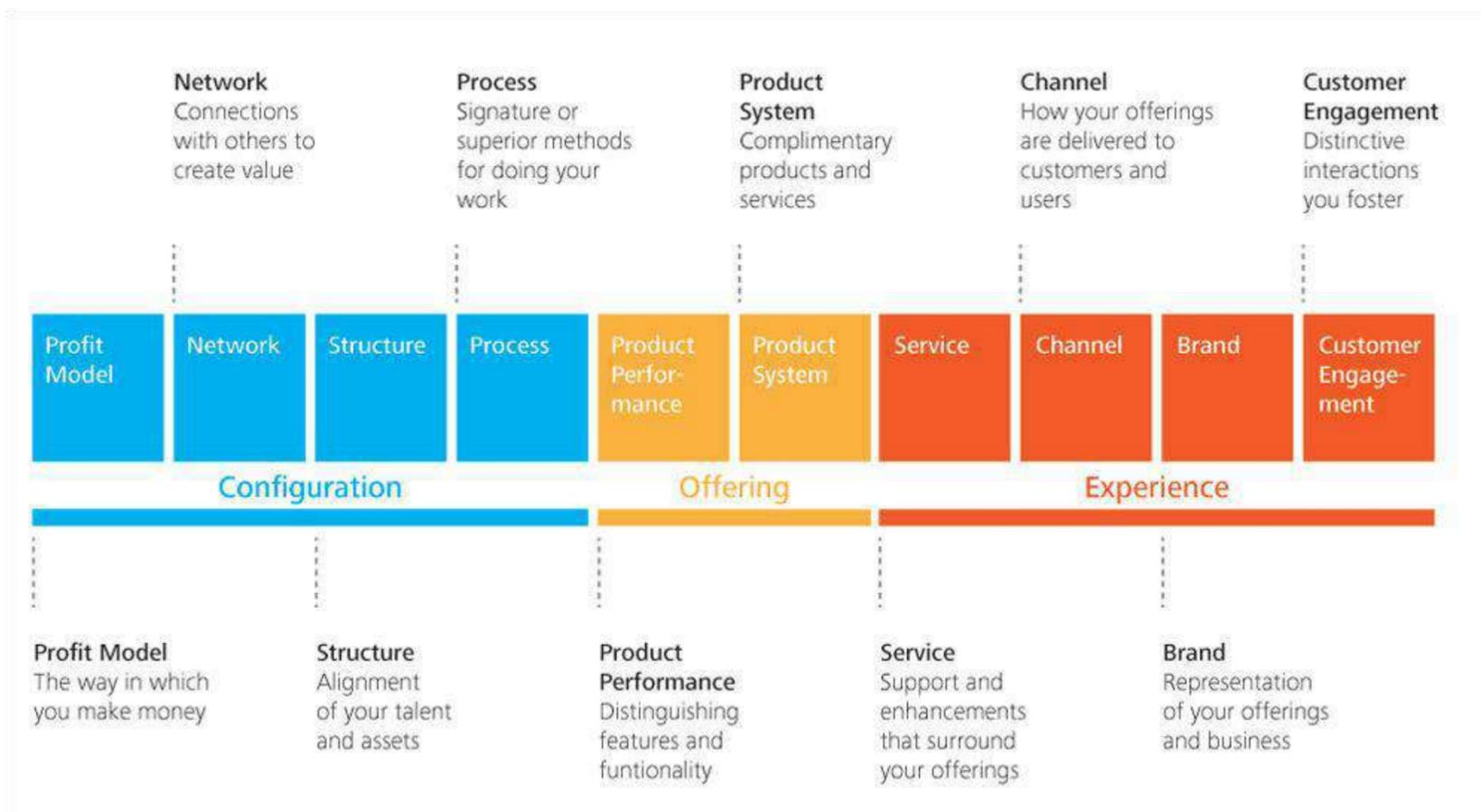
This approach to innovation that looks at innovation through the lens of 10 dimensions, was invented at Doblin, around 1997.

Doblin is a global innovation agency, founded in 1981 by Jay Doblin and Larry Keeley. According to Doblin's website, the agency is approaching innovation based on people and multidisciplinary. On the website, you can always see the evolution of the agency, including the 1997 moment when the 10 types of innovation approach was developed.

After testing and various improvements, in 2013 Larry Kelley, one of the Doblin co-founders publishes the book – Ten Types of Innovation: The Discipline of Building Breakthroughs.

Doblin Model of 10 types of Innovation

- **1 Profit Model:** how you make money.
- **2 Network:** how you connect with others to create value
- **3 Structure:** how you organize and align your talent and assets.
- **4 Process:** how you use unique methods to do your work.
- **5 Product performance:** how you develop unique features and functionality.
- **6 Product system:** how you create complementary products and services.
- **7 Services:** how you support and amplify the value of your offerings.
- **8 Channel:** how you deliver your offerings to customers and users.
- **9 Brand:** how you represent your offerings and business.
- **10 Customer engagement:** how you foster compelling interactions.



Innovation can often feel intangible. Sometimes it emerges after years of disciplined experimentation. At other times, it arrives as a sudden insight. While we may not always know how an idea was born, we can absolutely analyse and strengthen innovation once it exists.

For leaders, founders and executive teams, this matters deeply. Innovation is not luck. It is a capability - and capabilities can be designed, strengthened and replicated.

One of the most practical frameworks for doing this is Doblin's 10 Types of Innovation. Developed by Doblin in Chicago, the model groups innovation into three broad categories: configuration, offering and experience.

Configuration looks at how your enterprise is built.

Offering focuses on what you create.

Experience centres on how customers encounter and engage with you.

For leadership teams, this framework becomes a strategic lens. It helps you see whether you are over-investing in product tweaks while neglecting brand, channels or structure. For entrepreneurs, it prevents the common trap of believing innovation equals invention.

Profit Model Innovation

This type challenges how value is captured. It asks: are we charging in the right way? Are we monetising the right thing?

Example: Gillette

Gillette pioneered the model of selling razors cheaply while charging premium prices for blades. Leaders can learn from this by asking where recurring revenue or complementary goods exist in their own ecosystem.

Entrepreneurs often innovate here first - subscription models, tiered pricing, freemium access. Teams can workshop this by mapping value creation versus value capture.

Network Innovation

This focuses on partnerships and ecosystems. It asks: who else could help us create value faster?

Example: Procter & Gamble and its Connect + Develop initiative

By crowdsourcing ideas externally, P&G accelerated innovation beyond internal R&D.

For leaders, this highlights the importance of collaboration over control. For teams, it encourages cross-functional work. For entrepreneurs, it validates strategic partnerships instead of building everything alone.

Structure Innovation

This examines how talent, assets and governance are arranged.

Example: Zappos

Zappos experimented with holacracy, decentralising authority.

While not every organisation needs such a radical shift, leaders can ask: does our structure enable agility? Are decisions stuck in hierarchy? Teams benefit when roles are clear yet flexible. Entrepreneurs benefit when structure scales with growth rather than constrains it.

Process Innovation

This concerns how work gets done.

Example: Toyota

Toyota's lean system reduced waste and improved quality through continuous improvement.

For leaders, this means investing in operational excellence, not just strategy decks. For teams, it encourages feedback loops. For entrepreneurs, it reinforces disciplined execution as much as creative vision.

Product Performance Innovation

This enhances features and functionality.

Example: Dyson

Dyson differentiates through engineering improvements such as bladeless fans and bagless vacuums.

Leaders must recognise that product performance is visible - and easily imitated. Teams should pair performance innovation with brand or system innovation for defensibility. Entrepreneurs should avoid relying solely on feature upgrades.

Product System Innovation

This connects products into ecosystems.

Example: Apple

Apple integrates devices into a seamless ecosystem, strengthening loyalty.

For leadership teams, this prompts thinking beyond single offerings. What complements your core service? How can integration increase switching costs? Entrepreneurs can design ecosystems from day one - thinking platform, not product.

Service Innovation

This enhances how customers experience and use your offering.

Example: Harrods

Harrods' reputation for sourcing almost anything strengthens its brand halo.

Leaders can ask: what service layers amplify our product? Teams can map customer friction points. Entrepreneurs can create memorable service touchpoints even with limited budgets.

Channel Innovation

This rethinks how offerings reach customers.

Example: Dow Corning

Dow Corning's Xiameter platform offered streamlined digital purchasing.

For leaders, channel strategy is now inseparable from digital transformation. Teams should explore omnichannel thinking. Entrepreneurs should test direct-to-consumer, marketplaces and community-based sales early.

Brand Innovation

This distils and expresses a distinctive promise.

Example: Gore-Tex

Gore-Tex became synonymous with performance fabric.

Leaders must align brand with lived experience. Teams must ensure behaviour matches promise. Entrepreneurs should see branding as strategic positioning, not just design.

Customer Engagement Innovation

This focuses on how customers interact and participate.

Example: Sephora

Sephora's in-store classes transform customers into active participants.

For leaders, engagement builds loyalty beyond transactions. For teams, it fosters co-creation. For entrepreneurs, it builds community — one of the strongest moats in modern business.

Innovation across the whole system

The most resilient organisations combine several types of innovation simultaneously. Toyota did not only refine process; it built brand trust. Apple did not only improve product performance; it created a system.

For leadership teams, Doblin's framework can become a strategy workshop tool. Map your current strengths across the ten types. Where are you strong? Where are competitors stronger? Where is white space emerging?

For entrepreneurs, it offers a growth blueprint. You do not need to invent something unprecedented. You can innovate how you price, deliver, structure or engage.

For teams, it offers empowerment. Innovation is not reserved for R&D. HR can innovate structure. Finance can innovate profit models. Marketing can innovate engagement. Operations can innovate process.

Innovation is rarely a single lightning bolt. More often, it is the disciplined redesign of multiple elements of a system.

Now that you are familiar with the 10 Types of Innovation, the real work is understanding where each one sits within your own organisation. Innovation is not about trying to excel in all ten areas at once. It is about developing the strategic judgement to know which levers matter most for your current stage, market and ambition.

For leaders, this requires disciplined analysis rather than reactive change. For teams, it means asking sharper questions about where effort will create meaningful impact. For entrepreneurs, it means resisting the pressure to copy trends and instead building innovation choices around real customer insight and commercial evidence.

Certain areas such as brand, channel and customer engagement deserve attention in almost every organisation because they directly shape visibility, access and loyalty. The same applies to products and services - but innovation here does not mean chasing fads or mimicking competitors. It means making thoughtful, research-informed decisions grounded in your strategy, capabilities and customer data.

Innovation should never be impulsive. It should be intentional, analytical and aligned.

Where might your next breakthrough come from - product, process, profit model or partnership?

Which innovation type are you currently underestimating?

Thank You!

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