

# Rapid Results from Teams: Creating Value

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Author of *Managing B2B customers you can't afford to lose*



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## Rapid Results from Teams: Creating Value

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# Introduction

Value for your organisation comes from solving business problems and seizing business opportunities for both your organisation and your top customers, but how do you get rapid results from your teams?

To get rapid results from your teams, you need to ensure that you only have motivated, positive team members involved in the process. Individuals need to be persistent and keep finding ideas so you have new fresh ideas to choose from.



Creating your team from a mix of different departments, roles and experience will also promote the teams creativity and assist with the implementation stage later in the process.

Once you have the right team, you need to clearly define the problem you need to solve or the opportunity you want to seize.

Changing the definition of the problem or opportunity can help create additional ideas. Be unreasonable with the time allowed and the results required to unlock your creative side.

Again and again, the problem is solved when we see the problem is only a tough decision waiting to be made.

Robert H. Schuller

To save time and create real value you need a process to help you define your problem/opportunity. The process will help you collect many new ideas. The process will help you sort and prioritise your ideas to chose which are the best solutions.

When your solutions are chosen, you need to ensure you have good project management and allocate the required resources to see the project through to implementation.

You will need to persuade many departments to help through the life of the project. So, involving people from these departments in the original innovation meeting will help gain buy-in later.

For more advice on how to create persuasive pitches read our ebook below.

[Persuasive Pitching: Make them Listen & Win](#)

EBOOK



# Who should be in your Rapid Results Team?

For your rapid results team to be successful you need a diverse group of individuals who are all positive and highly motivated.

When searching for a solution to a difficult business problem or finding a way to seize a lucrative business opportunity, you need to ensure that you have the right people on your team.

The team needs to include solution-driven, motivated individuals who are happy to challenge the status quo and make a solution work. Individuals who won't jump to the first reasonable sounding solution, but keep trying to find ideas so there is a selection of ideas to choose from. Otherwise you will end up with the same old, tired and tried ideas.

Choose each individual on their own merit, however, you also need to consider the team dynamic. For the team to maintain cohesion and achieve results there must be mutual respect. To ensure everyone gets their chance to contribute you need a team leader or facilitator who will manage this process.



The rules for the team must be laid out early and that everyone understands and must be happy with the final goals and the method being used to reach these goals. You will only achieve success if everyone knows the goal.

Every idea must be accepted as valid by every member of the team until it is time to evaluate each idea against your chosen criteria. 'No idea is a stupid idea' is essential to allow peoples creative juices to flow and new breakthrough improvements to be created, rather than just incremental improvements.

Your innovation team should be made up of people from different departments, different levels and different backgrounds. This mix of people will allow you to gain different perspectives during your innovation process.



**You don't get harmony when everyone sings the same note.**

**Steve Honey**

Having people from different departments will improve internal communication and break down silos. This increases internal agility which will speed up the implementation process and reduce the level of resistance for new products and processes.

**Our traditional teams are too slow.  
We are not innovating fast enough.**

**Beth Comstock Chief Marketing Officer, GE.**

# Define your problem or opportunity.

To be effective and productive at solving a problem or seizing and opportunity, you must clearly define it, so everyone is clear what they are trying to achieve.

Many man-hours are wasted discussing how to improve a situation that has not been clearly defined. Everyone gets frustrated as they are solving different problems.

To make progress you need to ensure that everyone is solving the same problem, or chasing the same opportunity.

How to increase sales is too general, how to increase sales in product X for the final quarter of this financial year? This is a much more specific question and makes it much easier for everyone to solve the problem.

If I only had one hour to save the world, I would spend fifty-five minutes defining the problem, and only five minutes finding a solution.

Albert Einstein





## Defining your problem

Many creative solutions rely on finding a solution inside the collective memory of people working on the problem. Tapping into individual's or group memory is one of the most cost effective and repeatable problem-solving approaches.

Human memory works by encountering a piece of information that acts as a cue to retrieve other related things. If you want to retrieve different information from your memory you need to change the cue.

With creative problem-solving the definition of the problem is the cue to the memory. To generate a variety of solutions you need to change the definition of the problem to draw new information and ideas from people's memories.

**The solution is co-operation. When people co-operate, they use fewer resources. When we don't co-operate we need more time, more equipment, more services, more stock and more inventory.**

**Yves Morieux, BCG.**

# Be unreasonable.

To get results quicker, be unreasonable with the expectations for your innovation team. Make the problem harder or the opportunity greater and solve it faster.

When you put a limitation on resources, you remove the limitation on creativity. Nothing is forbidden. As you have nothing to lose you boldly challenge the status quo. That's how you come up with disruptive innovation.

Karim Mikkiche, Renault-Nissan

Adding extra pressure to individuals to create ideas in a very short period of time, for example three minutes, encourages them to suggest any idea that comes to mind. They don't have time to evaluate whether their idea will be viewed as ridiculous by other members of the team. This will create many more new ideas that you don't usually capture during your meetings.



## Keep it simple

When looking for inspiration on innovation, where better than from Steve Jobs.

[The seven innovation secrets of Steve Jobs](#)

ARTICLE

For inspiration, Steve tells you to look outside your industry. Also, that your customers demand simplicity and simplicity requires you to eliminate clutter from your user experience. Finally, think visually and bring your story to life.

## Unlock your creativity.

It is possible to limit more than just the time available to create ideas during your innovation meeting. You can be unreasonable in the resources available, or increase the result that you are expecting to achieve. These added pressures encourage your team to use the right side of the brain and make people a lot more creative than they would usually be.

Using pictures, quotes and questions are other ways of unlocking your creativity by changing your perspective of the problem.

I always skate to where the puck is going, not to where it has been.

Wayne Gretsky



How can you make the most of differences?

What could you substitute?

# Use a process to save time.

Using a process will save valuable time and create many more options.

We have all been in meetings where people shout over the top of each other to ensure their point is heard. Or worse, just quietly switch off and wait for the meeting to end, playing no part at all. Hours of unsuccessful, unstructured meetings are part of almost every companies weekly routines. Innovation meetings to resolve problems or seize opportunities are no different.

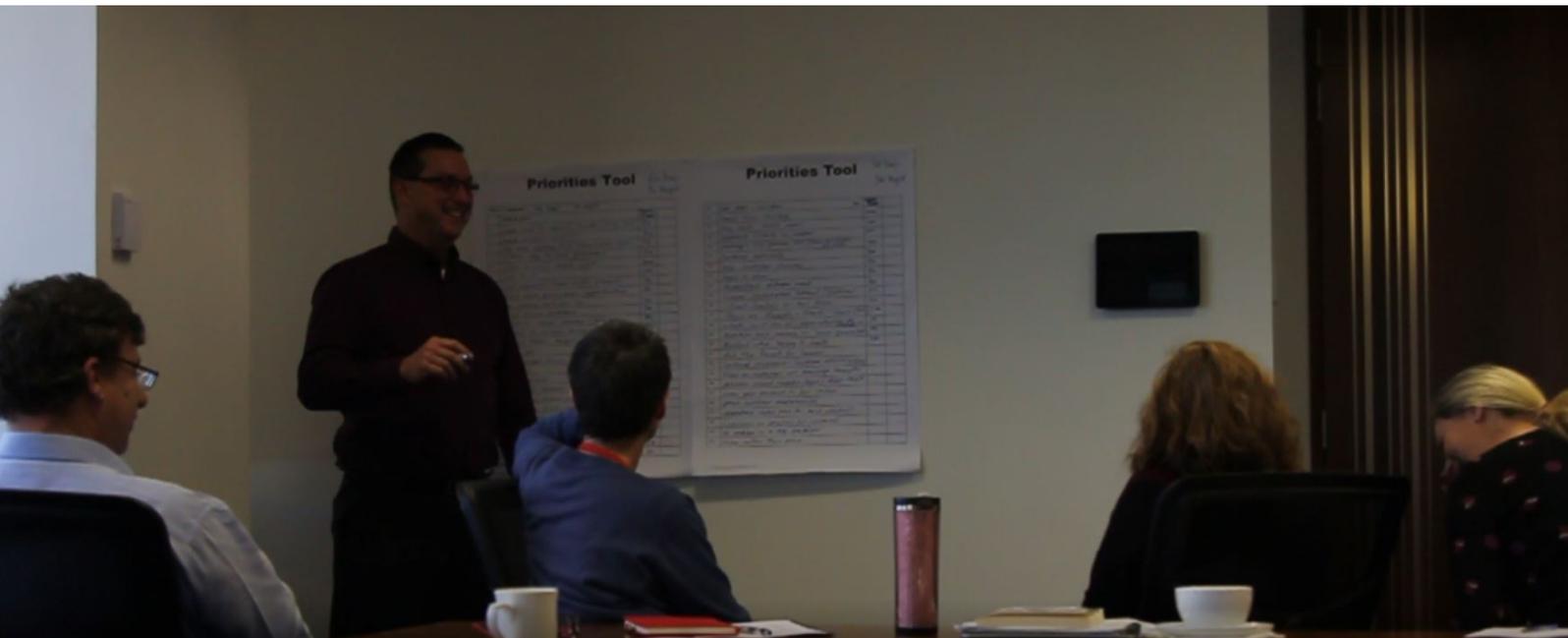
How can you change this?

## Use a process

Using a facilitated process will enable you to collect ideas, process ideas and choose solutions/actions to move forward. Just 90 minutes for each stage of the process can make these wasted hours of your life, productive and enjoyable.

Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right thing.

Peter Drucker



## Choose the breakthrough actions

In the video below, Sheena Iyengar shows with too many choices it can be difficult to decide which is the best.



How do you deal with the choice overload from all of these fresh, new ideas? This is when a good process shows its real value – in just 90 minutes you can reduce the multiple ideas (sometimes as many as 120 ideas) down to the best three actions to deliver you results.

**Too many choices can overwhelm us  
and cause us to not choose at all.**

Sheena Iyengar

# Implement solutions more effectively.

What stops a great idea becoming reality? Why do so many changes, products and services, fail?

Many ideas fail because they are never implemented. So, as part of your innovation team you need to ensure that your chosen ideas are fully planned and implemented. You must manage the time needed to put your plan into action. As most, if not all, members of the team will have regular duties and responsibilities alongside this project, to prevent failure you must schedule time for these project tasks.

A major challenge to implementation is getting different teams to agree that implanting this solution is a priority for each of them. Having individuals from all the teams involved in the innovation meeting should make the ownership and implementation of the chosen ideas easier and quicker.

**It is time companies recognised that what matters is not how great their ideas are, but how quickly they can execute them.**

**Matt Bross** Former Chief Technology Officer, BT



## Create a crisis to overcome hurdles

Implementing actions in an unreasonably short time produces rapid results. As Robert Schaffer has discovered, an unreasonably short timeframe creates a crisis situation, and in any crisis situation people are forced to pull together and find a way to overcome every hurdle and get a result.

An alternative project management perspective is suggested by Fergus O'Connell. He provides guidelines to keep your project on track. These are useful prompts to ensure your project plan produces rapid results.

### Will your project plan produce Breakthrough Results?

How well defined is the project goal?

Has the plan been written so every task is listed in chunks of 1-5 days?

Is there a project manager who every day ensures tasks are getting done?

Do the people planned to complete the tasks have time available?

Does the plan have some contingency?

Have you analysed and documented the risks to the plan?

Is someone tracking and reporting on the project at least weekly?



## Limit the risk

When you have decided which ideas you are going to progress, you may decide to test the waters with a few ideas before you determine which you will spend most resources (time and money) on.

Test your prototypes with your customers and determine which will be best received and create the biggest impact. Then allocate most resources to this idea.

Check out the video below where David and Tom Kelley from IDEO share their approach to Medtech prototyping:



Prototype



Final Product

If you never lose sight of the customer problem, how you attack the solution can remain more flexible and iterative and ultimately be more likely to succeed.

Brad Smith CEO Intuit

# Solve problems for your top customers.

Creating value for your top customers will build stronger relationships. Building relationships in this way is tough for your competitors to copy and tough for your top customers to forget.

The pace of change is accelerating and this is producing problems for your top customers. Some executives might say, “that’s not my problem”. However, if you help your top customers solve their problems you will create value for them. Determine which top customers to work with, as the extra resources needed for this means you should only do this with your best customers.

Many times you will be reacting to your top customer’s problems. However, sometimes you can help your top customers anticipate problems and solve problems before markets change. This builds barriers to your competitors.



Creating value for your top customers by solving their problems may offer opportunities to capture more value for your company from your top customers.

Solving problems is a powerful tool, so reserve this tool for only your top customers.

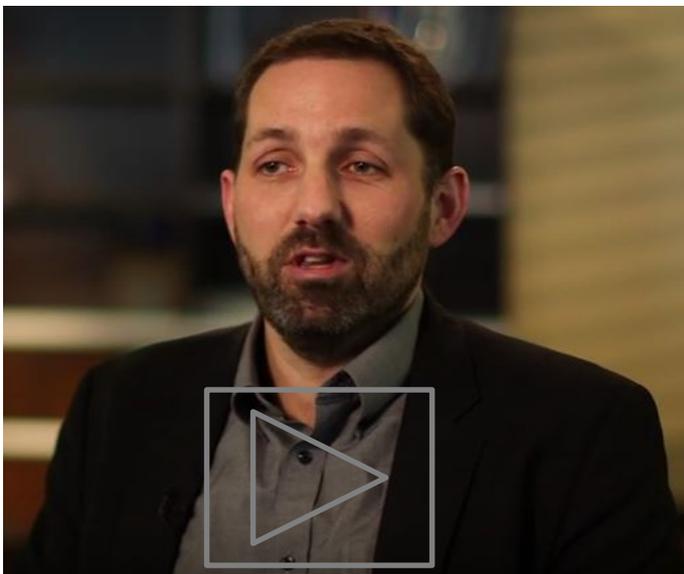
## Solving problems creates value for your top customers

A problem for your top customer is your opportunity to increase value. If you can help them to take a fresh look at how they operate, you can deliver outstanding value to their business. Besides, as competitive forces increase for your business (both conventional and unconventional competition) the value of helping your top customers take a fresh approach to their problems is critical to your business.

The moment you identify a **problem** for your top customer, two things happen. First, they want the problem solved. Second, it creates enormous opportunities for your business: to create more value for your top customers and to capture more value for your business.

Business isn't about living without problems.  
Business is about solving problems.

Tom Krause



Ewan Duncan from McKinsey discusses how to rewire value in a customer experience transformation: find out what's important to your customers and then take action.

Only work with top customers – top customers who value your company's services highly and value their relationship with your company highly. For these partnerships you should aim to exceed their expectations and deliver exceptional customer value.

In contrast, you should not try to solve problems for transactional customers because they view your service as a commodity – they want the product at the lowest price and that is all.

In the middle of  
difficulty lies  
opportunity.

Albert Einstein



Problems are not stop signs, they are guidelines.

Robert H Schuller

Chapter

# Questions to Challenge You

1. How do you decide who to include in your teams?
2. How do you define your problem/opportunity clearly, so everyone knows what they are trying to solve?
3. How do you manage the choice overload?
4. If you do identify a problem to solve, how do you have the commitment and resources to solve the problem?
5. When innovating how do you keep the customer front of mind?
6. How do you understand your accounts deeply enough to identify their problems?

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### **The Problem**

Solving problems or seizing opportunities as part of a team can leave many feeling frustrated. The usual response is “It would have been quicker if I had done it myself.”

Working in a team people either compete or conform. When competing they destroy ideas, when conforming they just suggest the usual, old ideas – never anything fresh or new.

### **The Future**

Using a process to solve problems or seize opportunities produces fast results, while avoiding competing or conforming.

Involving the right people – affected by the problem or implementing the solutions – they know how and why the solution was chosen. This provides ownership and facilitates the implementation process.

Solving problems for your top customers can also provide you with a competitive edge.

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