

# The “La Salle Innovation Matrix” – Innovation is the “Buzz” Word of the Day

Roger La Salle, Director on Innovation and Technology Strategy, Invetech Operations Pty Ltd, Melbourne, gave this talk on his “Innovation Matrix” which attracted a lot of interest at the recent InnoVaTe-X workshops in Melbourne.

There has been a lot of hype and activity in the area of innovation of recent times and there have been many attempts to define the word “Innovation” so that some meaningful progress on the debate can be undertaken.

A popular definition that has emerged on the subject of Innovation seems to be where Innovation is the process of taking an opportunity to the market, and the full gamut of activities that that entails. One learned professor was even quoted as saying, “Invention is the instantaneous creation of an idea, and Innovation is the process that converts that idea to a marketable product and takes it to the market place.”

In my view the debate on Innovation has done nothing but confuse the matter.

If people would only refer to the common dictionary they would find a suitable definition of Innovation that not only clarifies the matter, but also makes clear a way forward to use this word in a valuable and creative manner.

The word “Innovate” simply means to change, and Innovation is the process of change.

If we start from the understanding that

Innovation means to change, then we have a basis or a “call to action” to move forward in the development of new products and new initiatives.

## INNOVATION FOR MARKET LEADERSHIP

For any company in a business with new product, clearly the way to stay ahead of the pack is to be Innovative and keep creating new products. Indeed, recent research has shown that the top 10% of companies replace 85% of their products every 5 years. So clearly, for them Innovation is important in their market leadership.

Further to that, a recent study published in the Institution of Engineers magazine showed that it is the culture of an organisation that is the biggest driver of Innovation, by a factor of 2, compared with the next driver.

On a lighter note, in a recent episode of the Simpsons, “a much watched and loved television program”, Homer Simpson decided he would become a famous inventor. He resigned from his job and set up an office in his basement.

He sat at a desk with a writing pad with the word “Invent” written at the top.

He sat there with a pencil tapping on the side of his head day in, day out, saying invent, invent, invent, invent. For more than a week he did this until a lump grew on the side of his head, but no ideas came. Clearly, Homer needed a methodology by which he could create initiatives.

## NEW TOOL

A new tool has recently been developed which shows a clear way forward to people with existing products and who want to find a

means to stimulate thinking to create exciting new products.

This tool is known as the “La Salle Innovation Matrix<sup>®</sup>”, and is simply a crosshatch of catalysts, and seeds, by which new products may be conceived.

The “Innovation Matrix” is used to help identify new product opportunities from a starting point of an existing product.

The “Innovation Matrix” is a practical tool that is applied to create a change to either the product or service, or an association of the product or service.

The Matrix is a very powerful tool when applied to a specific product or situation.

The Matrix has two axes, the “Seeds” (which represent the product under review, or derivations of the product) and the “Catalysts”. Catalysts represent the actions that can be undertaken on a product.

It is best to demonstrate the use of the Matrix by example. Let us assume the product under review is a pencil.

Consider the first item on the vertical axis, **Extension**.

Extension means to change the product or to extend it. The question to be answered is how does one go about initiating this change?

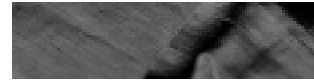
The ways to make change to a product are presented on the horizontal axis as the **Catalysts**.

The first way to look at extending a product is to “Future Gaze”.

Future Gazing means, to cast yourself into the future and look back at the product (as your grandchildren might do in 100 years time) and

Catalyst Seed	Future Gazing	New Design	Explosion	New Function	New Material	New Technology	Re Question	Inversion	Tracking	Reduction	IYFIHYDIW	Transfer
Extension (Changed)												
Accessories (Add ons)												
Complementary Products (Goes with)												
Channel Enhancement (Same outlet)												
Consequential Opportunities (Effect of)												

**THE “LA SALLE TARGETED INNOVATION MATRIX” FOCUSES ON AN IDENTIFIED PRODUCT OR PROCESS**  
 This matrix is the result of over 20 years of work and experience. The process works. The Edward De Bono tools for creative thinking can be used in conjunction with this matrix.



## The “La Salle Innovation Matrix”...

see how the product may look to those eyes and search for what may change. (I’m sure we have all done this when we view old photographs of our grandparents’ time. Usually when one does this sort of thing it is easy to find items that are clearly old fashioned, for example the sound horn on an old gramophone.)

Future Gazing asks you to do this on your product today. It is a very powerful tool for seeing what is perhaps accepted today but is really ready for change.

So apply the first intersection of the matrix and see what develops.

Using the example of the pencil, place yourself 50 or 100 years in the future, then look back at a picture of somebody using a pencil today. What would you think, would you laugh at the old fashioned pencil looking back at it in 100 years time? Use this look back tool to try and guess how a pencil may develop and see if new ideas can be conceived. Perhaps the pencil you visualise may have fully automatic self propelling lead, maybe it will have no lead at all but have some sort of force field that effects the paper to indicate the writing.

When that area of the matrix has been explored, still using the seed of Extension, now apply New Design as a tool for change. Perhaps the new design will be an integrated shape of the pencil to best fit the hand.

Once that Matrix intersection has been investigated, move to the next Catalyst, “Explosion”. This means to widely brainstorm the product looking for an extension. Maybe the pencil needs to be a laser pointer inscribing on to the paper.

The next Catalyst is “New Function”. This means to find a new use for the item combined with its original use. Perhaps the pencil could also be a ruler with a graduated side scale or a means for advertising.

The remaining Catalysts are:

“New Material” – this means, what new material are now available, which perhaps were not when the product was originally developed. How can a new material be used to advantage to innovate an older product? Clearly there are numerous examples of this. Indeed the very development of plastic as a material revolutionises thousands of old products. Being aware of new materials can be a powerful weapon in the Innovation tool kit.

“New Technology” – this means to use the latest technology to achieve the outcome already performed.

“Re-question” means to seriously ask what is the purpose of value in this item. Maybe it can be dispensed with and a completely different way found to achieve the same result.

“Inversion” – means to look at the product from the entirely opposite perspective. For example an electric motor operates from electricity, does the inversion apply, and could an electric motor make electricity? The answer is of course it does, indeed that is a dynamo or generator and such a product could have been conceived by inversion applied to a motor.

“Tracking” means to follow the item through a day in its life and see what opportunity that may bring for new development.

“Reduction” means to try and “cost down” or reduce the parts count or the construction to remove costs.

“IYFIHYDIW” means - If you’re finding it hard you’re doing it wrong. In other words, what is it that annoys you about the product or its use that can be corrected?

“Transfer” means to look at what others are doing in this area of endeavour and see if this gives some insight into possible improvement opportunities.

The Catalysts can be used for all lines down the vertical column.

These are:

**Extension (development)** – develop as a change to the product such as an adding an eraser to the end of the pencil.

**Accessory (adds on to the product)** – develop an add on and sell this with the product, such as a soft finger grip for a pencil.

**Complementary Product (goes with the product)** – this is a product that compliments the original product, such as a separate eraser to go with the pencil.

**Channel Enhancement (sold through the same distribution channel)** – such as a product that will take advantage with the distribution channel the original product already uses. This may be a ruler, or calculator, or ink, or pen etc.

**Consequential Change (what effect does the product have on the “landscape”?)** – This area looks for the opportunity made possible by the “ripple on the pond” that the original product or its derivation caused. For example, the introduction of an indelible pencil may provide the consequential opportunity for white out marker.

If the “La Salle Innovation Matrix” is applied in this manner to any specific product then it is highly likely that a new product will result.

The Matrix is best used in a group session where a product of a company is subjected to critical review in an endeavour to find a new product opportunity.

Further information and workshops to assist in the use and understanding of this Innovation Matrix may be obtained by contacting Roger La Salle at Invetech in Melbourne. Phone (03) 9211 7700 or e-mail to [rls@invetech.com.au](mailto:rls@invetech.com.au).

## COMPANIES MAY MISS OUT ON SIP

Australian TCF companies may miss out on entitlements under the Strategic Investment Program (SIP) because they have been too busy to take steps to fully understand the new scheme.

Consultant Peter Kreitals said businesses had been heavily burdened by having to meet the same 30 June deadline for both SIP applications and GST preparation.

Kreitals said the capital investment program was fairly routine but the record-keeping systems required for the R&D aspect of the scheme presented a major change.

“It places a major burden on corporate administrative mechanisms,” he said. “And people will miss opportunities because they have been understandably busy with their day-to-day businesses.”

He warned companies needed to be alert to the differences that would determine whether their programs were eligible under the SIP.

And he said the verification process would require advance planning and accurate record keeping.

“Companies will need to be able to demonstrate where they have spent money and that they have been engaged in eligible activities,” he said. “It means having the right processes and systems in place to track spending, to determine whether it does qualify and why. Many firms won’t have even thought about it and the sooner they get the right systems in place, the better they will be positioned to register claims.”

Kreitals warned it was easier to prepare the paperwork in advance than retrospectively.

“The more complete and accurate companies are in their paperwork, the less likelihood of dispute or missing out in areas where they have a legitimate entitlement,” he said.