

# Innovation starts with curiosity





# Contents

What is innovation?	03	08. Channel innovation	29
The 10 types of innovation	07	09. Brand innovation	32
01. Profit model innovation	09	10. Customer engagement innovation	34
02. Network innovation	13	Appendix: Additional workshops	36
03. Structure innovation	15		
04. Process innovation	19		
05. Product performance innovation	22		
06. Product system innovation	24		



Source: Netwealth Innovation Toolkit

# What is innovation?

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Part 1.0



# What is innovation?

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From profit model to processes, client service to brand image, there is potential to spark change for the better in any part of your advice firm.

To thrive as a business in 2025, innovation is vital. Innovation is not just for large corporations with well-funded Research and Development departments, but it can be in the DNA of every business. It can be initiated by any function or role, and done for any purpose. Smaller businesses have the advantage of being more agile – so innovations can be created and integrated faster.

Innovation is commonly tied to technology, but this is a limited view. Innovation could be as small as changing a process for more efficiency, or as dramatic as completely disrupting your own products and services and starting anew. Innovation could be about changing a brand to suit the current market, or changing the way a whole industry operates.

What is important in innovation, [according to Deloitte](#), is that it is not simply left to chance, but that it is systematic for the best chances of success. This is where Deloitte's '10 Types of Innovation' framework is useful, as it helps you identify where across your business there is potential to innovate. With this clear vision, you can make decisions about where and how to invest time and resources into innovation.

Regardless of the focus of innovation, there are some common ingredients. These include disruption, inspiration, and the need for a significant amount of commitment.

"Innovation can be big or small; disruptive or simply enhance today."



# What is innovation?



## Innovation can disrupt – or see you be disrupted

For example, in 2011, Sensis, then a billion-dollar business, sold advertising and printed directories including Yellow Pages and White Pages. The bulk of its revenue came from small businesses such as plumbers and builders. However, the digital landscape saw platforms such as Google reshape how people searched for and connected with services. Sensis recognised this shift and launched Yellow at Home, aiming to evolve into a richer content platform. This had all the hallmarks of a well executed innovation initiative, yet it failed. Despite having the ideas and capital, Sensis didn't have the right culture of innovation to back up the change. Sensis missed the chance to disrupt itself – and was swiftly disrupted by others.



## Innovation can be inspired by anything

Van Phillips, an amputee due to a water-skiing accident, considered the prosthetic limbs available to him uncomfortable. Inspired by the a of a cheetah's hind leg, Phillips spent 10 years designing and testing hundreds of prosthetic limb models with the help of aerospace materials engineer, Dale Abildskov, before landing on the best option. Today, people around the globe are empowered to walk, run, jump and live a better life thanks to their efforts. This shows how innovation can take cues from anywhere.

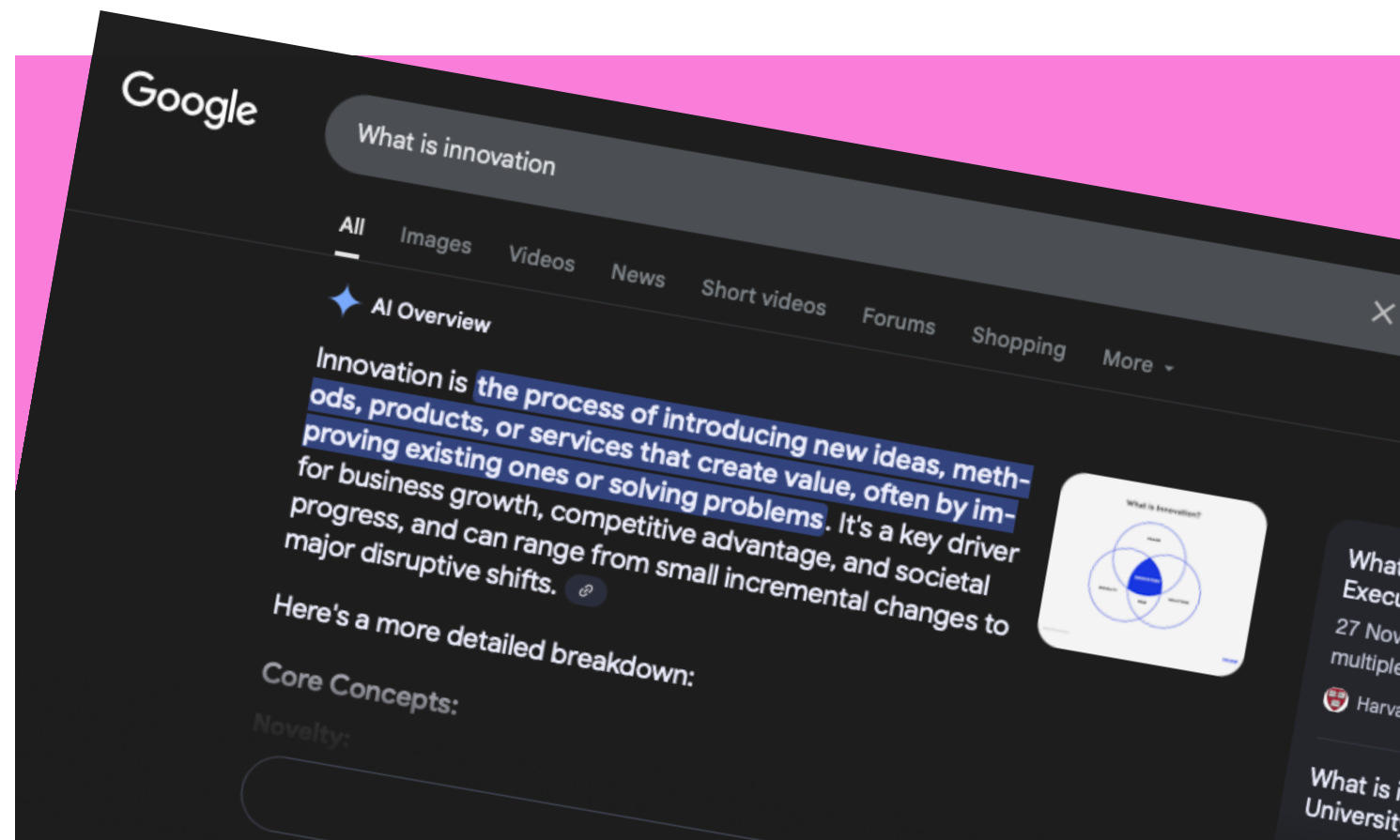


## Innovation takes commitment

James Dyson is a renowned innovator, and he is also known for his patience. In 1978, he became frustrated with his vacuum cleaner's diminishing performance. He discovered that its bag was clogged with dust, causing suction to drop. He had recently built an industrial cyclone tower for his factory that separated paint particles from the air using centrifugal force. He wondered whether the same principle could be applied to a vacuum cleaner. After five years and 5127 prototypes, he invented the world's first bagless vacuum cleaner, demonstrating that innovation takes patience.

Source: <https://www.lb.dyson.com/en-LB/community/aboutdyson.aspx>

# What is innovation?



## Innovation ignores legacy

Google generates around US \$50 billion per annum from its advertising 'search and click' revenue. In early 2025, recognising the trend by consumers to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) chat for research instead of traditional search engines, it disrupted itself and added an AI overview of the search findings at the top of its search results. Now, the traditional website links, from which Google generates its revenue, are further down the page, possibly not getting clicked at all. This shows how a company can untie itself from its own legacy and move on.



## Innovation is not always about technology

In the early 1970s, McDonald's took a hammer to its wall and created the drive-through restaurant. While the idea had been done by other fast-food chains, the impetus for McDonald's stemmed from soldiers located at the Fort Huachuca Army Base in Arizona. The local McDonald's store was missing out on sales as the soldiers had to stay in their vehicles when wearing their uniforms off base. The change paid off. In the early 2020s, around 70% of its major store sales in the US are from drive-through services. The chain has since innovated different styles of drive-through – including cafes and fast-pick up models. This demonstrates just how diverse innovation can be.



## Innovation can be small

When you go to a car park and are guided to an available spot by a green overhead sensor light, you are benefiting from a small innovation. This simple idea removes 'car park frustration' and shows how a small idea can make a big impact.



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