

November Blog



Ruminating on the key learning's from my Israel immersion

I was thrilled, when my esteemed colleague, the amazing [Tania de Jong](#) invited me, to present a master class at next week's [Creative Innovation Asia Pacific 2016 Conference](#). Tania and I first met several years ago, when she was part of an Australian Trade Mission visiting Israel, the iconic Start-Up Nation.

At the time, I had let go of my core corporate learning and consulting roles and had unexpectedly become an Israeli start-up entrepreneur in innovation education, where I was learning, by experimenting, doing and of course, failing. I was, in fact, totally immersed in researching the key drivers of the unique Israeli innovation culture and participating keenly in the Israeli start-up community's entrepreneurial lifestyle. So, for the [2016 Creative Innovation Asia Pacific 2016 Conference](#), she suggested that I include my 5 key learning's from the 6 years I spent immersed in Israel's entrepreneurial and innovative start-up culture and eco-system.

Whilst I had written an e-book "[The ImagineNation Story](#)" describing my experiences, I had not, actually sat down for some time, and retreated, reflected and percolated my generative learning's from my mis-adventures in Israeli start-up land. When I did actually manage to identify, summarize and edit the 5 key learning's I was surprised at how profound they were and how essential they are to ultimate 21st century business enterprise innovation and leadership success.

The 5 Key Learning's in Detail

1. Innovation emerges from colliding Necessity with Possibility

I initially found that Israel defied any kind of conventional culture model definitions, whilst it is essentially driven by a strong survival need; this is strangely balanced by an equally strong Jewish need for self actualization and self transcendence. This might create entropy that some suggest is not sustainable for the long term, it also manifests as a collision between the "necessity" (survival) need and "possibility" (making the world a better place need) that creates the explosion of creativity necessary to effect radical and disruptive innovations.

Why is this important for enterprise innovation?

At [ImagineNation™](#) we believe that innovation is the result of a COLLISION between different programming perspectives and thought patterns (specifically our necessity and possibility metaprograms). Typically, most organizations focus only the 'necessity' and 'survival' perspectives, causing them to see innovation as a lever for 'moving away' from some kind of undesirable future state. This results in what we describe as a '*push*' style of management,

based on **telling** people what to do and how to do it and as a result, creates a more conventional and conformist type of organizational culture.

Organizations who choose to focus more on the 'possibility' and 'opportunity' perspectives, causes them to see innovation as a lever for 'moving toward' some kind of desirable future state. This results in what we describe a 'pull' style of management, based on **asking** them what to do and how to do it and as a result, creates a more engaged, collective and creative type of organizational culture.

We encourage our clients to take a '*both/and*' approach and intentionally collide necessity (need for organizational survival) with possibility (the need to make a difference to the world). To then articulate this as a passionate purpose (why frame) for innovation, the result will be an explosion of creativity supported by a sense of passionate urgency that will ultimately lead to innovative break-throughs and solutions!

2. Constructive Nonconformity & Disagreement drive creativity that results in innovation

The Israeli culture is exemplified by a state of constant 'conflict' and 'argumentativeness' at all levels; between individuals, peoples, groups the government and neighbouring territories. In a unique way, this makes Israel and many Israeli's expert and masterful in deviating from a 'business as usual' ways of doing things; in challenging the status quo (no matter what it is), defying convention and in generating imaginative higher level 'out of the box' thinking through their assertive, candid and yet creative problem solving arguments and provocative debates.

Why is this important for enterprise innovation?

At [ImagineNation™](#) we teach our clients how to be safely disruptive and provocatively competent, which means they develop the creative confidence and generative discovery skill set (listening, inquiring and debating - constructive non conformity) to be, think and act differently. This means that they know how to see and deviate from organizational norms, other people's actions, and expectations, to make the difference they want to make in the world in ways that people value and cherish.

3. The power of adversity, positivity, optimism and individuality

Israel has a seemingly traumatized population, with a deep sense of self centeredness and an overall impatience, all with a population of approximately 8.3 million people. It is often marginalized globally, is surrounded by hostile neighbors, at the edge of chaos and in the face of complexity and is yet contained in a land the size of Tasmania. Yet most Israeli's embody an incredible ability to adapt, be resilient and defiant, and are able to deal with adverse situations whilst sustaining an inherently optimistic outlook and positive mindset.

Why is this important for enterprise innovation?

At [ImagineNation™](#) we have drawn inspiration from how Israel provides the world with a microscopic, adaptive and replicable example of how to adapt to adversity, discontinuity and volatility as levers for resilience, collaboration, creativity, invention and change. We enable our clients to see and solve wicked, business and customer problems as ‘blue ocean’ possibilities and to operate defiantly in the face of opposition, resistance and constraints. We support them to cultivate the core traits of passion, optimism, self efficacy, individualism, achievement, accountability and positivity which are at the core of every Israeli start-up entrepreneurs’ success story.

4. Emerging a new paradigm for 21st century leadership

When I arrived in Israel in 2010, I faced a harsh new reality which defied all of my previous organizational roles, as well as most of what I had been taught and experienced about high performance organizational cultures, leaders and teams. Aptly illustrated by Dov Frohman founder of Intel Israel in his book ‘Leadership the Hard Way’ where he states that *“leadership in today’s economy is a lot like flying a plane through a thunderstorm.”*

I quickly realized that most of the current approaches to organizational learning and development were irrelevant to future potential clients inside and outside of my new homeland as well as to what could potentially constitute successful transformative innovative 21st century leadership.

Why is this important for enterprise innovation?

At [ImagineNation™](#) we follow the advice of Albert Einstein who aptly stated that you can’t solve the problem with the same thinking that created it. For an organization to be able to innovate, people must have great leaders, people who understand how they impact on others and how they impact on the business enterprise culture. Leaders who drive innovation by making it safe and possible for people to innovate. The most effective leaders lead from behind to harness and mobilize people’s collective genius because they know that most innovation is the result of a collaborative effort by a diverse group.

5. Creating an innovation eco-system to co-operate internally and compete externally

One of the key critical success factors behind Israeli innovation and entrepreneurship is the successful Israeli innovation eco-system. This is described as the cluster of world class universities, government agencies, venture capitalists, large organizations, the (IDF) Israel Defense Forces, Start-Ups, and the collaborative eco-system that connects them.

Israel has developed the concept of an ‘economic cluster’ into a unique collaborative and competitive internal state driven, innovative eco-system. This is a result of its unique set of

cultural attributes including maximising diversity, willingness to experiment and fail, teaming and networking as well as government support initiatives. Israel has created a business environment where all of the key pieces and important parts work together to support and enable their start-up business enterprises to be adaptive, innovative and successful in an uncertain and unstable world.

Why is this important for enterprise innovation?

At [ImagineNation™](#) we encourage our clients to take a longer term, non linear perspective and emergent approach innovation. To apply it as a strategic and systemic lever to adapt to the disruption and variation involved in innovation as positive factors simultaneously. We have deciphered, defined and replicated the key attributes that enable the innovation eco-system concept to be adapted to suit specific individual and organizational needs. This means that individuals, functions, business units, organizations and even industries can take advantage of globalization and our inter connected world to collaborate effectively to see and solve customer problems and deliver greater user experiences.

So what does all this mean really?

For organizations to respond, flow and flourish with the wide range of 21st century challenges, business wicked and customer problems we suggest they focus on developing their capability in three key areas;

- Developing innovative leadership, entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial capacities, innovation focused organizational strategies, cultures and innovative ecosystems!
- Transforming possibilities, constraints, challenges and wicked, business and customer problems by harnessing and mobilizing people’s collective genius into user friendly creative inventions and innovative solutions, products and services that people value and cherish.
- Fearlessly experimenting with discovering, designing and delivering innovative prototypes that cause them to fail fast to learn quickly that result in radical and disruptive solutions.

This is just a short preamble to my whole masterclass presentation, so please join me at the [Creative Innovation Asia Pacific Conference 2016 The Exponential Shift Making transformation happening on 7-9 November 2016, Sofitel Melbourne on Collins](#) where my [master class](#) subject is a mouthful, it is ‘Making Transformation happen – the 7 breakthrough capabilities of successful transformative innovative leadership.’