



10 THINGS WE'VE LEARNED ABOUT Innovation



Leveraging the success and hundred-year legacy of the Board of Jewish Education New York-SAJES, The Jewish Education Project (<http://www.thejewisheducationproject.org>) pioneers new approaches in Jewish education for every age. They recognize that as society changes, the way they educate must adapt right along with it.

The Jewish Education Project believes that every Jewish family should have a path to affordable, accessible, and inspiring Jewish education for their children. They connect forward-thinking educators to powerful ideas and resources so they can create new models that change how, what, and where people learn.

Together with their partners, they're transforming Jewish education for today's ever-changing world and helping to shape the future of the Jewish people.

The Jewish Education Project is a beneficiary of UJA Federation of New York (<http://www.ujafedny.org>).



The iCenter (<http://www.theicenter.org>) is dedicated to igniting a passion for and commitment to Israel in the hearts and minds of young Jews so that contemporary Israel becomes an integral component of their Jewish identity.

The iCenter is a national address and advocate for high-quality and meaningful Israel education for Jewish children in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, in both formal and informal settings.

In collaboration with the teachers, camp counselors, and administrators who are on the front lines of educating Jewish youth, The iCenter strives to make Israel a stronger and more integrated component of Jewish education in North America.

The iCenter was founded through the generous support of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation (<http://www.schusterman.org>) and the Jim Joseph Foundation (<http://www.jimjosephfoundation.org>).

In Cooperation With



What is Makom? Makom (<http://www.jafi.org.il/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Strategic+Partnerships/Makom/About+Makom>) is a content development and training hub that works with leaders to reimagine the place of Israel in institutional and communal life. They believe that commitment is sparked and forged by embracing the vibrant complexity of Israel. Their team, based in Israel, New York, and Los Angeles, is made up of content and training experts with deep expertise in the field of Israel education and engagement. Makom works with individuals and with organizations, with communities large and small. They will work with anyone who is eager to hug and wrestle with Israel and the Jewish People.

What does Makom do? Makom works to empower Jewish educators, rabbis, arts and community leaders to develop sophisticated and honest Israel programming. They seek to generate innovative content, to cultivate the leadership necessary for innovation, and to advocate for a new kind of conversation about Israel.

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History of Project InCiTE

A Partnership Between The Jewish Education Project and The iCenter

TEEN EDUCATION is challenging. Many institutions and organizations are unsatisfied with their record for delivering high-quality experiences for learners in the years between bar/bat mitzvah and college. Additionally, the educators and youth professionals who work with Jewish teens often find themselves lacking the peer and professional support, communal resources, and professional development opportunities needed to bring new ideas to the table that better reflect 21st century teens and their families.

Inspired by this recognition and with a mandate to bring strong Israel engagement to teen settings, the Project InCiTE Innovating Creative Teen Engagement Fellowship (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>) was created through the work of the New Center for Collaborative Leadership at The Jewish Education Project (<http://www.thejewisheducationproject.org>).

We Started by Asking Ourselves:

- Is it possible to create an environment that fosters innovative ideas that will emerge as new models of Israel engagement for teens?
- How do we facilitate a process that will see these ideas through the creative, design, and implementation process?
- Can we deliver innovative projects that meet the needs of the organizations and settings where they will be piloted?

Charged with this task, we gathered together a diversely affiliated group of educators from national and regional institutions and organizations, and we designed the Fellowship to address these questions in four fundamental ways:

Innovation Training

We invested in working with SIT (Systematic Inventing Thinking) (<http://www.sitsite.com>), an Israel-based company of thinking trainers who worked directly with the Fellows. SIT facilitated retreats and training sessions and provided ongoing support to the Fellows. Participants were immersed in this process during the ideation and creative phases of Project InCiTE, learning strategies that broadened their capacity to think and innovate as they began to develop ideas for their projects.

Coach Support

We selected a group of seven high-level professionals in the field, each who brought his or her own expertise, experience, and perspective to the table. Coaches were assigned to individual Fellows whom they met with regularly, providing multiple support and guiding roles that varied during each phase of the Fellowship. As projects began to develop, coaches worked with cluster groups around common themes that emerged, allowing for their particular expertise to impact Fellows they had not worked with in the earlier stages of the Fellowship.

Institutional Sponsors

In addition to the qualifications of each Fellow candidate, we took into consideration two equally important factors during the selection process. We understood that for an educator to succeed, he or she must have buy-in from his or her institution and strong support from a professional (sponsor) within the organization. The sponsor could act as a champion to advocate for and help facilitate with the development and implementation of the educator's project.

Peer Relationships

We recognized early on the value of the Fellows working in groups, especially the insight they gained from the perspectives of others who were as committed to teen education, yet came from a significantly different educational or denominational setting. We invested in building these relationships by designing multiple experiences that fostered both personal and professional bonds—particularly during the ten days the Fellows spent together in Israel. These new relationships have had a positive effect on the educational landscapes the Fellows all participate in. We expect that the relationship webs that have formed will continue long after participation in Project InCiTE ends.

A Note on the Organizational Process and Personalities

One aspect of Project InCiTE that did not make its way into the *10 Things We've Learned About Innovation* report or *Contribution to the Field of Israel Education* report is our internal management process. From an organizational perspective, we feel it bears mentioning.

We had in place at the beginning of the Fellowship three foundational understandings:

- End Goals: Developing projects and spreading the ideas to the wider community
- Strategies: Intentionally picking an eclectic cohort, SIT training, coach support, and peer development
- Structure: Overnight retreats, an intense Israel experience, monthly or weekly coach support calls and meetings

Other than this overall working plan, we intentionally left room for Project InCiTE to be open and fluid. Meaning, we knew that we would discover things along the way that we could not anticipate or expect and wanted to have the capacity to evolve as we went along, which we did. We also learned that personality types present in a process like this one or any other initiative could influence the undercurrent of how it will flow, what will be reacted to, and what will rise to the surface and require attention. It proved to be an exciting, challenging, and often elevating experience to be both responsive and proactive in this way, and we learned not to underestimate its value.

Project Information

- Funding: In just eighteen months, fourteen of the twenty Fellows were

granted seed funding to launch their projects.

- Projects: The Project InCiTE webpage houses pages for each Fellow. Each page has a description and assessment about the project that the Fellows developed and a “how to” for implementing it in other settings.
- The Project InCiTE webpage also contains copies of process documents including a list of the outstanding educators in Israel with whom we worked. The webpage will be updated as projects are implemented and assessed.

The Project InCiTE team is proud of the wonderful group of professionals who embarked on this journey with us. Their collective commitment and hard work has contributed a body of work that will positively impact the wider educational community. We wish them *hatzlachah* as they continue in their personal and professional Jewish journeys.



Debbie Seiden

Project Manager for Project InCiTE Fellowship



PROJECT INCITE TEAM

From The Jewish Education Project
*David Bryfman, Debbie Seiden,
and Jill Minkoff*

From The iCenter
Anne Lanski and Aliza Goodman



Introduction to Innovation

FOR MANY YEARS now I have worked in both formal and informal Jewish educational settings determined to win the battle to engage every Jewish teenager in a meaningful Jewish journey post-bar or bat mitzvah. There are many days when this is rewarding, but unfortunately, there are many more days when this is often frustrating and disheartening. My assumption for many years was that if there was very little good stuff out there to engage Jewish teens, then there must be an inadequate number of good people doing this work. Besides the arrogance and naiveté of this statement, I eventually learned that my primary assumption was flawed. As I continually discover, there are often great people out there trying to do very important work, but it is often something else that prevents them from realizing their potential.

And so Project InCiTE was conceived with the single framing question: How could we develop a program that would unleash the full potential of Jewish teen professionals?

We provided coaches, worked with institutions, and infused high-quality Israel resources and experiences—all of which were significant components of Project InCiTE. Yet before any of this occurred, we had to focus our attention on the very essence of what it was we wanted to achieve. We were dissatisfied with the status quo of inadequate Jewish teen engagement, and somehow we needed to break the cycle of the same old experiences being offered to an ever-changing population of Jewish teens.

While “innovation” had become a buzzword in the Jewish community, we realized it was far more complex and complicated than many others had recognized. Most importantly, we learned we could actually teach creativity and innovation; thus, our partnership with SIT—Systematic Inventive Thinking (<http://www.sitsite.com>) was born. In what we believe to have been the first attempt of its kind in the Jewish world, we took individuals within institutions and trained them in skills and capacities to become perpetual agents of creativity and innovation wherever they may end up. The success of Project InCiTE will not just be measured by the projects conceived during this fellowship—but through the impact that everyone touched by this experience carries with him or her at every point along his or her journeys.

David Bryfman

Director of the New Center for Collaborative Leadership
The Jewish Education Project

[David's bio >](#)



Project InCiTE Fellows



**Carine
Warsawski**



**Renee
Goldfarb**



**Andrew
Fretwell**



**Tair
Guidace**



**Dana
Sharkarchy**



**Shahar
Gal**



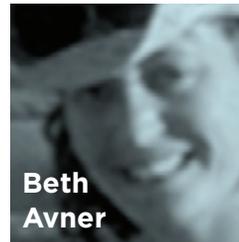
**Efron
Sturmwind**



**Hope
Chernak**



**Sharna
Marcus**



**Beth
Avner**



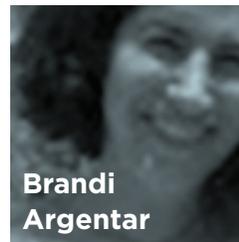
**Rachel
Winkler**



**Rebecca
Leibowitz**



**Alan
Sufrin**



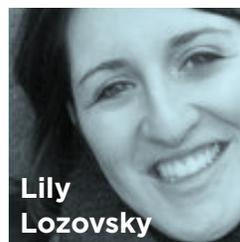
**Brandi
Argentar**



**Orly
Millstein-Shapira**



**Eliza
Zipper**



**Lily
Lozovsky**



**Ben
Fink**



**Jodi
Mishkin**



**Lilach
Bluevise**

DAVID BRYFMAN is currently Director of the New Center for Collaborative Leadership at The Jewish Education Project (formerly the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York-SAJES). David recently completed his PhD in Education and Jewish Studies at NYU focusing on the development of Jewish adolescent identity development and experiential Jewish education. He is also a graduate of the Wexner Graduate Fellowship Program. Prior to moving to New York, David worked in formal and informal Jewish educational institutions in Australia, Israel, and North America. David is also currently an educational consultant for The iCenter. In his spare time David also enjoys (sort of) running marathons.





Some Innovation InCiTES

From Our Thinking Trainers at SIT— Systematic Inventive Thinking

AS MENTIONED in one of the essays in this collection (see *Organizational Support: Ready, Willing, and Able*—Clare Goldwater), it is notoriously difficult for an individual to change his or her mind. “Fixedness,” some of us call it. But experience teaches us that this is just the beginning of an arduous journey towards change and innovation.

If the goal were only changing an individual’s mind—*dayenu*. If it were not only changing an individual’s mind, but also changing his or her entire perspective on some issue—*dayenu*. If it were getting an entire team to change their perspective—*dayenu*, and so on, becoming progressively harder (from one *kal va’chomer* to the next) to get others to collaborate with your newly acquired idea, convincing the management of an organization to sincerely support an initiative for change, and, finally, drive an entire organization to embrace and implement it.

Embed all these hardships in the context of education, and, for some mysterious reason, the challenges seem to double in intensity. Education activities seem to bring out the best in many of us in many respects. But openness to innovation is not always one of them. It is no surprise, therefore, that at the outset of Project InCiTE (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>), both the Fellows and their support staff seemed to us (SIT facilitators) a bit less than more-or-less confident of their chances of actually generating, let alone implementing, some valuable new ideas in the Israel education environment.

Observing with “innovation-professionals” eyes, we thought we could discern several additional hurdles and challenges:

1. Lack of clarity on what the Fellows were actually trying to achieve (see *Learning Innovation...Immerse Yourself*—Reuven Greenvald on the *what* before the *how*). Counter to what many believe, it is very hard to effectively innovate just by “being creative.” Well-defined goals and a clear sense of the available framework are crucial (see *Adapting to the Innovation Zone*—Joshua Yarden). Constraints, we believe, are crucial because when everything is totally open, it is hard to generate innovative traction.

2. Not enough heterogeneity in the group. It is tempting to note the differences between the Fellows as a sign of diversity. Less intuitive is to be aware of their relative homogeneity compared to the target audience of the Fellows' expected activities.

3. Strong peer pressure as to what is and isn't acceptable in the field. Firm dogmas abound in any field, but in a politically and emotionally sensitive subject such as Israel education, the number of concepts that one hesitates to mention very often dramatically limits the space for mental maneuver.

4. Fellows could not draw upon many available examples of people who had been (like them) relatively low in the system's hierarchy, and yet were able to introduce impactful innovation.

How can we explain, then, the (relative) success of a substantial number of Fellows? Here are several possible factors:

1. The entire venture was taken seriously by all involved. This sounds trivial, but isn't. The basic point was that participants were required to commit time and energy, and most did.

2. A strong set of support mechanisms was put in place: coaches, trainers, and the InCiTE staff themselves were all at the disposal of the Fellows for the duration (see [Strategic Assessment Guides Innovation—Bradley Solmsen](#)).

3. Fellows were thrown together to mentally mix in a structured way while sharing impactful experiences, thus creating, within the general homogeneity, relative heterogeneity (see [More than Just Babble—The Power of Diverse Voices in the Innovation Process—David Bryfman](#)).

4. Deadlines and timelines were dictated and often self-imposed (see [Deadlines Bring New Ideas to Life!—Jill Minkoff](#)).

In addition to these four, I would venture to say that the key factor, for which credit can be shared by the organizers, the Fellows themselves, and the external situation, was the Fellows' powerful motivation to generate change. I found it interesting to speculate on the reasons for this phenomenon.

1. The first point, which my colleagues and I felt intuitively when we first met the group and that emerged time and again throughout the process, was a strong sense that there is no way that the current status quo can be accepted as the norm going forward (see [Status Quo Unacceptable—What I Learned about Innovation—Adam Stewart](#)). This was expressed also on a very personal level—quite a few people seemed pretty tired (or worse) of continuing “just doing their jobs the old way.” Project InCiTE was therefore the perfect outlet for energies that otherwise might have been spent solely on grumbling and *kitoorim*. In a sense, this is the best combination for fostering innovation: unease and restlessness with the status quo, combined with resources and orientation that point the way to a possible solution.

2. Last, but far from least—what was obvious throughout the process, was that everyone was busy doing things they cared deeply about. The importance of this factor cannot be overstated, as it is probably the one parameter that either exists inherently or doesn't, with very little margin for external influence.

To summarize in a formula (revving up for Project InCiTE 2?): Take a group of intelligent and dynamic people; set them a challenge on a theme they strongly care about and where there exists consensus on the need for change; set a clear timeline; supply training, a robust structure, and resources (not too generously); and support/follow-up closely. Keep warm for eighteen months, breathe deeply (see [Risk Taking: What Scares the Hell Out of You?—Rebecca Sykes](#)), and serve proudly.

Amnon Levav

Cofounder and Managing Director of SIT—Systematic Inventive Thinking

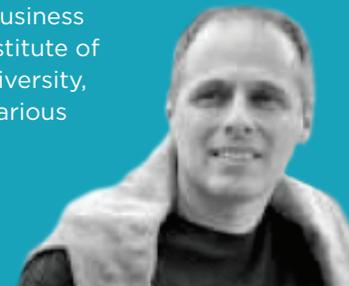


S I T[®]
Systematic Inventive Thinking

SIT helps people and organizations to become more innovative. SIT stands for Systematic Inventive Thinking, and is both the name of their company and a description of their methodology.

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Amnon is involved in thinking, teaching, and writing about various aspects of innovation. He has published in the *Harvard Business Review* (“Finding Your Innovation Sweet Spot,” March 2003) and has taught seminars at Columbia University, the London Business School, the Singapore Institute of Management, Tel Aviv University, and other institutions in various countries.



1

INNOVATION

Status Quo Unacceptable What I Learned About Innovation



BY ADAM STEWART

Paradigm-shifting innovation is worth it when the status quo is not acceptable. Tools and methods that focus on opportunities, rather than problem solving, are available, and they challenge both organizational and personal status quo.

HOW OFTEN have we heard the phrases “It never occurred to her that she couldn’t...” or “He just wouldn’t accept the fact that...” in praise of an innovative pioneer? One of the most critical but difficult challenges in the process of innovation comes at the point at which it is apparent that the status quo is not acceptable—that the way we have been doing things are not producing the results that we want. While it seems like a simple notion, we have so much invested (sometimes emotionally, sometimes financially, and often both) that it takes a significant amount of energy and time to get to this point, *and* it makes the hurdle that much more challenging to clear. It’s no wonder that more successful innovators tend to dismiss the status quo from the beginning and that innovation training leaders like SIT (<http://www.sitsite.com>) have a variety of tools designed to push thinkers “outside of the box” of their own status quo.

Part of the reason, it seems, is that recognizing the status quo as unacceptable falls too late in most innovation processes and that much of the discussion around innovation, in general, focuses on what innovation “looks like” and what it “requires.” Understandably—and in an era where “innovation” has become a buzzword substituted for anything new or sleek or that simply needs to get sold—promoters of true innovation attempt to distinguish it from the fray. This is clearly an important and needed discussion. One only needs to do a video search on the word “innovation” to find top-level corporate executives and institutional leaders giving obtuse and circular definitions of innovation that hold no discursive value. We certainly need to know what it is before we can do it.

What innovation requires is an equally important discussion, especially in the context of Jewish education where the distribution of resources is far from bal-

anced. True innovation takes more time and more resources than we are used to dedicating to our projects. If an organization is making the tough decision to innovate (and apply resources to an area that any budget-minded auditor—be it a board member or CFO—would call overhead), they want to be sure that they have the necessary tools for innovation. Effective tools and methods are a real hallmark of innovation and give a strident example to the notion that innovation can be taught and applied; you don't need to be born with the ability.

With all the attention on what innovation looks like and what it requires, it is no surprise that the discussion of when to innovate has become marginalized. We sometimes speak of innovation as the ultimate good that can be universally applied. There is nothing that we do that couldn't benefit from the process of innovation, so why waste time on the questions of when and why? This couldn't be further from the truth and, in fact, belies the general wisdom from the first two conversations: Innovation is something that is specific and targeted and requires time and resources. So before we target and dedicate time and resources to our programs, we had better decide that it is worth it.

And when is it worth it? Why and when we innovate is of primal importance and is directly related to the question of status quo. There are times and places in our organizational work where the status quo is acceptable (and we hope many cases where it is actually optimal). Our organizations would be horribly inefficient if we didn't ever distinguish between what we

find suitable and what we would like to change. Yet not only do we often ignore this important question, but, as a result, we replicate the status quo in our innovation process.

As an example I take a recent project, which I supervised, that was connected to Project InCITE (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>). The project was to use a social media platform to connect teens in Israel and in the United States. The status quo in this organization was that they built curriculum modules—excellent, well-thought, engaging, dynamic curriculum modules that no one used except for them. For months they struggled—in the name of innovation—to create a better module, trying desperately to find the right module that would change the field and be applicable across multiple settings. It was not until they readdressed their status quo that they understood a new possibility: to stop being the builders of the modules and focus exclusively on building a

status quo acceptable? If it is, this is not an area for innovation. If it isn't, we can't pretend that in the world of endless possibilities the only way to develop our project is within our current frameworks. The determination: "status quo unacceptable" is a prerequisite to our innovation.

This prerequisite is potentially the largest stumbling block to our innovation. For most of us, we have been trained or we are naturally inclined to identify problems and to attempt to fix them. True innovation requires us to look less at the problems and more at the opportunities. If the status quo is unacceptable, let's not find new ways to cope with the reality; let us change the reality. If innovation is to be paradigm shifting, game changing, and reimagining, we need to demand that status quo is unacceptable before we begin the process of innovation. ■

Our organizations would be horribly inefficient if we didn't ever distinguish between what we find suitable and what we would like to change. Yet not only do we often ignore this important question, but, as a result, we replicate the status quo in our innovation process.

community of teachers to create their own unique, individual modules for the platform. From there, a very effective, scalable, and potentially field-shifting project emerged.

Nothing in the process led them to understand that they needed to dismiss their status quo—but it was only after they did, that a real innovative process began. Innovation demands us to ask the question first: Is your

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Learning Innovation... Immerse Yourself



BY REUVEN GREENVALD

Technology, psychology, and philosophy/ideology provide innovative means for effective and sustainable renewal when combined with methods that focus on “subject matter,” “learner,” “teacher,” and “milieu.”

SOME DAYS I wake up in the morning and I feel like I am channeling Kohelet (<http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt3103.htm>). I read a newspaper article and I think I've read the same article ten years ago or more. News is recycled. Fashion is recycled, and it is called “retro”—what is really new under the sun? Much of the technology we use every day presents itself as an innovation, but when it comes down to it, technology provides new mechanisms for things we have been doing for millennia: communicating with one another verbally and in writing, in close proximity and from a distance, and to convey concrete or abstract thoughts.

In Jewish education we can take a closer look at what we desire to call “innovation.” New people enter the field and bring with them new energy. (This doesn't mean that veterans are incapable of generating new energy.) Often we see this new energy applied to modes of activity planning that have been around for decades, but they appear different because of renewed commitment and sometimes because of more “bells and whistles.” Instead of “innovation,” which sets the bar very high, I prefer the adjective, “innovative.” In that sense, educators are playing around with renewed solutions to the challenges they face. It seems to me that “innovative” in Jewish education comes from three domains: technology, psychology, and philosophy/ideology. The first two extend the reach of our educational efforts and continually challenge us to be more effective in our methods. The third has the capacity to reorganize and reconsider knowledge to answer the fundamental existential questions posed in every generation.

The Fellows in Project InCITE (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>), a program that challenged them to create innovative programs in Israel education, were largely drawn to the development of innovative methods. The SIT (Systematic Inventive Thinking) (<http://www.sitsite.com>) approach was well suited to asking questions about method and for providing a systematic framework for the consideration of alternatives. The assumption is that innovative methods will bring about greater engagement with Israel. This assumption was

proven by some of the fine work done by the Fellows.

To a lesser extent in Project InCiTE did we see grappling with the third category, that is, a reconsideration of the big questions that Israel education is contending with today. If technology and psychology help the educator be more effective in terms of initial engagement, the domain of philosophy and ideas is what sustains that engagement over time. More time would have been needed in Project InCiTE to immerse the Fellows in the *what* and *why* of Israel education.

It seems to be that greater immersion in both the subject matter and pedagogy of Israel education is needed to really produce innovative Israel education. Without this immersion, Israel becomes substitutable for any other topic within Jewish education. Immersion doesn't necessarily require years of thinking; intensity of focus for shorter periods of time can also qualify as immersion. Greater immersion in the enduring understandings and essential questions of Israel education can create a communal laboratory for experimentation and deep conversation, which can result in a deeper sense of purpose and vision and something more deeply innovative educationally (see Scott Berkun, *The Myths of Innovation*, Ch. 1, <http://www.scottberkun.com/books/the-myths-of-innovation>).

In thinking about what this immersion would look like in order for the educator to come away with a vision for Israel education, I found a useful starting point in Schwab's four commonplaces (see Joseph Schwab, "The Practical: A Language for Curriculum" in *Science, Curriculum, and Liberal Education: Selected Essays*, University of

Chicago, 1978, <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/S/bo3634168.html>)

By privileging in this case the subject matter as a primary locus of the philosophical and pedagogic questions of Israel education, I would see the Israel educator asking these questions about the commonplaces:

1. Subject matter: What is the *it* of Israel education? What ideologies and philosophies influence organization of the subject matter?
2. Learner: Who is the learner (generally)? Who is the learner vis-à-vis the subject matter?
3. Teacher: Who am I as an educator (generally)? Who am I in relationship to the subject?

4. Milieu: What is my setting? What is my setting in relation to the subject?

Project InCiTE provided tools, fellowship, and mentorship that support the educator towards development of the innovative. Equipped with new tools and seeing the value of peer and mentor dialogue and feedback, this Project InCiTE cohort should be encouraged to go more profoundly into essential questions if they are serious about making profoundly innovative contributions to Israel education. ■



Immersion doesn't necessarily require years of thinking; intensity of focus for shorter periods of time can also qualify as immersion.

REUVEN GREENVALD

is Director of Community Initiatives for Makōm, a program of the Jewish Agency for Israel, that is creating new paradigms for thinking about the place of Israel in contemporary Jewish life. A graduate of the Jerusalem Fellows (Mandel Leadership Institute), he was a community day school leader in northern California and suburban DC.

Reuven is a member of the Project InCiTE Coaching Team



More Than Babble

The Power of Diverse Multiple Voices in the Innovation Process

BY DAVID BRYFMAN

Innovation beyond groupthink requires a multiplicity of diverse voices from people, experiences, books, conferences, etc. that blend together for common purpose through experiences of challenge, encouragement, frustration, and fun.

I'VE COME TO understand why apples are more likely to fall next to you than on you and that if you are ever unfortunate enough to be struck by lightning, it's unlikely to happen again. Similarly, it is not surprising few people can claim multiple breakthrough ideas. It's no further a surprise that even fewer are audacious enough to say innovation was the result of their work alone. And although many of my best ideas come in moments of solitude (in the shower, running...), I cannot force these breakthrough moments; if I do, I am invariably disappointed.

The real truths about innovation include: a good idea is not the same as innovation; coming up with a great idea is seldom a spontaneous event; innovation is rarely the work of an individual; and, as people like Benjamin Franklin acknowledge, innovation is more often than not, the result of many trials and tribulations. While initially these might scare people from embarking on an innovation journey—acknowledging these realities makes innovating easier.

In life before Project InCiTE (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>), if I had a problem I couldn't solve, I'd ask for help from people easily reachable in the office or via e-mail. If their brainstormed ideas didn't provide

adequate solutions (and if geography and time allowed), I'd gather colleagues in a room to collectively bang our heads together. Frequently we would generate responses I felt (with no disrespect to my thought partners) I could have discovered myself. Today's technology (e.g., list-serves, chat rooms, blogs, and hash tags) allows me to reach larger and more targeted groups. But technology merely extends the process just described of choosing people based on affinity. Choosing known people feels comfortable and less threatening; it's safer. Yet, stop and think about it. Often we already know how friends, colleagues, and virtual "friends" think, how they'll react, what they can offer, and what their limitations are. Gathering like-minded individuals in real space or online often results in groupthink.

When the Project InCiTE Fellows first met, we asked them to consider new ways to engage Jewish teens. They generated a tried and tested list of classic programs—many of which were deemed unsuccessful, yet still continue because it's considered better to do what one knows rather than to try something untested and new. Eighteen months later, the list reads like a revamped eclectic grouping of cutting-edge, diverse, and (dare I say) *innovative* ways of engaging Jewish teens with Israel and the Jewish people in the twenty-first century. Now Project InCiTE is complete, I reflect upon what contributed to the shift, noting all the times we insisted the Fellows be exposed to others who were not their usual go-to people.

Of all inputs the Fellows received, none was more powerful than the multiple voices influencing their projects at every step. Coaches, supervisors, SIT (<http://www.sitsite.com>), Israel-trip educators, The iCenter (<http://www.theicenter.org>), The Jewish Education Project (<http://www.thejewisheducationproject.org>), Makōm (<http://www.jafi.org.il/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Strategic+Partnerships/Makom>), people from other fields and disciplines, the wide assortment of professional development oppor-

tunities, also books, articles, and conferences outside the traditional Jewish orbit, and the list goes on—they were exposed to a multiplicity of diverse voices. We became the conductor allowing each input to share its uniqueness before blending together as an orchestra.

SIT talks about a “closed world” where solutions to problems are found within resources already available. Answers often lie before you—not necessarily as a whole, but as the separation of the whole into its many parts. In innovation’s ideation stage, the closed world must extend to the limitless number of diverse people with whom we can connect.

The most important diversity we encouraged was the pool of Fellows themselves. We chose Fellows spanning educational settings (day schools, congregational schools, summer camps, Israel trips, JCCs, public school programs, etc.). We had Israelis and North Americans of multiple generations, of varied experiences and qualifications, and from across religious movements. Our only criteria were that they work with Jewish youth and consider Israel important to their Jewish educator role. In the end we selected an eclectic cohort with a common purpose.

What they brought to the fellowship exceeded all our expectations! While we gained satisfaction when a Reform Jew and an Orthodox Jew shared Shabbat dinner together, or when Jewish texts, classic and contemporary, are equally taught and respected by secular Israelis and orthodox Russian speakers, these were not our true accomplishments. The establishment of a cohort of diverse Jewish youth professionals, who support, challenge, encourage, frustrate, and laugh their way through every stage of the innovation process—this is the model of innovation Project InCiTE holds up as its success story for the Jewish community.

Project InCiTE reinforced that collective problem solving of like-minded individuals yields evident results. For true innovation to occur, we must fill our minds with inputs of the most diverse thinkers from the widest cross section of disciplines—quite simply, people who do not think like us. This requires humility—recognition that we only know what we know and that there are people with wisdom who can contribute to all aspects of our work.

If you’ve believed nothing else so far, not only is it more productive to innovate with others who are not exactly like you, it is also great fun interacting and exchanging ideas with people whose thinking you can’t anticipate.



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Perhaps having fun isn’t the greatest measure of success—but in our experience, true innovation is hard work and being engaged, and enjoying ourselves certainly contributed to our achievements.

This story of using multiple voices is not just about Project InCiTE or innovation. In the end it is at the core of Clal Yisrael’s future. The Jewish people’s very survival may depend upon using a diverse multiplicity of voices in every endeavor moving forward. We can wait for apples to drop on us or lightning to strike us—but it will be far more productive to utilize the multiple languages present at the Tower of Babel and transform some of that babble into innovation. ■

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4

INNOVATION

The First Idea is Rarely the Best Idea



BY SIMON KLARFELD

Deliberate consideration of who to invite into conversation about an innovation is valuable. Although it is a less direct path to implementation, the experimentation, tweaking, and ninety-degree turns enrich results.

THE FIRST STEPS of a creative act are like groping in the dark: random and chaotic, feverish and fearful, a lot of busy-ness with no apparent or definable end in sight. There is nothing yet to research. For me, these moments are not pretty. I look like a desperate woman, tortured by the simple message thumping away in my head: “You need an idea.”...You need a tangible idea to get you going. The idea, however miniscule, is what turns the verb into a noun—paint into a painting, sculpt into sculpture, write into writing, dance into a dance.

— Twyla Tharp, *The Creative Habit: Learn It And Use It For Life: A Practical Guide* (Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2003), <http://www.twylatharp.org/bio.shtml>

If we consider different modalities of creative expression, we find that in every single one, there is hardly ever one singular and direct path to success. In jazz music, for example, artists will often speak to their most prolific works being born out of a kernel of an idea but not fully developed until trying out different syncopated rhythms, crescendos, and diminuendos. They hope that those riffs will resonate with the audience in an attempt to help them connect with the music.

To up the ante even further, jazz musicians will strengthen the depth of their work by adding in other musicians to “comment” on their primary melody, bringing different textures, voices, and rhythms to create an entirely different experience for the listener.

As an educator, we always need to determine who or what will be the best members of our ensemble. Who will bring vibrancy to the texts we read or to the curriculum that we develop in order for our audience (students/ community) to have the best possible learning experience?

In determining your ensemble you should consider inviting people you trust, who aren’t outright naysayers, and people who

on the one hand think alike but on the other hand are diverse enough in their experiences and creative outlets that you are not speaking to yourself. Ideally they may be your professional colleagues, but they could also be a member of your family, a friend, a “veteran,” or a mentor.

If we work with the assumption that collaboration is the best way to achieve the best ideas, then our best work will no doubt come from a discourse that is rich in diversity of people, concepts, and values.

We also must consider the best environment in which the ensemble can bond and the music of our teaching can flow. Toward that end, the successful evolution of an idea, which will ultimately allow an initial raw concept to develop into a rich meaningful experience, needs to be developed in a physical and mental space that allows for creativity, risk taking, reflection, and finessing. When choosing a space, consider the difference between a sterile classroom and a lake-side gazebo.

Once you have your kernel of an idea, the ensemble gathered, and your best location to work within, there are three things you can do:

1. Experiment with the idea—flesh it out, try it out, asses it, see what might work and what definitely won't.
2. Adapt it, tweak it, look at it from a different perspective, improve it, and then record it and put it aside, allowing time to start again fresh to make sure that you haven't missed any big ideas.
3. Take a ninety-degree turn—use your working assumption, but implement it in a different way. Take your core educational theme that you want to explore with your *chanichim* (students) and change a key variable (location, time period,

or tone). Lastly we can learn a great deal from others outside our immediate world, who can help shed light on our approach. A look at the diverse representation within the Project InCITE (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>) cohort underscores this point. ■

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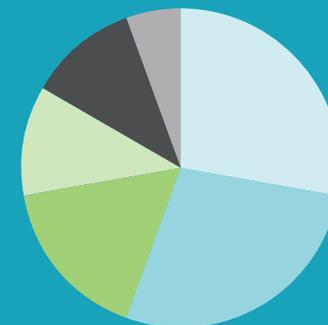
SIMON KLARFELD has served as the Founding Director of Genesis at Brandeis University, VP of the Andrea & Charles Bronfman Philanthropies and as Executive Director of Columbia/Barnard Hillel. Now as an Education and Leadership Consultant, Simon's expertise is in the areas of youth and young adults, Jews of the Former Soviet Union, pluralism, Israel and experiential Jewish education. He is currently writing “Jewish Sources and Perspectives on Leadership.”

Simon is a member of the Project InCITE Coaching Team



INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN PROJECT INCITE

Representation includes JCCs, Synagogues, National Organizations, Youth Movements, Day Schools, Israel trips, Online Learning.



- Reform
- Non Denominational
- Zionist
- Orthodox
- Conservative
- Progressive

Deadlines Bring New Ideas to Life!



BY JILL MINKOFF

Deadlines help avoid the innovator syndromes of “Yesterday’s Idea is Old” and “A+ Paper” which result in a continual improvement cycle that never gets to implementation. Deadlines focus innovators on implementation.

MANDATORY AND enforced deadlines provide boundaries that help bring new ideas to life. Without deadlines, it is possible an innovator will get stuck in a particular aspect of the innovation process. Without deadlines, the probable outcome of an innovation process may be death of the process and, subsequently, of the innovation.

As Project InCiTE (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>) was being designed, deadlines for specific aspects of its activities were identified. Due dates were set with the knowledge that Fellows and coaches would need to be at particular points of achievement by certain points in time in order to reach their ultimate goals.

Let’s use a metaphor of sports or games to help understand this. Imagine you are playing a sport or technology-based game. Your goal is to have the most points by the end of a specified period of time (the deadline). The minutes are counting down and now only seconds remain. Pay attention to what you are thinking, feeling, and doing as the clock approaches zero. Now imagine playing without a time limit (deadline). You might spend hours, months, or years trying every play possible, or you could even procrastinate, and the game may never end.

Many of our Project InCiTE Fellows wanted to pursue every possible play in order to find and design the best project imaginable. They found it most difficult to adhere to the deadlines imposed for idea generation and idea development. In turn, this kept them from the next phases of the innovation process (e.g., prototyping/piloting, evaluation, etc.). These Fellows wanted to find the next great idea or the slight change that would make the current idea better. When caught in this cycle, there is no end to the possibilities of improvement. Successful innovators either know when to stop within a stage of

the innovation process and move on to the next, or they are part of a process with imposed and maintained deadlines.

“Yesterday’s Idea is Old” Syndrome

For those having the greatest challenge moving forward in the process of innovation, it appeared that by the time something is fleshed out in a concept idea (or just before that), it no longer seemed creative, innovative, applicable, or exciting. Just at that point, a new idea would come to awareness that was exciting. And, this “Yesterday’s Idea Is Old” cycle would start again.

“A+ Paper” Syndrome

For others, the issue was the desire that each aspect of the innovation process was met with excellence—the A+ paper. Similar to the “Yesterday’s Idea Is Old” cycle, the “A+ Paper” cycle is one of constant improvement or, at times, the inability to even begin because of a sense of ambiguity of what is needed or wanted. The operating motto for this type of person could be: “You need to give yourself plenty of time to do it well.” Recently the concept of “PTS: Permission to Suck” (<http://www.permissiontosuck.net>) has been used as an antidote for this dilemma.

The innovation training from SIT (Systematic Inventive Thinking) (<http://www.sitsite.com>) included an interesting experience. Fellows were placed into teams and asked to develop a creative idea/solution to a given need/problem. The teams had ten minutes to generate an idea/solution. Initial thoughts and feelings included: “We’re anxious that we can’t do this as a team that quickly.” Proven wrong, because they were able to accomplish the task, the SIT facilitators then assigned a new task with only five minutes in which to achieve it. The ideas generated in the shorter round were generally better than the first. Deadlines played a strong role in accomplishment.

For Project InCiTE Fellows, imposed deadlines (along with the reinforcement of these deadlines from their coaches), helped the Fellows to focus their attention on the task at hand and the outputs required for each stage of project development. Deadlines help as an impetus for focusing on the task at hand as well as for moving forward with other aspects of the work.

Note: In a recent game-play experience provided by Global Kids (<http://globalkids.org>), the philosophy and cycle of “1) Try, 2) Expect to Fail, 3) Reassess Strategy, and 4) Try Again” was demonstrated as innate and habitual in the world of online game play. Perhaps our future generations of innovators



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(those spending hours in the worlds of technology-based game play) will be more adept at accepting (whether or not they understand) the value of deadlines to enforce movement within this cycle. ■

JILL MINKOFF is a Project Manager of The Jewish Education Project’s New Center for Collaborative Leadership, who worked with the coaches of Project InCiTE. As well as her experience in educating Jewish youth, she has been a Melton Adult Mini-School educator. Jill holds a BA in philosophy from Pomona College and an MA in Judaic studies from Siegal College. She is currently studying to be a rabbi through the Academy for Jewish Religion. Her business background includes leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurial experience in multiple industries.



Organizational Support: Ready, Willing, and Able

BY CLARE GOLDWATER

Some organizations, regardless of their size or their readiness for and buy-in to change, stand in the way of innovations achieving momentum needed for success. Therefore, innovators must focus on what is controllable.

IT IS PROBABLY an obvious statement that in order for change to take place in an organization, the organization has to be ready, willing, and able to support that change. It is no surprise that even equipped with a fantastic new idea if there is no institutional will, there will certainly not be a way to make it happen. Nothing new there. So what can we add to the accumulated wisdom of innovation strategy that will be valuable to others in the same situation? The lessons of three Project InCITE Fellows (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>) who fought tenaciously to bring change to their various organizations can serve as cases (not exhaustive or comprehensive, certainly, but instructive and true of many others) for some lessons to bear in mind.

Lesson #1: Size Doesn't Matter—All Organizations (Regardless of Size and Scope) Can Be Supportive or Not

The three Project InCITE Fellows that I worked with closely came from very different organizations. One of them (let's call him A) worked for a national organization. B worked for a cross-communal organization in a particular city, and C worked for a local institution with local members and stakeholders. Despite the very different types of activities and scope

of these three organizations, we found that size was irrelevant to their ability to embrace and support change. It was no easier for a small organization to embrace change than a larger one and no easier to gain buy-in from a limited number of stakeholders as opposed to very large numbers of members.

Lesson #2: Are You Ready? And Able?

Organizational readiness should not be underestimated. Despite the fact that all the Fellows completed a mapping of their organizations before they embarked on their projects and were encouraged to explicitly consider the level of readiness of their organization, this was a step that was either skipped over or minimized as relatively unimportant. The assumption was that a good idea would create its own traction and push the project forward, even over the obvious objections of particular stakeholders or despite other levels of dysfunction in the organization. This just wasn't true. On reflection, at least one organization was not ready or even really interested in innovation. And a second was ready in some areas but inconsistent overall. The final success of the projects was directly correlated to the level of readiness of the organizations.

Lesson #3: Buy-in, Buy-in, Buy-in

A significant part of readiness relates to the notion of "buy-in," which is absolutely crucial in order for a new idea to find any support and momentum. Buy-in from varied stakeholders can be extremely difficult and time consuming to procure, and it was an element that all the Fellows struggled with. Even for C, whose project was ostensibly most successful and whose environment was most supportive, the level of buy-in was mixed among stakeholders, and C basically just ignored those who might have had different approaches or questions about the project. All the Fellows failed to invest significant time in creating relationships with their allies and stake-

holders and shied away from the intensive work that was needed for this.

It is interesting to consider why this is the case. I would estimate that, for young and relatively inexperienced professionals, the skills needed (strategy, communications, and relationship building) to develop buy-in from stakeholders (often lay leaders, older superiors, and donors) are undeveloped. They focus on the program implementation itself, the curriculum, programming, *hadracha* (leadership training), and group facilitation, but don't have the other set of skills needed here. For B, for example, who was in a very complex and fluid situation with almost no control over her budget, community agenda, or even implementation of her project, I have hypothesized that significant investment in communicating on an ongoing basis with her allies and stakeholders would have preempted at least some of the difficulties she encountered. But her natural reticence with this kind of work and the pressures of actual programming conspired to keep her away from this investment, and in the end she paid for that. It would be wise to consider how young professionals can be trained, or mentored, by those in their organizations who have demonstrated skills in this area, and helped to understand the importance of this work as an integral part of any kind of program implementation.

Lesson #4: Focus On (and Celebrate) What You CAN Control

Given the relatively junior level of the Project InCITE Fellows, it is unsurprising that they did not control very much of their own environment. There was a constant struggle to define and retain control of budget, program, and implementation of the innovative idea. It was quite

frustrating to start with an innovative big idea, only to find it whittled down into something different through the course of a budgeting and planning process. As a result, the Fellows who successfully managed to implement a satisfying project were those who focused on the small victories that they were able to achieve and to stay focused on the goals that they had set for themselves, while holding only loosely to the process itself. And in the case of B and C, whose projects were at the mercy of other forces that were out of their control, I encouraged them to focus on the elements that they could control and their own personal goals for the teens they were working with.

Frankly, given the complexities and dysfunctions of the organizations in question, I am

impressed that the Fellows did manage to achieve something and that two out of three of them implemented projects that were new to their organizations with some level of success. Organizations, even with the right stated intentions, are complex beasts, and the best idea has little chance for success in an unsupportive or problematic system. Change is hard, and that is a truism that deserves respect. ■

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CLARE GOLDWATER is a British-born educational consultant with a particular interest in experiential education, educational travel, and group facilitation. She has worked with children and adults of all backgrounds and with professional development for Jewish educators. She has an MA in education and was a Jerusalem Fellow at the Mandel Leadership Institute in Jerusalem. She is also a certified coach, working with leaders to help them reach their potential. Clare lives in Washington, DC with her family.

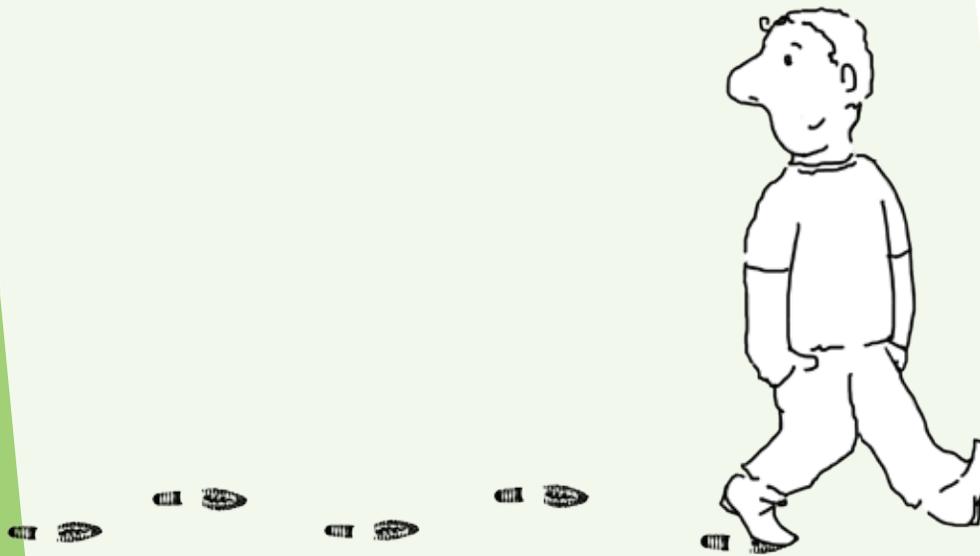
Clare is a member of the Project InCITE Coaching Team



Strategic Assessment Guides Innovation

THE NEW OXFORD American Dictionary defines “assessment” as “the evaluation or estimation of the nature, quality, or ability of someone or something.”

“Evaluation or estimation”—Many people assume that assessment is something you do toward the end of a given work cycle. I believe that best practices (in any field or endeavor), especially regarding attempts at innovation, demand that assessment during planning and implementation happens at the earliest possible opportunities of a given project.



BY BRADLEY SOLMSEN

Innovators must understand 1) issues, challenges, and their own capacities for change, 2) that innovation is a cyclical process, and that 3) assessment strategies are fundamental to innovation from inception through completion.

At the beginning of Project InCiTE (<http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>) we had the opportunity to learn closely with professionals from SIT (Systematic Inventive Thinking) (<http://www.sitsite.com>). They explained, “Don’t just listen to the voice of your customers; listen to the voice of your product.” Over the course of the work of this project I have learned three lessons regarding the relationship between innovation and assessment.

Lesson #1: Assessment to Understand

You cannot truly innovate until you fully understand all the issues or challenges at hand. This deep and full understanding comes from strategic assessment. An educator or organization interested in developing an innovative new program must fully understand what existing programs are being offered and why and how they are succeeding or failing; demand an interest in new programs; and know the challenges currently in the field, resources available (human, financial, and other), and other important variables.

A potential innovator must also be able to effectively assess his or her own capacity to effect change. The innovator needs to be able to articulate the impact of his or her vision on the field, what resources will be needed, opportunities for partnerships and collaboration, and how an ideal will be both funded and sustained.

Only with this full understanding, through strategic assessment at the outset, can an idea move from the theoretical stage to a more actual stage.

Lesson #2: Assessment Reminds Us That Innovation is a Process

As each Fellow worked to develop an understanding of the field of teen engagement with Israel and Jewish peoplehood as well as generate potential ideas for innovation, we quickly became aware that the development process was cyclical. Each member of the project continually returned to examine goals, resources, assumptions, challenges, passions, and many more variables.

The role of assessment during the project development phase (as opposed to at the implementation phase) was to remind us to ask important questions. Were our plans still connected to our initial goals? Were our resources and our ideas in alignment? Did we have buy-in and support from our organizations, supervisors, and other key stakeholders? Without assessment strategies we would not have been asking these key questions and our projects would have been more likely to venture off track.

Lesson #3: What Did We Do?

If assessment strategies were deployed at the very outset of the project (i.e., How would we measure whether we were achieving our goals?) and we were asking assessment-based questions during the development of the project, then we would be in the position of having a significant amount of tools and data to explore to help us answer the question: What did we do/what impact did our innovation have?

At this stage it is often essential to work closely with an assessment expert to interpret initial findings and data. In all of our cases we were developing pilot projects. It is at this point that

we each needed to remind ourselves that the definition of pilot projects are that they be assessed for what worked and what didn't work—and that they might need to change in possibly fundamental ways.

Change, even for new ideas, can be difficult, but thoughtfully collected data and guidance from experts often helps to mitigate the challenge of change and adaptation.

Upon reflection, we realized that it is impossible to successfully innovate (in a sustainable way) without strategic

Upon reflection, we realized that it is impossible to successfully innovate (in a sustainable way) without strategic assessment throughout the project.

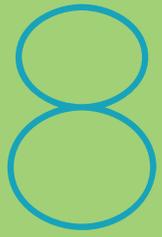
assessment throughout the project. We need to continue to see assessment strategies as fundamental components of our work...from the very beginning of each project through to the final phases of innovation. ■



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Bradley is a member of the Project InCITE Coaching Team





Adapting to the Innovation Zone

BY JOSHUA YARDEN

Innovation requires more than moving from familiar to uncharted territories. Creative mind, affect, and behavior combine with purpose to drive reflective and iterative progress within an understanding of personal and organizational capacities.

THE INNOVATION ZONE is a conceptual space, which can be constructed in the creative mind. Cognitive, affective and behavioral capacities, including adaptability, critical analysis, extrapolation, synthesis, thought leadership, and project management can be cultivated for the purpose of traversing the distance between familiar and uncharted territory.

Achieving success in the zone requires building upon existing capacity. A project that requires people to overreach their abilities or overextend the available resources will become frustrating and is unlikely to succeed. This can generate resistance to innovation, born of a fear of failing. Trial and error must be encouraged.

Innovators should have a creative, reflective role in defining, designing, and implementing their project. Innovation is not a test or a method to evaluate work. An innovative project should reflect a learning process and grow out of a synthesis of the demonstrated success and the creative abilities of the innovators. Plans need to be flexible and modifiable in order to accommodate learning during the design and implementation stages. It is entirely unlikely that the first iteration

of a new concept or product could be the best iteration. Locking in a concept is in opposition to innovative thinking and design.

Innovation is a means to an end rather than a goal in itself. It is a purposeful response to a problematic situation, designed to heal, repair or transform, to transcend limitations and increase the possibility for success. Innovation requires a coherent plan, a calculated risk, and effective methods of implementation. Insufficient planning and/or unconscientious implementation could yield to more failure than “leaving well enough alone.” A well-designed system has to be put in place in order to accommodate the plan. The goals of organizational innovation are to:

- 1) Increase organizational vitality by setting achievable essential goals.
- 2) Enhance the internal coherence of a system or an organization by shedding operational elements that are inconsistent with the goals and adding components that can promote them.
- 3) Strengthen the integrity of an organizational mission by aligning goals, content, and method. The capacity of a system to implement an innovative intervention can be characterized by the clarity of explanation of the mission, thoughtful speculation as to how the mission will impact its targets, and an operational plan for how the mission can be achieved, taking into account not only the potential advantages of a successful innovation, but also anticipating possible resistance to change.

Innovation requires thoughtful design and careful implementation for the purpose of achieving intended results. Few successful innovations start from scratch. Moving effectively from point A to point B, from an existing situation toward intended improvement, is a matter of extending expectations to include the possible that has not yet been proven. It is a matter of suitable adaptation, rather than stretching beyond an organization's capacity for change.

The innovation zone can be elusive. It is difficult to map or measure. Answers to the following three questions will provide the initial information necessary for determining organizational capacity for planned change:

- 1) What fungible resources are at the disposal of the organization? That is, what assets (from people to property to processes) can adapt or be adapted from their current situation and be placed on a new trajectory?
- 2) How can they be leveraged in order to promote the change process?
- 3) What assets are missing, and how can they be obtained?

An innovation design process requires:

1) An assessment of the current situation, including definition of goals and an analysis of the gap between actual and desired outcomes.

2) A proposed intervention that can narrow the gap, including an estimation of what resources would be necessary to implement the intervention and a cost-benefit analysis to assess whether devoting the necessary resources is possible and at what price.

3) Balancing the budget of all resources (human, programmatic, and financial) to be invested in both the innovation and the preservation of existing elements of the current situation. This assessment will determine the adaptability factor. Does the system have the capacity to make the shift? Neglecting to conduct a thoughtful and deliberate process will increase the risk of adaptation becoming more of a hit or miss proposition than a calculated opportunity.

The impact of effective innovation doesn't need to be vast or overwhelming. Organizational identities are defined within the tension between preservation and change. The successful intro-

duction of new elements into an existing system can maintain or establish the balance of the system. Adaptation can be envisioned, implemented, and assessed through an incremental process of instituting achievable steps that will strengthen rather than undermine the ability of an organization to achieve its mission. Rocking the foundation of the system with the "next big thing" could damage or destroy rather than improve it. As such, radical change is likely to be resisted, often for good reason. There is no need to destroy the world in order to rebuild the one in which we live. Incremental change will usually have a better chance of taking root in the organizational culture and producing desired results. ■

JOSHUA YARDEN holds an MA in Judaic Studies from the University of Haifa and a PhD in education, culture, and society from the University of Pennsylvania, where he wrote a dissertation entitled, "Embracing Complexity: A Reflective Investigation of Cultural Transformation through Reflective Practice in Experiential Learning." He has extensive experience in Israel and in North America, working with individuals, camps, schools, community organizations, and national initiatives engaging learners and teachers in the process of "becoming Israel." His many presentations include: "In Search of Solutions: Understanding Israel through Problem-Based Learning," "The Binding of Abraham," "Jacob's Struggle to Become Israel," "The 'Torosophy' of Experiential Learning," and "The Well-Framed Empty Space."

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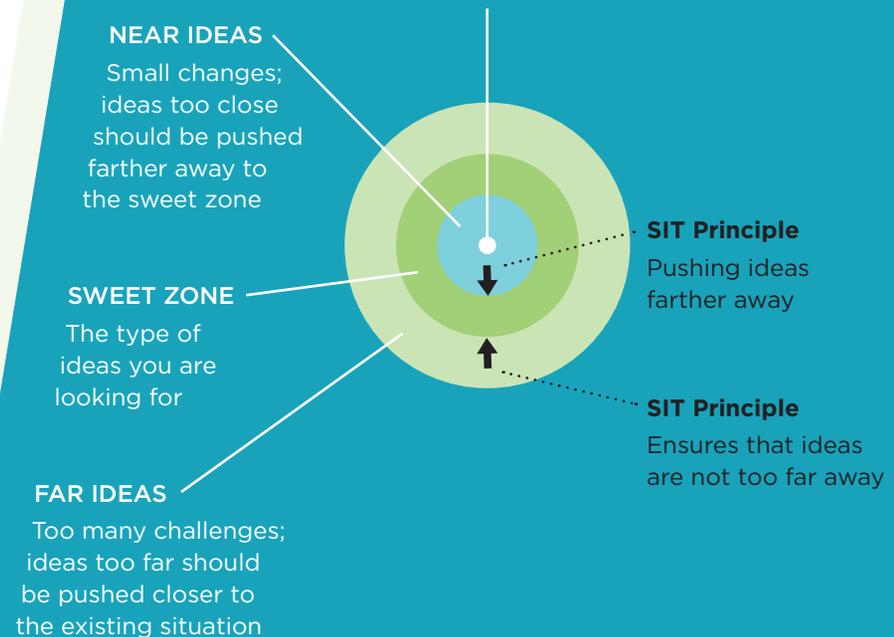
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SIT MODEL OF INNOVATION

Most Ideas for new products are either uninspired or impractical. Finding the "sweet zone" requires balance that leads to both ingenious and viable ideas. When we innovate, we direct our thinking outward, trying to create something new and different from what we have now. Yet we do not want to wander too far off. A great idea must be both executable and appealing.

The Near Far Sweet principle ensures that you generate ideas that are sufficiently removed from your current situation in order to be truly interesting, while nevertheless close enough to your core competence in order to be feasible.

EXISTING SITUATION



Spreading New Ideas

BY BILL ROBINSON

Innovation spreads through people who adopt and adapt demonstrated success. We can foster this through creating networks of people, supporting adoption and adaption, and demonstrating success.

ONCE A NEW IDEA emerges, how does it spread? Or, from a practical perspective, how can we enhance the spread of new ideas that are deemed beneficial?

Diffusion of Innovation

In the 1960s, Everett M. Rogers, in *Diffusion of Innovations* (<http://www.stanford.edu/class/symbsys205/Diffusion%20of%20Innovations.htm>), attempted to answer these questions. His research, based primarily on farmers, has recently been popularized by Malcolm Gladwell (<http://www.gladwell.com>). However, today, researchers and practitioners of change still often make the mistake of assuming either that everyone is the *same* or everyone is completely *different*. They do not take into account the particular differences among people that hamper or facilitate the flow of new ideas. At the heart of *Diffusion of Innovations* is the assumption that there are five types of individuals: Innovators, Early Adopters, Early Majority, Late Majority, and the rest.

In farming, no one expects that all farmers are going to come up with new seeds or new farming practices. A few, self-selected, risk-comfortable Innovators tend to experiment with new techniques and new seeds. They have many failures and some successes, of which the Early Adopters then

make use. The next group, the more risk-averse Early Majority, do not adapt the new idea until they see that it has been successfully employed by the Early Adopters. Only when the majority has adopted and implemented these new ideas, are those in the Late Majority ready to get on the bus. The rest, by then only a small remainder, may never get the message. Following a *Diffusion of Innovations* approach, we would focus our resources first on finding innovations and connecting those new ideas to those most likely to adopt them early on and toward others.

Imagine your typical high school fashion scene. The Innovators are the eccentrics, continually trying out all sorts of new clothing ideas. The Early Adopters will borrow selectively from them, and by wearing these new clothing ideas, they then become fashionable. The Early Adopters are the influential cool kids, whom everyone else watches to see what they should wear.

In Jewish Education

While simple in theory, the *Diffusion of Innovations* approach is complex in practice. Many of the conditions and relationships that allow for the spread of ideas in other areas of life may not be as strongly present or as welcome in Jewish education, which is marked by a high degree of teacher autonomy and isolation. Educators spend the overwhelming amount of time with their students. The amount and quality of educator-to-educator contact is limited. To be successful at diffusing innovations, we need to build networks that bring Innovator educators into contact with Early Adopters, and the latter into contact with the Early Majority, and so on. Second, rather than expecting change to germinate from all or even most educators, we need to catalyze and support idea creation among a select few Innovators. Third, for Early Majority educators, hearing about the new idea is not enough; they need to be shown how it has been successful elsewhere before they open themselves to something new.

Catalyzing and Spreading Innovation

We must also recognize that ideas change as individuals not only *adopt* them but

also *adapt* them to the environments in which they work. In this manner, ideas are like viruses or genetic mutations in which the individual becomes the carrier. Each time an idea is transmitted, it adapts to and reshapes the environment of the individual in which it finds itself. Richard Dawkins (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEVt5e2w32w>) has explored this concept in his work on memes. David Gershon, in "Social Change 2.0: A Blueprint for Reinventing Our World" (http://www.sustainablecitynetwork.com/blogs/david_gershon/article_5b8f63d2-eea0-11df-8077-0017a4a78c22.html), also shows the same process of continual adaptation in his work spreading new environmental ideas throughout individual neighborhoods and throughout the world.

In this way, the boundary between creating an innovative idea and adapting one become very fuzzy. Sparking and spreading innovation are arguably more similar than different. To quote briefly from Rob Cross (<http://www.robcross.org>), the author of *Driving Results through Social Networks: How Top Organizations Leverage Networks for Performance and Growth* (John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2009):

"The term innovation usually conjures up an image of a brilliant employee or sequestered team creating the next lightbulb, sticky note, or software program. Too many companies today hold to this heroic vision when, in fact, this is not how innovation usually happens. The legendary story of 3M's Post-it Notes is one of collaboration and evolution that unfolded among research scientist Spencer Silver, product developer Art Fry, and countless others. Even Thomas Edison's success depended on a team—from fifteen engineers in his Menlo Park laboratory to financier J.P. Morgan to men such as Samuel Insull who grew the utilities that made electricity a profitable business...History teaches us that most breakthrough innovations are recombinations of existing ideas or technologies, the integration of which occurs

through networks. Now more than ever, important innovations arise from the flow of knowledge and capabilities across internal and external networks. Although traditionally these networks have formed serendipitously, it is becoming increasingly important for leaders to cultivate them in targeted ways."

The catalyzing of innovation, like the diffusion of innovation, relies on networks of people and resources coming together to share ideas and learn with one another. As Thomas Friedman (<http://www.thomasfriedman.com>) has written, it used to be that businesses succeeded by owning knowledge and keeping it to themselves; today, businesses succeed by tapping

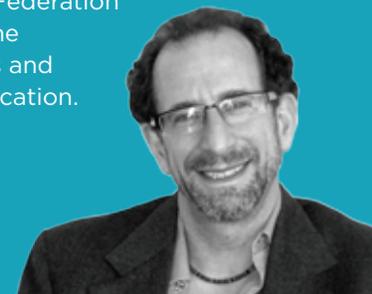


Each time an idea is transmitted, it adapts to and reshapes the environment of the individual in which it finds itself.

into and making use of a continual flow of new knowledge existing outside their organizational boundaries. To be successful in Jewish education today involves connecting into collegial networks of educators to find and share the newest and best ideas for engaging and educating the next generation of Jews.

The success of Project InCiTE now presents its greatest challenge. To date the work of Project InCiTE Fellows, primarily as Innovators and Early Adopters, have developed many new and exciting opportunities. Now it is our collective task to engage the Early and Late Majority, and ultimately the rest, in this new era of innovation in Israel engagement. ■

BILL ROBINSON is Chief Strategy Officer at the Jewish Education Project. He holds an Interdisciplinary PhD in the social sciences from Rutgers University. Before coming to The Jewish Education Project, Bill was Director of Education and Research at the Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life. Previous positions include Director of Education at Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple in New Brunswick, New Jersey; Managing Director of the Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale; and Staff Researcher for the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, where he also served as Planning Consultant to the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta. Bill is the coauthor of several articles and policy briefs on Jewish education.



10

INNOVATION

Risk Taking What Scares the Hell Out of You?



BY REBECCA SYKES

Innovation requires willingness to take risks. When you know what's right yet don't know how to proceed, first find support and safety. Then relax into redirecting, discernment, acceptance, practice, and balance.

WHAT SCARES THE HELL OUT OF YOU?

What scares the hell out of you?
What I know is right.
Everything I don't know how to do.
How strong are you?
I can hold it together.
I can let it go.
What's in your heart?
Don't make me go there.
I really, really want this.
When will you be willing to go too far?

Do you need a push?
I got your back.

 Listen to the recording online:
<http://vimeo.com/26383935>

Meditation: Risk Moving Into Your Day

This meditation is supported by a voice recording by Rebecca Sykes. It was designed to support the work of risk takers.

Find a comfortable seat. Whether you're in a chair or on the floor get comfortable. In these first few moments, the attention you give to your comfort will make it that much easier to find the riskier places to go. If you feel tightness in the hips, elevate them by sitting on a pillow.

You are setting yourself up to become vulnerable, and that risk is supported by a solid foundation.

Close your eyes and take a few breaths, just for practice.

Inhale and exhale. Your body was built for this. Every part of you was meant to participate fully in life. Over the next few breaths, soften your skin. Notice any area of tightness, of holding back, and bring

softness there. The jaw is slightly open, while the lips are gently closed.

Turn your attention to the inhale. Notice how the breath fills you from the inside out.

Each inspiration comes as a result of your willingness to make room in your body.

As the breath fills you, create more space by sitting up tall. As you exhale, soften the shoulder blades together onto the back, leaving your heart gently exposed. Rely on the inspiration of your breath to fill you up, lifting your chest, and as you exhale, keep the chest lifted, stay full in your rib cage, and draw in your low belly so that you can sit even taller.

Each inhale expand and lift, each exhale, draw in and lift higher.

As you deepen your breath, focus your attention on your chest.

Let your curiosity get the best of you.

Can you, in your mind's eye, picture the place where the physical heart resides? Imagine the breath flowing in and out of this space.

Notice how easily the breath moves through you, in support of you.

Notice which thoughts and feelings come up.

The mind is meant to move, think, and create ideas at a radical pace. Rather than see every thought or idea that comes up as a failure to meditate, recognize it as new energy to be directed right back into your heart.

With discernment, use your strength to send that energy into your heart space.

With acceptance, make room for it in your body by sitting tall on the inhale, sitting taller on the exhale.

Allow your breath to slow and deepen.

With every breath you risk becoming more connected to all the parts of yourself. In this time and space, you *practice* meditation. This practice is a deepening of your self-awareness, and how you are connected to both knowing and not knowing. Creating space for both is a balance. And in that balanced inhale and exhale, there is room for recognizing all your creativity.

Breathe in; gently breathe out.

When you are ready, take a final deep breath, and after your exhale, slowly open your eyes and risk moving into your day. ■

REBECCA SYKES' time at Camp Ramah set things back on fire anytime she strayed from blazing a path as an artist who also wants to live a Jewish life. Time at camp also led to degrees from Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary in theater and music. Ramah Darom and Ramah Wisconsin feel like home, the kind of home where you can write, direct, teach improv, and create a staff-training curriculum while you eat tater tots. Currently, Rebecca serves as Artist in Residence at Hillel of University of Chicago where her Anusara-inspired yoga classes allow the diverse community to explore an integrated approach to mind-body awareness, using each yoga pose to powerfully open to new possibilities. And do handstands. As a singer, actress, yogini, mentor, and educator, Rebecca helps individuals and organizations take reliable risks towards inevitable inspiration.

Rebecca is a member of the Project InCITE Coaching Team



When you are ready, take a final deep breath, and after your exhale, slowly open your eyes and risk moving into your day.





Resources

Selected Resources in Israel Education and Teen Engagement

All information for Project InCITE: <http://www.projectincite.blogspot.com>

WEBSITES AND OTHER RESOURCES

ISRAEL21c

Presenting Israel beyond the conflict

<http://www.israel21c.org>

Makōm

Makōm website at The Jewish Agency for Israel

<http://www.jafi.org.il/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Strategic+Partnerships/Makom>

Media Midrash

Linking videos with compelling curricular content

<http://www.mediamidrash.org>

Nu Campaign

T-shirts aimed at inspiring people to take action

<http://www.nucampaign.org>

SIT (Systematic Inventive Thinking)

Helping organizations and individuals to innovate

<http://www.sitsite.com>

Sviva Israel

Connecting young people to Israel through environmental education

<http://www.svivaisrael.org>

TED Talks

"Ideas worth spreading"

<http://www.ted.com>

The iCenter

Links to innovative, cutting-edge programs, projects, and resources

<http://www.theicenter.org>

The Jewish Education Project

Links to resources and educational programs

<http://www.thejewisheducationproject.org>

The Jewish Lens

Using photography in the exploration of identity and peoplehood

<http://www.jewishlens.com>

Toldot Yisrael

Telling history without the textbooks

<http://www.toldotyisrael.org>

JEWISH EDUCATION BLOGS

AVI CHAI Educational Technology

<http://edtechexp.blogspot.com>

Chag Haatzmaut at Makōm

<http://chaghaatzmaut.com>

Hararetz at Makōm

<http://www.makom.haaretz.com/blogs.asp>

Innovation in Jewish Education

<http://blogs.brandeis.edu/movingje>

Jewish Education Change Network

<http://www.jedchangenet.ning.com>

Migdalar Guy's New Blog

<http://migdalorguysblog.blogspot.com>

New Jewish Education

<http://newjewisheducation.blogspot.com>

Welcome to the Next Level

<http://nextleveljewisheducation.blogspot.com>

ONLINE JEWISH RESOURCES

Legacy Heritage

SMART Board Jewish Educational Database

<http://www.legacyheritage.org/SJED>

Lishmoa

<http://lishmoa.org>

Lookstein

<http://www.lookstein.org>

This resource list will be continually updated on the Project InCITE webpage

VIDEO RESOURCES

“Ani Yehud!”



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_UJn14n49E

“21st Century Education In New Brunswick, Canada”



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjJg9NfTXos>



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