

A Journey towards Innovation Fitness



By Paul Hobcraft

Agility Innovation Specialists



Paul Hobcraft can be contacted on Paul@agilityinnovation.com

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www.paul4innovating.com

A Journey towards Innovation Fitness

Organizations need to strive towards being innovation fit but how can they recognize this and work on their critical needs?

A short series introducing the concept of Innovation Fitness

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Building your Innovation DNA

Published on www.paul4innovating.com site in 2016 in "Insights & Thinking"

Moving Up the Path towards Innovation Fitness

So how do we become innovation fit?



Can you imagine standing on top of a mountain, looking out across a vast expanse of nothing but mountains and valleys stretching out before you. If you squint hard enough you can just make out that somewhere in the hazy distance, the end point of your travels, towards that much needed innovation understanding, made up of many different dynamics that make you and your organization that much fitter to compete in today's challenging world.

Clearly while you are on top of this mountain you feel exhilarated to have even got up to this point. To even get to this point you have already made a decision that you and your organization would become an innovation one and needs to look beyond what you have to what is possible.

You had some vague ideas on what that might mean when you set out on that first climb to achieve this first advantage point. What you never expected once you had got to this particular mountain top was just what the vista that had so suddenly opened up in front of you would mean. The sudden shock of what might be in front of you suddenly became overwhelming; it stopped you in your tracks. You felt suddenly confronted on what all this might actually mean.

Starting a journey always needs a first step.

We begin our journey, a journey full of innovation fitness dynamics. Start walking, start exploring, and let's go climbing, probing our need for personal and organizational innovation fitness. So this is a web site dedicated to Making Your Organization Fit.

I am to be your guide.

Journey of Innovation Fitness Dynamics Outline Concept

So how do we become innovation fit? By [Paul Hobcraft](#)

www.innovationfitnessdynamics.com is perhaps your *possible* innovation work-out gym.....

Firstly stop and survey our world from a new advantage point

Can you imagine standing on top of a mountain, looking out across a vast expanse of nothing but mountains and valleys stretching out before you. If you squint hard enough you can just make out that somewhere in the hazy distance, the end point of your travels. The distance you have to travel towards that much needed innovation understanding that is made up by so many different dynamics that make you and your organization that much fitter to compete in today's challenging world seem so really far off, or actually is it?



The Innovation Journey before you

Exhilaration can quickly turn to reality.

Clearly while you are on top of this mountain you feel exhilarated to have even got up to this point. To even get to there you have already made a decision that you and your organization needs to become a more innovation one and needs to look beyond what you have, to what is possible, you are curious to explore this further, you have to, innovation is a strategic imperative for, adding value, growth and improved wealth creation.

You have innovation choices

You had some vague ideas on what that might mean when you set out on that first climb to achieve this first advantage point. What you never expected once you had got to this particular mountain top was just what the vista that had so suddenly opened up in front of you, would actually mean. The sudden shock of what might be in front of you suddenly became overwhelming; it stopped you in your tracks. You felt suddenly confronted on what all this might actually mean. Do you go on or go back down?

Starting any journey always needs a first step.

While you had lived fairly comfortably down in the valley below, you simply kept looking up wondering what it would be like to become a more innovative organization. What was beyond that one mountain you constantly looked up too? You had survived, sometimes you even thrived but much of that 'success' was actually outside your own hands, it was often

determined by some luck, often those abilities to react to something quickly enough on what went on around you.

You followed others, you adapted and adjusted to changes going on and kept simply going but you felt this was not a really sustaining position. You wanted to change this, you felt you just wanted to be more in charge of your own innovation destiny. The question was how?

The big idea: a decision to walk a new path with a journey's end in mind.

Then the big idea came to you. The way to change was to make a critical decision, to move on by following a new path, a path towards innovation fitness. Why innovation, why the need to get fit? What was the journey end you had in mind? It might change as you move forward but the critical aspect is to make the move, staying where you are is not an option today.

To help on your journey I believe we need to raise our game and provide a greater fitness to the way we manage innovation. The dynamics of innovation need to be understood

Innovation Fitness Dynamics is a structured approach, you might want to find out about.

The journey has many peaks and troughs, mountains and valleys to forge. Firstly you have to understand your present fitness to travel on any 'change' journey and in this particular case, to achieve any innovation fitness is highly dynamic and challenging. There are lots of fitness points needed to transform your innovation potential from a simple follower to a leader, recognized and respected for your ability to consistently deliver innovation in a sustaining way.

The end goal

The end goal of your journey is simply "*the greater fitness you can achieve in innovation capability the more it can equate to a new value creation*". The exploring of the terrain that suddenly is opening up in front of you as you look over the mountains and valleys is in need of exploring, of travelling, of searching out those different combinations you require to get you to your own dynamics of innovation fitness understanding.

Welcome. You will find here your guide, your companion, to be available to walk alongside you on your innovation journey.

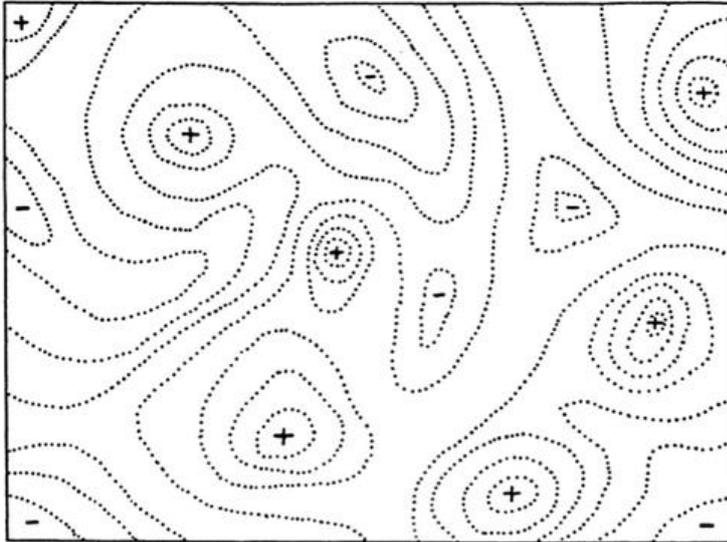
The first step towards achieving any innovation fitness is to decide that you are are not going to stay where you are and so you become aware, the second step is a clear acceptance that you have to take a journey. The first step leads one to the second.

"One's first step in wisdom is to question everything – and one's last is to come to terms with everything"

– George Christoph Lichten- physics professor and scientist 1742- 1799.

The dynamic points of innovation understanding

08/06/2016



Have you ever studied a map in a hilly or mountainous terrain? When you are studying the terrain, you have to survey the landscape and then decide how to cross. You need to be aware of what to avoid and what will help you map out a successful pathway. You need to optimize, evaluate and determine your best options.

Determining future innovation outcomes requires a greater understanding of what capabilities are more useful to develop, those that offer a more dynamic capacity. Do you know yours?

Can you separate these from the many you have that fail to give innovation impact?

We never start from a blank innovation canvas.

None of us has a 'blank' innovation canvas, we have developed a present position; one that is built on a legacy of past work and from our needs built up from our innovation activity, also in the past. As these develop we make choices, we sometimes become locked into certain structures, systems and processes, so we find it often highly difficult on how we are going to change, to move from one position to a different one – traversing the landscape to achieve better solutions to meet different goals that meet the present or future needs.

Have you ever evaluated your capabilities, competencies and capacities to innovation in light of a changing landscape?

One where competitors have gained new ground or you have been confronted with a more disruptive product that threatens your established position, or has even the potential to threaten your very existence? Your ability to respond to changing positions are often determined by knowing which capabilities and capacities you can call upon and leverage for

finding new solutions that accelerate and innovate your position to respond and stay competitive.

Do you know which are your more dynamic and valuable capabilities?

How do you go about and recognize these and to be able to separate them from many of your existing assets, that make a valuable contribution but do not have the dynamic potential to change, to rapidly increase performance and offer a distinctive future advantage.

The more dynamic, evolving ones that lead to new growth identification, new creations and solutions, that deliver new opportunities to compete in changing market conditions. These strengthen not just critical capabilities they build upon them a far more distinctive advantage.

Today we need to constantly orchestrate our innovation capital; it needs to be context specific and highly interconnected. Are yours?

Gaining awareness is an evolutionary path of becoming highly adaptive

- Knowing your dynamic capabilities to traverse a highly competitive landscape needs an understanding.
- Knowing your innovation fitness is becoming essential for your future growth and sustainability.

Exploring this dedicated site set up for determining the practice of building your innovation fitness is a good starting point.

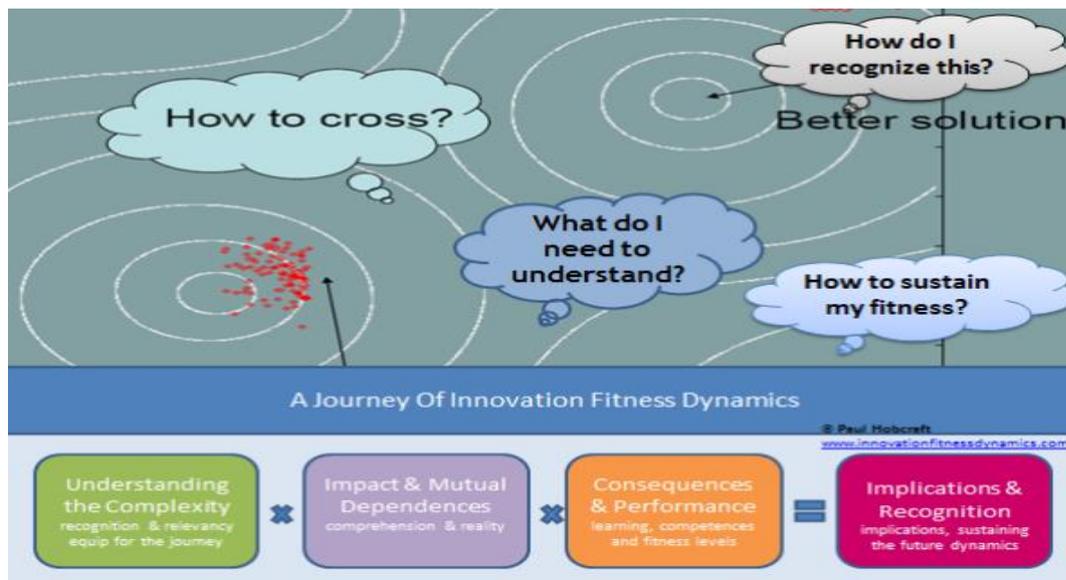
The end result is offering you the components to focus upon through by identifying and building those dynamic capabilities

Can I help you identify and determine your core dynamic components? I believe so, why not find out and ask?

The value of fitness landscapes as part of your innovation awareness

26/01/2014

I'd like you to work through these 'thoughts' to begin to evaluate the value of knowing your innovation fitness and what makes up your distinct dynamic capabilities:



Mapping out your innovation terrain

By firstly *mapping out your innovation capabilities* to the task at hand enables you to understand and relate to what is needed – *we call that the context for innovation*.

Innovation Fitness Landscapes helps in this task by identifying the opportunity spaces on where you need to focus your efforts- *and apply the appropriate resources to navigate the terrain*.

The greater understanding of the 'fitness points needed' can transform your innovation landscape potential, or *in business parlance, achieve your goal*.

Achieving this fitness accelerates your opportunities into final tangible outcomes. Here is a little bit of the theory: you look for those critical factors that will *give higher value potential or 'peaks' that are more valuable to your needs*.

The more 'rugged' the landscape, the tougher the innovation challenge, can also *determines the greater fitness for the rate of innovation needed*.

The height of the peaks in these landscapes, the greater value placed upon them, illustrates how intense the innovation challenge is, and the number of critical peaks shows how diverse its potentially is to *then provide the appropriate resources*.

The ability to identifying the emerging patterns provides the need to act and invest, *making adaptive even exploratory walks to provide the appropriate resources needed.*

Understanding these will enable you to move you to the higher fitness points where innovation viability is enhanced and needed to be so as *to resolve the challenges faced.*

You need to experiment, to take these exploratory 'walk's to realize the potential and *learn how to scale accordingly.*

As you begin to think of your capabilities to innovate it raises critical questions around “are we focusing on the right ones to deliver on the challenges we are facing”, “what can we do differently” and “how can we identify those critical ones”?

9 Stages for building innovation fitness

03/02/2015



Achieving innovation fitness is a journey- to get there we often need to manage the switchbacks as we build our capabilities and capacities to innovate.

1. **Getting Started – Understanding the Needs & Imperatives of Innovation Fitness**
 - Why we must travel this critical path for Innovation.

- The meaning of dynamic capabilities and innovation fitness landscapes
- Merging the theory with practical reality to produce new outcomes and positive results.
- Focusing on resources and performance – why is this important
- The problem is knowing what we have and what we really need

2. The Fuel of Innovation Performance – the dynamics of innovation

- A sharper, clearer focus on innovation resources to meet strategic need
- What is known about resources to sustain, enhance performance
- Knowing and aligning your strategic criteria – for sound innovation approaches
- Getting innovation within the right context of your business
- Moving your resources in the right direction

3. Getting even more specific – quantification and qualification

- Recognizing the building of scale, change rates and dynamics that happen over time and why we need to constantly build our innovation capabilities.
- Developing the resources to meet the need – structured, focused, clarified by bringing out the necessary discussion.
- An illustrative scenario for a directional innovation fitness landscape map
- Recognizing resources can come beyond the firm and bringing these in successfully. Managing within a more open environment.
- Achieving mutual dependencies to support; recognizing the hindering ones
- Being aware of the impact of different scenarios in the management of innovation

4. Building the Innovation Fitness Machine – reinforcing feedback, identifying needs

- Recognizing the current status, spotting emerging patterns, seeing spaces and gaps and identifying solutions.
- Beginning the ‘adaptive walk’ to get to higher fitness points needed to compete.
- Clarifying the complementary resources, looking to embed new routines quickly and set up follow through approaches.
- Introducing natural tensions into the system to trigger ‘step change’
- Resource dependence climate, culture, diversity, intensity and uniqueness
- Reinforcing feedback – watching for dangers, managing the machine capacity, removing the brakes selectively
- Shifting your resources need not deplete or force other people to compete for them – working through the tensions within teams and silos.
- Matching resource dynamics with the innovation value chain & life cycle stages
- Simulation modelling the ‘what ifs’ and ‘why’

5. The Strategic Architecture – designing the system to perform as needed

- The step process for designing and executing the architecture design
- Diagnosing performance challenges and road blocks – resolving, moving on
- Lining up the solutions is not a linear process and needs careful management
- Addressing the effects of intangibles in the Strategic Architecture.

6. The Hard Face of Soft(er) factors – the hidden power of intangible resources

- Clarifying the impact of the intangibles and recognizing time, climate and conditions are significant contributors to innovation activities.
- The different rivalry types: internal and external, inter department, inter projects and working through resolutions to these.
- Reflecting feelings and expectations, addressing all the different needs
- Measuring the tougher parts of intellectual capital
- The real value of your intangible resources
- Recognizing the value of hidden innovation and spotting its occurrence

7. Entering into Competitive Battle – the Dynamics of Rivalry, the Uniqueness of You

- Recognizing, developing, capturing, transforming, avoiding and out – manoeuvring
- Your point of choosing what, where, how and when to compete.
- Building capabilities that are unique to you and hard to replicate
- Building sustainability into the innovation equation as ongoing
- Extending the turf, exploiting the situation, pushing beyond, seeking partners.

8. Building and Testing Capabilities to Perform

- Measuring capabilities through different fitness levels and scale.
- Learning to build capabilities as ‘ongoing’ and evolving for changing needs
- Re-Structuring the process for dealing with the dynamics of change
- Knowing the points of impact on performance to enable recognition and reality
- Managing innovation performance progressively across the spectrum of business need through testing and extending capability learning.
- Building from personal to team to organizational learning in measured steps
- Recognizing the role of leadership, achieving strategic alignment and working on broadening out innovation competence at different organizational levels.

9. Keeping the innovation fitness wheels turning, keeping your eyes on the road

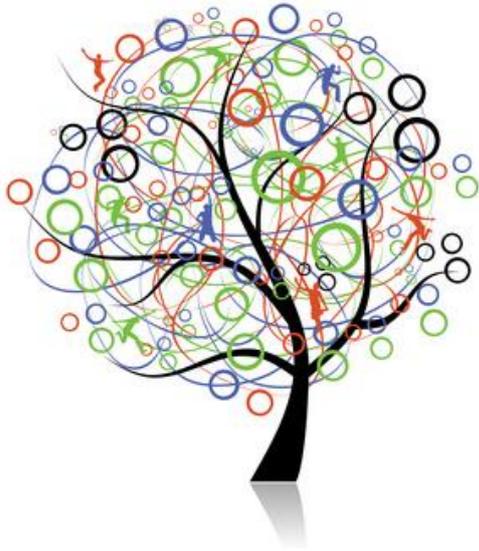
- Resolution of conflicting goals, control and structure
- Dissecting conflicting positions, resolving impasse
- Knowing the limits of human engagement
- Goals, controls and measurements can dominate and strangle
- Keeping the measurements simple and clear
- Managing innovation as a critical strategic resource
- Merging the results into a greater alignment to Strategy and Approaches

The end result is looking to generate your fitness landscape

As you can see this is applying a very comprehensive approach, a fairly ‘intensive’ one. This might alter individually after some clear piloting, learning and experimentation undertaken. Building innovation capabilities takes time; they are complex, highly structured and multi-dimensional. Any structured approach to tackling innovation takes time and considerable commitment.

Recognizing the different capabilities to develop and grow

24/08/2014



A firm's ordinary capabilities are the ones that enable us to perform efficiently and effectively, those essential routines and practices that often require having a high level of technical need supporting these activities.

In contrast, dynamic capabilities are those higher level competences that determine a firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure both the resources and competences to possibly shape, have the power to transform and then be deployed to meet rapidly changing business environments to take advantage of these changing conditions.

Recognizing the importance of Dynamic Capabilities

Dynamic capabilities are about selecting the right things to do and getting them done, while ordinary capabilities are about doing things right. The former implicates dynamic efficiency, the latter static efficiency.

Dynamic capabilities require an organizational form that leverages the knowledge and capabilities of managers throughout the organization. In business firms with strong dynamic capabilities, the key tasks of managers, especially those in the top management team, are entrepreneurial. It's not just a planning role; it's also strategic. It involves planning along with engagement and enactment, it encourages agility.

Appreciating and leveraging those ordinary capabilities is equally essential

The stronger these ordinary capabilities can be 'honed' then organizations can go beyond performing basic business functions well and can excel in these. While most capabilities, including some dynamic capabilities, are underpinned by organizational routines, many of the activities of top managers are non-routine by nature.

The key entrepreneurial capabilities needed for [asset orchestration](#) and realignment of the enterprise often reside in the skills and knowledge of top managers, managing the routines and assets and respond dynamically when changes are happening to adapt and respond

Ordinary capabilities involve operations, administration, and managing the governance. They are rooted more firmly in routines than are dynamic capabilities. A routine is a repeated action sequence, which may have its roots in algorithms and heuristics about how the enterprise is to get things done. Organizational routines transcend the individuals involved.

Finding the right complementary blend of capabilities is a real challenge to achieve

The capabilities perspective views the enterprise as clusters of complementary assets that must be combined and coordinated to create value. The utilization of such assets therefore requires managerial action. Managers in the dynamic capabilities framework perform that role. They orchestrate, and call into being, the assets that are vital to firm performance.

They determine the speed at which, and degree to which, the firm's particular resources can be aligned and realigned to match the requirements and opportunities of the business environment in order to generate sustained positive returns.

The alignment of resources both inside and outside the firm includes assessing when and how the enterprise ought to form alliances and joint ventures with other organizations.

Understanding all your required capabilities needed is essential

Valuing and knowing both your ordinary *repeatable capabilities*, to enhance and improve existing performance and discovering those that are *more dynamic in nature*, to change performance more significantly are both critical to identify, build and support in consistent and thoughtful ways. The key is knowing what is critical and then how to focus and invest in those that drive and sustain performance.

Investing in a mapping of your innovation fitness landscape can significantly contribute to this understanding and advance organizational performance in the critical areas that offer it present and future value.

Extracts drawn from the paper and built upon: "The Functions of Middle and Top Management in the Dynamic Capabilities Framework" by Sunyoung Lee and David J. Teece

Restating the Value Proposition of Innovation Fitness

08/09/2015



I have been reviewing my work on innovation fitness landscapes, in the designing and understanding of the dynamic capabilities organizations constantly need to find, evolve and establish for sustaining successful innovation. There are those that are more essential to manage the growing complexity we find in managing innovation, we need to move towards them, learning there need and place for helping in achieving successful and sustaining innovation outcomes.

I felt it was time to make a restatement.

Let me restate what I am focusing upon here, in this work and why it has a separate, dedicated website to allow me to evolve and share in this discovery and thinking through journey.

So my hypothesis, hopefully covered off in this initial explanation is made on the basis of growing research and evidence, as an investigative point for further [work-to-be-done](#) in thinking and constructing around the plotting or mapping out specific innovation landscapes that deliver the innovation capabilities needed.

This work is now at a point it needs additional help to take this out further in a testing and experimental environment and I am looking for one or more 'willing' organizations to be the pilot for this to validate and further improve from the learning.

The Challenge I'm trying to Solve

Knowing what are the critical factors for innovation and their dependence for sustaining innovation success are becoming a vital necessity to understand so an organization can place the appropriate resources behind them. The question is, which are critical, which naturally occur when others begin to be put into place, which seem to have limited or no real effect on changing the dynamics of innovation?

Knowing these and having these clearer shown as a 'return on impact/investment' (ROI) has real business value. Today, we lack a clear system model that brings the critical innovation factors out and gives them their appropriate values, and then can equally provide the ability to model different future states and conceive future scenarios through different impact-investments.

We need to recognize Resources are scarce and need constant renewal

We still don't understand the 'dynamics' of innovation, the interdependency of the parts. Which parts have greater impact, which are not so important? Innovation is still not treated company-wide in a holistic way as recognition of the dependencies is poorly understood. This is what needs to change.

What and where do you place your resources to gain greater impact? What is important to recognize as needing additional 'weight and focus', what capability and competencies need to have a stronger emphasis and why? How can we identify these, make the innovation process more dynamic yet these embed constantly as routines? What would happen if we ignore certain innovation aspects, what would give greater impact to our business?

Why do I think Fitness Landscapes will help?

The pressing need for a firm is to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competencies/ capabilities to address rapidly changing environments and its ability to achieve new, more innovative forms in market position.

This calls for more 'dynamic capability' to be achieved, to be available and constantly being built up as they are in flux and change. The basic question that needs to be addressed is "what are our dynamic capabilities and more importantly which critical ones should we focus upon to improve our capabilities and competences to innovate?"

The solution I am looking for offers Innovation Fitness landscapes by provide the understanding of the existing position and 'point towards' where to place your resource to improve your innovative capacity to adjust and deliver the capabilities and capacities to meet the challenges on hand. Equally, to project and forecast the gaps those need solutions to bridge, and then fill those accordingly with the right capabilities.

Fitness Landscapes as a solution has its roots in Darwin.

In any competitive situation, the survival of the fittest dominates (Darwinian). Knowing your innovation fitness is essential in this race. The question often raised is where do we focus our limited resource to achieve a better fitness to be successful at innovation?

Mapping out innovation capabilities and capacities

Mapping out your innovation capabilities to the task at hand enables you to understand and relate to what is needed. Innovation Fitness Landscapes identify the opportunity spaces on where you need to focus your efforts and apply the appropriate resources to navigate the terrain and move towards greater and more successful innovation outcomes. The greater

the 'fitness' and peaks obtained transforms your landscape potential into accelerating opportunities and increasing tangible outcomes.

These critical factors that are identified give higher value potential or 'peaks' that are more valuable to your needs. The more 'rugged or diverse' the landscape can also determine the greater fitness needed for a higher rate of innovation. The strength of the peaks in these landscapes illustrates how intense the innovation challenge is, and the number of critical peaks shows how diverse it potentially is to have resolved as contributing factors.

The ability to identifying the emerging patterns provides the need to act and invest, you begin to make adaptive walks, so as to move you to the higher fitness points where innovation viability is enhanced and understanding is needed to be in place so as to resolve the challenges faced. Greater fitness equates to more value creation potential. The ability to inter-couple landscape entities and exploit individual interactions alters your dynamics to innovate and improve repeatable cycle times and provides for increasing options to explore.

Moving towards a solution

I want to take this (pioneering) work out for testing and experimenting, to calibrate its framework so it delivers a strong rigor and validation to take out and scale further. This is why I believe I am at a point of needing some invested time by a client or two to work on this with me in this testing, validation environment.

The solution is a framework that shows promise but it needs to go further from theory into practice. What are the mutual dependencies, how the innovation 'system' behaves, what are its more important impact factors which are weaker and what should be considered in the 'best' innovation environment?

The key is to know what are those capability points are, the ones that are dynamic and highly relevant to the delivery of innovation, and dampening down the ones that are less so.

Greater innovation fitness equates to building the capabilities and capacities that provide more value creation potential as clear distinctive ones.

The journey is so we emerge on our understanding of those points of greater value; these are the dynamic points of your innovation need.

About Paul Hobcraft



I simply enjoy innovation. I got 'hooked' fifteen years ago and since then have increasingly focused on innovation until it is 100% of my business thinking and activities today.

I research across innovation, looking to develop novel innovation solutions and frameworks where appropriate. I provide possible answers to many issues associated with innovation with a range of solutions that underpin my advisory, coaching and consulting work at www.agilityinnovation.com.

The aim is to support individuals, teams and organisations, in their innovation activity, applying what I have learnt to further develop core innovation understanding, so clients can achieve positive and sustaining results from their innovating activities.

For me, ***innovation needs to enter the DNA of our organisations*** and our own individual make-up. In my writing, I try to offer a range of thoughts on different aspects of innovation to help each of us to understand this subject better.

Innovation as a source for our growth fascinates me.

As for my personal journey

How I got to this point I can only say it has been varied, challenging but full of fun and learning. This has taken me to live and work in Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Malaysia, Switzerland, the Netherlands, USA, Hong Kong, Australia, and recently twelve years in Singapore. Today, I live in Switzerland, my adopted home.

I've worked in a number of senior positions within global corporations, in global, regional, country and functional levels tackling different challenges that have included start-ups, turn-rounds and significant re-engineering and operational design or automation across a global network.

The work has been varied, the challenges diverse coming from starting up different businesses in emerging markets, turning difficult ones around in challenging economic and market conditions more than once, re-engineering a global organization over a three year period choosing to live permanently out of a suitcase (or two) for months at a time in each

of the major global locations as the best way to deliver the changes, and finally simply accelerating companies, getting them through to critical mass points, for achieving their positive contributing footprint, within the world.

In 2000 I went into my own business of consulting and advisory work, firstly based in Asia and then in recent years, based in Switzerland

After I moved to Ticino in Switzerland, from Singapore I am spending different times between the two regions, although Europe holds an increasingly more central role. All the time my focus is on innovation and many of the related topics that move it increasingly towards a core within organisations. Innovation understanding does 'simply span' globally and I have been fortunate on building on the foundations initially laid down in Asia and advanced while in Europe through an ever-expanding network of collaborators, knowledge and insights.

My present focus is spent building this innovation practice, providing advice on building the right capabilities and capacities, into organisations or individuals wanting to advance on what they have already in place; to improve, accelerate and develop their innovation competencies and understandings of the 'fit' of innovation.

Paul Hobcraft has been voted into the top innovation bloggers over a consistent period from 2012 on a leading Global Innovation Community- Innovation Excellence- ,



“These accolades are highly appreciated and valued- they inspire me to keep innovating in my own unique way and style. These recognitions help me believe I can contribute to the wider innovation community we are all part of”

Paul Hobcraft runs Agility Innovation Specialists: <http://agilityinnovation.com>

His Email is: paul@agilityinnovation.com

Direct contact: **+41 91 751 4350**

The organization is based in Switzerland for Europe & Singapore for Asia.