

	Redefining Innovation
<p>Bill Creamer Gates and Company</p>	<p>Innovation can be defined as "old ways turned inside out." Restructuring the existing landscape into something that is more appropriate for today's business and commerce. Innovation can also be defined as: discovering new connection points, new channels of delivery, new methods of attacking the competition, new ways to design your product/service into the overall delivery function that already exists (ala <i>designing in</i>) in the marketplace.</p> <p>One may ask, "How do we begin the process of designing ourselves into the marketplace?" The best way is to start by understanding and defining the existing value chain for your particular marketplace. Once defined, analysis and opportunity assessment can take place.</p> <p>Let's walk through a simple process . . .</p> <p><u>Step 1: Define the Value Chain</u> Define and understand the current value chain. What makes it take its present form? How does it create or add value? Who has the power position in the value chain (suppliers, distributors, integrators, manufacturers, buyers, etc.) and why?</p> <p><u>Step 2: Find the Weakest Link</u> Know your company's strengths and take advantages of current weaknesses in the value chain. Where can your company add incremental and overall aggregate value?</p> <p><u>Step 3: Reconnect the Value Chain -- Designing In</u> The redesigned value chain, with the addition of your company as a key value contributor, should make the new value chain significantly stronger and more a compelling business proposition for the intended target marketplace. How does one do this? The process begins and ends with researching and determining the answer to the following question: How can you "design yourself in" so others find it difficult to function properly, or function effectively, without your organization's participation?</p> <p>- continued on back -</p>

Step 4: Implement -- A Continuous v. Discrete Process

Some management teams make the mistake of believing the entire process of innovation to commercialization must be thoroughly and completely defined before they can enter the game. This premise can lead to a quick stall point. The entire process is actually one of continual change, which cannot be fully defined. Markets are constantly developing and changing and the process described above will accordingly follow a similar continuous course of change and evolution.

Step 5: Build the Culture

Creating and establishing the culture for innovation is often more important than the new product launch itself. However, changing company culture can be extremely difficult. The culture that fosters innovation is often a by-product of basic product/market life cycle analysis. A new company often starts with an innovation mindset, but often loses it as it grows into maturity and reaches critical mass. Therefore, the culture of the company will determine its sustainability and innovative performance over the longer term.

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