

Facilitation

Next Step Associates provide an external facilitation service for the development of your products and services. The **value** of employing an outside facilitator is precisely that **we do not know your business** and therefore can help without being burdened by pre-conceived solutions.

Explanation

Your role in sessions is to generate ideas, evaluate the ideas and select the ideas so that you move steadily towards the goal of getting to the best solution.

Our role is to manage the important things in the process, like time, pace, mood, and choice of activity.

We watch out for when things are going too slow, and we speed them up. We watch out for things going too fast, so we slow them down.

We watch out for when things are getting too serious, and we lighten things up. We watch out for when things are getting too light hearted, so we encourage some serious thinking!

We watch out for when it seems like your knowledge is getting in the way, so we help you move away from that knowledge!

We watch out for when knowledge is given but is highly questionable! We usually know this when it is heavily defended!

And we help you shift gears when you need to move from generating ideas to evaluating them, and then back to idea generation again.

So we help manage the mood, the pace, and the progress, for anything from a marketing campaign, to brand value, to culture change, to inventing products and services in any kind of business or organisation.

So, over time, you go from where you are now, which is not knowing what to do, to where you want to be; which is not only knowing **what** you want to do **but why!**

For innovation to be successful, without just getting lucky, you need to know why you are going there. So that other people can understand why you are doing what you are doing. If you do not fully understand why, then all you have is someone's next great idea. People will not support you and may even work against you, and you may also not be right of course.

So in getting from where you are to where you want to be, we make sure you understand the ground you cover, and this sometimes means going backwards, forwards, sideways, with each step making more and more clear the journey you need to take.

The most important part of the innovation process is evaluation. And we are evaluation specialists! We will even invent the evaluation process which most suits your needs!

Because, if you do intend to go somewhere different, then it is highly likely that your current way of evaluating things is not good enough.

Our facilitation is **fun, hard work, meaningful, clear and messy!** Just as it should be. We believe we are in the **reality business**.

We don't aim to simply create lots of new ideas. We aim to help you find the **very best ideas possible**.

How

Facilitation would involve initial planning with a few members of the new product/service team, not to understand the problem but to gauge how we should begin the process. We search for a sense of the resources available, of the commitment to invent, of the barriers for new thinking that may exist and for a very general sense of what is wanted.

We help you prepare for the session, the environment as well as the people, so that the time is used to maximum advantage.

We then facilitate the session, managing the stages of process from initial generation of ideas through to action plans for a feasible and exciting new products services. We are experts in the processes of Synectics and TRIZ, The Theory of Inventive Problem Solving.

Where the invention is of a new device in science and technology we can use software from the Invention Machine Corporation and/or Ideation.

We can help you with the process of innovation, with exploration of patent issues (using the software from The Invention Machine Corporation), with competition analysis by functionality (again using the software where appropriate) and with mapping collaboration opportunities.