



Marketing Innovation

Many organisations have great ideas but are unable to effectively communicate their benefits to potential users. New products and services that are on the shelf remain there with little or no uptake. Often this is not due to the quality of the innovation but the lack of marketing and a sales narrative that hooks new users and customers.

Creating stories that people can relate to will increase dissemination and adoption of new potential innovations. Good stories stick – they are repeated and shared, and the more often this happens, the greater the possibility that an innovation will catch on. The minimum requirement to communicate an idea begins with creating a narrative about its origins, its development and its value to users. People are interested in stories, and some stories resonate more than others.

Brand awareness is not often associated with innovation. But without it, there is a danger that the product becomes the company and vice versa. In both situations new innovations will be slow to catch on, as the distinction between product or service and company is blurred. Having a strong brand and a unified message across the product and innovation portfolio means increased chances of repeat customers due to brand recognition.

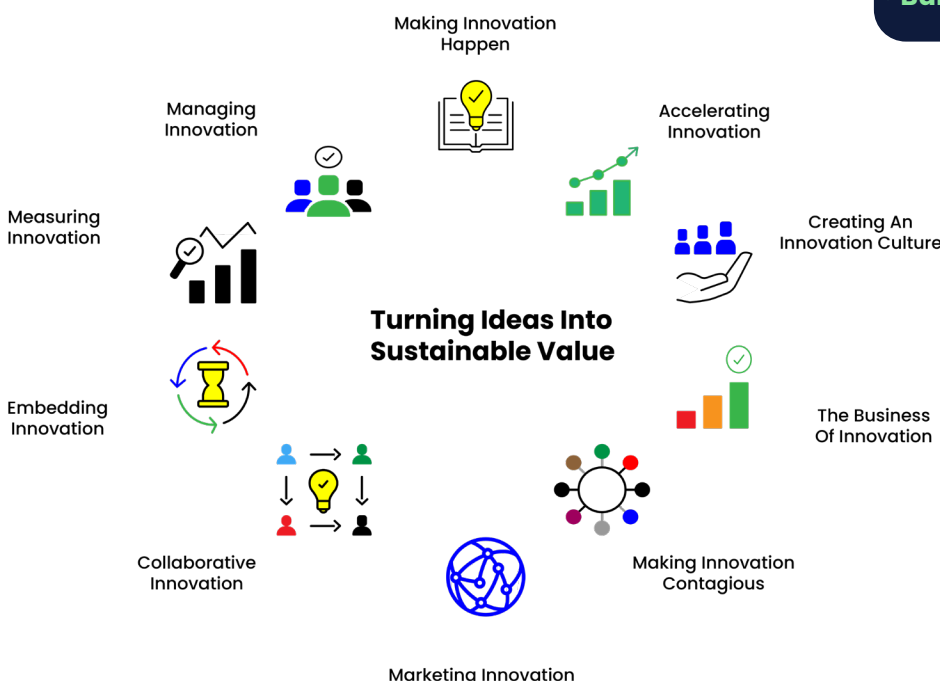
Understanding the wider context of innovation helps to position the offer. Net zero, cost inflation and customer experience are all contemporary challenges that innovation can help to overcome. Framing innovation against these challenges (and other industry-specific ones) could be the tipping point that attracts new users. Future tipping points can be identified and applied to trigger the irreversible changes that can stick, increasing the level of innovation. A market narrative, with compelling messages, communicated by key influencers, such as a first customer or early adopters, can increase demand and create market contagion.

Relationships are also key to marketing innovation. Innovation does not happen in a vacuum – users and suppliers are a crucial part of the system and can act as advocates for innovation. Building a network of super-connectors that have real influence (both hard and soft) can help ignite a story and spread it beyond the organisation.

Marketing Innovation is one of the 10 themes in the Making Innovation Happen (MIH) Framework. The MIH Framework provides a means of changing the way that people, teams and organisations look at innovation, innovation journeys, and how to systemically turn ideas into sustainable value.

The 3 Innovation Enablers

- Increasing brand awareness
- Context led micro-interventions
- Building relationships



"Don't find customers for your product; find products for your customers."

Seth Godin

"People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it."

Simon Sinek



Innovation Enablers

Increasing brand awareness

If no-one has heard of your organisation, they are unlikely to have heard about your offer. Increasing brand awareness moves your organisation away from the notion that “the company is the product,” ensuring that current and future innovations endure longer than one-off product and service offers. This attracts customers, investment and partnering opportunities. However, brand awareness requires more than just making customers and suppliers conscious of your brand. Your unique selling points also need to stand out from the crowd. Developing a stand-out purpose with an aligned offer can extend the shared purpose with customers and suppliers, providing a platform for long-term relationships.

Context led micro-interventions

It is crucial to understand the wider ecosystem that the organisation operates in and the challenges and opportunities that are present. The context can be understood by taking a whole-system view and looking at the situation at a team, organisation, industry and society level. Understanding this context allows for interventions which are targeted and likely to have a high impact. The timing and environment for delivering an idea or message can have a huge impact on its adoption and spread. Timed correctly, the idea or message can ignite an explosion of demand, new market behaviours and system change. Identifying a system’s tipping point triggers will help identify the conditions to make irreversible change that sticks.

Building relationships

Collaborative relationships between users and suppliers have mutual benefits and increase positive innovation outcomes. Relationships can be formal or informal but ultimately, in both B2B and B2C scenarios – customers shape the market. Collaboration to understand customers’ wants and needs can accelerate innovation by increasing the certainty of a return on any investment. Relationships are important for marketing innovations, as customers and suppliers can act as informal salespeople for an innovation.

Finding and harnessing the influence of super-connected advocates and early adopters of innovation helps create contagion. They are the people with opportunities for transmission with increasing transmission probability. Identifying and collaborating with early adopters makes it more likely they will share information, raising market awareness to and supporting future sales. These same networks can be leveraged for every new innovation. High profile adopters with large numbers of followers can reach large audiences and act as lightning rods that deliver rapid growth.

So What?

Organisations do not operate in a vacuum. If no-one knows about your latest innovation, it will not be a success. Marketing is not often associated with innovation but is in fact a crucial enabler. The presentation and narrative surrounding an innovation can make it contagious. Building a unique overarching company brand that is separate from individual products increases the likelihood of repeat and new customers taking advantage of new innovations.

Changing the presentation and messaging of an innovation can cause an explosion of demand and new market behaviours. These changes do not need to be large – it may be that a series of incremental changes makes innovations stick. Understanding the context and timing of the changes and adapting them to the audience are key to making innovation contagious. Taking a whole-system view to identify challenges can help to make context led interventions that are more likely to stick.

With successful marketing, innovation can become contagious. This is why the timing, communication channels and environment for raising awareness of an idea and creating a message can have a huge impact on levels of adoption and spread. Timed correctly, a story that resonates with people will ignite an explosion of demand, creating new market behaviours and long-term system change.