

# Does Experiential Diversity Boost Innovation?

## Making Innovation Happen

**Turning Ideas Into Sustainable Value**

# Speaker Introduction



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Interimconsult



## **Career Summary**

Business Founder and Owner, Board Member and Executive with over 20 years' experience working in FTSE 250, AIM listed, PE-backed and privately-owned businesses and social enterprises. Sector experience in Rail, Integrated Transport, Infrastructure, Technology, Education and Defence.

# The Interimconsult 1% Make a Difference Commitment

**1% of our total sales is used to support charities and our community, so every time you work with us you will be helping someone in need.**



We're an East Midlands charity dedicated to supporting families who've suffered a stillbirth or infant loss.



# Interimconsult – What We Do

- **Innovation Discovery Workshops** – this is usually the first step comprising a market innovation overview prior to a 1-day workshop to look at the organisation's innovation challenges, successes and failures using the Making Innovation Happen (MIH) Framework. The analysis and market overview is presented in the form of an Innovation Discovery Report that identifies innovation priorities and enablers.
- **Making Innovation Happen Programmes** – comprising tailored programmes and services focussing on specific innovation priorities. The programme is delivered via workshops and 1-2-1 meetings to deliver an agreed set of innovation outcomes.
- **Innovation Mentoring** – based on 1-2-1 mentoring of individuals looking to make innovation happen in their organisation, comprising a 3-6 month programme.
- **Making Innovation Happen - The Basics** – ½ day workshop focussing on reframing innovation and how to make it happen using the MIH Framework.
- **Innovation Consultancy** – tailored advice and support using specialist consultants, tools and processes, to increase innovation by turning ideas into sustainable value.

# What is Innovation?

Making Innovation Happen

# Our Definition of Innovation

Innovation can come in many different forms - it is not just about product design, service development or new technology.

At its simplest, innovation can be defined as:

***Turning Ideas Into Sustainable Value***

*So increasing your capacity and capability to innovate will increase your capacity and capability to create value*



# Why Does Experiential Diversity Matter?

## The Problem

Many organisations, teams and people struggle with unleashing their potential to turn ideas into sustainable value.

## The Innovation Journey

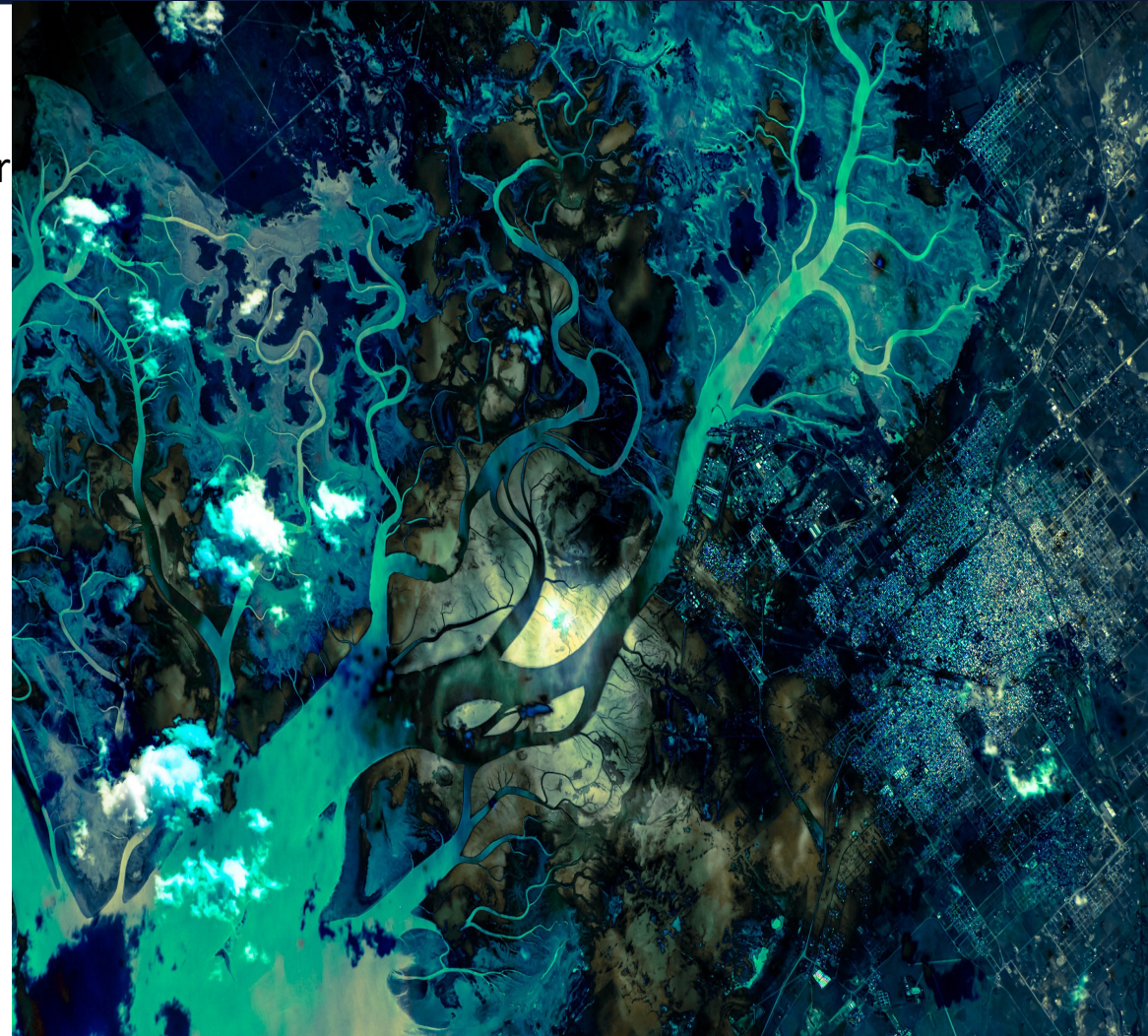
Great ideas don't guarantee great innovations.

At any point, there are several different factors that contribute to taking the path that turns ideas into sustainable value.

The innovation journey is often a near-random walk of different size steps with the occasional quantum leap across a complex landscape – navigated by people.

There is no single journey starting-point, path or end-point – the innovation journey is infinite in duration.

**Experiential diversity helps us to navigate throughout the innovation journey**



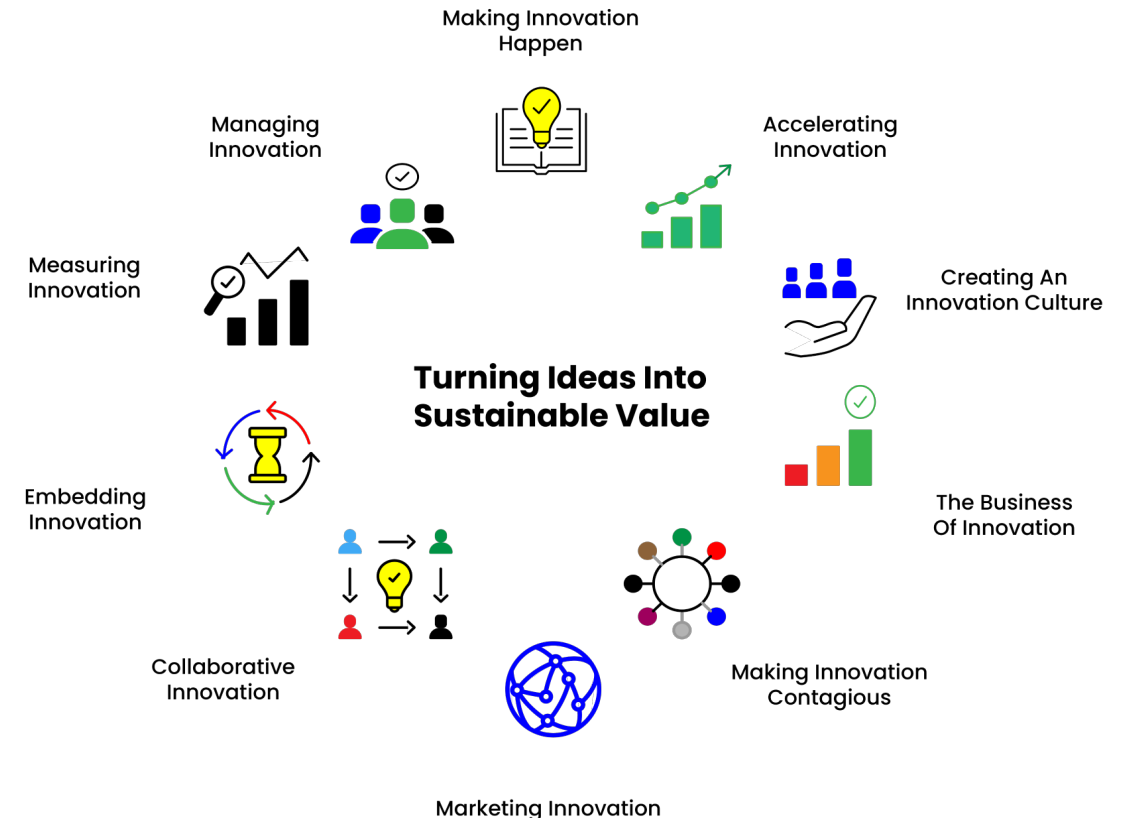
# Making Innovation Happen

The **Interimconsult Making Innovation Happen (MIH) Framework** can be used to help reframe the way that people, teams and organisations look at innovation, the different types of innovation journey, and **how to systemically turn ideas into sustainable value**.

## The MIH Innovation Enablers

1. Define and measure the value you want to create
2. Create a BAU innovation system
3. Increase value and purpose alignment
4. Advocate innovation
5. Plan investment to create sustainable value
6. Measure success using qualitative & quantitative KPIs
7. Measure for insight and benchmarking
8. Fail fast
9. Create stickiness
10. Increase brand awareness
11. Identify super-connectors
12. Take context led micro-interventions
13. Build relationships (B2B, B2C)
14. Manage innovation risk
15. Develop an organisational learning capability
16. Increase people orientation

## The MIH Framework Themes





# Making Innovation Happen

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# THE INNOVATION

# JOURNEY NEEDS PEOPLE WITH

# DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES

# TO TURN AN IDEA INTO

# SUSTAINABLE VALUE

## The MIH Framework Themes



# Diversity and Innovation

Making Innovation Happen

# Demographic Characteristics

**The Equality Act 2010** protects people against discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the workplace and wider society on the grounds of 9 protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

**But just complying with the the Equality Act alone is not sufficient to boost innovation.**



## Home Office

### Diversity and Inclusion Strategy *Inclusive by Instinct* 2018 - 2025



**Representing modern Britain in all its diversity to deliver the best outcomes for the UK**

We exist to serve the UK population. To do this to the best of our ability, we must understand and reflect the diverse and changing population of the UK.



**Differences in thought and outlook lead to ideas and new ways of doing things**

Everyone brings their own unique perspective and outlook. By creating a listening and engaging culture where people can have the confidence to share ideas, together we can identify new ways of doing things.



**Attracting and retaining the best talent**

The more inclusive our environment, the more likely it is that everyone will fulfil their potential. We want to reach out to diverse communities and ensure they get the best out of the Home Office as an employer. When we can be ourselves, we perform better, enjoy ourselves and stay with the Home Office for longer.

# Social Factors, Cognition, and Careers

**Social context** includes the various elements within society that can influence individuals and groups' behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, and lifestyles. Examples include:

- Socioeconomic status
- Education
- Family dynamics
- Place
- Community values
- Social Networks
- Peer Groups
- Access to Resources
  - Health,
  - Infrastructure
  - Transport
  - Media platforms
  - Money

**Cognition** describes the mental processes that determine:

- How we think about things
- How we solve problems
- How we learn
- Our perspectives and preferences
- Our understanding

**Career experience** is defined by:

- Roles
- Organisations
- Sectors
- Subject Matter Expertise
  - Business Management
  - Culture Change
  - Marketing
  - Operations Management
  - Technology
  - Finance
  - Commercial



# Experiential Diversity Enables Innovation

## The Building Blocks of Experiential Diversity



### Demographic Characteristics

Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation



### Social Context

Socioeconomic status, education, family dynamics, place, community values, social networks, peer groups, and access to resources



### Cognition

How we think about things, how we solve problems, how we learn, our perspectives, our preferences, and our understanding

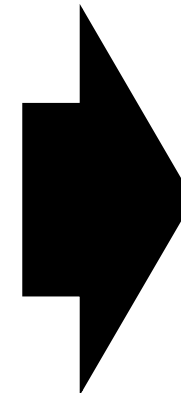


### Career

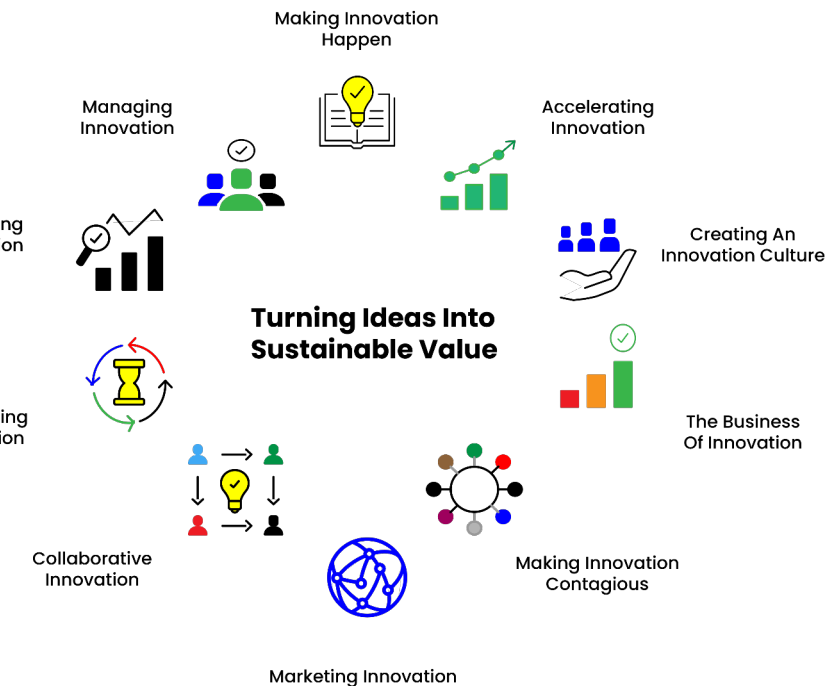
Roles, organisations, sectors and subject matter expertise in areas such as: business management, culture change, people, marketing, operations, technical, finance, and commercial



**EXPERIENTIAL  
DIVERSITY**



## The MIH Framework Themes



# Experiential Diversity and Serendipity

The Journey from Sewing Machines and Silversmiths to Safer Roads



# Innovation and Serendipity

***Serendipity – the fact of finding interesting or valuable things by chance***

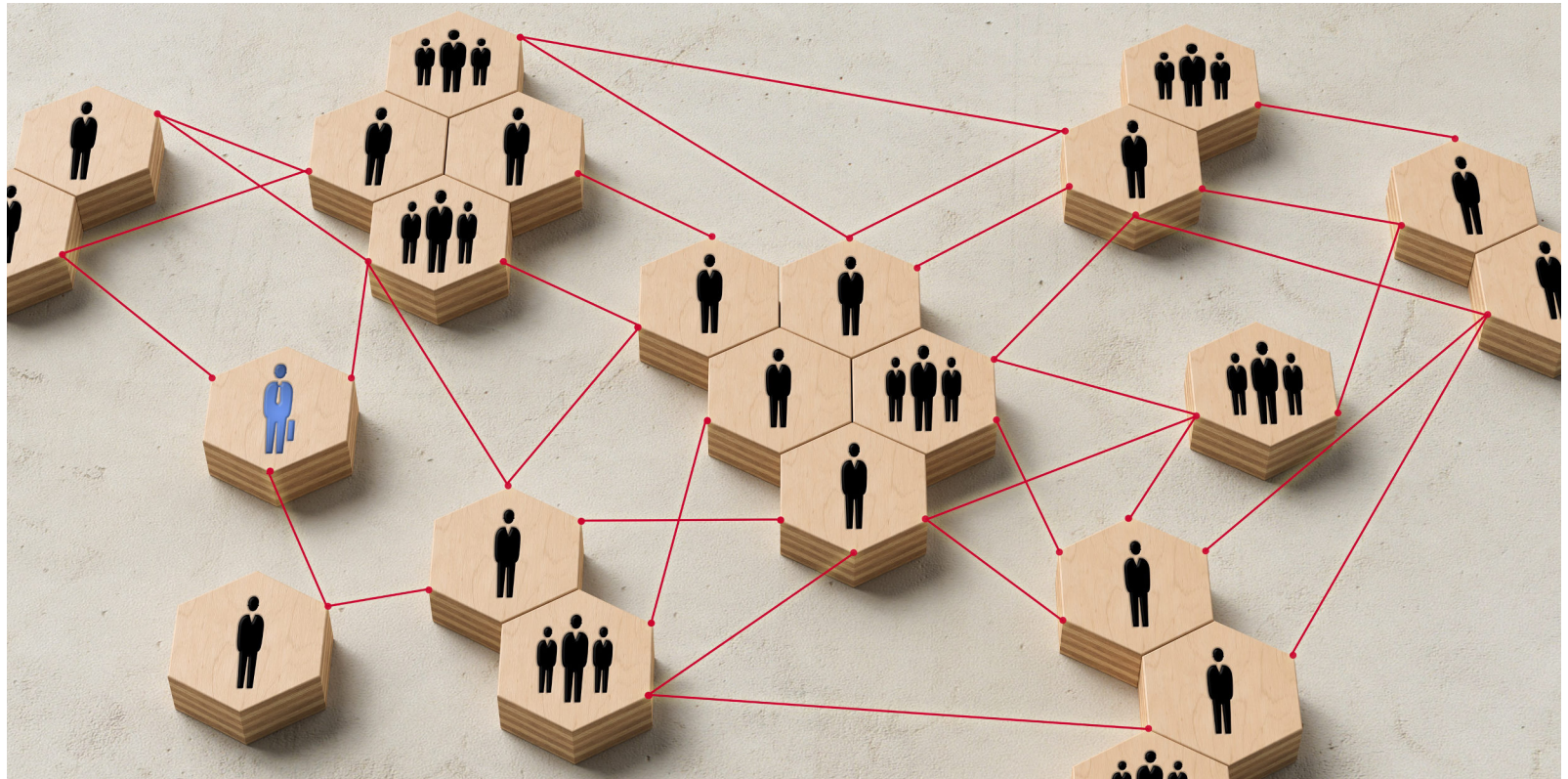
*(Cambridge Dictionary)*

## **Most innovations are inevitable**

The uncertainty is often about who turns an idea into some form of sustainable value, when it happens, how it happens, and the scale and timing of its impact.

## **Serendipity plays a significant role**

Serendipity-led innovation is influenced by environmental prompts where different people with different experiences interact.



# Creating Sustainable Value By Chance

At first sight, diversity does not explain why the phenomenon of serendipity has so often been a trigger for innovation – so called ‘light-bulb’ moments.

**But frequent and varied interactions with people having different lived experiences is more likely to lead to the development of new thinking, ideas, and perspectives.**

This is serendipity in action and is something that Samantha Copeland calls *‘discoveries that occur at the intersection of chance and wisdom’* and *‘what we retrospectively interpret as revolutionary breakthroughs typically begin life as rather normal work’*.

**The challenge is to increase the number of intersections between chance and wisdom as part of our normal work.**





# The Need for Experiential Diversity

- Matthew Syed's book - *Rebel Ideas: The Power of Diverse Thinking Differently* – explores collective diversity, where innovation is not the result of an individual's brilliance and their individual insights, but networks of people, collective brilliance, and collective insights.
- People 'reinvent' themselves based on context – learning and adaptation to our environments is natural and means people can change and are not just defined by their experiences at any one point in time in their lives.
- Experiential diversity creates one of the conditions for innovation - collective insights that can break down silo-based thinking and the echo chambers that inhibit creativity, creating an environment for individual adaptation and learning.



# Some Warning Indicators

- Team Dynamics
  - Using the terms '*Them*' and '*Us*'
  - A "Skunkworks" approach
  - Most team meetings become broadcasts and are dominated by 'hierarchy' and/or 'experts' in the room
  - Silence when asking for feedback
  - Team members remain the same throughout the whole innovation journey.
- Generalisations, of any kind, based on differences in:
  - Demographics
  - Social context
  - Cognition
  - Career Experience
- An over-reliance on work environment set up as **the** primary enabler - water cooler moments. Soft furnishings, and game facilities are not enough!



# Some Positive Indicators

- Team Dynamics
  - Avoiding use of the terms '*Them*' and '*Us*'
  - Experiential diversity is monitored and corrected if needed
  - Most team meetings involve challenging and supportive dialogue – listening to learn and timely contributions are valued above a compulsion to engage
  - Actively seeking and receiving feedback
  - Team members change based on need throughout the whole innovation journey.
- Actively searching for how individual's experiences can add value based on differences in:
  - Demographics
  - Social context
  - Cognition
  - Career Experience
- Work environments promote different types of engagement and have different resources that increase intersections between chance and wisdom 'during normal work'.



# Does Experiential Diversity Boost Innovation?

Making Innovation Happen



# 5 Tips To Increase Innovation

1. Recognise that everyone's lived experiences and frames of reference are much wider than those just associated with demographic and cognitive diversity - our unique experiences as human beings, our sliding door moments, and the phenomenon of serendipity make us what we are today, shaping and limiting the way we see the world, consciously and unconsciously.
2. Ensure that experiential diversity is valued and not suppressed by organisational culture – avoiding silo-based thinking and echo chambers that constrain diverse thinking.
3. Create an environment where normal work fosters innovation, all day, every day - just interacting by adopting 'the water cooler approach' is not enough.
4. Bring different people with different experiences together as part of normal work - collective experience is needed to navigate the different points along of the innovation journey that turns ideas into sustainable value.
5. Be proactive and create an environment with opportunities that bring people with different experiences together, to share knowledge and perspectives, and leverage their collective wisdom.