



**INNOVATION**  
ENGINEERING®

**2022**

**Innovation  
Engineering  
Conference  
Q&A**

WEBINAR Q&A

WITH THE INNOVATION ENGINEERING INSTITUTE

## QUESTION 1:

What Innovation Engineering tools do you suggest we use for problem solving? As we look at proactive problem solving as a new offering.

## ANSWER 1:

In the new book, *Unleashing Proactive Problem Solving* and in the class that we're formulating right now, we are taking the spirit of the tools that you all know really well. And we're working to adapt them into a quicker and simpler format so that they can be used in an on demand format where you don't necessarily have a piece of paper, and you didn't plan ahead for a Create Session. Many tools are already mindset based and are great for problem solving:.

- Lawbreaker
- Stimulus Mining
- Homework Trail (is one not taught currently)
- Triz
- Control Charting

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## QUESTION 2:

Greg, based on your IRI research. How can organizations measure the success of their innovation efforts? What do you recommend?

## ANSWER 2:

It all depends on your industry and company. First is financial. Is your revenue increasing? And what percentage of that revenue is from new products or services? If you are close to 50% over the last five years then that is a good financial benchmark.

But that doesn't necessarily work with the public sector or non-profits. For them it is more about impact metrics. There is not going to be just one output or thing that you measure. ROI will be dependent on what your company, department or team determines success looks like.

### **QUESTION 3:**

What role does leadership play in driving innovation within an organization?

### **ANSWER 3:**

Leaders need to be clearly aligned on innovation. They need to get together and align across the different business units or departments. Leaders at the high level need to align on a strategy. What strategies do we want to pursue? New products and services? Systems improvements? Both?

The key is to clearly communicate that choice to the employees in a way that motivates them to want to help. That is important, but it is also just a tiny part. Leaders also need to align on, for the front end of innovation and beyond that, how are they going to measure innovation projects, and how will they decide what to invest in.

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### **QUESTION 4:**

It has been a few years since many of our certified black belts have gone through training. And things have significantly changed. Can you give a brief synopsis of how mastery works today versus even just two or three years ago?

### **ANSWER 4:**

First the format is different. Instead of three days in person and then going off and finish getting certified, we now have an online self guided version. When you enroll you have 12 months to complete your certification meeting with your IE Black Belt Coach every other week to work through the course together. It is a great option for people who truly need flexibility.

The second option is the digital cohort where we meet every week for 16 weeks, and then you have 8 months to finish the application assignments. No one needs to travel anymore.

The other big change with Mastery is the applications. Historically application assignments were project focused. Now that Blue Belt focuses on project work we have upgraded and improved the Mastery application assignments. Now they are all about building systems, and really applying it to your work. The goal with the application assignments is to not add extra work. As you know in the past you had to do a provisional patent which wasn't always something that applied to everyone's role. Now you have the option of doing a provisional patent or doing a trademark search. Today the assignments are lot more adaptable to each student their needs and what they are trying to accomplish. To be clear the applications are also much more involved because you are not just running a project. For example it is about building systems for doing things like writing a BOR, what is a BOR for your organization and how to you get there.

Since, moving to this new format we have seen an almost 200% increase in certifications. Instead of coming to Ohio for 3 long, but fun days and then going back with a pile of certification work that seems overwhelming. Each week people are learning new set of skills, practicing and absorbing them and working towards their certification as a team with coaching.

### **QUESTION 5:**

We clearly identify our death threats and capture them, but many times are cycles are long because we are in a regulated business. There are certain things we have to do legally before we are even able to engage with our clients and these steps can sometimes take months.

How do we clearly articulate the other things that we need to do as we are going through the learning process? So they might not be death threats...they might not even be a decision, yes or no, but they are mechanics or options for going to market.

### **ANSWER:**

When you are in the discovery phase and “death threats” isn’t the correct term for an action in the Jump Start Your Brain project acceleration platform, you can customize your checklists to identify milestones and tasks that are happening simultaneously during a learning cycle. As you work through a project starting with the standard checklist you can tweak it for your needs then at the end when you have it to where you think it is standard you can save it and use it for future projects.



### **QUESTION 6:**

How do we network with other Innovation Engineering certified people?

### **ANSWER 6:**

Join the LinkedIn group for [Innovation Engineering Certified Practitioners](#).



### **QUESTION 7:**

How can we schedule a Proactive Problem Solving Session?

### **ANSWER 7:**

It’s easy. Shoot Lydia Carson an email at [lydia@EurekaRanch.com](mailto:lydia@EurekaRanch.com).

## QUESTION 8:

How do we foster and sustain a culture of innovation?

## ANSWER 8:

The piece that we put out yesterday is related to this. There's so much debate about where you start with this. And if you read some articles, even like Harvard Business Review articles that say, "There's no chance unless leadership is completely bought in." Or, "The structures have to be in place first, because that's what's going to lead to the culture that you want."

And we agree with that, in the long term. Culture is not going to stick unless you've got buy in from those who can control the processes and the reporting structures and their roles. Doing innovation is not one of those things that just happens. You have to put in place the structures, the roles, the templates. It's all of those mechanical details that can create a culture that is made by the structure. Because if you'd have sent people to training, and they come back into a culture that hasn't changed, the amount of inertia that they have to overcome may may never surpass it.

However, you can't start all at once with the perfect and beautiful structure. So one way to start is to peek into what does that structure look like? How do I learn what the rules need to be in the systems that I need to put in place? It can start with some training. And then you go back and you try some things, making some structural enhancements or changes based on what you learned at training.

But that's just the beginning. As you'll read in the paper - try things after training. Try to change your schedules, and your routines around what you learned. Try to change your scorecards, and how you analyze know the activity so that it's sort of further integrated into the structures. And then ask yourself, "Are some of the things that are producing results that we like in my team or my department? Can I now go up and down the org structure and start to make some of those more cemented into the structures?" Those things could be leadership workshops, PROACTIVE problem solving for maybe other members of the team.

Start to work up and down the org chart. In a perfect world, you'd start from the top down and everything would be in place. But usually that doesn't happen. People come to a training. They go home and reflect, "I like what I just saw, but it's gonna be really hard for me as an individual to make this all take take hold." So you just start where you are. Go back, make some tangible changes to your schedules and routines and go from there..

As a real life example, one organization in the Innovation Engineering movement has been taking this approach for the last year and a half and has a program that's been working quite well. They want everybody everywhere all over the company being more innovative at their jobs.

They started by getting a bunch of IE Black Belts and optimizing their Front End of Innovation system. Once that was well in place, they wanted it more broad across the organization. So in this latest wave one of their IE Black Belts is leading an effort to expand it. They're getting volunteers from across the organization every quarter. They're recruiting 15 to 20 people to come in and get an introductory training. Then some of them will go on to get IE Blue Belt.

Others of them will do innovation in workshops, like in PROACTIVE problem solving. They're doing a version like that because they want something that everybody can do that's going to just take a day. But they realize if they're going to go back into their world - because it's a big, big company - that they really need to have some IE Blue Belts over there that are leading initiatives. So sure, they can be proactive in what they're doing every day. But it's also great if there's somebody over there, maybe coming up with some projects and leading some collaborative sessions that they can pop into.

It makes sure everyone's really engaged in across the organization. Every quarter, they're recruiting a new set of people. And, when it's volunteer, it follows the natural diffusion curve. And it's working. It's working quite well.

The wave approach is great. If you just train everybody all at once, and they're not sure what to do, and their leaders aren't involved or haven't been trained...it can be frustrating. Having a structured approach, regardless of how it's done is it's helpful to make sure that you don't educate somebody and then frustrate them because they don't have the time and the tools in their area of the business to operate.