

Taking your business to the next level

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Entering the world of business and establishing your own company is one of the most challenging things one can do. It takes capital, courage, commitment and a lot of hard work.

But to take your business to the next level once you have made a start is really quite straight forward. And it can be done with little risk, certainly far less risk that you took in getting started; and it's all about innovation and the leverage that can be applied to your existing market presence.

The real secret lies in understanding and the real use of "innovation", a word best defined as "*Change that Adds Value*"© La Salle 19999

By this I do not mean the abstract concepts of innovation, or so called "brain storming" or mood changing in the hope that some inspiration may come. Businesses cannot rely on hope. Instead what is meant is actual innovation that is directly applicable to all of your products, services and functions. It's with the simple process of innovation that you can move your business to new heights.

In short there are three opportunities that are immediately available to you once you understand the simple mechanism.

You can innovate your:

- Products
- Services, that is, the way you do business
- Processes, that is, how the business operates.

Innovation of products can leverage off the four fundamentals, called "**Seeds**", that underpin any product.

The seeds are:

- **Change** or add value to your product in some way. - No product is immune from change for the better. If you disagree with this you are essentially saying that any product will remain unchanged for eternity, a highly unlikely proposition
- **Add Accessories** to your products - Many companies today exist just by selling accessories, just look at the chains of shops selling auto accessories, to cite just one example
- **Add Complementary Products** - When somebody is about to make a purchase, you should take advantage of the mindset they have at the time by offering them complementary items, such as a drink or fries with a hamburger
- **Enhance the Sales Channel** -The existing channel or the access you have to your customer, is a valuable asset that can be leveraged. - This is like the petrol station being certain that you will come into their shop to pay the fuel bill, so they also offer extremely high priced commodities once they have you figuratively, "captured".

Once you realise the business building opportunities afforded by embracing these seeds, the next thing to do is find ways to stimulate your mind in developing ideas based on the seeds. **Catalysts** are the fuel for this thinking and twelve key ones have been identified.

Some of the catalysts include:

- **Tracking** - If you follow your product through its life you will find a multitude of opportunities. Such as putting honey into squeeze containers as a result of observing the frustration of users with messy jars.
- **I Wish** - Like making a wish about your product, such as a glass that never gets empty and solving this with a pressure sensor and miniature radio transmitter that signals a drink waiter to refill your drink
- **Frustration** – this may well be the biggest source of all business opportunities. Listen for somebody cursing a product and you will have an instant opportunity for innovation

By arranging both seeds and catalysts in a rectangular grid, a matrix results for thinking. Each intersection of Seed and Catalyst creates a stimulus for creativity. The difference with this innovation matrix, unlike most other way to stimulate thinking, is that the thinking is immediately and directly applicable to your products.

“La Salle Product Innovation Matrix”

Cat'sts	Tracking	I Wish	Frustration									
Seeds												
Change												
Access'y												
Complement												
Channel Enh'mnt												

The important thing to remember is that getting started in business is the hard part. After that, moving to the next level is a systematic process of innovation based leverage and, if done properly, it can be virtually risk free.

In the case of services and service companies a similar innovation approach is employed; only in this case the seeds are a little different.

In the case of processes, a Process Innovation Matrix is used; again in this case the seeds and catalysts are quite different. A similar approach is used to identify new business opportunities using an Opportunity Matrix.

With the knowledge of seeds and catalysts for each particular situation and their application to any business, breakthrough thinking can be developed as it applies directly to your products, processes and services.

The generic term for this type of structured thinking I refer to as “La Salle Matrix Thinking”. The fundamentals are clearly quite simple, and universally applicable.

So take your business to the next level. It can be done systematically and in a structured way that is not only low risk, but uses a process that can engage staff members at all levels of your business.

Roger La Salle, often referred to as Australia “*innovation guru*” is the creator of the “Matrix Thinking”™ technique and is a widely sought after international speaker on, Innovation, Opportunity, and business development. He is the author of three books, Director of a number of companies both in Australian and overseas and has been responsible for a number of successful technology start-ups. In 2005 Roger was

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