

## Rough and Tumble and Innovation

By Lanny Vincent

There is a form of play that shows up in humans and a variety of other species. It is called rough and tumble play.

Some people mistake it for fighting. Yet most play scientists recognize this form of play as a—if not the—key contributor to the necessary fine-tuning of social empathy and confidence sufficient to face new and uncertain environments. This is essential for the survival and “thrival” characteristics of the species. “Roughhousing” is what my father called our rolling around on the floor together when I was a young boy. The restrained tackling and wrestling with my daughter when she was younger are also fond memories for me of rough and tumble play.

Vigorous rough and tumble play also directly contributes to an organization’s ability to innovate. Without this play, a launched innovation neither resonates with consumers nor lasts in the marketplace. This is especially true when competitive conditions in the marketplace change. Rough and tumble play is essential for the healthy development of each innovation. It is also essential for the healthy, robust and collaborative problem solving which innovators need to invent.

Many organizations have cultures that actually work against rough and tumble play. On one hand, some companies overvalue politeness. These tend to mistake rough and tumble play for fighting, and are quick to inhibit it, even to the point of avoiding conflicts altogether. Nothing could be more disastrous for an innovation’s development. Without experiencing the stresses that come from multiple iterations of trial and failure, our innovations will remain flabby or flimsy with little value traction.

On the other hand, some companies have  
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## PRIDE of the Team

By Dan Swanson, Rayalta Innovations

“Is this all we got from that group? These ideas aren’t breakthrough; they’re marginal at best. I thought we had the best and brightest people on that team.” Words like these are still being thought, said, and even heard in executive offices across the globe.

These days most view innovation efforts as collaborative. Many times these innovation efforts produce poor results because not all the right people are on the team. How do you change this and get the right mix on the team?

The problem is and always has been how do you know if you have the right mix of individuals? It is not just bodies, but the right minds, and the right mix of minds and experience, that makes the most powerful team.

Selecting by gut feel just doesn’t cut it anymore. Yet it is very hard to tell which people are best suited for a specific effort. Each project is unique and the old method of: “one person from department A, another from department B, etc.” works if people are interchangeable, but they are

not. It doesn’t make any sense to solve a unique problem by throwing just any team together. What is needed is a way to treat each individual project, like it really matters, like it is unique.

For more than 20 years (at four different Fortune 500 companies), I have been building innovation teams along with the team-forming tools necessary to deliver success. During the past year, these team-forming methods and tools have been dramatically improved and changed. A patent was filed recently to protect the innovation. The tool is called the PRIDE Profile. It takes a user through 25 questions to determine his or her current innovation orientation. It helps the user form the best team by enabling a selection of the right mix of individuals based in part on their technical experience and partly on their orientation to innovation.

For innovation efforts it seems people can be classified into five main areas that describe their overall orientation toward innovation. After taking the profile, individuals can recognize their own orientation

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## Rough and Tumble

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become so rough and tumble themselves—even brutish—that internal competitors replace external ones. There simply is no play of any kind, much less rough and tumble. It is all about performance, all the time. There is no permissible time or safe place for thinking out loud with one another. Companies under significant public scrutiny are often play-deprived, especially of the rough and tumble type.

As many of you know, we have a close friendship and collaborative association with Dr. Stuart Brown, founder the National Institute for Play, a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the science of play ([www.nifplay.org](http://www.nifplay.org)). Dr. Brown has looked at how play—a state of consciousness and set of behaviors—is essential for growing the adaptive capability necessary for people to make healthy adjustments in order to thrive in a changing environment.

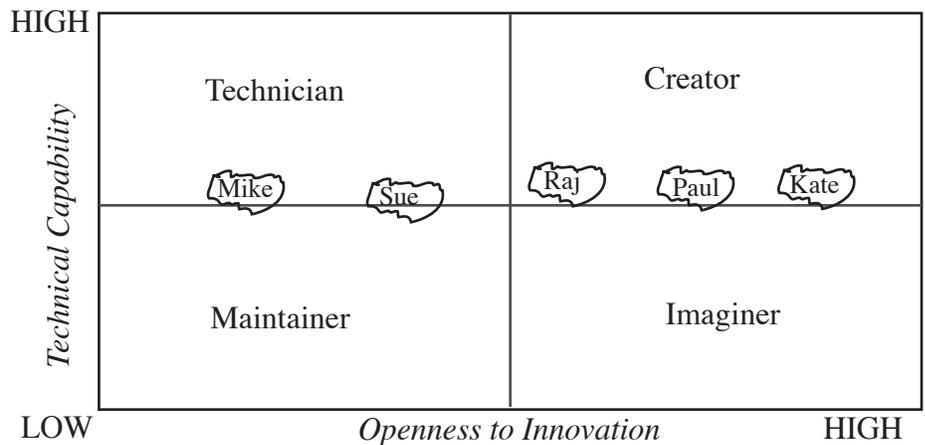
The more play experience one has, the greater the organism's ability to adapt. The less play experience, the weaker the organism's ability to adapt to changes in its environment. What hard science is teaching us about the vital contribution of play to an organisms' adaptive capability, our experience confirms regarding how play impacts an organizations' ability or inability to innovate.

While playing at the appropriate place and time is important, the form of play may be of equal consideration. How you play may be as important as the playing itself. Healthy innovation requires both.

Over the past 25 years, I have facilitated more idea generation sessions than I care to admit. Many of these ideations served to engage participation, and in that they were useful, but too few left any traceable contribution to a successful end result. One reason these brainstorming sessions don't produce as much as they promise is because people often get caught up in Alex Osborne's primary rule of brainstorming which is to withhold judgment.

My experience is to populate invention sessions with diverse but well-informed and experienced experts and ask them to go beyond their judgment, but by no means withhold it. It is their judgment that enables the rough and tumble playing with ideas, the result of which is a much higher quality of thinking.

## PRIDE of the Team



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toward innovation. The main areas can be represented by one of the letters in the PRIDE profile. P-oriented people value Power, R-oriented people value Relationships, I-oriented people value Ingenuity, D-oriented people value Details, and E-oriented People value Evenness. Since

***Will your innovation efforts succeed? Only if you have the right people on the right team!***

most people are combinations of two or more profile types, they can have significantly varied innovation orientations.

In the example in the chart above, after using the PRIDE profile, three individuals were identified as potential members of an innovation team: Raj, Paul, and Kate. Sue

“Fear that might keep you from voicing your real thoughts is poison. Almost nothing could be more detrimental to the well-being of the company,” says Andy Grove in his book, *Only The Paranoid Survive*, which chronicles his experience with Intel's precarious navigation from memory chips to microprocessors.

We need to consider formally installing play periods right after gate reviews in the stage gate processes. Play is not only appropriate to the front end of innovation, a time and place for healthy, open dissent should be permitted and encouraged at various points in an innovation's development. Learning applied to creating value can only be advanced when we replace conflict avoidance with safe and protected “housing” for rough and tumble play. □

and Mike do not have sufficient enough innovation orientation for this project. The PRIDE profile is project specific, so on the next project the results may be different. Further differentiation is done when we test each person's technical capability. Rayalta Innovations has developed such measurement tools, but that discussion is beyond the scope of this article.

This approach to finding the right mix of people for innovation efforts has delivered the results management needed. From a single project, which was completed in less than 90 days, the optimized team delivered a 6% revenue increase and a 29% decrease in inventory to a significant line of business. These results delivered executive buy-in, and were directly charged to the executive's budget. The optimized team delivered real, tangible, and measurable bottom-line results.

In another example, an innovation team was selected using the innovation orientation model. That team delivered an \$82,000,000 annual cost reduction while at the same time increasing customer satisfaction.

If you'd like to play with the model, a version of the PRIDE system is online at [Rayalta.org](http://Rayalta.org). Select the “Members” tab on the top of the site, where you will be taken to a login. Use the Login ID: BookBuyer and the password: Rock&Roll. You can try out the system and see how it may help you build better innovation teams and deliver better results with more profitable innovations. □

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