

Can Games Help Your Company Innovate?

January 11, 2013 • [Andrea Simon](#) • [Print](#)

In my last blog I shared with you ways to [Go Exploring to find a Blue Ocean Strategy®](#). I thought I would provide you with some other ways to creatively “see, feel and think” about your business, your markets, your customers and your wish list of future customers. Maybe you need some new ideas and innovations. See if this helps.

As certified facilitators of Innovation Games® we work with a lot of organizations that must shift from good processes to great innovations. There are many tools to help you become more creative. [Innovation Games®](#) are some of the best to ignite change.

The word Innovation is on the tip of every CEO’s tongue. They want their company to be the next Steve Jobs’ Apple. Nice idea. Too often they do not have any way to encourage innovation.

Think for a moment. What are you really doing in your organization to encourage idea generation, convert ideas into innovations and support an innovative culture? Do you have an idea bank? Do you hold idea jams? How about an Innovation Gym where you can work on an idea and build a business plan? Do you empower your staff to make decisions? Or are you efficiency and process-driven?

Perhaps you need some games to play.

Igniting Change Workshops

In a recent series of **Igniting Change** workshops I held in various parts of the country I watched as CEOs or their management teams played games. It was actually fun. The games proved extremely valuable methodology for these CEOs and managers to “see, feel and think” in totally different ways about their companies, and in some cases about themselves.

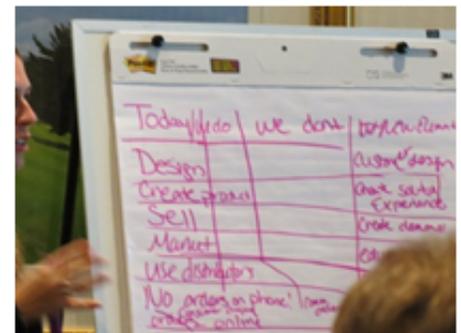
To help them, we chose some of our favorite games—**Reverse Everything and Now, Wow, How**. These are games that help their minds deconstruct their current businesses and reinvent them, all within three hours.

You might want to try them yourself. Let me share with you how to do one of these. Let’s **Reverse Everything!**

How to “Reverse Everything”?

Depending on the size of the group we break into 3-5 person teams. In each group they select one company to deconstruct using Reverse Everything. Participants are asked to write down their assumptions about this company, or perhaps a problem or issue that they are facing. The assumptions are simple statements about the way things are **TODAY**. Try using the P’s: Product, Pricing, Placement, Promotion, People, for starters. Then list **OPPOSITES**. These are easy—We Don’t or We Do More. Then, let the **NEW ELEMENTS** flow. The more ideas, the more likely there are good ones. You just don’t which they are.

What could happen next? This hypothetical Reverse Everything Exercise might be yours:



Today	Opposite	New Elements
We sell neck pillows	We don't sell We don't focus on neck pillows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell online direct to consumers • Have unique websites • Use network marketing • Develop own stores • Create mobile app to enable easier purchases • Focus on children • Become back remediation experts • Become an evaluator of products and sell "best in breed"
We have sales people	No sales people	
Work with distributors	No distributors	
Have only our own products	Sell many lines of products	
We manufacture	We don't	
Don't sell direct to consumers	We do	

Next, take the ideas and see which ones you can do "Now." Which would be big original ideas—"WOW?" And which seem very cool but you don't really know "How." It is a very effective way to take abundant ideas and help prioritize them before you finish the game.

Why are games such an important part of the creative process? Games create randomness within rules. They take people into a new space. Games do have rules and boundaries but they are beyond the realities of the moment.

The big ideas often appear at the intersections. In one group three different companies came together with a new concept that they could do together.

Want to play? You can see some games on our website www.simonassociates.net or on www.innovationgames.com.

