

## **An Innovator Advises: Apply Creativity to Be the Best at Everything You Do**

Many people yearn to stand out from the crowd, but draw comfort from fitting in with everyone else. What life path should they follow?

Some people enjoy straddling the gap between the desires to stand out and to fit in through continually innovating in ways that appeal to many other people. Their innovations allow them to feel unique. Whenever their innovations are widely adopted, the use of and interest in their innovations brings the innovators closer to others.

Does such a life appeal to you? Most people I ask answer “yes.”

But many people who find continual innovation to be attractive don't believe that they can succeed in that activity.

Could you become such a successful innovator? I think so based on what I've learned by helping thousands of people create popular innovations.

Have you already produced innovations that many other people use? Perhaps not yet, my answer is based on asking tens of thousands of people about their creative experiences.

Do you think you have what it takes to be a successful innovator? Perhaps you don't, but I have good news: Successful innovation can be learned and become a habit. If you can follow the dots from A to B to C, you can be an influential innovator.

To share more about being a successful innovator with you, I interviewed Dr. Wayne Lotherington about how he changed from being a creative person working in advertising to someone who is a leading expert in helping others learn to be successful innovators.

To dispel some of the common misunderstandings about innovation, Dr. Lotherington offers this commonsense definition for creativity, one of innovation's foundations: “the act of merging or connecting ideas that have not been merged before.”

You can put together ideas that haven't been put together before. I know you can. To show you how, let's start by developing a fictional story. Imagine a platypus, a pretty unusual creature you must admit, that can talk. Now put the talking platypus into the White House in Washington, D.C. advising President Obama on reviving banks. You've got the basis for a pretty interesting story, don't you think? You've put together three ideas for the first time -- a platypus, having a platypus talk, and having a talking platypus advise President Obama.

Now, add your own twist to that story idea to create something new. Here's an example of what I mean: Perhaps you decide to have the platypus advise Bill Gates, the billionaire philanthropist and founder of Microsoft, on how to eliminate poverty. Now, you've got the idea!

Make another innovation in the story. You might have President Obama and Bill Gates advise the platypus on how to be more successful in playing basketball. Now that you see how easy this is, keep going.

Write the best story idea you develop (or hire someone to do so) and you've created a successful innovation. Self-publish that story, then develop a series of connected stories, and later add related products, and you've established a stream of business innovations based on your creativity.

Even if you work in an ordinary business, effective innovation works just the same way. Imagine that you need better advertising to attract more potential customers: Use the talking platypus as your spokesperson to explain how your business provides combinations of features that customers can't find anywhere else. If you want a friendlier spokesperson, substitute a teddy bear.

Let's look a little deeper at your situation. How can you gain a lot of skill and experience as an innovator and launch a more successful innovation career? Dr. Lotherington's experiences provide helpful perspectives you can use.

Dr. Lotherington began his post-secondary education by earning a Bachelor's degree in economics, and went on to gain a graduate diploma in education, followed by a Master's degree in administration. He applied this knowledge foundation to the advertising industry where creativity is highly valued. Eventually, curiosity drew him to learning more about creativity and

innovation, and he left advertising to speak about and teach these subjects as part of his own training and consulting firm.

Despite being well qualified and very successful as a trainer, teacher, and consultant, Dr. Lotherington knew that he could be even more innovative. To prepare for making a breakthrough, he decided to learn even more about creativity and innovation. In addition, he was aware that many of his speaking and training competitors held doctoral degrees. Dr. Lotherington concluded that earning a Ph.D. could increase his knowledge and strengthen his professional credibility.

Earning a doctorate is a hard task for any mid-career professional. When your work involves traveling all over the world as Dr. Lotherington's work does, it's impractical to study at a university that's located in only one place. He decided that Rushmore University was just right for him because all of the work could be done online from wherever he was, at whatever time of day he was available.

During these doctoral studies, Dr. Lotherington drew on these principles to helping others become more successful innovators:

1. Aim to become the best at what you do.
2. To improve beyond what you know now, break important activities into repeatable mental and physical steps that can be learned and applied successfully by those with limited experience.
3. Learn new skills in a context where your results count.
4. Work hard, set high standards, and meet difficult deadlines.

As a result of his doctoral research, Dr. Lotherington was able to go from being a highly creative person to someone who can help anyone else become a successful innovator. His work identified these principles for you to apply:

1. Creativity improves results.
2. There's a repeatable method to creative thinking.

3. Creative thinking methods can be learned.

4. Creative thinking can become a habit.

How was Dr. Lotherington's life changed by pressing forward into his challenging studies of creativity and innovation? He gained a lot of confidence. Drawing on that confidence, he became much more active and influential in his profession.

While studying for his doctorate, Dr. Lotherington published a book and his business grew by 89 percent that year. Two years later he graduated, and his business grew by 89 percent again. Since beginning his Rushmore courses, Dr. Lotherington has authored two books and coauthored three others. Several other coauthored books are currently under development. In addition, he was asked to join the Rushmore faculty as an associate professor who provides individual tutorials in creativity and innovation.

Are you ready to follow Dr. Lotherington's creative example for standing out while fitting in? I hope so. All you have to lose is your dissatisfaction with your life as it is.

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