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SMART INNOVATION SET



Volume 38

Immersive Technologies to Accelerate Innovation

*How Virtual and Augmented Reality
Enables the Co-Creation of Concepts*

Sylvain Fleury and Simon Richir

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Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Foreword](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Preface](#)

[Introduction](#)

[1 Innovation Management: Issues and Key Points for a Vital and Strategic Process](#)

[1.1. A question of survival](#)

[1.2. The blue ocean strategy](#)

[1.3. Open innovation](#)

[1.4. Technical and human issues from ideation to design](#)

[2 Creativity and Cognition: Factors and Biases of Mental Processes Involved in Creative Activities](#)

[2.1. The creativity process](#)

[2.2. The factors of individual creativity](#)

[2.3. Creativity and personality](#)

[2.4. The factors of organizational creativity](#)

[2.5. Cognitive biases and creativity](#)

[3 Physical and Virtual Environments and their Influence on Creativity](#)

[3.1. Physical environment of creation](#)

[3.2. Virtual creation environment](#)

4 User-Centered Innovation Methods: Design Thinking, Double Diamond, Lean UX and Time to Concept

4.1. Design Thinking

4.2. The Double Diamond

4.3. Lean UX

4.4. The Time to Concept method

5 Some Creative Problem-Solving Methods: TRIZ, C-K, CPS, Design Sprint

5.1. The TRIZ method

5.2. The C-K theory

5.3. Creative Problem Solving

5.4. Design Sprint

5.5. Lateral thinking

5.6. Synectics

5.7. Detour techniques

5.8. Discovery matrices

6 All-Terrain Ideation Techniques: Brainstorming, Brainwriting, Brainsketching, Bodystorming and Immersive-Storming

6.1. Brainstorming

6.2. Brainwriting

6.3. Brainsketching

6.4. Bodystorming

6.5. Immersive-storming

7 Immersive Tools for Every Innovative Situation

7.1. Design in virtual reality

7.2. Co-design in virtual reality

7.3. Types of immersive applications for creativity

7.4. Choosing the right creativity tools

[7.5. Immersive tools for innovation project stages](#)

[8 A Successful Immersive Experience for More Creativity](#)

[8.1. The experience of immersed users](#)

[8.2. The creative's user experience](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

[Index](#)

List of Illustrations

Chapter 1

[Figure 1.1. It is essential to train in methods to improve the innovation process, to protect ideas, to have a dedicated place and to train teams in ideation methods. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 1.2. Model of the upstream phase of design based on Dorta's \(2004\) phases and Goldschmidt's \(1992\) categories of sketches. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 1.3. Time2Teach: virtual reality tool for quickly and simply creating video animations, 3D or virtual environments to illustrate, for example, a mechanical operation, and also to create visual representations of flows \(here, for example, air flows\). For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 1.4. Example of a collaborative work situation with augmented reality flow visualization \(created with the Time2Teach virtual reality tool\) on a tangible air filter, using a Hololens headset](#)

[and a tablet. For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip](http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip)

Chapter 2

[Figure 2.1. Representation of the creativity process as a function of the corresponding level \(Wallas 1926\)](#)

[Figure 2.2. The GENEPLORE model \(according to Finke et al. 1992\)](#)

[Figure 2.3. Model of individual creativity \(inspired by Amabile 1988\)](#)

[Figure 2.4. Model of organizational creativity \(according to Amabile 1988\)](#)

[Figure 2.5. Systemic model of creativity \(according to Csikszentmihalyi 1999\)](#)

[Figure 2.6. Cognitive biases identified for each step of a creativity workshop](#)

Chapter 3

[Figure 3.1. Representation of the types of influences exerted on the creative process and resulting in creative performance \(after Dul and Ceylan 2011\)](#)

[Figure 3.2. Representation of the “physical environmental support model” \(according to Hoff and Öberg 2015\). For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 3.3. At the Laval Virtual Center, a ping-pong table is available just in front of the Creative Space, ideal for making breaks friendly and for “disconnecting”. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

Figure 3.4. The roof without vegetation (left) and with vegetation (right) used for breaks in the experiment by Lee et al. (2015). For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 3.5. Example of a playful physical and mental warm-up activity during a day of creativity workshops. The flexible space is set up especially for this exercise and is reconfigured very quickly afterward. The participants are led to get physically and mentally in motion in order to optimize their intellectual functioning during the rest of the workshop. For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 3.6. Example of a virtual reality design meeting situation. The user is standing and physically moving throughout the exchange, while the other users are physically at a distance. For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 3.7. The Creative Space used by our team at the Laval Virtual Center was designed to be the ideal place for creative workshops. This is a computer-generated image showing an example of the layout of this space. The previous figure shows the real space. For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 3.8. Windows Mixed Reality headset in a carrying case for a virtual reality-based creativity workshop at a partner site. All of the materials needed for the planned session were contained in this single case. For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 3.9. Avatars used in attractiveness and presence studies (top), the level of visual fidelity of avatars increases from left to right; collaborative task situation (bottom left); negotiation task situation (bottom right). For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 3.10. Virtual environments designed by our team for a furniture ideation session: an inspiring natural environment (left) and an office environment allowing the user to become aware of space and usage constraints (right). For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 3.11. Environments designed to immerse participants in a city of the future to imagine innovations in that context. Participants can collaboratively move around the city or an apartment and draw the innovations they imagine together. For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Chapter 4

Figure 4.1. The five steps of Design Thinking by Stanford University. For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 4.2. The UK Design Council's Double Diamond model

Figure 4.3. Representation of the "Feedback Loop" or "Lean Startup Cycle". For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 4.4. The five steps of the Time to Concept approach represented "Design Thinking style". For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 4.5. When a Post-it session is conducted right after a collaborative game, participants let go more easily during the divergence, communicate more and are more inventive. For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 4.6. Examples of inspirations used by our team: a shelf of immersive technologies (left) and a prospective virtual environment that can be configured by the facilitator and allows participants to immerse themselves in a residential neighborhood of the future (right). For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Chapter 5

Figure 5.1. Overall schematic representation of the problem-solving approach with TRIZ. For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 5.2. Schematic representation of Design Sprint (from GV.com). For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Chapter 7

Figure 7.1. Screenshots of Time2Craft (top and bottom left): simple shapes can be made in a very clean interface, directly in CAD software (bottom right). For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

Figure 7.2. On the left, the drum-like keyboard, and on the right, the individual text-to-speech microphone, and the collective text-to-speech recording. For a color version of this figure, see www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip

[Figure 7.3. Example of a collaborative work situation with one user immersed in a headset while the second user views the environment on a large screen, commenting on the actions of his or her colleague. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 7.4. The “Affordance and Constraint Network” \(according to Fromm et al. 2020\)](#)

[Figure 7.5. Augmented reality visualization of a 3D mechanical part with an animation showing the direction of flow in the part. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 7.6. Virtual reality meeting situation in our team with presentation of results graphs: instead of displaying a slide show on a screen, the graphs are spread out on the walls of the virtual room. Thus, during the presentation, the facilitator and his colleagues move around the environment, viewing each graph as they would move from painting to painting in a museum. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 7.7. Cokoon application developed by our team, allowing to cut freehand in a scanned point cloud in order to quickly test in virtual reality rearrangements of existing environments. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 7.8. Application “La plume et la lanterne” \(the feather and the lantern\) designed by students of Arts et Métiers as an immersive experience that is both playful and contemplative, conducive to letting go. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 7.9. The seven categories of determinants of creativity tool choice](#)

[Figure 7.10. Schematic representation of the uses of virtual reality in a Design Thinking project. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 7.11. Schematic representation of the uses of virtual reality in a Lean Startup project. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 7.12. Schematic representation of the uses of virtual reality in a project conducted with the Time to Concept approach. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 7.13. Representation of the stages in which virtual reality applications intervene in a creativity workshop \(according to Graessler and Taplick 2019\). For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

Chapter 8

[Figure 8.1. Example of an exercise used in our team to learn about Time2Sketch, our immersive drawing tool. The participants have to imagine and draw a logo for their team. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

[Figure 8.2. Example of a collaborative work situation at the Institut Arts et Métiers de Laval, with a user creating three-dimensional animations in virtual reality, assisted by his or her colleague visualizing the result in the room in augmented reality. For a color version of this figure, see \[www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\]\(http://www.iste.co.uk/fleury/innovation.zip\)](#)

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Foreword

The need for change in a company often translates into a real need to adapt in order to survive, especially in a constrained environment; in other words, it is a matter of innovating or dying. This was well illustrated during recent crises, for example in 2008 with the financial crisis, when, even under reduced resources, the accelerated change toward an “open innovation” model with external partners, academics, customers and suppliers, enabled us to prepare for the rebound after the crisis. More recently, during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the rapid use of digitalization and the electrification of transport are already preparing us for environmental challenges, particularly related to global warming and the necessary reduction in the use of fossil fuels. In this changing world, the innovation process facilitates change and creates a positive, continuous and visible dynamic. This process is useful for companies to focus efforts at the right time, with the right intensity, in the right place, with competent and prepared teams. The notions of market and temporality are also crucial. Without a market, innovation will only remain at the invention stage, an expense for the company with no return on investment. To be successful, this implies a continuous intimacy with customers, a shared value creation process. The innovation process must also adapt to the context and make the most of available technologies, wherever they may be, from our suppliers, our academic partners, and public or private research. The meeting with the teams working at the Laval Virtual Center and the work carried out with the *Institut Arts et Métiers de Laval* have enabled MANN+HUMMEL, a leading global company in filtration technology, to strengthen its strategy in the field of digitalization, by seeking to create value from digital data,

and by applying it to the innovation process. The speed with which we can interact with our customers in our ideation processes, up to the realization of prototypes, real or virtual, is an important factor in convincing future customers, investors and internal or external decision makers. In 2016, based on this observation, the collaboration between MANN+HUMMEL and the *Institut Arts et Métiers de Laval* was initiated in order to conduct research and experimentation on the contribution of technology, related to virtual reality, to the innovation process. This project is called “Time to Concept”, and its objective is to reduce the time between ideation and the first customer experience. It is about putting the user or the customer at the center of the game by immersing them, gathering their emotions and feedback, and taking these into account in real time to adapt the product or the service. It is also of course about converging, at the end, on a creation of value, demonstrated in the virtual environment, with system interactions made more visible. For example, during a recent car show in Frankfurt, we managed to put a few customers under virtual reality headsets to gather their impressions of a new vehicle interior filtration system: a situation lasting less than two minutes to explain everything, in particular to visualize the invisible, that is, the improvement of the vehicle’s air quality. Remembering the experience, one of them, a world-renowned car manufacturer, then selected us to create a demonstration vehicle. In the field of air quality improvement, which is one of the strategic axes of the MANN+HUMMEL Group, we try to make visible with the help of virtual reality the physical phenomena at stake, such as fluid mechanics, the propagation of pollutants and their filtration. Explaining them is all the more necessary to bring to the market new and more efficient filtration technologies, adapted to the new uses of mobility and our lifestyles, and also in tune with the new recommendations

and regulations in this field. Thus, this book describes the generic results of research work validated in concrete cases to support the digital transformation of innovation within companies through immersive technologies.

Jérôme Migaud
Transportation Innovation Director
at MANN+HUMMEL Group
September 2021

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Finally, thanks to Laurent Chrétien and the great team of Laval Virtual for their logistical support and for the regular exchanges on the uses of immersive technologies that have stimulated our creativity over the years.

September 2021

Preface

In this book, we regularly refer to research work conducted by our team at the *Institut Arts et Métiers de Laval*. It is therefore not superfluous to provide a few elements of context beforehand.

The *École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts et Métiers* is a French engineering school renowned for its orientation toward the industrial world. The *Institut de Laval*, attached to the Angers campus, has developed in conjunction with the Laval virtual reality ecosystem and in particular Laval Virtual, the organizers of the international virtual reality trade show. The institute manages the MTI3D master's degree, which trains high-level students in the management and engineering of immersive technologies. The Institute's researchers form the "presence and innovation" team of the "*Laboratoire Arts et Métiers ParisTech d'Angers*" (LAMPA). The work of the team concerns not only virtual reality, user experience and use cases of virtual reality in different industrial sectors (training, health, product design, etc.) but also innovation methods and creativity. Alongside research activities, the team is led to support companies in their adoption of immersive technologies and also in their innovation processes, notably through the animation of creativity workshops.

Within the framework of the Chair entitled Time to Concept, a series of work has been completed on immersive technologies for ideation. This work has enabled the formalization and evaluation of the Time to Concept method described in this book. It is therefore both a researcher's viewpoint that is proposed and the result of a

field experience built on the basis of tests and regular feedback in real situations.

September 2021

Introduction

Humanity has always sought to innovate by inventing new products, services or manufacturing processes. Innovation is part of our DNA. The Renaissance (14th-16th centuries) was a period of greatness. Five hundred years later, we are now living in the “Renaissance 2.0”, a new period of major innovations, both great and troubled, that history will remember.

Collective intelligence, boosted by increasing network speeds and artificial intelligence, gives rise to new ideas every second across the planet. Like comets, most of these ideas fade away as quickly as they appeared, before being transformed into intelligible concepts that can be seized by the companies best equipped for innovation.

The digital transformation of companies is a competitive challenge and a complex step for large groups and industries, but at the same time a tremendous opportunity. This transformation is moving into another dimension with the development of immersive technologies and artificial intelligence. The challenge of innovation and digital transformation are now coming together as more and more research shows the potential of immersive technologies in accelerating the first steps in the innovation process.

1

Innovation Management: Issues and Key Points for a Vital and Strategic Process

Systematic innovation requires a willingness to see change as an opportunity.

PETER DRUCKER

1.1. A question of survival

Every year since 1955, *Fortune* magazine has published a ranking of the 500 highest-grossing U.S. companies. In 2014, the *American Enterprise Institute* revealed that 88% of the companies initially included in this ranking were no longer in existence. Some had gone bankrupt, others were bought out, even though most of them had been flagships of American industry. As Joseph Schumpeter said, most companies die “of old age” when they are no longer able to innovate. Lack of innovation naturally leads established companies to disappear. These disappearances are accelerated by the arrival of new companies which, on the contrary, are born and develop in their wake. Innovation is therefore a question of survival, or at least of maintaining a dominant position.

1.1.1. The example of Blockbuster Video

Blockbuster Video is a famous example of a company that died of old age due to lack of innovation. Founded in 1985 in Dallas, the company operated a chain of VHS movie rental stores. It adapted to the evolution of video media, moving from VHS to DVD and video games. In 2000,

Blockbuster had an option to buy the young California company Netflix for \$50 million. Blockbuster's executive at the time refused the deal because Netflix was losing money. In 2014, Blockbuster Video went bankrupt while Netflix raked in more than \$5 billion in annual revenue. Netflix made all video rental companies obsolete in a few years. Blockbuster Video, in a dominant position, failed to make the paradigm shift that was needed at the time. The story was not over, as in 2019 and 2020, no less than six competing platforms came to the market with a technological and economic model similar to that of Netflix: Disney, NBC, Apple, HBO and Amazon. There is also room for "followers"; it is never too late to innovate.

1.1.2. A regime of intensive innovation

The challenge of innovation is to survive or to maintain one's advantageous position. This is not new, of course, but innovation is even more crucial today than it was yesterday because we have entered a regime of intensive innovation (Hatchuel *et al.* 2000). On a global scale, the number of patents filed and scientific publications is constantly increasing. While it took more than 60 years to go from a 17 cm vinyl to a 12 cm CD, it took only 5 years to go from a digital music player to a subscription-based streaming service. This example illustrates the accelerating pace of innovation. MPO, the European leader in vinyl records, became the European leader in CDs and then DVDs after a successful technological transition. Moreover, the reduction in the number of vinyl records on the shelves has not disrupted the expertise of companies in this field, whereas the arrival of online listening platforms has made other media obsolete. This is the second characteristic of the era of intensive innovation: innovation is increasingly radical. Not only do disruptions happen more often, but they are also more brutal. Companies are therefore more and more