

**Excerpts from**  
**THE TEN FACES OF INNOVATION**  
**By Tom Kelley with Jonathan Littman**

**The Learning Personas**

Individuals and organizations need to constantly gather new sources of information in order to expand their knowledge and grow, so the first three personas are *learning roles*. These personas are driven by the idea that no matter how successful a company currently is, no one can afford to be complacent. The world is changing at an accelerated pace, and today's great idea may be tomorrow's anachronism. The learning roles help keep your team from becoming too internally focused and remind the organization not to be so smug about what you "know." People who adopt the learning roles are humble enough to question their own worldview, and in doing so they remain open to new insights every day.

1. *The Anthropologist* brings new learning and insights into the organization by observing human behavior and developing a deep understanding of how people interact physically and emotionally with products, services, and space. When an IDEO human-factors person camps out in a hospital room for forty-eight hours with an elderly patient undergoing surgery-as described in Chapter 1-she is living the life of the Anthropologist and helping to develop new health care services.
2. *The Experimenter* prototypes new ideas continuously, learning by a process of enlightened trial and error. The Experimenter takes calculated risks to achieve success through a state of "experimentation as implementation." When BMW bypassed all its traditional advertising channels and created theatre-quality short films for [bmwfilms.com](http://bmwfilms.com), no one knew whether the experiment would succeed. Their runaway success, which underscores the rewards that flow to Experimenters, is detailed in Chapter 2.
3. *The Cross-Pollinator* explores other industries and cultures, then translates those findings and revelations to fit the unique needs of your enterprise. When an open-minded Japanese businesswoman travels 5,000 miles to find inspiration for a new brand, she finds a concept an ocean away that sparks a billion-dollar retail empire, and demonstrates the leverage of a Cross-Pollinator. You'll hear her story in Chapter 3.

**The Organizing Personas**

The next three personas are *organizing roles*, played by individuals who are savvy about the often counterintuitive process of how organizations move ideas forward. At IDEO, we used to believe that the ideas should speak for themselves. Now we understand what the Hurdler, the Collaborator, and the Director have known all along: that even the best ideas must continuously compete for time, attention, and resources. Those who adopt these organizing roles don't dismiss the process of budget and resource allocation as "politics" or "red tape." They recognize it as a complex game of chess, and they play to win.

4. *The Hurdler* knows the path to innovation is strewn with obstacles and develops a knack for overcoming or outsmarting those roadblocks. When the 3M worker who invented Scotch tape decades ago had his idea initially rejected, he refused to give up. Staying within his \$100 authorization limit, he signed a series of \$99 purchase orders to pay for critical equipment needed to produce the first batch. His perseverance paid off, and 3M has reaped billions of dollars in cumulative profits because an energetic Hurdler was willing to bend the rules.
5. *The Collaborator* helps bring eclectic groups together, and often leads from the middle of the pack to create new combinations and multidisciplinary solutions. When a customer-service manager wins over a skeptical corporate buyer to the idea of brain-storming new forms of cooperation, and the resulting new program doubles their sales, he's playing the role of a very successful Collaborator.
6. *The Director* not only gathers together a talented cast and crew but also helps to spark their creative talents. When a creative Mattel executive assembles an ad hoc team and dubs them "Platypus," launching a novel process that creates \$100 million toy platform in three months, she is a role model for Directors everywhere. Her story is told in Chapter 6.

### **The Building Personas**

The four remaining personas are *building roles* that apply insights from the learning roles and channel the empowerment from the organizing roles to make innovation happen. When people adopt the building personas, they stamp their mark on your organization. People in these roles are highly visible, so you'll often find them right at the heart of the action.

7. *The Experience Architect* designs compelling experiences that go beyond mere functionality to connect at a deeper level with customers' latent or expressed needs. When an ice cream shop turns the preparation of a frozen dessert into a fun, dramatic performance, it is designing a successful new customer experience. The premium prices and marketing buzz that follow are rewards associated with playing the role of the Experience Architect.
8. *The Set Designer* creates a stage on which innovation team members can do their best work, transforming physical environments into powerful tools to influence behavior and attitude. Companies like Pixar and Industrial Light & Magic recognize that the right office environments can help nourish and sustain a creative culture. When a business team doubles its usable output after reinventing its space and a sports team discovers a renewed winning ability in a brand-new stadium, they are demonstrating the value of the Set Designer. Organizations that tap into the power of the Set Designer sometimes discover remarkable performance improvements that make all the space changes worthwhile.
9. *The Caregiver* builds on the metaphor of a health care professional to deliver customer care in a manner that goes beyond mere service. Good Caregivers anticipate customer needs and

are ready to look after them. When you see a service that's really in demand, there's usually a Caregiver at the heart of it. A Manhattan wine shop that teaches its customers how to enjoy the pleasures of wine without ever talking down to them is demonstrating the Caregiver role-while earning a solid profit at the same time.

10. *The Storyteller* builds both internal morale and external awareness through compelling narratives that communicate a fundamental human value or reinforce a specific cultural trait. Companies from Dell to Starbucks have lots of corporate legends that support their brands and build camaraderie within their teams. Medtronic, celebrated for its product innovation and consistently high growth, reinforces its culture with straight-from-the-heart storytelling from patients' firsthand narratives of how the products change-or even saved-their lives.

The appeal of the personas is that they work. Not in theory or in the classroom but in the unforgiving marketplace. IDEO has battle-tested them thousands of times in a real-world laboratory for innovation. Every year, we work on literally hundreds of innovation projects. And where once the bulk of our clients were start-ups or technology companies, today some of our biggest clients are progressive leaders of the Fortune 100. They seek us out not just for help with a single innovation but for a series of innovations. They come to us to tap into the insights and energy of a talented team, adept at playing roles like Cross-Pollinator, Anthropologist, and Experimenter.