

7 Habits of Innovation

In preparation for their move into Steelcase’s new innovation center, a cross-discipline team developed a manifesto of sorts for new residents. The aim: accelerating insights to innovation.

🕒 Read 4 minutes

In preparation for their move into Steelcase’s new innovation center, a cross-discipline team developed a manifesto of sorts for new residents. The aim: accelerating insights to innovation.

1. RAISE CENTRAL QUESTIONS

Ask big questions, and then start digging in. It can be intimidating to work in uncharted territory without familiar paths to follow, or with no right or wrong answers. But accept this ambiguity as a part of your process and go with it. Question your assumptions and ask crazy, lofty questions... then explore these mysteries by breaking them down into focused pursuits.

2. BE OBSERVERS, LISTENERS, AND LEARNERS

We are all explorers of ideas, and we need to uncover the edges of what we already know so that we’re able to step into new territories. So roll up your sleeves, get dirty and take risks to venture into the unknown! Covering a lot of ground quickly will help you uncover the most exciting opportunities to take further.

3. MAKE IDEAS VISIBLE

Get ideas out of your head—make them visible! Write it, doodle it, hack it, build it, act it out, make a video, whatever. Ideas are useful only to the extent that they can be shared, evaluated and built on by others. If you have trouble finding a way to express or visualize your idea, team up with someone who can help you get your ideas out in the open.

4. SHARE AND CO-CREATE

Reach out to foster connections and meaningful relationships both inside and outside of the company. Inspiration, opportunities and partnerships can come from anywhere; they feed your intellectual appetites and assemble a more dynamic community. So, spark some interesting and even provocative discussions by inviting more diverse voices into your conversations. Mix it up—great ideas can come from unexpected places!

5. MAKE OTHERS SUCCESSFUL

A great measure of your success is how well you have made others successful. Build an environment of trust and respect around you. Recognize your colleagues, encourage their contributions and build on their ideas. Celebrate courage, and create more opportunities for the people around you to shine.

6. BE AN OPTIMIST

Enthusiasm is contagious. We all share an innate optimism in the very work that we're doing; our collective efforts create solutions that can improve people's lives and build a healthier world. Openly embrace this enthusiasm, and listen to constructive criticism—it makes ideas stronger, and doing so also gets others excited about what you're creating together.

7. FAIL FASTER TO SUCCEED SOONER

Learn, rinse, repeat. Don't wait to try and get everything right the first time. Even if something doesn't work as expected, we still learn from it. Rapid prototypes gradually grow your understanding of the big problems that we're trying to solve, piece by piece. And the more things you try out, the more you learn—faster!