

## KNOWING YOUR BEST CONTRIBUTION

**Please pass this to a friend and point them to the website assessment**

You have scored yourself to find where you make your best contribution to Innovation.

Which column is your highest score? Referring to your chart where you scored yourself

Column 3, the 'Gold' Diggers typically find the opportunity and open it up. If you do this you are likely to be an Artist, Marketeer or Researcher.

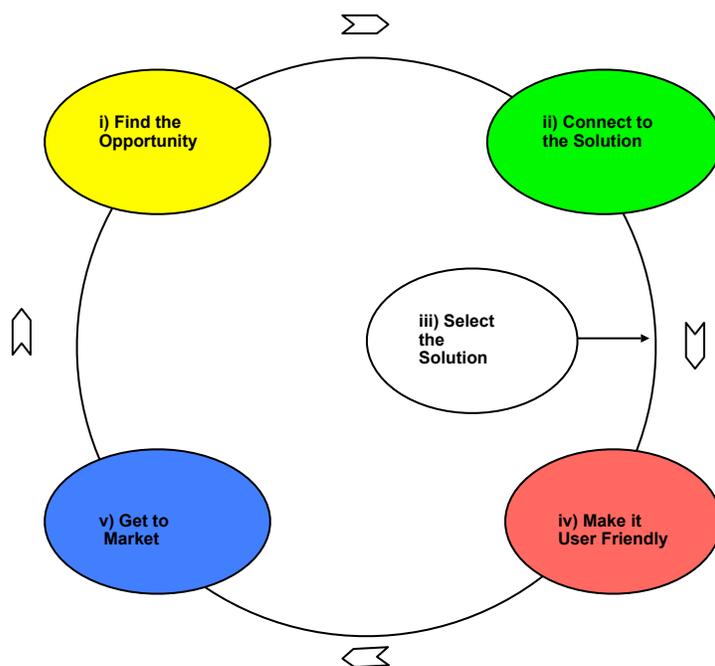
Column 1, the 'Connectors' are the 'Green Thumb' who nurture the Seed of the idea and Connect to the Solution. They are the Design, R & D and Strategic Planning people.

Column 4, the Developers make the idea 'User Friendly' and make it work. They are Engineers, Systems Developers and Accountants.

Column 2, the Doers finally take the solution to market and Get the job finished. They are Project Managers, Salespeople or folks from Production.

These are the stages in the Innovation Process and each person fits like this;

**Creators** find the Opportunity  
**Connectors** connect to the solution  
**Developers** Make the solution user friendly  
**Doers** get the solution to Market



**CREATOR**

Creators learn from experience. If you are a creator you see things happen and the event impacts you. Your mind races on to see other “opportunities” related to the event you have witnessed. You see unfulfilled needs. However, your mind does not like boundaries and you will flow from one opportunity to another. You are an observer but you need to capture your thoughts before they “move on”. The skill of note taking is something you should develop and this may be alien to you. I talk about this in Chapter 13 on the Competent Innovator. Because you don’t like boundaries you prefer your ideas to be “grey” at the edge. You don’t like people asking you to define a problem and you don’t like people asking you to make decisions. In fact you like to keep on generating more and more choices. You operate best in a loose mode, free of boundaries. You may have disliked those school exams where there was a “right answer” but probably enjoyed those where you could just flow with your thoughts. You love possibilities. You are an exciting person to work with but beware of conflict with developers. They are highly focused people and they will accuse you of “lacking focus”. That’s ok, it’s not your job. My wife is a creator and I am a developer and we work well together if we remember our aptitudes lie in different areas. As a creator you also need the opportunity to explore in order to succeed. I talk more about exploration in Chapter 13.

As a creator you will be most comfortable in an artistic or research environment. This means graphic art, market research or an activity with a lot of human interaction. Ask yourself if you are doing what you do well.

**CONNECTOR**

The creator’s best friend is probably the connector. If you scored equally on both you are interchangeable and it speaks to the fact that both types work best in a loose mode. Although the name has changed, both people operate in a creative mode. However, where creators were the problem finders the connectors are the problem solvers.

The linkage between creators and connectors is important. The creators do not like to put a definition on a problem whereas the connectors do. In a large population you will find true connectors are in short supply. That is why people providing training in “problem solving” have had “open season” during the last twenty years. Although generally in short supply, in the world of “Quality Management” there can often be an above average number of connectors.

The QM profession attracts “problem solvers”. Here I mean true problem solvers. Most people jump to a solution and implement. The danger in the world of the innovator is that the creator sees an opportunity and we implement the first solution that springs to mind. The connectors don’t do that. Importantly, they define the problem the creators have uncovered and even more importantly as connectors you will “connect” to solutions. What I mean by this is you will take

“solutions” from a different context and put them into the context of the current problem. Examples of this are where Henry Ford was seeking the solution to his problem of “mass production” and saw a meat processing plant where the carcasses were being moved by hanging them on hooks. Yellow Tail Shiraz overcame the problem of bad wine at parties by looking at the domestic environment where people were drinking more and more cranberry juice. Notice the flavour next time you drink Yellow Tail. This “connecting” happens to all of us at some time and it happens so quickly we think it is “magic”. In truth as connectors you can have worked on a problem for a long time before you find a solution. The danger therefore is stopping at this one solution and so relating back to creators is important. Remember they like lots of choices. Connectors love problem solving and so you need a diet of problems. When compared with creators you are far more of a thinker. Because you are a thinker you will really want to understand the problem and you will address solutions from a conceptual rather than a practical level. However, you will want your concept to be sound.

Because you are a thinker you may not want to implement solutions. Don't be insulted, that is not your job. Linus Pauling the Nobel Prize winner said the best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas. This is your job.

### **SELECTING THE SOLUTION**

Selecting the preferred solution is something I talk about later. This is the job of the strategic planners. The connectors need to provide choices and those choices need supporting data on risk, ROI and practicality.

Many people think that once you reach this point innovation is finished. What I have described so far is not innovation, it is creativity. Creativity is a subset of innovation.

Innovation is about converting new knowledge into new products and new services. So far we have only created new knowledge. We do not yet have the new product or service. Now the game changes and we go from “loose to tight”. We have to make the solution practical and we have to get it into the hands of the user.

### **DEVELOPERS**

The Developer is far more focused than the connector and the creator. If you are this person you will work best in a defined or “project driven” environment. You want a specific problem to work on and that problem must not be ambiguous. The “lots of ideas” from the connector must have been distilled into two or at the most three choices to enable you to focus. You are similar to the connectors in that you are both thinkers and so you need to take time to understand the concept they have developed. Your strength is that you turn abstract ideas into solutions that work. You are good at “data analysis” and so can pinpoint weaknesses in a product or a process and move on to the “best solution”.

“Time is of the Essence” at this stage in the innovation process and you might find this difficult because you want your solution to be precise and unambiguous. You hate being taken off the job you are working on before it is complete and being asked to work on something else. You will miss lunch or dinner if you have in your mind a “completion point” for something you are working on.

This is the attribute where I have the highest score and I envy those people who can leave off a task which is incomplete, relax and enjoy lunch and then come back to the job later. Taking time to relax is a skill that Developers have to work on. This is when Developers can have some of their best insights. Remember Archimedes found his answer to “specific gravity” when he “took a bath”. A lunch out of the box and I don’t mean a “boxed lunch”, I mean out of the building, can often be your best friend when you are hitting the wall and not finding answers.

Because you are focused you can find yourself in conflict with the creators who like to see the “big picture” and you can also forget to be including the potential “users” of your solution Don’t forget the “alpha testing” that is fundamental for the developer. You are probably a good planner and so use that skill to create your project timeline and also to involve the implementers or doers who come next.

## **DOERS**

The Doers, like the developers work best in a project driven environment and need the tight mode of operation. You may think if you scored highest here that you have no job in the work of innovation. In truth, your job is the toughest of all. You need to have been involved with the developers so you know what is coming down the pike You are similar in that you work best in a structured environment but you are different in that developers are thinkers whereas as “you like to do” as your title suggests. Be aware of this and respect your differences. You may be surprised that you have strong similarities to the creators in that you are both practical people. You both enjoy “new situations” and find them stimulating. You can be impatient and unlike the developers you will keep “breaking things”, trying different solutions until you find something that works. Use the “thinking” strengths of the developer to help you here. You like getting your feet wet and your hands dirty You feel you are getting something done.

You are likely to be in Operations or Sales, if you are in your natural habitat, because you like to deliver. Because of your practical approach to life, if you are in Operations, you find to your surprise you mix easily with the sales and also marketing people but you are less at ease with those R&D folks. If this is the case, be conscious of it and learn to work with those “thinkers”.

Your challenge is to get the solution in the hands of the customer. If you’re an operations person this means working with the developers to eliminate

production or service problems. If you are a sales person you need to understand the ideas of the 'Creators' in marketing who originally saw the opportunity here.

### **LEARN TO WORK WITH OTHERS**

You can see that whether you are a Creator, Connector, Developer or a Doer this does not put you in a box. You need to work with people that have other attributes in order to do your own job. Understanding how those other people think and act will help you to work better with them. Use the assessment on your team and understand your colleagues.

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**Peter Merrill**

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If you would like more information about innovation please don't hesitate to contact me via our website or at [info@petermerrill.com](mailto:info@petermerrill.com). We can supply you with information on

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The book "Innovation Generation" is available via the [www.petermerrill.com](http://www.petermerrill.com) website