



THE NINETEEN TENETS OF  
VALUE-CENTERED INNOVATION

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## INTRODUCTION

Product development is full of assumptions, untested beliefs, and risk. In even the best circumstances, under a traditional process, it can take weeks, months, or years of effort to prepare for launch, and the value of the effort can't be proven until *after* that day finally arrives. What if the solution is wrong? What then?

We believe in drawing on the best of the Design Thinking, Lean, and Agile methodologies, and adding a rigorous commitment to pragmatism, cross-functional collaboration, and tying actions to outcomes. We believe in augmenting the practices we already know with those that can finally empower us to fully mitigate risk, reduce bias, deliver value early and often, and prove the effects of our work.

We believe not in putting the user, the business, or the technology at the center of the conversation, but in centering our decisions on what's valuable for all three.

We believe in Value-Centered Innovation.

1

# KNOW THY BUSINESS OBJECTIVE.

Every for-profit project has one of three goals: make more money, spend less of it, or both.



When we do not know the future value of our work, we must stop and go find it.



When we can find no future value, we must stop.

2

# FIND THE PROBLEMS.

There is just one way  
to improve the future:  
know what is shy of its promise  
in the present.



There is just one way  
to measure progress:  
compare what *is* to what *was*.



To evaluate the future,  
document the present.

3

ANSWER THE  
QUESTIONS,  
QUESTION THE  
ANSWERS.

Gather all the facts.



Verify all the data.

4

# DEFINE THE CHANGE.

Nothing makes one's aim truer  
than a clear view of a clear target.

5

# LIST THE OBSTACLES.

Knowledge of why  
the target has not yet been hit  
activates knowledge of  
how to hit it next.

6

**WORK ONLY  
ON THE NEXT  
RIGHT THING.**

Ask:

What is the next  
most important problem?



Ask:

What solution might feature  
the least effort, least risk, and  
highest impact?



7

**KNOW THE  
NUMBERS,  
PUT THEM IN  
WRITING.**

Find them.



Express them.



View every decision as a way  
to change them.

8

**INVEST IN  
EVIDENCE,  
OR INVEST IN  
NOTHING.**

If you can produce  
no evidence, stop.



If you have a little evidence,  
get a little more.



If you have a lot of evidence,  
proceed.

9

**WORK  
IN A CIRCLE,  
NOT A CHAIN.**

Gather the three minds of  
Business, User, and Technology.



Decide at once,  
not in sequence.



Decide together,  
not alone.

**MAP  
THE PLAN  
TO ITS  
BENEFIT,  
THE ACTION  
TO ITS  
OUTCOME.**

Ask:

What must be done to achieve  
the desired outcome?



Ask:

How does this product,  
service, feature, or action  
help achieve it?

11

# Do JUST IN TIME RESEARCH.

Lean manufacturing teaches:  
*Pull, not push.* Gather only  
what can be used right now,  
not what might be used later.



Each change changes the present.  
Work in the present.  
Do not work in the future.

12

Do  
JUST ENOUGH  
RESEARCH.

Learn only enough  
to form a hypothesis.



Then act.

13

**WRITE  
MEASURABLE  
HYPOTHESES.**

If you cannot measure it,  
you cannot improve  
or prove it.

14

**SPEND THE  
LEAST EFFORT,  
GET THE RIGHT  
EVIDENCE.**

Do only what must be done  
to decide what to do next.



Do only what must be done  
to decide whether it is right.



15

# EXPERIMENT IN ISOLATION.

When we test  
a single change, we can know  
what caused the effect.



When we test  
multiple changes together,  
our work becomes a guess.

16

**FOR  
THE TRUTH,  
DEPLOY.**

Hypothetical solutions  
in hypothetical situations  
conjure hypothetical truths.



Real solutions  
in real situations  
conjure real truths.

17

TRACK  
THE EFFECTS,  
PUT THEM IN  
WRITING.

A failure to record  
what has been learned  
enables the failure of what  
has yet to be tried.

18

ACT ON THE  
LEARNINGS  
OR DON'T  
ACT AT ALL.

Make decisions  
based on the results.



If asked to act differently,  
ask why, then ask why again.

19

**KNOW  
THY BUSINESS  
OUTCOME.**

By knowing what we achieved,  
we go home fulfilled.



By showing what we achieved,  
others learn the path.

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