

Ten Practical Implications for Leaders

Once ideas have been generated, the most promising and inviting ideas need to turn into action. But how can you best test and spread good ideas? Here are ten practical things leaders can do to help.

- 1** **Become a better pilot.** Learn to navigate your way through the CPS process. You may not need all of it, every time. For example, sometimes, the idea brought to you is already good enough to take to stage 3: preparing for implementation. Or, equally frequently, an idea seems to have no discernible problem to solve but is beloved by the idea holder! Develop your diagnostic and navigation skills, so you and the team take the next step needed.
- 2** **Separate divergent from convergent thinking.** Do this, not as a rule for rule's sake, but with your best judgement of how to make progress on the problem.
- 3** **Be problem minded.** You will need to explore, agree and define a focus on the challenge at hand. This seems an obvious thing to say, yet it isn't done as often, or well, as needed. Under time pressures, and with vaguely shared presumptions of shared understanding, teams often move onto developing solutions. Only to find later that they have, indeed, been working on different or multi-faceted problems that needed clarification. Take the time to imaginatively explore and select the best-fitting problem for your needs.
- 4** **Design for incubation time.** In reality, a CPS campaign might be part of a team's ongoing work, applied to a locally owned challenge. Or as part of a new products and services project, bringing people together from across the organisation. We have worked with teams that have designed part of a CPS process to last a week, and others where it is spread over months. The resource of time available is not the only consideration in the design planning. Build in deliberate time for incubation.
- 5** **Provide a buffer around your team.** Part of your leadership role is to provide place, space and time to encourage people to think in this way. Temporarily remove the burden of time and stakeholder pressures. Protect your team from the too-early scrutiny of powerful stakeholders, and secure the political and resource support you need.
- 6** **Anxiety prefers to limit.** Be watchful of the tendency for people to polarise choices and create dilemmas. This, or that, idea? Lower cost or raise morale? Develop new markets or refine current ones? Sometimes these choices are appropriate, but, sometimes, when people venture into new territory, the polarising is an anxiety-reducing psychological strategy. It serves the immediate needs of the person, through reducing the complexity of the moment into a neat, though illusory, choice. Ask yourself whether the choice is meeting the needs of your problem-owning client.
- 7** **There can be a social payoff.** CPS is not commonplace for many in our workforce. It can be liberating, fun, and have the side-effect of enhancing work relationships between people, as well as making task progress. It is a new way of working for many people, one that they remember with positive thoughts. And they usually want more.
- 8** **See things through.** Make sure that the problem selected really matters to your team. Add determination and perseverance to the mix, so that ideas reach implementation and that you learn from the results. Point to successes delivered and aim to build a virtuous spiral of capability building and positive results.
- 9** **Be fair.** As leader, you may have a preference for a particular idea. If you do, the team already knows it. Ask yourself whether the reaction to your preferred idea would be the same if it came from another team member.
- 10** **Be a developer.** You may be best placed to facilitate the team through the CPS process. And you may not. Weigh up the pros and cons of giving this role to someone else, so that you can help your team in a different way.