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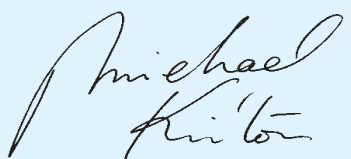
### Background To Adaption-Innovation

I remember vividly, as a boy of six, an occasion when two loved and respected relatives fell out because each had been sorting out some matter, in their different characteristic ways, which clashed. Each muttered darkly that the other was "silly". I remember saying to each one: "Oh! No, Uncle isn't silly and he always does it this way." For some reason the memory stuck and got added to by other examples from other people over the years. With added maturity and a degree in Psychology, the principle gradually emerged: people tend to perceive characteristic or inherent differences as differences of capacity (silly man - silly woman; silly old fool - foolish youth; mad Englishman - funny Frenchman) which always leaves the speaker's in-group as superior. This seems a natural inclination we may share with herd animals - in-group is familiar, safe and good - out-group is irrelevant or hostile. The notion of "different but equally valuable" requires insight and time to learn.

The results and observations from a study in management initiative also heavily influenced the development of Adaption-Innovation Theory. In this study, I repeatedly observed that "personalities" were seen to have characteristic effects on the progress and success of group (corporate) initiative in organisations. While all the managers studied asserted that they were sensitive

to the need for change and were willing to change, all of them seemed more willing to embark on changes involving a characteristic style closer to their own than those involving a style that was markedly different. As a result some changes, in some groups, went through with little or no discussion while others took years from the time first suggested to the start of implementation. The latter examples frequently required a dramatic precipitating event to clear the path to acceptance - these seemed to be ones that needed a shift by the majority of the group in the way the problem was perceived before the solution proposed could be seriously considered. Until the shift occurred some proposals looked risky or, worse, irrelevant and risky; whilst other proposed changes in groups with a different "personality mode" were dismissed as mere tedious tinkering, although their champions argued they would have led to some immediate improvement to the current system. Adaption-Innovation Theory gives an understanding of the source and implications of these differences and their effect on teamwork at all levels.

M.J. Kirton DSc



## Problem Solving is the Key to Life

The Adaption-Innovation Inventory measures thinking style. Thinking is the means by which we solve problems and are creative. Everything that lives has to manage the changing world about it and acquire those things that it needs to survive. If enough individuals of a species survive long enough to reproduce successfully that species continues to survive. This is not easy, for most of the species that have ever lived have not survived. Mankind, one of the latest arrivals, must also manage change and diversity or perish. In one form or another, whether understood by the individual or not, problem solving is the key to life. Every species does so differently.

All forms of life, Mankind included, have evolved a structure that fits all their survival needs, e.g. finding and absorbing appropriate nutrient. This structure is also limiting, e.g., the eyes that are good in daylight are poor in half-light. Mankind has become expert in overcoming many limitations, but the underlying structure remains the same. The astronaut may get to the moon but still walks to the space vehicle; the image that is enhanced by the telescope passes through the eye to a brain that has remained unaltered for a 100,000 years. So problem solving needs to enhance not ignore these limits (coping behaviour may modify thinking style but at a price).

More advanced life forms have developed instincts. Instincts are so complex (like building a nest) and yet so rigid that each one is immediately recognisable by experts as belonging to a particular species. Each represents a whole problem solving process: problem identification, solution selection and implementation. The survival value of instincts is immense, for they can all be done without learning; indeed without ever having been seen done by another. Yet they operate almost perfectly on the first occasion they are used even if learning can be added on. The weakness is that they are hard wired: once triggered every individual must operate in the same way and changes to instincts can only come about by breeding not by thinking. Using this precise definition, Mankind is unique - having no instincts. When we perceive a danger ahead while driving we do not "brake by instinct". We have learned to do so - perhaps so well that it is now a conditioned reflex but all learned, nevertheless. What we need to know we must be taught.

Learned problem solving, well developed in all higher order species, offers the widest potential range of responses and the greatest problem solving flexibility. The advantages of problem solving are obvious (Mankind's achievements are huge compared to any other organism) but the expense is high. Everything we do, except for those in-built structures, has to be learned: who are our enemies, what to eat, how to get it, how to mate, how to give birth, or how to nurture our young. As learning takes time and practice, our young are more vulnerable, for longer, than those of any other species. In order to survive, we need continually to learn. A-I Theory emphasises two key issues: (a) When we problem solve we are limited by the way we are built (e.g., our intelligence, no-one has endless capacity or flexibility) but we have no instinct to help or hinder us. (b) All of us are intelligent and creative, at different levels and with different styles, and, therefore, all of us are capable of learning to contribute to team problem solving, as long as there is both motive and opportunity.

## Understanding Adaption-Innovation

The Adaption-Innovation Theory is founded on the assumption that all people solve problems and are creative - both are outcomes of the same brain function. The theory sharply distinguishes between **level** and **style** of creativity, problem solving and decision making and is concerned only with style. Both potential capacity (intelligence or talent) and learned level (such as management competency) are assessed by other measures. This means that innovators and adaptors can each be found at every kind of level - from the highest to the lowest - see: "Misusing the Word Innovation" on page 8. Adaption-Innovation Theory deals with (and KAI measures) only differences in thinking (cognitive) style. The theory states that people differ in the cognitive styles in which they are creative, solve problems and make decisions. These style differences, which lie on a normally distributed continuum, range from high adaption to high innovation. The key to the distinction is that the more adaptive prefer their problems to be associated with more structure, with more of this structure consensually agreed, than do the more innovative. The more innovative prefer solving problems with less structure and are less concerned that the structure be consensually agreed than are those more adaptive. The terms "more adaptive" or "more innovative" are more precise than "adaptors" and "innovators" for describing a continuous range and not two types - a very important distinction. For instance, "tall" and "short" are also not absolute terms; you could be seen as tall in one country, average in a second and on the short side in a third - without changing height by a millimetre! Likewise, you could be seen as adaptive in a work team, as in the middle at the tennis club and as an innovator at home. Your preferred style will not change but you can be perceived differently by different people. So, you may need to vary your behaviour (using coping behaviour, which is learned) as you may need to vary your role.

Those scoring as more adaptive approach problems within the given terms of reference, theories, policies, precedents and paradigms and strive to provide solutions aimed more at being "better" than different. Their value is obvious, they are the experts in the current system and dedicated to its continuance and efficiency - no organisation can survive long without adaption offered either by adaptors or by "coping" innovators. By contrast those more innovative tend to detach the problem from the way it is customarily perceived and, working from there, are liable to produce less expected solutions that are seen as being "different" although it may be difficult to determine if they will be "better". The more innovative are also critical to the organisation in that they more readily perceive the radical views and solutions that re-arrange the very structure in which the problem resides, although that involves more risk. One way of summing up is that the more adaptive can be said to prefer to solve problems by the use of rules and the more innovative despite the rules.

These differences in creativity style produce distinctive patterns of behaviour. The whole range is essential for solving the **wide diversity** of problems that face individuals and groups **over a long time**, although these differences are less useful on **particular** problems that obviously require mostly adaptive or innovative solutions. A diversity of problems requires a diverse team, which is difficult to manage because each individual's preference can also be seen to have disadvantages, especially by people not like them. The adaptor

tends to stay with the current paradigm (policy, theory) too long; i.e., when it is past the point that it can be saved by improvement. The innovator tends to abandon the current paradigm too soon; i.e., when it still offers the promise of solving the immediate problem, with the reduced risk of adaptation instead of the added risk of innovation. So here we uncover a key problem in collaborative problem solving - who decides when the "too" stage is reached? It is no problem if all in the group are agreed, except that the "all" in question could be wrong - discovered mostly by hindsight! The more immediate problem is when all do not agree. Then the differences within the group can be viewed with negative discrimination: "If you cannot see what I can see (which is so obvious?), you must be silly". (Instead of silly, one can also read: old, young, uninformed, foreign, pedantic, wild, or whatever is the term that puts you down and out of my way while I solve this critical problem!).

The value to be had from KAI is not to get a "score" and a description of oneself compared to a national general population sample, so you can say: "I'm a high innovator" or "I'm a moderate adaptor." Such "boxes" are not very informative and are often misleading. The value is to use this information to help make better use of yourself and other people (particularly those not like you), for mutual benefit, in every group of which you are a member.

As members of a group come to appreciate the value of diversity in problem solving styles, they tend to become more tolerant and even more appreciative of other diversities. A common mistake is to capitalise on others' weaknesses - it is mutually more profitable to make use of others' strengths. That leads them to make better use of each others' "strengths" to mutual benefit - remembering always that a "weakness" in one problem solving situation can well be a strength in another.

Do not tolerate differences between people - welcome them - they are useful!

**Beware!** It is easy to jump to the wrong conclusions that: adaptors are against change whereas innovators are free of structure and like all change. These positions are too extreme, as in reality:

- No living creature, man included, can do without structure (advanced structure is needed for the complex affairs of mankind e.g., law, language, classification, theory);
- No living creature, man included, can survive without changing and managing change well.
- No-one (including high innovators) accepts all change; no-one (including high adaptors) rejects all change - Homo Sapiens is highly selective!

Innovators tend to overlook and even dismiss intra-structure change as unimportant, mere tinkering, and the process of getting there boring. Adaptors are wary of "buying" innovative change that seems to treat essential structure too casually, to be overly risky and, by adaptor standards, liable to be inefficient or even irrelevant to a shared problem.

We all have the tendency to fancy our own style preference - seeing its virtues clearly but just as clearly seeing the faults of others' different style preference. This can readily lead us into the trap that all people who are different from our own selves are so because they can't be like us, so they must be inferior (and if they do not agree they may be hostile as well!).

People like us are, on balance, easier to get on with. People 20 points or more apart on KAI (even if both are relatively adaptive or both are relatively innovative) are as likely to fall out as collaborate.

These differences are stable - no life experience (becoming more mature, knowledgeable or senior) will change them. Learn to use them well. The value of this knowledge for you is:

- to give fresh insight into inter-person conflict (people with widely different styles tend to fall out),
- to use this insight to pave the way to more and more fruitful collaboration in teams,
- to allow you to get on with others while remaining different from them, by valuing the difference between you and them.

#### **Which is better - intuition or logic?**

It depends on the stage of the problem. Intuition is logic and learning with the steps concealed. Its value is that its operation is wide ranging and fast, allowing a quick *suggested* answer which may have broken a barrier or two. It is ideal for *setting up* some problems - it must never be taken as *proof*, for which we need every step to be laid open to check and test.

**Each system should be used at the appropriate stage.**

### **Everyone is an Adaptor or Innovator**

Are there people who are in the middle, between adaptors and innovators, who are neither adaptors nor innovators? If so, how broad is such a middle category?

A part of this answer has already been given - an individual is more or less adaptive (or innovative) than others. For a high adaptor, most other people will be more innovative (and vice versa for high innovators), however, even a high adaptor or innovator can sometimes find themselves in the middle of an unusual group. **All comparisons are relative** - there are no absolute "boxes" into which people are slotted. A person can be a middle scorer in a group of three people, when one is more adaptive and the other more innovative. If one of the others leaves, there is then no "middle"; however if the leaving person is replaced, our example person could now become the most adaptive or the most innovative member in that group.

#### **All people problem solve and are creative.**

Adaptors and Innovators can be equally creative (can be equally good or bad at problem solving) they just do so differently.

A person is always an adaptor or innovator to someone else (unless very close in score - i.e., less than 10 KAI points apart, irrespective of where they fall on the scale). If these two people are the same style then we can compare them with others with whom they interact. In practice, therefore, there is no "featureless" middle and the range of "negligible difference" is quite narrow. People, however, who have scores that happen to fall into an intermediate position (between: two people, a person and a group, two groups) could play the useful role of "bridger", but only if they choose to do it. If they do, we hope they are skilful! Fortunately, skills can be learned.

# Characteristics Of Adaptors And Innovators

## Perceived Behaviour:

Adaptors tend to accept the problems as defined with any generally agreed constraints. Early resolution of problems, limiting disruption and immediate increased efficiency are important to them.

Innovators are seen by Adaptors: as glamorous, exciting, unsound, impractical, risky, abrasive, threatening the established system and causing dissonance.

## In Problem Defining:

Adaptors tend to accept the problems as defined with any generally agreed constraints. Early resolution of problems, limiting disruption and immediate increased efficiency are important to them.

Innovators tend to reject the generally accepted perception of problems and redefine them. Their view of the problem may be hard to get across. They seem less concerned with immediate efficiency, looking to possible long-term gains.

## In Solution Generating:

Adaptors prefer to generate a few novel, creative, relevant and acceptable solutions aimed at "doing things better". These solutions are relatively easier to implement.

Innovators generally produce numerous ideas, some of which may not appear relevant or be acceptable to others. Such ideas often contain solutions which result in "doing things differently".

## In Policy Formation:

Adaptors prefer well-established, structured situations. They are best at incorporating new data or events into existing structures or policies, to make them more efficient.

Innovators prefer less structured situations. They use new data as opportunities to set new structures or policies. They are less protective of the current paradigm.

## In Organisations:

Adaptors are essential for ongoing functions, but in times of unexpected changes may have some difficulty moving out of their established role.

Innovators are essential in times of change or crisis, but may have trouble applying themselves to ongoing organisational demands.

## In Collaboration:

*The Principle:* Groups need both adaption and innovation to be effective over time.

*The Problem of Large Gaps (20+ points):* The larger the gap between peoples' scores on KAI, the greater are the problems of communication and collaboration. This is true even if the people concerned are all adaptors or innovators. The problem is the size of the gap between people or groups, not where they are located on the inventory. Remember that no one is wholly adaptive or innovative – almost everyone is at the same time more adaptive than some people and more innovative than other people.

*The Advantage of Large Gaps:* The wider the difference the more effort and tolerance is needed to stay together, but the greater is the group's breadth of problem solving.

*The Advantage of Small Gaps:* The narrower the thinking diversity range, the more limited the range of problem solving potential; within this restricted range high efficiency is the norm.

*Bridgers:* Those who happen to have an intermediate score within a group could (if willing) be most helpful (if also skillful) in acting as a bridger.

*Coping Behaviour* Allows people to play successfully a role to which they are not naturally suited. It is stressful for people to be forced to behave very differently from their preferred style, consistently, and over long periods.

*and Leadership:* Good leaders ask for minimum coping behaviour most of the time: they get offered maximum coping behaviour in a crisis.

32 48 64 80 96 112 128 144 160

A D A P T A T I V E – I N N O V A T I V E

67% of people are in this range

My Score: 126

Compared with: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Special Or Small Groups

When plotted, the distribution for large general populations of adaptors and innovators forms a normal curve:



Population means are around 95. Males' scores generally are normally distributed around a mean of 98 and females' scores around 91. Smaller groups can be more erratic but specialised groups can be both stable (reliable) and predictably different from general populations. This is because the bulk of the problem solving in such groups requires more adaption or more innovation. If a group has been operating successfully for long enough, then by selection (and self-selection including turnover) its KAI mean will reflect its problem-solving orientation with either adaptors or innovators being in the majority, like this:



Peoples' style preference does not change.  
Peoples' behaviour can and does  
by coping behaviour.

A prediction of a group's likely orientation can be made by comparison with other groups, preferably in the same environment. A group that is more likely to have to solve most of its problems within one major paradigm (however large and complex) will tend to be more adaptive. Examples are: production, costing, information storage and retrieval systems.

Innovative groups often have to "find" problems or to juggle out puzzles that lie across more than one paradigm. Personnel, O & M and project management departments often find themselves between people and departments each with their own systems. Marketing and Research Departments hence have one foot in the company and one outside it, e.g. in the market place or in the university world, with other disciplines and with other people. See Table of Occupational Differences (right).

### **All people have original ideas**

KAI measures the differences between people's preferred style of idea generation.

Other ways of measuring originality can be defined by the questions they answer: how clever? or how successful? or with what degree of knowledge? or in what field? All of which are independent of style. So there are people who are clever, successful adaptors, less clever successful adaptors, clever unsuccessful innovators, etc.

**Don't confuse style with level.**

## Table Of Occupational Differences

Mean Score	Sample	From
80-90	Branch Bank Managers, Civil Servants, Cost Accts, Plant Managers, Machine Superintendents, Production Managers, Accts Supervisors, Maintenance Engineers, Programmers.	UK, US, Italy, Canada, Singapore, Australia, Slovakia
83	Apprentices (Tech. Engineers)	UK
91-92	Secretaries, Nurses	UK, US
93-97	Teachers	UK, US
94-95	General Population	UK, US, Italy, France, Slovakia, Netherlands
95-97	Military Officers, Managers generally, Engineers generally	UK, US, Italy, Canada, Singapore, Slovakia
101-103	R&D Managers	UK, US
104-110	Marketing, Finance, Planning, Personnel, Fashion Buyers	UK, US, Italy, Canada, Singapore, S. Africa

### Notes

The means of groups listed in the table are from research studies; each based on hundreds of people.

- Although the average score of groups may vary, the range of the individual scores in them usually does not - the range is wide. Large groups often contain people with scores noticeably away from the average of their group. If the group is well led these differences are a valuable resource.
- A difference of only 5 points between 2 groups is noticeable over time. A bigger gap can cause difficulties - e.g. between production and marketing.
- A difference of 10 points between 2 groups is noticeable over time; 20 points or more can lead to communication problems; mutual respect, skill and coping behaviours are needed to close the gap.

People's scores do not change and coping behaviour can be "expensive" - so people with scores close to the group mean are more likely to stay. A group that loses diversity may feel more "comfortable" - which may not be a major problem until environmental changes occur that alter the range and nature of the whole job - then comfort tends to evaporate.

Evaluation of which is best, adaption or innovation, can only be done in relation to the intended aim of the change in question.



## KAI Part Scores

This inventory (KAI) measures Adaption-Innovation preferred style. KAI total score breaks down into three inter-related sub scores - that is, these scores for most people can be closely predicted from their total score. Knowing about them re-enforces the main descriptions. About a third of respondents show small but significant variations between these part scores that a certificated KAI user can interpret on a one to one basis, adding to the descriptions given here. The names (and initials) of these part scores are: Sufficiency of Originality (SO) relating to one's style of idea generation; Efficiency (E) relating to one's method of problem solving; and Rule/Group Conformity (R) relating to one's style of relating to structure, both impersonal and personal. The general descriptions are below - but note that they do not contribute equally to the total score. As for the total score, high adaptors have low scores and high innovators high scores, without this having any level (capacity) meaning whatsoever - the "score" just indicates a place on a scale, like a map grid reference (not like low golf scores or large test scores that are "good").

### Idea Generation - Sufficiency Of Originality (SO)

This sub score helps show more clearly differences between people in their preferred handling of original notions or ideas. As a matter of preference (not as a matter of capacity) the more adaptive (compared to the more innovative) tend to produce a smaller number of novel ideas that are generally agreed to be more immediately relevant, sound, safe, well chosen and, therefore, useful. In organisations, particularly those that are successful and well established, these ideas are viewed as "good bets". Adaptive solutions to problems lead to improvements to current ideas, methods, practice, policy, structure (the paradigm). They often seem so fitting as to be relatively easily acceptable to most others; indeed many of these ideas seem to be just what has been needed. There is a danger here that such new ideas can be so readily accepted that they may not be examined with enough care, so some do fail for that reason. Fortunately for the more adaptive problem-solver the very plausibility of their failures and their track record as sound paradigm improvers tends to protect them; in this respect innovators are, in general, less fortunate.

Adaptors choose to confine their idea and solution generation to agreed structure more closely than innovators. Therefore, innovators can find themselves generating ideas across boundaries and breaking paradigms; sometimes the outcomes appear unrelated to a given problem and seem risky to implement, unsound or even, especially for high innovators, bizarre. Most people, including high innovators, will expect many such ideas to fail. Their ideas are less likely to be seen to have failed for unforeseeable, hard-luck reasons than are the idea failures of "good" adaptors. Hence, innovators are less protected from failure of ideas than adaptors; on the other hand, discarding failed ideas is part of their being.

Adaptive strategy is to produce spontaneously a sufficiency of ideas that are all linked to the problem in consensually agreed ways. If asked, adaptors produce more ideas - it is that they just find it more efficient to produce a few at a time. Efficiency is another part score dealt with below - see how these part scores overlap. Working within agreed structure, adaptors are more likely to improve policies but less likely to generate mould-breaking notions - this is their preferred trade-off. The more innovative preferred style is more likely, spontaneously, to produce many more ideas, some of which appear to be adaptive and others innovative.

Those who are more innovative do not confine themselves to innovative idea production only - that would suggest that they know (or care) enough about the structure always to elect to work outside it. The more innovative often also have problems in choosing among the ideas they proliferate and picking one that pays off. Evidence suggests that they are more likely to fancy their more innovative ideas - whilst adaptor assessors will be more likely to choose the innovators' less innovative ideas as worthier of support. The innovator trade-off is that generating ideas that may "do differently" means a higher loss of their ideas.

This theory is adamant that all people produce original ideas, whether at a higher or lower level, whether more adaptively or more innovatively. People at higher levels can choose to produce ideas below their best. Both adaptors and innovators prefer their own style but a motive to complete a specific task may lead them to move away from preferred style by "coping behaviour". This costs more effort than behaviour in preferred style.

The innovator's originality appears more glamorous, so the sterling value of adaptive originality is too often undervalued.

### Methodology - Efficiency (E)

This sub score helps show more clearly style differences of the preferred method of problem solving. The more adaptive will define the problem more carefully and tightly, will note precedent, search more methodically for relevant information and arrange data in more orderly ways. By working closer within the system (structure) they are more likely to get the system to work for them and use their creativity to refine, order, improve, and make more immediately efficient the current structures and paradigms. They like their creative change to keep the general structure stable. They like to achieve progress and avoid inflexibility at a more controllable speed and at lower risk than innovators. One element in adaptive preference in originality production is efficiency. Efficiency style overlaps originality style.

The more innovative problem solvers trade off the benefits of immediate efficiency and lower risk by paying less attention to the immediate structure enveloping the problem as perceived and less attention to meticulous detail and thoroughness. They gain, thereby, a wider overview, taking themselves out of the system in which they began, often producing a much needed set-breaking idea, sometimes threatening their "organisational fit". Adaptors can work more easily in organisations, put up neater arguments and are less likely to find themselves supporting unworkable solutions. However, if the current system is failing to the point of needing a complete reformulation, they are likely to go on trying to make it yet more efficient.

It is difficult at times to see the high innovator as efficient, operating with what, by most people's standards is a lack of consistency, predictability and key detail, yet this is the most efficient way of producing something different, as distinct from something better. Innovative efficiency is the best way to break the paradigm - when that should be needed.

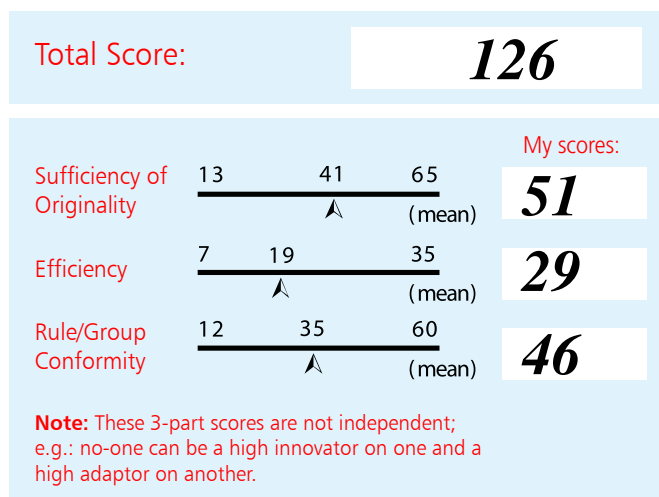
Without the more adaptive, every organisation's stability and continuity would soon be in danger but the more innovative are better placed to force systems to make more radical change; even to justify their very existence. Good leadership balances the risks of any one style dominating too much for too long. However, overdoses of innovation can destroy an organisation quicker than overdoses of adaptation.

## Management of Structure - Rule/Group Conformity (R)

This sub score helps show style differences in the management of structures within which problem solving occurs. Adaptors abide by Rule Conformity (impersonal structure) the better to solve their problems. They accept Group Conformity (staying within personal or informal structures) to ensure group cohesion and collaboration in problem solving. Obviously these structures overlap as it is people, especially those in close contact, who interpret the formal rules, policing those that are of importance to the group. Much more than innovators, adaptors use agreed structure to solve problems. The more adaptive abide by both rule and group structure in order to make changes efficiently.

Research confirms that adaptors do not conform to every rule or to all the wishes of any boss. They prefer to have rules as efficient guidelines and take good note of the ways and wishes of the group of which they are members. For them, good rules accord with consensus. So even powerful people who threaten group cohesion by rules unrelated to consensus, to prevailing paradigms or to approved custom, in short, who seem to require conformance to arbitrary standards, will find adaptors in firm opposition. The more innovative, having less regard for structure, consensus, tradition or cohesion, are more likely to solve problems by bending or even breaking the rules. For those who cherish rules because they see them as useful, these more innovative colleagues too often appear as abrasive, disturbers of the peace, undependable and unnecessarily challenging to consensus.

The more adaptive help make members of a group work together to bring about change. They generate ideas acceptable to the group and within the general structure, modifying the rules more cautiously and in more piecemeal fashion, but gradually achieve great changes, for the better (in terms of the paradigm), at a safer more manageable pace. Their type of creative problem solving is vital to any organisation particularly those that are large and successfully established. The more innovative are much more capable of bringing about challenging, unexpected changes swiftly at the expense of a current order within the group, which may, at times, need such a shake up. So all groups, in large or small doses, in one place or another, at one time or another, also need innovators. Hence, in order to manage problems both widely and well, especially in groups, we need to be able to manage diversity well - a critical problem in itself!



## Summary & Points To Remember

First thoughts for you to take away from this presentation on adaption-innovation are:

- Your problem solving style is innate and has made you successful (whatever you may think of yourself at this moment, you are successful or you would not be in the position of reading this!) but you are always learning better coping behaviour.
- If your team is efficient, you benefit. One of your key jobs is to help keep your team efficient.
- The more you know yourself and value others who are different, the more your team can turn diversity to mutual advantage.

Some thoughts applying to teams:

- If it's harder for you to shine in a team made up of people not like you, remember this is true of everyone else.
- Teams made up of people with different problem solving styles, are harder to recruit and find it harder to work together, but they have the potential to be successful over a wide range of problems.
- Teams made up of people with the same problem solving style may be easier to recruit and find it easier to work together, but they have the potential to be successful only over a narrow range of problems.
- Do not think of adaptors and innovators as closed in-groups, you are an adaptor to some and an innovator to others. (Beware measures that put people into boxes - with a KAI of 114, you are an innovator to someone of 100 and an adaptor to someone of 127).
- Remember, then, not to expect the others to do all the coping behaviour and that it goes both ways.

### Examples of uses of KAI:

This theory (and KAI) can be used wherever there is a person thinking. It has been used to:

- enhance individual awareness,
- facilitate problem solving in teams,
- help resolve conflict between two people or two teams.

It can be used in any problem solving situation, for example:

### Marketing:

Research shows that all people like some, but not all, new products, but most marketing personnel believe that buyers of new products are innovators. This is not true: adaptors and innovators tend to be attracted to different products.

### Project Management:

Research shows that project managers tend to be innovative, but that their clients tend to be adaptive. Part of the job is bridging the gap.

### Consultancy:

Consultants often need to enhance adaption among innovators and innovation among adaptors (taking professional risks in doing so), but unless they teach the management of diversity successfully they may only promote power struggles.

### Promotion:

Both adaptors and innovators can reach the top. The more powerful leaders become the more they must ensure that their individual style does not over balance the group.

## Linking Exercise

Try linking information on Adaption-Innovation with other related knowledge and skills.

Creativity “techniques” (e.g., brainstorming, synectics) and management “tools” (e.g., Taguchi concepts, Pareto analysis, fishbone diagrams) enhance (usually in groups) either innovative or adaptive styles of problem solving. Don’t pick the technique you fancy, use the one needed to crack the problem.

Ensure the team has available a “tool-kit” of tried and tested techniques and tools, honed for use on the appropriate problem.

### Now Try Relating A-I To The Management Of Diversity:

A-I theory emphasises that every one of us has a preferred style of problem solving.

So every one of us approaches every problem with a bias!

If we can manage, well, the diversity of the way in which we tackle problems then other kinds of diversity that we need to manage (like age, culture, colour, religion, experience, knowledge, class or whatever) may not appear so difficult.

## Misusing The Word “Innovation”

Innovation is a trendy term, so widely used that it is losing any precise meaning. In creativity circles it can mean the same as “new”, “creative”, or even the implementation of creativity. It also implies being “good” and “high level”. The disadvantage of having all these different meanings is that it cannot be measured well and therefore cannot be applied to people fairly - if the meaning of a term is unclear it is unethical to rate people on it!

A-I research shows that innovation has no correlation with level (an innovator can have any intelligence or capacity for any competency - as can an adaptor). If this were not true then comparatively few people would be creative. Nonsense, we are the most intelligent beings on earth! In A-I theory, just as everyone is intelligent but are so at different levels, every one is also creative, which we measure in two independent ways: how much (level) and in what way (more adaptive to more innovative). As said earlier, brain function does not discriminate between problem solving and creativity - the distinction is linguistic not scientific. As everybody problem solves at different levels (e.g., intelligence, skill, knowledge) and in different styles, it is of long term mutual benefit to each of us to let others, with whom we interact, make best use of their diversity, as often as possible. This is a core message of Adaption-Innovation Theory.

The more adaptive modify the paradigm as an outcome of their creativity.

The more innovative modify or break the paradigm to facilitate their creativity.

Which is best is what is needed.

## About KAI

To learn more about Adaption-Innovation Theory read:

‘Adaption - Innovation in the context of Diversity & Change’

(ISBN: 0-415-29851-2) or contact us directly at: [dist@kaicenter.com](mailto:dist@kaicenter.com)

[www.kaicenter.com](http://www.kaicenter.com)

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## An Exercise

- Why not, for the group’s benefit, share scores in the group? Mark them on a KAI scale (on a flipchart). Keep handy the descriptions given earlier
- Note how the scores cluster and note any person(s) out on an edge
- Ask yourselves: do the majority cluster around a “score” that reflects the group’s “climate”?
- Do the majority’s “score” reflect the style of solutions that it is currently trying to reach?
- Are these problems “simple” (mostly adaptive or innovative) or “complex”?
- Are the majority of problems of the same style as the rarer but more critical ones?
- Is the person “on the edge” well used, like being empowered to find solutions suited to that style?
- What are the other questions, relating to style of problems and people, that need resolving?

To help set up the team to address these kinds of questions, first try these individually:

- List important things in this job I find easy to do and those I find hard.
- Note how I exploit those things I find easy.
- Note how I cope with things I find hard.
- Note how I collaborate with colleagues of similar thinking style to me.
- Note how I collaborate with colleagues of different thinking style from me.
- When ready, compare these notes with colleagues - develop a “group diversity audit”.

Now try tackling the first set of issues above.

To manage change both broadly and well we need to manage diversity well.

## Advanced Exercise

Discuss and then explore how to apply any information learned:

- People with same (within 10 KAI points) or similar (within 20 KAI points) score:
  - feel comfortable in each other’s company because they do not need to expend effort in “coping behaviour”.
  - feel they can manage some changes really well, but may be “too comfortable” to want to explore some suggested changes that might disturb the climate.
- People with close KAI scores have a feeling they “fit”.
- People with close SO scores feel they communicate with each other well.
- People with close E scores feel they work together well
- People with close R scores feel they can trust each other well

Have you heard this before?

- The more I am around people who “fit”, the easier it is to dismiss “misfits”. Why don’t they try harder?
- I am never a “misfit” - but I do try to provide the group with some very necessary diversity of view. Pity it is not always valued. They lack insight.