

INNOVATE LIKE EDISON

The Success System of America's Greatest Inventor

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MAIN IDEA

By any measure imaginable, Thomas Edison is the greatest innovator in American history:

- He generated a record-breaking 1,093 US patents and 1,293 international patents over 62 successive years.
- Many of Edison's inventions have gone on to become the basis for what are today vast multi-billion-dollar worldwide industries.
- He established the world's first industrial research laboratory and a systematic process for innovation.
- Edison founded General Electric and pioneered the lighting, phonograph, movies, batteries and cement industries.

Obviously, Edison knew how to innovate. He based his entire innovation success around five competencies. Within each of these competencies, five essential elements can also be identified as building blocks or best practices Edison used. Taken together, these five competencies and twenty-five elements provide a blueprint for innovating like Edison.

“Thomas Edison invented systematic innovation and there is much to be gained by revisiting his methods and making them relevant to the challenges we face now. Edison was, of course, an exceptional genius, but the greatest product of his genius was the establishment of a systematic approach to success that he believed anyone could emulate.”

– Michael Geb and Sarah Caldicott

Competency #1 – Have a solution-centered mindset

- Level 1 Align your goals with your passions
- Level 2 Cultivate charismatic optimism
- Level 3 Seek knowledge relentlessly
- Level 4 Experiment persistently
- Level 5 Pursue objectivity rigorously

Competency #5 – Focus intensively on creating value

- Level 1 Link market trends and strengths
- Level 2 Tune in to a target audience
- Level 3 Apply the right business model
- Level 4 Understand scale-up effects
- Level 5 Create an unforgettable brand

Competency #2 – Use “kaleidoscopic” thinking

- Level 1 Keep a personal notebook
- Level 2 Generate new ideas rapidly
- Level 3 Try and identify patterns
- Level 4 Express your ideas visually
- Level 5 Go back and explore roads not taken



Competency #4 – Harness master-mind collaboration

- Level 1 Recruit great people
- Level 2 Form multidisciplinary teams
- Level 3 Encourage open exchange of ideas
- Level 4 Reward collaborators generously
- Level 5 Network with outsiders intensively

Competency #3 – Apply full-spectrum engagement

- Level 1 Balance work and relaxation
- Level 2 Be both serious and playful
- Level 3 Share ideas but always protect them
- Level 4 Simplify complex ideas
- Level 5 Balance solitude and teamwork

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Competency #2 – Use “kaleidoscopic” thinking Pages 3 - 4

Competency #3 – Apply full-spectrum engagement Pages 4 - 5

Competency #4 – Harness master-mind collaborations Pages 5 - 6

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