Chapter 1

Introduction to Individual & Group level Innovation

1.1 Introduction

Innovation is a term that is often used by writers but seldom defined. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, ‘innovation’ derives from ‘novare’ meaning to make new or alter. ‘Innovation’, then, is defined as, ‘to bring in novelties, make changes in’. The definition in the Macquarie Dictionary also stresses ‘bringing in something new’, but adds ‘for the first time’. This latter addition, arguably, places a heavier emphasis on initiating something that has never been developed before, a slightly different emphasis from altering something that already is in existence, which the Oxford definition suggests. In this stronger emphasis on ‘newness’, ‘innovation’ seems to have much affinity with a similar word, ‘invention’.

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“Learning and innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow.”

Invention’ is defined as a new thing, method, instrument or contrivance created by thought. The emphasis in this definition seems to be on a product, object or process, and this is further confirmed by the addition of the notion of patenting. There are many levels and forms of innovation. While ‘innovation’ includes the notion of creating something new, it also suggests that this creation might be an alteration of something that already exists, looking at the familiar in new ways, as well as the initiation of something entirely original. Further, while ‘innovation’ includes the creation of an object, it is much broader than this. It might also include a set of ideas or beliefs, a way of thinking about a problem or set of issues, a process of organizing or solving problems, a set of practices or ways of doing something. While it may be an end, with identifiable outcomes and products, it may also be the process by which the ends are achieved.
In some sense, the meaning of ‘innovation’ might be more usefully associated with notions of thinking, believing and/or doing things differently from previously, in such a way that this results more closely in achieving goals and outcomes. In this sense, it is closely related to ‘change’, a term it is often used in conjunction, or even synonymously, with. Certainly, ‘innovation’ is inextricably tied to knowing and thinking, and particularly new or different ways of seeing, thinking about and using knowledge. It is also centrally linked to learning, and particularly learning from one another (Cairney in Cumming & Owen 2001). ‘Innovation’ might include the notions of entrepreneurship and commercial production and use.

In other words, Innovation can also define as developing something new. What is new may be original, or the alteration or modification of something already in existence. Innovation may be a product. Equally it may be a process, or a set of ideas, particularly in education. Often it is focused on problem solving, but should not be limited to that. It may be better conceived as awareness, a state of being in the world. While it is generally oriented towards improving a situation, it should always be based on ethical principles. Innovation is centrally related to knowledge and learning.

The capacity to be innovative rests on a number of skills, attributes and values. These include high levels of planning, organizing, communicating (including information and communications technology, or ICT), working independently and in teams both as leader and partner, generating new ideas using lateral thinking, and breaking free of the canons of a subject field to employ knowledge in new ways. Such skills are supported by personal qualities such as curiosity, initiative, creativity, self-confidence, flexibility, adaptability, responsiveness and a sense of relevance.

Innovation is the key idea that is shaping corporate life, helping leaders conceive previously unimagined strategic options. Take acquisitions, as an example. Most are justified on the basis of cost and capital reduction: for example, the merger of two pharmaceutical companies and the global rationalization of overhead and operations and the savings from combining two sales forces and R&D labs. You can, however, buy earnings through acquisitions for only so long; cost-control, however necessary, is a defensive strategy.
Innovation enables you to see potential acquisitions through a different lens, looking at them not just from a cost perspective, but also as a means of accelerating profitable top-line revenue growth and enhancing capabilities. For example, the innovation capabilities of P&G were enhanced by its acquisition of Gillette. Its market-leading brands (such as Gillette, Venus, Oral B, and Duracell) are platforms for future innovations; and core technologies in blades and razors, electronics, electromechanics, and power storage strengthen the technology portfolio from which P&G can innovate in the future.

Innovation also provides an edge in being able to enter new markets faster and deeper. In large part, it is P&G’s revived innovation capacity that is allowing it to make inroads into developing markets, where growth is double that in rich countries. Innovation puts companies on the offensive. Consider how Colgate and P&G, effective serial innovators, have innovated Unilever out of the US oral-care market. The company that builds a culture of innovation is on the path to growth. The company that fails to innovate is on the road to obsolescence. The US domestic automakers and major companies such as Firestone, Sony, and Kodak all used to be industry leaders, even dominators. But they all fell behind as their challengers innovated them into second place (or worse).

Peter Drucker once said that the purpose of a business enterprise is “to create a customer.” Nokia became number one in India by using innovation to create 200 million customers. Through observing the unique needs of Indian customers, particularly in rural villages where most of the population resides, it segmented them in new ways and put new features on handsets relevant to their unique needs. In the process, it created an entirely new value chain at price points that give the company its desired gross margin.

Innovation, thus, creates customers by attracting new users and building stronger loyalty among current ones. That’s a lot in itself, but the value of innovation goes well beyond that. By putting innovation at the center of the business, from top to bottom, you can improve the numbers; at the same time, you will discover a much-better way of doing things — more productive, more responsive, more inclusive, and even more fun. People want to be part of growth, not endless cost cutting.
A culture of innovation is fundamentally different from one that emphasizes mergers and acquisitions or cost cutting, both in theory and practice. For one thing, innovation leaders have an entirely different set of skills, temperament, and psychology. The M&A leader is a deal maker and transitionally oriented. Once one deal is done, he moves to the next. The innovation leader, while perhaps not a creative genius is effective at evoking the skills of others needed to build an innovation culture. Collaboration is essential; failure is a regular visitor.

Innovation leaders are comfortable with uncertainty and have an open mind; they are receptive to ideas from very different disciplines. They have organized innovation into a disciplined process that is replicable. And, they have the tools and skills to pinpoint and manage the risks inherent in innovation. Not everyone has these attributes. But companies cannot build a culture of innovation without cultivating people who do.

1.2 Difference between Invention and Innovation

To understand innovation, you first have to see the differences between an invention and an innovation. An invention is a new idea that is often turned into a tangible outcome, such as a product or a system. An innovation is the conversion of a new idea into revenues and profits. An idea that looks great in the lab and fails in the market is not an innovation; it is, at best, a curiosity. As Jeff Immelt once put it, “Innovation without a customer is nonsense; it’s not even innovation.”

Invention is needed for innovation to take place. But invention is not innovation. In many companies, inventions that result in patents are considered innovations. These companies are often touted as “innovative.” In fact there is no correlation between the number of corporate patents earned and financial success. Until people are willing to buy your product, pay for it, and then buy it again, there is no innovation. A gee-whiz product that does not deliver value to the customer and provide financial benefit to the company is not an innovation. Innovation is not complete until it shows up in the financial results.
Real innovation can change the context — the market space, the customer space, the competitive space, the societal space — in which a business operates. Changing the game, then, means not being hamstrung by the deep-rooted conventional wisdom of your business and industry, but rather is seizing the initiative to imagine a new game or a new space and, thus, shaping and controlling your destiny. Game-changing leaders search for and execute ideas that put the company on a long-term path to prosperity.

For example, P&G created a new market space by introducing the disposable diaper; with the iPod, Apple likewise created an entirely new market space and changed the game for those who were not its usual competitors, such as music, media, and consumer electronics companies. Both P&G and Apple refused to be hemmed in by current conditions; instead, they redefined them. In the process, they forced the competition to play their game. It did not end there. The iPod, with its sleek design, built new capabilities within Apple and was a harbinger of the iPhone, which is changing the game for the cell phone companies.

There is an increasing advantage to being a game-changer — and higher risk for trying to survive on the defensive. Innovation enables you to be on the offensive. The speed of change is such that compared even to two decades ago, “innovate or die” is truly the name of the game. P&G’s core products are increasingly challenged by private labels and without continuous innovation would be threatened by commoditization. Commoditization drives down prices; the differentiation that comes from innovation carries an economic premium.

Moreover, the competition is tougher than ever — and only getting more so. Thanks to the Internet, there is more transparency than ever on prices, which reduces margins. A more-open trading system and more-efficient shipping have shrunk the economic globe; better communications and the Internet have tolled the death of distance. The development of venture capital and the rise of bold capitalists in places like China and Brazil have led to a host of new competitors. The only way to stay ahead is to keep innovating.
1.3 Types of Innovation

A research report “Succeeding on Innovation” about innovations in major businesses in the USA revealed a large gap between what leading corporations said about innovation and what they did. 80% of the companies stated that innovation was very important to their businesses but only 4% stated that they were good at it. That there is a consistent connection between a company’s commitment to innovation and its success in the marketplace is supported by certain facts about sales, profits, market share, and budget for innovation:

- The sales increase in highly innovative companies was nearly twice as much as in companies that were less innovative.
- The more innovative companies reported an average increase of 10.8% in sales while the least innovative companies reported only 5.7%.
- The profit increase in most innovative companies was more than three times as high as in less innovative companies.
- The more innovative companies reported an average profit increase of 51% against just 14% for the less innovative.
- The market share increase for the more innovative companies was more than twice as much. The most innovative companies reported a 50% increase in market share growth compared to only 27% increase in less innovative companies.
- More than twice as many highly innovative companies had a specific budget for innovation compared with less innovative companies.

The above facts speak eloquently about the importance of innovation. You must be wondering, what is the backbone of innovation? It is simply the creativity and creative ideas. Creativity enriches the innovation process as an inseparable part of innovation; it helps in the generation of ideas. Innovation is the application of such ideas towards doing things better or cheaper or more effectively or more aesthetically. There are various types of innovation requires to start and run the business successfully.
**Product Innovation:**

Product/service innovation is the result of bringing to life a new way to solve the customer's problem - through a new product or service development - that benefits both the customer and the sponsoring company.

Entrepreneurs have to prove themselves different than other in their offering. Entrepreneurs need to modify the product continuously to suit changing requirement. Entrepreneurs forced to diversify and enriched their product portfolio to grow and to compete. Thus, many companies realize the importance of exclusiveness and they carried out Research and develop products and processes to improve.

- Enhance product packaging or presentation.
- Obtain technical help to overcome a problem.
- Obtain specialist advice on commercialization and intellectual property rights issues.
- Update equipment to produce new products or increase their efficiency.
- Identify ways of minimizing waste as well as the processing of by-products.

**Type of Product Innovation**

- Mechanical—tractors, cars.
- Chemical—pesticide, logical—seed variety.
- Managerial—IPM, extra pays for work, overtime.
- Institutional—water users’ association, patents, banks, stock market, conservation districts, monks.

**Process Innovation:**

Process innovations increase bottom-line profitability, reduce costs, improve efficiency, raise productivity, and increase employee job satisfaction. It also delivers enhanced product or service value to the customer. For manufacturing companies, process innovation include such things as integrating new production methods and technologies that lead to improved efficiency, quality, or time-to-market, and services that are sold with those products. For service companies, process innovations enable them to introduce “front office” customer service improvements and add new services.
Business Innovation

Business innovation involves a wide spectrum of original concepts, including development of new business models, organizational innovation, business application of technology and communications, new management techniques, environmental efficiency, new forms of stakeholder participation, transport and finance.

It consists new business models, new management models, new approaches to value chain management, new approaches to information, idea and knowledge management, new forms of strategic partnerships, new forms of selling and customer service.

Organizational Innovation

More efficient innovation metrics Organizational innovation reflects the recognition that new ways of organizing work in areas such as work-force management (such as employee empowerment, new people partnership, or positive action to involve all employees in order to make work organization a collective resource for innovation), knowledge management, value chain management, customer partnership, distribution, finance, manufacturing, etc. can improve your competitiveness. Organizational innovation also includes business model innovation.

Technology Innovation

Technological innovation covers innovation derived from research and technology developments that are independent of product and service initiative. “The best companies maintain roadmaps that define the next technologies they will pursue and the requisite timing of each. These technology roadmaps are matched to their product roadmaps to ensure that the two are synchronized.” As core technology developments take longer than shorter product and service initiatives, by separating research and invention from product and service development, companies can achieve stretch without incurring too much risk.
Marketing Innovation

Today marketing is business and looking to changing time demands the maximum innovation for marketing activities. It covers Innovative design and presentation techniques, new forms of differentiation, positioning, and advertising, Innovative distribution and customer service methods. It is to help a company develop new value added services, enter new markets, and create new market segments/categories, new distribution methods, and new forms of customer service and customer partnership. Marketing Communication can also be more effective with Innovation Strategies.

Strategy Innovation:

It consist reinvented enterprise strategy, Innovative corporate growth strategies, improved competitive strategies. It is about challenging existing industry methods of creating customer value in order to meet newly emerging customer needs, add additional value, and create new markets and new customer groups for the sponsoring company.

Implementation of all these innovations can improves the utilization of human capital. The problem of Uncertainty in business is quite obvious which can be solved through innovation. In ongoing era of globalization, it is very important to select the right mode to enter in international market that also calls innovative internationalization. Gradually we are moving towards the knowledge economy where only innovation strategies at each and every stage can help to survive.

Position innovation

The third focus of innovation involves re-positioning the perception of an established product or process in a specific context. Position-based innovations refer to changes in how a specific product or process is perceived symbolically and how they are used. For example, Levi-Strauss jeans are a well-established global product line, originally
developed as manual workers’ clothing materials, but then re-branded as a fashion item.

In the humanitarian context, position innovations include changes in the signals that are disseminated about a humanitarian organisation and its work. This may relate to the way in which aid is marketed and packaged for potential donors. Alternatively, it may involve a repositioning of humanitarian assistance within a particular operational context or for particular users. An example of the former can be seen in attempts by humanitarian agencies in different complex emergencies to develop principle based cross-agency positions in relation to belligerent parties in complex emergencies which amount to a set of conditions under which humanitarian aid would be delivered, and a clear articulation of the situations where it would not. Agencies such as Disability International or HelpAge International are position innovators in that they call for the delivery of humanitarian products and services to groups that are often excluded.

**Paradigm innovation**

The final ‘P’ relates to innovation that defines or redefines the dominant paradigms of an organisation or entire sector. Paradigm-based innovations relate to the mental models which shape what an organisation or business is about. Henry Ford provides a pithy quote, when talking about the development of the Model T motor car: ‘If I asked people what they wanted, they would have asked for a five-legged horse’.

Examples of paradigm innovation in the international humanitarian sector include an increasing emphasis on local ownership and leadership of responses to crises as an alternative to internationally dominated responses. A greater and more central role for aid recipients is another example, and finally, perhaps the most radical innovation is the idea of disaster risk reduction approaches, which if successful can negate the need for any kind of response.

The development of community-based feeding therapy is one of the most recent examples of such innovations, with the combination of a product (PlumpyNut), a process (community-based distribution), a re-positioning (the idea that aid agencies do not need to do the feeding themselves directly) and a paradigm shift (the notion
that families and communities can treat malnutrition at home). Similarly, cash-based programming at its most radical involves a new product (cash), new processes (means of distributing cash), new position (a change in how aid is perceived by donors) and new paradigms (a change in how recipients are perceived by aid agencies).\textsuperscript{iv}

1.4 Innovation in banking services in India:

The Indian banking industry is evolving rapidly, and is at the threshold of explosive growth. Changing customer needs, technology-enabled disruptive business models, and a progressive regulatory environment are driving fundamental shifts in the industry, fuelling innovation and forcing banks to reconsider their business strategies. Banks are aware of looming threats: 80 per cent of global chief strategy officers recently surveyed believe their business models are at risk, and admit to worrying about new entrants with disruptive technologies. Leading companies prepare themselves by building innovation portfolios that go beyond products to include services, new business models and even business processes. These companies are better prepared to compete with or co-opt potential disruptions.

Indian banks, like institutions in other markets, resist fundamental change through innovation. Recent innovations by banks, such as lean mobile branches, solar-powered ATMs, and “tablet-based” banking do not really challenge the status quo; they simply improve existing customer access and convenience. Only time will tell if current pilots and in-market experiments will scale to become new business and profit models. To truly become more innovation-led, banks must embed innovation explicitly into their strategic and operational DNA.

Innovation in banks has proved to be a key element in promoting differentiated growth and return to shareholders. Companies in the top quartile of the McKinsey Global Innovator Index, defined through analysis of hundreds of companies worldwide, report up to 10 times more revenue growth and significantly higher total returns to shareholders over the long run than their competitors.
Despite this, incumbent banks globally struggle to innovate. As with many industries, the most disruptive innovations come from attackers.

Placing innovation at the heart of growth Companies rarely become innovation leaders by accident. Many executives believe that it takes at least two years before an innovation can generate measurable value. An innovation transformation is therefore a journey, not an event. This journey begins when the leadership places innovation at the heart of growth, and holds the organization accountable for delivering it to achieve performance objectives. An important part of this process is defining the sort of transformation suitable for the organization. The innovation approach can accordingly be either incremental, or breakthrough. The incremental approach is observed when organizations believe in minimal risk or that innovation is not their most significant growth lever. Innovations usually include continuous improvement activities to expand current businesses to existing customers, through commercial model improvements, portfolio optimizations, efficiency agendas focused on short-term gains, etc. While this approach may be easiest to adopt in the short term, it rarely improves the long-term competitiveness of a business. Financial institutions that face the threat of new technologies and business models need to take stronger action, namely a breakthrough approach where they invest in incubating growth options and build new routines and mechanisms such as new lifestyle-oriented product lines, new service delivery platforms, reinventing personal financial management services, and using big data advanced analytics. These types of innovation are less likely to cannibalize core businesses in the short term and can quickly be scaled up, if needed. Both approaches require that the organization ensures appropriate people systems, short launch and learn cycles, and resources allocated against pursuing the best opportunities. An innovative company must have three firm pillars to build on: a defined aspiration and strategy, actionable insights, and a mobilized organization. Defined aspiration and strategy: Our research indicates that executives who integrate innovation into their strategies are six times more likely to meet their financial objectives. Fifty per cent of executives believe successful innovation needs a leadership that is aligned with the aspiration and strategy. Innovation leaders make tough choices on where they want to invest and align resources accordingly. They
also establish a performance system that explicitly links innovation to overall strategic planning and setting objectives.

Actionable insight: While all organizations have good ideas, most struggle to prioritize these for the highest returns. Our research clearly indicates that the best ideas come from the combination of unique customer, technology and business model insight. Leading innovators have robust approaches to uncovering the differentiated needs, wants and desires of their customers, looking at existing and emerging technological enablers and finding business models that reinforce the resulting value propositions. Financial institutions that have tools to surface new customer behaviors, monitor emerging technologies and craft new business models will be able to develop winning value propositions, and will become innovation leaders.

Mobilized organization: A high-performing innovation system has strong mechanisms to recruit and develop the appropriate mix of people and processes that accelerate moving ideas to the market, a resource allocation method to invest in the best opportunities, and incentives to reward managers who take smart risks while pursuing innovation. However, many financial institutions focus much more on serving existing customers and are constrained by legacy IT systems that reinforce existing business models. This makes it hard to identify and pursue new/potential business opportunities. To overcome this dynamic, many companies create a dedicated innovation group or team. While this may add value, this tactic more often sidelines innovation as a “special” initiative, dulling its impact at scale. A truly mobilized organization will encourage a shared understanding of the value of innovation, extensive cross-functional collaboration, rapid innovation development processes, and a culture that celebrates successful innovation while also tolerating failure in attempted innovation. There are no shortcuts to creating an innovation company. Investing in the right building blocks to aspire, choose, discover, scale and mobilize is critical. Organizations that put in the effort and master the principles of innovation are well positioned to consistently outperform their peers, while others risk losing their competitive edge.
1.5 Customer Satisfaction:

Customer satisfaction, a business term, is a measure of how products and services supplied by a company meet or surpass customer expectation. It is seen as a key performance indicator within business and is part of the four perspectives of a Balanced Scorecard. In a competitive marketplace where businesses compete for customers, customer satisfaction is seen as a key differentiator and increasingly has become a key element of business strategy. There is a substantial body of empirical literature that establishes the benefits of customer satisfaction for firms.

Organizations are increasingly interested in retaining existing customers while targeting non-customers, measuring customer satisfaction provides an indication of how successful the organization is at providing products and/or services to the marketplace. Customer satisfaction is an ambiguous and abstract concept and the actual manifestation of the state of satisfaction will vary from person to person and product/service to product/service. The state of satisfaction depends on a number of both psychological and physical variables which correlate with satisfaction behaviors such as return and recommend rate. The level of satisfaction can also vary depending on other options the customer may have and other products against which the customer can compare the organization's products. Because satisfaction is basically a psychological state, care should be taken in the effort of quantitative measurement, although a large quantity of research in this area has recently been developed. Work done by Berry (Bart Allen) and Brodeur between 1990 and 1998 defined ten 'Quality Values' which influence satisfaction behavior, further expanded by Berry in 2002 and known as the ten domains of satisfaction.

These ten domains of satisfaction include: Quality, Value, Timeliness, Efficiency, Ease of Access, Environment, Inter-departmental Teamwork, Front line Service Behaviors, Commitment to the Customer and Innovation. These factors are emphasized for continuous improvement and organizational change measurement and are most often utilized to develop the architecture for satisfaction measurement as an integrated model. Work done by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (Leonard L) between 1985 and 1988 provides the basis for the measurement of customer
satisfaction with a service by using the gap between the customer's expectation of performance and their perceived experience of performance. This provides the measurer with a satisfaction "gap" which is objective and quantitative in nature. Work done by Cronin and Taylor propose the "confirmation/disconfirmation" theory of combining the "gap" described by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry as two different measures (perception and expectation of performance) into a single measurement of performance according to expectation. According to Garbrand, customer satisfaction equals perception of performance divided by expectation of performance. The usual measures of customer satisfaction involve a survey with a set of statements using a Likert Technique or scale. The customer is asked to evaluate each statement and in term of their perception and expectation of performance of the organization being measured.\(^{8}\)

1.6 Customer satisfaction in seven steps:

It's a well known fact that no business can exist without customers. In the business of Website design, it's important to work closely with your customers to make sure the site or system you create for them is as close to their requirements as you can manage. Because it's critical that you form a close working relationship with your client, customer service is of vital importance. What follows are a selection of tips that will make your clients feel valued, wanted and loved.

1. Encourage Face-to-Face Dealings

This is the most daunting and downright scary part of interacting with a customer. If you're not used to this sort of thing it can be a pretty nerve-wracking experience. Rest assured, though, it does get easier over time. It's important to meet your customers face to face at least once or even twice during the course of a project. My experience has shown that a client finds it easier to relate to and work with someone they've actually met in person, rather than a voice on the phone or someone typing into an email or messenger program. When you do meet them, be calm, confident and above all, take time to ask them what they need. I believe that if a
potential client spends over half the meeting doing the talking, you're well on your way to a sale.

2. Respond to Messages Promptly & Keep Your Clients Informed

This goes without saying really. We all know how annoying it is to wait days for a response to an email or phone call. It might not always be practical to deal with all customers' queries within the space of a few hours, but at least email or call them back and let them know you've received their message and you'll contact them about it as soon as possible. Even if you're not able to solve a problem right away, let the customer know you're working on it.

A good example of this is my Web host. They've had some trouble with server hardware which has caused a fair bit of downtime lately. At every step along the way I was emailed and told exactly what was going on, why things were going wrong, and how long it would be before they were working again. They also apologized repeatedly, which was nice. Now if they server had just gone down with no explanation I think I'd have been pretty annoyed and may have moved my business elsewhere. But because they took time to keep me informed, it didn't seem so bad, and I at least knew they were doing something about the problems. That to me is a prime example of customer service.

3. Be Friendly and Approachable

A fellow Site Pointer once told me that you can hear a smile through the phone. This is very true. It's very important to be friendly, courteous and to make your clients feel like you're their friend and you're there to help them out. There will be times when you want to beat your clients over the head repeatedly with a blunt object - it happens to all of us. It's vital that you keep a clear head, respond to your clients' wishes as best you can, and at all times remain polite and courteous.

4. Have a Clearly-Defined Customer Service Policy
This may not be too important when you're just starting out, but a clearly defined customer service policy is going to save you a lot of time and effort in the long run. If a customer has a problem, what should they do? If the first option doesn't work, then what? Should they contact different people for billing and technical enquiries? If they're not satisfied with any aspect of your customer service, who should they tell? There's nothing more annoying for a client than being passed from person to person, or not knowing who to turn to. Making sure they know exactly what to do at each stage of their enquiry should be of utmost importance. So make sure your customer service policy is present on your site -- and anywhere else it may be useful.

5. **Attention to Detail (also known as 'The Little Niceties')**

Have you ever received a Happy Birthday email or card from a company you were a client of? Have you ever had a personalized sign-up confirmation email for a service that you could tell was typed from scratch? These little niceties can be time consuming and aren't always cost effective, but remember to do them.

Even if it's as small as sending a Happy Holidays email to all your customers, it's something. It shows you care; it shows there are real people on the other end of that screen or telephone; and most importantly, it makes the customer feel welcomed, wanted and valued.

6. **Anticipate your client's needs & go out of your way to help them out**

Sometimes this is easier said than done! However, achieving this supreme level of understanding with your clients will do wonders for your working relationship.

Take this as an example: you're working on the front-end for your client's exciting new ecommerce endeavor. You have all the images, originals and files backed up on your desktop computer and the site is going really well. During a meeting with your client he/she happens to mention a hard-copy brochure their internal marketing people are developing. As if by magic, a couple of weeks later a CD-ROM arrives on their doorstep complete with high resolution versions of all the images you've used on the site. A note accompanies it which reads:
"Hi, you mentioned a hard-copy brochure you were working on and I wanted to provide you with large-scale copies of the graphics I've used on the site. Hopefully you'll be able to make use of some in your brochure."

Your client is heartily impressed, and remarks to his colleagues and friends how very helpful and considerate his Web designers are. Meanwhile, in your office, you lay back in your chair drinking your 7th cup of coffee that morning, safe in the knowledge this happy customer will send several referrals your way.

7. Honor Your Promises

It's possible this is the most important point in this article. The simple message: when you promise something, deliver. The most common example here is project delivery dates.

Clients don't like to be disappointed. Sometimes, something may not get done, or you might miss a deadline through no fault of your own. Projects can be late, technology can fail and sub-contractors don't always deliver on time. In this case a quick apology and assurance it'll be ready ASAP wouldn't go amiss. xi
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