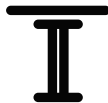


Nay-Sayers

**HOW TO INNOVATE AND DEAL
WITH RESISTANCE AGAINST
NEW IDEAS**

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TalkInnovation

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Preface

Chester Greenwood loved ice skating. But due to the bitter cold his rather big ears were freezing. Adamant to stay out on the ice for longer, he decided to do something about it and came up with a novel idea to protect his ears. He bent two pieces of wire into a loop and with the help of his grandmother covered them with pieces of fur. Then he connected the two padded loops with another piece of wire so he could wear the contraption on his head in such a fashion that the padded loops would cover his ears.

On a cold December day in 1873 Chester went out to skate and test his newly invented earmuffs. The other kids laughed at his unusual head-gear, but soon realized that Chester was still skating when they had to go inside because of the biting cold. The laughter ceased and before long they started to ask Chester to make them a pair of earmuffs as well. Two years later he applied for a patent on earmuffs and started a factory to make earmuffs which ended up providing many jobs for the people in the area. And till this day the invention of the earmuffs is celebrated in Chester's hometown Farmington in the United States.

The 15-year old Chester Greenwood came up with an amazingly simple but very effective invention. In spite of his ingenuity, his skating friends laughed at him. But they stopped when they saw that his earmuffs were actually quite useful. Chester's earmuffs are an example of how innovative ideas tend to meet with resistance when they are introduced.

In my professional career I have encountered many situations in which I dealt with innovation in all its facets. I helped clients to create new ideas, advised them how to implement innovative strategies and processes

Preface

and gave workshops and masterclasses on how to innovate. I noticed that the process of innovation was difficult at times, but the real difficulty was not conceiving new ideas, but to get them accepted. Over the years I met with ridicule, fierce resistance and skeptical questions, as have all innovators and teams that are working on innovative ideas. Just or not, critique is difficult to deal with, especially when you've just created something new that you are immensely proud of and you believe in with all your heart. But in order to successfully implement your innovation you need to learn to deal with resistance.

The Nay-Sayers book is written to help innovators overcome resistance. It helps you to formulate arguments to make your innovation acceptable and adoptable. By placing yourself in your critic's shoes, you learn to see your idea from the nay-sayers' point of view. Instead of awaiting the response of the public the book helps you to take proactive steps and anticipate possible resistance.

This book offers an explanation where resistance comes from, explores in depth the different objections and arguments in various stages of the acceptance process, and advises you how to deal with different forms of resistance.

Carmen Hutting,
Talk Innovation

Why we fear new ideas

Although the Ancient civilizations already knew that the Earth revolved around the sun, centuries later the Catholic church believed otherwise. Surely, the Earth, which they believed was created by God, had to be more important than the sun. To think otherwise was heresy.

When at the turn of the 17th century Giordano Bruno and Galileo Galilei proclaimed that our planet was not the center of the universe, their ideas were ill received by the Catholic church. The first was burnt at the stake, the latter imprisoned in his own house for the rest of his life.

Anyone involved in innovation, inventing, research, creating and tinkering can tell you that one of the hardest things to do in the process of innovation is to overcome resistance. Sometimes, it proves utterly impossible to convince the nay-sayers, and arguing your case only results in scorn or worse, as was the case with Giordano Bruno and Galileo Galilei.

In retrospect we can appreciate the true value of Galilei's discoveries. He has been acknowledged as the father of modern science by Albert Einstein and according to Stephen Hawking Galilei stood at the foundation of modern science. Eventually Pope John Paul II expressed his regret in 1992 how the inquisition under his predecessor Pope Urban VIII handled the affair.

If we are able to re-evaluate our opinion of an innovation, why haven't we learned to appreciate change right from the beginning? After all, didn't all those inventions and discoveries from the last centuries

predominantly led to an improvement of our lives? The invention of vaccination for instance, prevented numerous unnecessary deaths. Street lighting improved the safety of citizens during nocturnal hours and the introduction of the telephone brought people closer together who were separated by physical distance. Despite the fact that most innovations we have seen in the past have proven beneficial, we still object to all that is new. By now we should have learned that change is often for the better, and that we have far more to gain than to lose if we embrace change. Why then is there still resistance to innovation?

Understanding resistance against new ideas

Heated debate and fierce objections are quite common when a new idea or technology is introduced. Today we see examples of how such resistance manifests itself in the debate over the self-driving car or the public opinion about in vitro meat. But this kind of resistance certainly is not a contemporary phenomenon. As Galilei's example shows us, almost all the great innovations throughout the ages were ridiculed or rebuffed by the majority at first. And not only technological inventions or scientific discoveries are shunned, but socio-economic innovations like egalitarianism or universal suffrage, and ordinary items like toys, accessories or new food produce suffer the same fate.

Whatever we gain from adopting a technology or idea, innovation always meets with resistance. To understand where this resistance comes from, we're going to take a closer look at the public debate over the driverless car.

The main arguments raised by the opposition are "having no control in a life-or-death situation" or "the inability to control artificial intelligence". The sentiments are understandable, because when you are traveling in a driverless car, you are completely at the mercy of the machine: You're not the driver anymore, but have become a passenger. The arguments are driven by the fear that a loss of autonomy might result in physical

harm. In case of the driverless car you could argue that the perceived risk is based on valid arguments because the consequences of machine failure could be irreversible. Hence it is understandable that such an innovation meets with resistance.

Now let's look at another example. When the first waterproof umbrella was introduced in Britain, the first man to use it was verbally abused and even pelted with trash. In this case you can't argue that the umbrella posed a threat to society or could be harmful, because what harm could an umbrella do? It wasn't equipped with artificial intelligence, nor did it open or close of its own accord. There seem to be no valid arguments against an umbrella.

But in a sense the umbrella did pose a threat to society. The man who introduced the umbrella defied commonly held beliefs, because until then only women used umbrellas -or parasols- to shade them from the sun. A man using an umbrella was 'not done' and therefore a preposterous act. He might not have realized it, but his act questioned whether or not those commonly held beliefs that had shaped society were valid.

The irrationality of resistance

Although we set great store by our intelligence, these beliefs are anything but rational. When people assess something new that enters their life, like an innovation, it is subject to the same mechanism that kicks in when we make a decision. To understand how we make decisions we need to take a closer look at how our brain works. Our brain evolved over time, as we learned to walk upright, started to use tools and developed agriculture. Gradually humans developed more modern brains equipped for their new behavior. According to the American physician and neuroscientist Paul D. MacLean and his triune theory our contemporary brain consists of three layers. Not real layers or compartments in the brain, but layers in an evolutionary sense of the word. For argument's sake you could compare them with the layers of an onion:

The Old Brain or Reptilian Brain, the Limbic brain or Mammal brain and the Neocortex or Human Brain.

The old brain was the first to evolve, before we became cognitive beings.

This Reptilian Brain is embedded deep in our system and controls our primary body functions like breathing and also controls our primal behaviors which are geared toward survival.

When humans started to live in larger groups with intricate relationships, the next part of the brain evolved: The Limbic brain. This part of our brain, or our inner monkey, deals with our needs and emotions. It is the part of the brain where value judgements are made and memories are stored.

The last part to evolve is what we call the Human brain. Language and logic are its specific traits, so with this part of our brain we perceive, think, imagine and create.

Decisions are for 95% made in the oldest two parts of our brain. Scientific studies show that in the decision-making process, the older brains have already made a decision a split second before we rationalize the idea with our Human Brain. This happens for instance when we want to pick up an object or when we want to buy something. And the same happens when we are confronted with a new idea. Our inner lizard and to a lesser extent, our inner monkey, decide how we should respond to the innovation based on our instincts, our gut feelings, fears and needs. After that our Human brain starts to rationalize this decision: "I don't like it because...it is dangerous!" or "...because...it will end our way of life! This delayed argumentation of our Human brain is credited with far too much weight than appropriate, because it doesn't really have a say in the matter. We think we can use reasoning to overcome resistance. We start a discussion, hoping to prove the critics wrong with rational arguments. But it won't make any difference. The inner lizard has already made up its mind.

Why then is our inner lizard so set against new ideas? According to Professor Calestous Juma in his book: Innovation and Its Enemies: Why

People Resist New Technologies: "It is the uncertainty associated with change—especially the fear of losing what we value—that leads to resistance to change." He argues that it's not about fear for something new, but the fear of loss, like the fear of losing one's identity, or one's sense of purpose. This is the Mammal Brain talking. But it goes deeper than the fear of losing something that we value. Change rattles the foundations of our existence. It undermines the carefully constructed status quo that ensures you have enough to eat and drink, a safe environment to rest and sleep, and a future for yourself and your nearest and dearest. In other words, when confronted with change, it's the inner lizard going into full survival mode, calling the shots.

Resistance and the phenomenon of inertia

Another aspect that we need to take into consideration if we ask the question why we resist new ideas, is the phenomenon of inertia which in this case means 'to stay physically unchanged'. According to research our unwillingness to change could have something to do with homeostasis, a stage in which a human body preserves as much energy as possible whilst maintaining all the body functions on a specific level like body temperature or bodyweight. You can compare it with an internal thermostat for all your bodily functions that keeps everything on the optimal level for survival. A change in behavior, like taking action to lose weight for instance, means going against this intrinsic state of homeostasis. Our bodies will resist the change, because a new habit costs far more energy to execute than an existing habit. The body rather preserves its energy and will try to maintain the equilibrium to ensure survival.

We develop behaviors that keep us safe or make us feel good, like putting on seatbelts or smoking. These habits are developed in a contextual situation: when you are nervous you light a cigarette or when you get in a car you fasten our seatbelt. The context gives your brain the

cue for an action. Your brain then makes a connection between the cue and the action. The more often you repeat this action the more ingrained the pathway between the cue and the action becomes. If you want to change a habit or introduce a new behavior to an existing cue, like for instance not to smoke when you're nervous, it goes against the deeply ingrained neural pathways in our brain. We may consciously make the decision to quit smoking, but without an incentive that threatens our survival or dogged determination and persistence, the attempt probably will fail.

Innovation is taking risks

How we react to change might thus be a part of our survival mechanism. If we have created a status quo that ensures our survival, why on earth should we rock the boat with unnecessary risks? Because that is exactly what innovation is, taking risks. And we only take risks when there is no other option. But on the other hand, when our survival is threatened, we can be quite inventive. That is when the Human Brain shines. It tries to make sense of the instinctive reaction of the Lizard brain and uses cognition, imagination and logic to avert the threat. Therefore, we display quite a lot of creativity when we try to eliminate a new idea that we see as a threat, and use anything from slander and misinformation to sabotage and demonization: Anything to stop the new idea from disrupting the status quo. A well-known example is how Thomas Edison tried to thwart the use of Alternating Current (AC) which was introduced by his competitor George Westinghouse. Edison was in favor of Direct Current (DC), the commonly used form of electricity at the time which he used to power his most famous invention, the lightbulb. In his opinion AC was life threatening, and to prove the danger Edison used AC to electrocute or 'Westinghouse' several animals and even had a hand in the development of the electric chair.

It is often assumed that providing evidence or arguments will eliminate resistance to innovation. But unfortunately, it is not that simple. The main reason logic and arguments won't help to sway the resistance is because language evolved with the Human brain. And that part of our brain is rarely used in the decision-making process. Instead of arguing we should be addressing the underlying needs and survival mechanisms. Values our inner monkey could relate to, or primal needs our inner lizard understands. We first have to gain the trust of the Reptilian brain and then give it input with an emotional value in order to convince the Mammal brain.

Think about what the innovation has to offer the inner lizard and the inner monkey. The offering should have an emotional value which corresponds to our dreams and wishes and our unspoken needs and hopes. When an innovation strikes an emotional chord, it has a higher success rate. Take for instance innovations that appeal to a sense of freedom, like the car. Or innovations that give us a sense of security like surveillance.

Show what the innovation is about. Let the public experience it, so they can establish an emotional connection with your idea in the Mammal Brain. Create a non-threatening situation that makes the inner monkey feel good and in which the inner lizard feels safe. Respect their opinions and try to understand where the resistance comes from. Embrace the resistance.

No matter what the idea is, there will always be resistance to innovation. It's how you deal with the resistance that makes all the difference.

From denial to acceptance:

THE 4 STAGES OF ACCEPTANCE

The easiest way to solve a problem is to deny it exists.

~ Isaac Asimov, writer of the novel 'I, Robot'.

Denying problems is a very human thing to do. To what we pay attention is a choice, partly conscious, but mostly unconscious. It is a coping mechanism to filter out the important information. This picky scope of attention also creates a feeling of safety. Filtering out all the things that are different or uncomfortable makes us feel safe and secure. Therefore, we like to surround ourselves with like-minded people who share our system of beliefs. The familiarity we experience gives us a sense of belonging.

We also only tend to see familiar things. This is not only by choice; it was discovered by neurologist Robert Burton that this process is actually hard-wired in our brains. How it works is actually quite similar to the process of erosion. When the first raindrops fall on a slightly sloping surface, they will randomly flow away. But when more rain starts to fall, little streams start to form that will slowly erode the ground. Over time the water will carve out deep gullies in the surface and any rainfall will follow the same pathway.

The same goes for our brain. When we encounter something for the first time it can be interpreted in any fashion. Once the interpretation is established, it becomes a pathway in our brain, just like falling raindrops