

Guide Your Service Innovation Initiatives

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Develop and Use Service Innovation Roadmaps for Your Company, Colleagues, Country, or Self

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What can you gain from this article?

Build and use roadmaps for your initiatives to improve service – service from one provider to one client, service from much of society to much of society, or something in between.

Use the framework presented in this article to anticipate your improvement initiatives, rally support, guide initiatives, achieve results, and reuse results and lessons learned. Such initiatives may, for example, enhance services, products, capabilities to create or improve services or products, or abilities to innovate.

What is the framework?

What are the elements of the framework?

A framework for service innovation features five elements.

- A definition of service.
- A list of categories of achievements and endeavors people and other entities pursue.
- A spectrum for categorizing service activities that support achievements and endeavors.
- A model for service-activity relationships between entities.
- The realization that people can treat service innovation as service.

What is service?

Service denotes an entity's influence on another (or the same) entity's achievements, endeavors, or wellbeing.

What do entities achieve or try to achieve?

Figure 1 lists categories of achievements and endeavors. People may debate the extents to which a specific achievement (including wellbeing) or endeavor ...

- Corresponds to more than one category.
- Occurs based on purposeful (or non-purposeful) activity.
- Is desirable (or undesirable).
- Is needed (or not needed).

Figure 1. Categories of Achievements and Endeavors¹

Effect specific agendas or goals.
Satisfy or enhance principles.
Enhance people's lives or the "fabric of society."
Have satisfying experiences or relationships.
Gain or improve processes, skill, or knowledge.
Create, amass, deploy, benefit from, or distribute resources, organizations, or wealth.
Attain certification or other recognition.
Enhance reputation.
Ally with endeavors or coalitions.
Create or teach knowledge or techniques.
Gain goals, purpose, or a sense of direction.
Provide context for support that coalitions provide or receive.
Other (Specify.):

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How does service support achievements and endeavors?

For an achievement or endeavor, Figure 2 provides a spectrum of vital activities. For example, a key step can be an entity's making a decision to pursue an outcome. Following such a decision, one finds *Implementation* (including carrying out activities to effect agendas or goals) and *Outcomes* of such Implementation. The decision may be based in part on *Insight* such as principles, plans, and risk analyses. Insight may be based on *Information*, which in turn is based on *Transactions* that capture, synthesize, and propagate data. Transactions are supported by *Infrastructure*, including people and computer systems. Also, *Reuse* can occur for aspects of Outcomes, Implementation, Insight, Information, Transactions, and Infrastructure.

¹ These categories are associated with the *Direct Outcomes* tool known as *Achieve Purpose*. This and other applications of Direct Outcomes are Copyright © Thomas J. Buckholtz.

Figure 2. Activity Spectrum²

Activity	Examples	Theme
Extend Success	Create opportunities from endeavors and from results of endeavors.	Reuse
Realize Results	Measure, recognize, and appreciate achievement.	Outcomes
Accomplish Activities	Take action to achieve goals.	Implementation
Set Direction	Perform analyses. Evaluate plans. Make decisions. Establish principles. Set goals.	Insight
Understand Context	Learn information. Determine the extent to which to use and trust specific information.	Information
Process Data	Find, synthesize, store, retrieve, and communicate data. Communicate with colleagues.	Transactions
Marshal Resources	Marshal and deploy tangible resources.	Infrastructure

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A specific activity provides services that affect the achievement or endeavor. People can consider that the achievement or endeavor depends on – or is – an aggregate of such activities and services.

People can consider the extent to which achievement aggregates starting with Infrastructure and continuing toward Reuse.³

For example, the following items indicate results an individual might want to achieve regarding food.

- Reuse – The individual has a healthy life.
- Outcomes – The individual obtains nutrition or pleasure via food.
- Implementation – The individual eats or drinks food.
- Insight – The individual plans a meal.
- Information – The individual learns about nutritional value or allergies associated with ingredients.
- Transactions – The individual transports ingredients.
- Infrastructure – The individual grows agricultural products useful as ingredients.

Each item represents services that the individual might need. People can consider the extent to which ...

- Success (or failure) accumulates “upward” from Infrastructure toward Reuse.
- The individual provides relevant service.
- Other entities support the individual’s providing relevant service.
- Other entities provide relevant service without much participation by the individual.
- Opportunities exist to innovate – that is, to improve service.

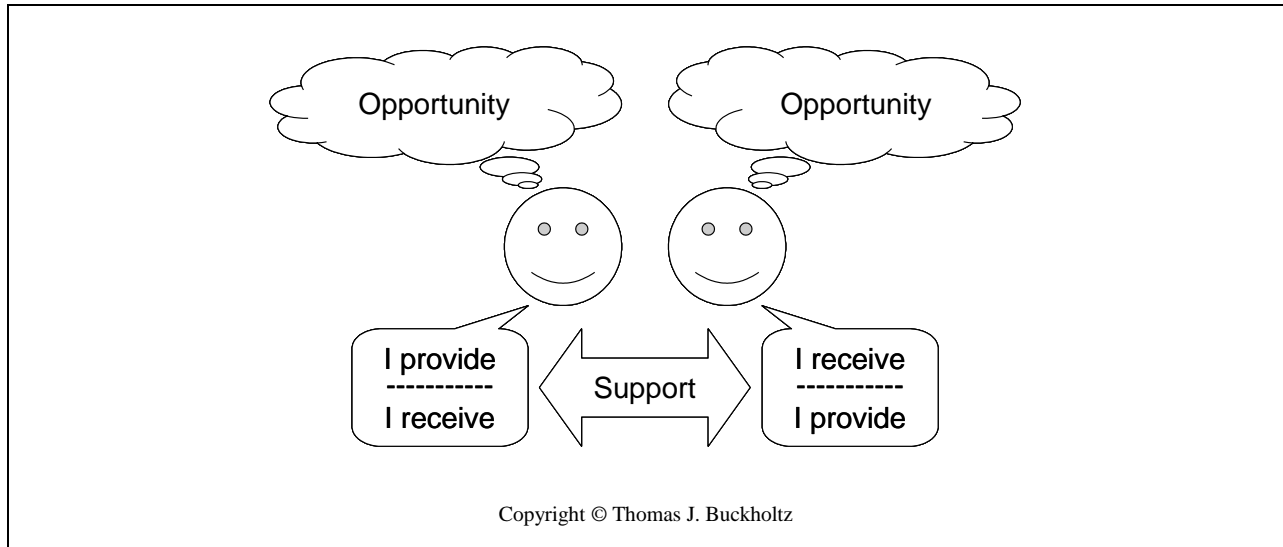
² This Activity Spectrum is an application of the *Direct Outcomes* tool known as *Achieve Progress*. This and other applications of Direct Outcomes are Copyright © Thomas J. Buckholtz.

³ For more information regarding this Reuse-through-Infrastructure hierarchy, consult Figure 4 (page 6), discussion related to that figure, and other discussion in this article.

What entities are involved in an instance of service?

Service activities feature one, two or more-than-two coalitions affecting⁴ each other's formulating and capturing opportunities. Sometimes, people consider a coalition to be a *client* and another coalition to be a *provider*. Sometimes a person, organization, informal group, nation, information system, animal, or other entity belongs to both a client coalition and a provider coalition. Often, a client coalition provides service to the client coalition's providers. Figure 3 symbolizes service relationships.

Figure 3. Service Activities – Opportunities, Coalitions, and Support



How can people foster service innovation?

How can people anticipate service improvements?

People can anticipate service improvements by looking for opportunities throughout the Activity Spectrum. By exploring answers to questions such as the following questions, people can develop themes for service-improvement opportunities.

- What services do people need, in various Activity-Spectrum bands, regarding what (often, Reuse and Outcomes) the people need to, want to, or could achieve?
- What techniques can be developed to provide new or improved services – for whom and in which bands (again, relative to people's desired Reuse and Outcomes)?
- How can skills, technologies, or discoveries be used to enable or improve techniques or services?
- For a specific client, service, and range of possible providers, to what extents does the client want the service to be performed by specific entities (for example, to minimize the client's work)?

People can use such questions to develop needs-centric and capabilities-centric themes for service-innovation opportunities. The first question encourages focusing first on needs. The third question encourages focusing first on capabilities.

⁴ *Affecting* may include helping and hindering.

For example, the Activity Spectrum provides a means for doing the following.

- Anticipate or catalyze progress associated with the Electromechanical Information Age.⁵
- Anticipate or catalyze improvements, based on information services or technologies, in the services provided by a product line.

For the Electromechanical Information Age, people can consider the extents to which ...

- The client potentially includes almost all individuals, coalitions, and endeavors.
- The provider includes chief information officers (CIOs), communities led or catalyzed by CIOs, information-services providers, and computing and telecommunications services and technology suppliers.
- The “Infrastructure era” started in the 1840s, with the telegraph, and now encompasses telephones, radios, televisions, computers, and the Internet.
- The “Transaction era” started in 1890, with electronic processing of punched cards in support of the United States census, and now encompasses services associated with data management, word processing, spreadsheets, “e-commerce,” supply chain management, enterprise resources planning, customer relationship management, coding of software, and search engines.⁶
- Service-innovation opportunities remain for widely applicable services and technologies.
 - Infrastructure and Transactions era innovations tend to feature themes such as better, faster, cheaper, or better integrated.⁷
 - “Information era” innovations can feature new services and more-useful service.⁸

Service improvements in specific product lines (or from specific industries) tend to follow the same Infrastructure, Transactions, ... sequence. For example, for an airplane pilot, gauges provide Transactions services and autopilots provide Implementation services. Gauges preceded autopilots.

People can consider the extents to which “higher level”⁹ services achieved in some product lines portend higher level service innovations in other product lines or higher level services from widely applicable techniques and technologies.

How can people achieve service improvements?

Figure 3 provides a vision of coalitions’ working together to formulate and capture opportunities. Figure 2 provides a roadmap. Having anticipated service-innovation opportunities, people can do the following to effect service innovations (that is, to convert opportunities into Outcomes).

- Plan, starting from desired Reuse and Outcomes. Thereby, identify as-yet still-needed Implementation, Insight, Information, Transactions, and Infrastructure.
- Achieve appreciated Outcomes and Reuse by fulfilling as-yet unmet needs.

Figure 4 illustrates potential needs in various Activity-Spectrum bands – this time in an action-oriented arrangement (for fulfilling unmet needs) that reverses a planning-oriented sequence used in Figure 3.

⁵ *Electrometrical* denotes use of equipment that includes electrical or electronic components.

⁶ When this article was written, search featured people specifying words or phrases that the people thought might be found in items that might be both relevant and assessable (for example, via the Internet). Search engines returned lists of potential “click here” Transactions. People then provided the Information-level service of determining the extent to which data at the various “click here” sources was relevant to people’s needs.

⁷ Potential for *new* services includes applications of quantum computing.

⁸ Such service would supplant and augment services provided today by people.

⁹ *Higher level* denotes “closer to Outcomes and Reuse.”

Figure 4. Activity Categories for Defining, Pursuing, and Capturing Opportunities

Marshal Resources that can pursue opportunities.

- **Infrastructure** includes resources that can pursue opportunities or that can be used to pursue opportunities.
 - Examples include people, skills, funds, computing and telecommunications systems, animals, transportation systems, cars, fuel, other tangible products, and work environments.

Process Data through which the resources can pursue opportunities.

- **Transactions** include communicating and processing data through which resources can pursue opportunities.
 - Examples include sending, receiving, synthesizing, processing, and storing communications and data – between or by resources.

Understand Context regarding an opportunity.

- **Information** includes knowledge about an opportunity.
 - Examples include facts that people and information systems use when setting direction and solving problems.

Set Direction as to whether and how to capture the opportunity.

- **Insight** includes analyses and decisions regarding the extent to which to pursue the opportunity.
 - Examples include potential goals, potential plans, risk analyses, recommendations, and stated principles, goals, and plans.

Accomplish Activities to capture the opportunity.

- **Implementation** includes doing activities to capture the opportunity.
 - Examples include performing activities that people anticipate will help further principles and achieve goals.

Realize Results associated with the opportunity.

- **Outcomes** are results associated with work to capture the opportunity.

Extend Success by applying results to other opportunities.

- **Reuse** features creating and pursuing opportunities based on further uses of Infrastructure, Transactions, Information, Insight, Implementation, or Outcomes.

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How can people foster service-innovation initiatives?

A service innovation initiative can focus on, for example, a customer need, provider company, industry, or nation. People can plan and achieve service-innovation initiatives similarly to planning and achieving specific service innovations. Again, key elements include the following.

- People, skills, systems, and other Infrastructure.
- Communications among people, plus other Transactions.
- ...
- Recognizing that Outcomes have been achieved.
- Reusing appropriately Outcomes, Implementation, ..., Transactions, and Infrastructure.

An initiative can coalesce around a general theme. For example, starting approximately 1990, the United States General Services Administration's Information Resources Management Service catalyzed a nationwide grassroots movement to improve governmental service to the public.¹⁰ Early coalition members (Infrastructure) included information resource management¹¹ leaders from federal Executive Branch agencies. Soon, participants (Infrastructure) included academic, news-media, private-sector, and public-sector (at all levels of U.S. government) employees and organizations. For example, news-media organizations sponsored conferences (Transactions featuring the sharing of Information). At the beginning of the initiative, people did not predict precisely who (Infrastructure) would get involved, what studies (Information and Insight) might be done, or what service improvements (Implementation) would be attempted. Starting in 1993, the federal Executive Branch labeled some of its programs as "reinventing government." Overall progress has included successes in "e-government" and simplified processes for obtaining construction permits from local governments.

What roles can entities play in service-innovation initiatives?

Entities have opportunities to take roles throughout the Activity Spectrum. The following illustrate some roles that support initiatives.

- (Infrastructure) – Recruit participants. Help people gain skills.¹² Provide funds. Provide tools.
- (Transactions) – Help communities communicate. Find, synthesize, store, filter, or forward data.
- (Information) – Market possible opportunities for innovation. Recommend the use of specific knowledge or research.
- (Insight) – Develop or recommend goals or plans for initiatives.¹³ Analyze benefits or risks. Make decisions.
- (Implementation) – Carry out service-innovation experiments or programs.
- (Outcomes) – Measure and announce results from experiments or programs.
- (Reuse) – Redeploy successes or lessons learned.

People can explore the extents to which ...

- An entity – an individual, enterprise, university, government, research laboratory, news-media entity, ... – or a combination of entities can, should, or does contribute to an initiative.
- An entity or group can make useful contributions throughout the gamut of possible roles.

How can people measure the effectiveness of service-innovation initiatives?

The categories in Figure 1 suggest dimensions – for example, the achievement of goals or wealth, or the enhancement of processes, skills, reputation, or knowledge – for measuring success.

For an endeavor, people can use the Activity Spectrum and consider the extent to which ...

- Measurements of Reuse and Outcomes call attention to results.
- Measurements of Implementation may call attention to previously unrecognized results.
- Measurements of Implementation, Insight, Information, Transactions, or Infrastructure call attention to inputs (at least to the extent progress is not reused).

¹⁰ Francis. A. McDonough and Thomas J. Buckholtz, "Providing Better Service to Citizens with Information Technology," *Journal of Systems Management*, April 1992.

¹¹ *Information resources management* (IRM) combines knowledge usage, service, and management; computing; and telecommunications.

¹² Education can foster people's developing skills associated with any of the Activity-Spectrum bands.

¹³ Research results can recommend improvements associated with any of the Activity-Spectrum bands.

For example, during the 1980s, Pacific Gas and Electric Company conducted an innovation program focused on benefitting from personal computers and other “office technology.” After less than 3.5 years, I presented the following “punch line” in a speech to corporate officers. “We have 5,000 computers. I’ve spent \$20,000,000 of the Company’s money. And, you here in this room have signed off on \$100,000,000 in recurring annual corporate benefits.”¹⁴ These 3 sentences feature 2 Infrastructure inputs and 1 Outcomes result.

People can use various measuring techniques for service-innovation and other initiatives. People can pay attention to choosing appropriate techniques.¹⁵

How can you foster service innovation?

What steps can your colleagues and you take?

Consider taking next steps such as the following.

- Determine service-provision or service-innovation outcomes – improvements to current or planned endeavors, opportunities you can create or pursue, or the solving of problems – you would like to achieve or help achieve.
- Plan and accomplish implementation to achieve those outcomes.
- Use insight you gain from this article.¹⁶

¹⁴ Innovations featured improvements in services to customers and services within the company. Financially quantifiable benefits featured productivity gains.

¹⁵ The Direct Outcomes Achieve Impact tool provides a process for articulating benefits and, within the process, points to opportunities to choose appropriate qualitative, non-financial quantitative, and financial quantitative measurement techniques. People can use various Direct Outcomes tools as metrics or to help guide selection of metrics.

¹⁶ Additionally, you can ...

- Use insight from the book *Innovate Incisively: Gain Impact. Save Time* to ...
 - Guide and extend your use of the framework.
 - Learn and benefit from other applications and aspects of Direct Outcomes and other techniques, skills, and tools.
- Acquire a copy of *Innovate Incisively: Gain Impact. Save Time*. – as an electronic download – via a link on the page <http://ThomasJBuckholtz.wordpress.com> .
- Contact Thomas J. Buckholtz via ...
 - E-mail at TomBuckholtz@aol.com .
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