



Innovation trees and branches

Tool for exploring patterns of incremental and radical innovation in organizations

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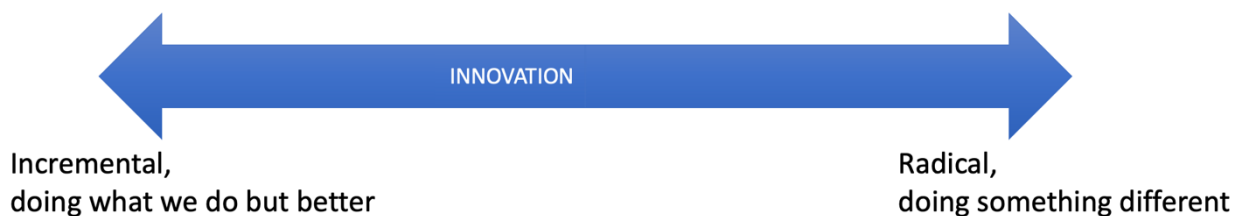
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Managing Innovation

Tool: Mapping types of innovation

Purpose: To offer a perspective on incremental and radical innovation and to identify the patterns within a particular organization's innovation portfolio. It offers the chance to review the balance between 'exploit' (incremental innovation) and 'explore' (radical innovation).

Background:

Innovation can be a small incremental change – doing what we already do but better – or it can be a radical change, doing something the world has perhaps never seen before. We can plot different types of innovation along a simple spectrum of novelty from incremental through to radical.



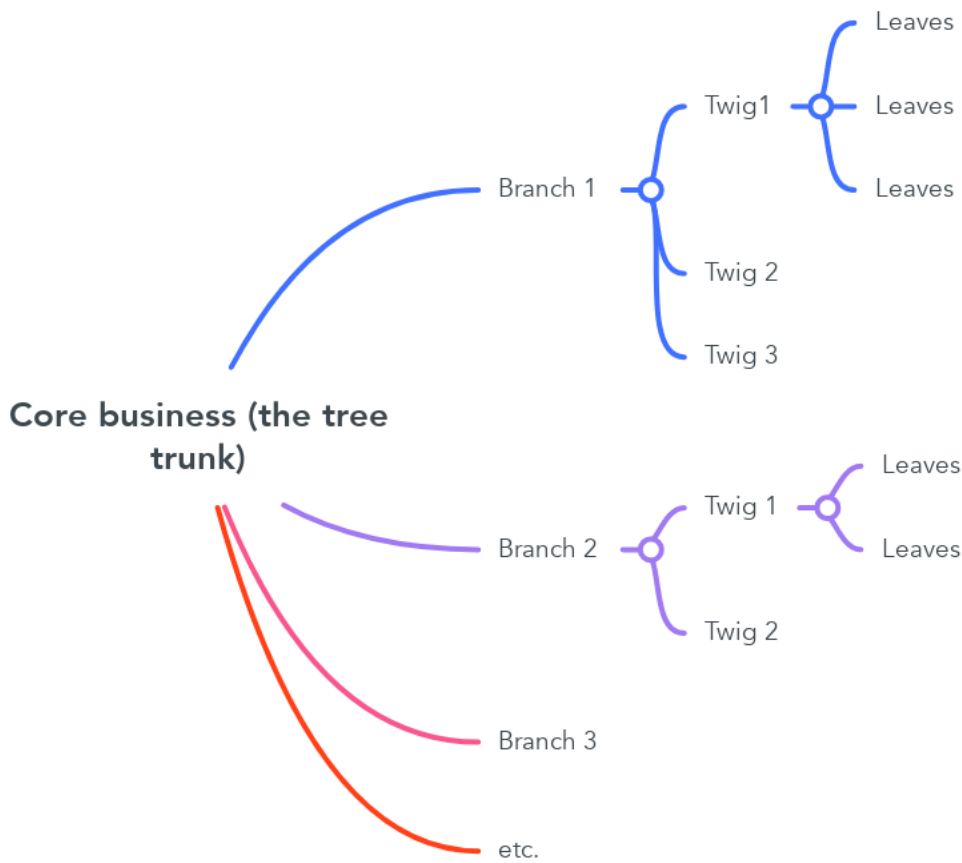
Tool description

One way we can represent this is to imagine innovations as branches and twigs on a tree. Sometimes there is a major new branch, from which eventually many smaller twigs will grow and on them individual leaves. New big branches represent radical innovations, twigs and leaves represent larger and smaller derivative innovations.

Use this simple template to help analyse the pattern of incremental and radical innovation. It can help focus strategic questions like whether we are too reliant on old growth and have no new branches growing? In innovation terms do we have new sources of growth and strong branches which can open up space for derivative incremental improvements – the Mk 2, 3, 4 models or the process enhancements? Or do we have too much foliage (leaves and twigs) which are blocking the sunlight from the rest of the tree and stopping it from growing in new directions? Does our tree need pruning? In innovation terms do we have too much incremental innovation which takes our attention and resources so we have no scope for new growth?



To use the tool, create a MindMap and put the main branches as key nodes. Then add the incremental variants as twigs and leaves, as below.



An example might be a company like 3M; a much simplified tree map for them might look like this:

Major branches	Twigs	Leaves
Sandpaper	Wet or dry Different sizes Sheets and pads	Different grades of grit particles

PostIt notes	Different sizes and shapes	Different colours, thicknesses Different images and customisable features
Recording media	Tapes Later discs of varying sizes Different application targets – computer data, voice and music recording, video tape, etc.	Different sizes and packaging
Adhesive masking tape and later Scotch tape	Different sizes Different applications for different users Dispensers and delivery options	Different colours, thicknesses Different images and customisable features