
Book Review

***Design Thinking for the Greater Good: Innovation in the Social Sector*, by Jeanne Liedtka, Randy Salzman, and Daisy Azer**

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Trying to solve problems in organizations has traditionally involved management defining problems, recruiting experts to do research and analysis, and then presenting possible solutions and recommendations to the organization. This approach is referred to as Innovation I Process. Authors Liedtka, Salzman & Azer (2017) advocate identification and effective solutions stemming from a more holistic approach they call Design Thinking Innovation II Process. This systematic approach includes many stakeholders from management, all relevant employees, as well as the consumers or end users.

Rather than top-down management identifying a problem and soliciting expert opinion for solutions, Innovation II Process values and includes diverse key stakeholders equally from the start. Together they collaborate openly to identify root causes for problems, brainstorm all solutions, and then take what they learn from the synergy of an inclusive approach to drill down to a few innovative initiatives for effective change. There is power in using such a diverse group to identify issues and creatively problem solve. This makes it possible for a multiple dimension approach to a problem, as well as an open, noncritical brainstorm process to identify many possible solutions that may not be identified through a more linear approach. After the brainstorming, multifaceted solutions provide more complete answers (Liedtka et.al., 2017).

The effectiveness of Innovation II as way to solve problems is illustrated in ten case studies covering a spectrum of service industries from health services, government agencies, community initiatives, and educational settings. From a British community struggling for solutions to rejuvenate its economy, to the designing of an assisted living center for people with autism, to a remote hospital trying to identify critical needs of their patients to save lives and give support, Innovation II provided unique and effective solutions (Liedtka et.al., 2017). These studies illustrate the effectiveness of Innovation II to gaining a more complete picture of the problem and to stimulate innovated solutions from diverse perspectives. The Innovation II process contributes a richness and common-sense dynamic missing from the traditional, more linear, top-down analysis and solutions.

The book concludes with guidelines on how to implement the five phases of the design thinking process: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. This innovated approach takes problem solving from one-dimensional problem solving to a three-dimensional approach, with the additional insights that come from multiple perspectives (Liedtka et.al., 2017).

The critical question is how can the Innovation II design thinking process be applied using groups of diverse stakeholders in our online educational environment to clarify the real problems and provide innovative solutions? Who are the diverse stakeholders in our organization that should be included in this problem identification and solving process? What problems challenging online higher education environment could be solved with this dynamic approach?