

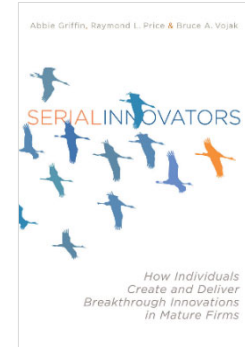
SERIAL INNOVATORS

How Individuals Create and Deliver Breakthrough Innovations in Mature Firms

by Abbie Griffin, Raymond L. Price & Bruce A. Vojak

(Stanford University Press; May 30, 2012)

“Serial Innovators zeros in on the cutting-edge thinkers who repeatedly create and deliver breakthrough innovations and new products in large, mature organizations. These employees are organizational powerhouses who solve consumer problems and substantially contribute to the financial value of their firms.”



Summary

In this pioneering study, authors Abbie Griffin, Raymond L. Price, and Bruce A. Vojak detail who these Serial Innovators (SIs) are and how they develop novel products, ranging from salt-free seasonings to improved electronics in companies such as Alberto Culver, Hewlett-Packard, and Procter & Gamble. Based on interviews with over 50 serial innovators and an even larger pool of their co-workers, managers and human resources teams, the authors reveal key insights about how to better understand, emulate, enable, support, and manage these unique and important individuals for long-term corporate success. Interestingly, the book finds that serial innovators are instrumental both in cases where firms are aware of clear market demands, and in scenarios when companies take risks on new investments, creating a consumer need.

For over 25 years, research on innovation has taken the perspective that new product development can be managed like any other (complex) process of the firm. While a highly structured and closely supervised approach is helpful in creating incremental innovations, this book finds that it is not conducive to creating breakthrough innovations. The text argues that the drive to routinize innovation has gone too far; in fact, so far as to limit many mature firms' ability to create breakthrough innovations. In today's economy, with the future of so many large firms on the line, this book is a clarion call to businesses to rethink how to nurture and thrive on their innovative workforce.

Major themes and insights

- How SI contributions differ from those of others
- How SIs operate within the organization
- What characteristics differentiate SIs from others
- How to identify and develop SIs
- How SIs are managed most effectively

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- Introduction: Serial Innovators and Why They Matter
- Ch 1: Breakthrough Innovation in Mature Firms
- Ch 2: The Processes by Which Serial Innovators Innovate
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- Ch 4: Navigating the Politics of Breakthrough Innovation
- Ch 5: Characteristics of Serial Innovators
- Ch 6: Identifying and Developing Serial Innovators
- Ch 7: Managing Serial Innovators for Impact
- Ch 8: Love Letters to Our Customers: Serial Innovators, Potential Serial Innovators, and All Those with and for Whom They Work
- A: Interview Suggestions for Identifying Potential Serial Innovators

Audiences

- Proven SIs
- Aspiring future SIs
- Colleagues of SIs
- Managers of SIs and aspiring SIs
- Technical executives (VPs of engineering, R&D)
- Business executives (CEOs, COOs and presidents)
- Human resource managers
- Technology students interested in innovation

About the authors

Abbie Griffin holds the Royal L. Garff Presidential Chair in Marketing at the University of Utah's David Eccles School of Business. A former editor of the *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, Griffin's research investigates how to measure and improve the process of new product development.

Raymond L. Price holds the William H. Severns Chair of Human Behavior in the College of Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and is the Co-Director of the Illinois Foundry for Innovation in Engineering Education. He has held management positions at Allergan, Boeing, and Hewlett-Packard. Price is co-author of *The HP Phenomenon: Innovation and Business Transformation*.

Bruce A. Vojak is Associate Dean for Administration in the College of Engineering at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Adjunct Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering and of Industrial and Enterprise Systems Engineering. He has held positions at the M.I.T. Lincoln Laboratory, Amoco Corporation, and Motorola. Vojak serves on the Board of Directors of Midtronics, Inc.

Reviews of *Serial Innovators: How Individuals Create and Deliver Breakthrough Innovations in Mature Firms*

"Griffin, Price, and Vojak truly have written a love letter to all who pursue breakthrough innovation. By shifting our focus from an impersonal, controlled process to the many personal acts of discovery and relationships characteristic of serial innovators, the authors refreshingly bring us back to the heart of the matter: experts with the passion to overcome technical and organizational hurdles to solve real-life challenges."

—**Mary McDowell**, Executive Vice Presidents, Mobile Phones, Nokia

"Wow! A book that explains what I do and how I do it! By 'making the implicit explicit,' *Serial Innovators* not only validates my personal approach, but also gives me new ideas on how to strengthen it, enroll others, and nurture future serial innovators. Here's to giving me the courage to deliver once more!"

—**Nancy C. Dawes**, Serial Innovator and Research Fellow, Victor Mills Society, Procter & Gamble

"Written by three undisputed experts in product innovation and management, this book is extremely well researched and executed. It presents a model that perfectly complements our traditional understanding of product innovation. In *Serial Innovators* managers will find a refreshing perspective and clear guidance on how to locate, reward, and retain serial innovators within their organization."

—**Anthony Di Benedetto**, Temple University

"This book is fascinating. The concept of the serial innovator, distinct from the serial inventor or serial entrepreneur, is important. Serial innovators are a rare breed and we need to learn more about them. This book provides a first look into their nature and how to manage them. It will be extremely useful for readers who think about and work on breakthrough innovation in established companies—and who struggle with how to do it better."

—**Ginna C. O'Connor**, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and author of *Grabbing Lightning: Building a Capability for Breakthrough Innovation*

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