

ANDREW GRANT | GAIA GRANT

Best-selling co-authors of *Who Killed Creativity?*

THE INNOVATION RACE

HOW TO CHANGE A CULTURE
TO CHANGE THE GAME

WILEY

THE INNOVATION RACE

**HOW TO *CHANGE* A CULTURE
TO *CHANGE* THE GAME**

ANDREW GRANT | GAIA GRANT

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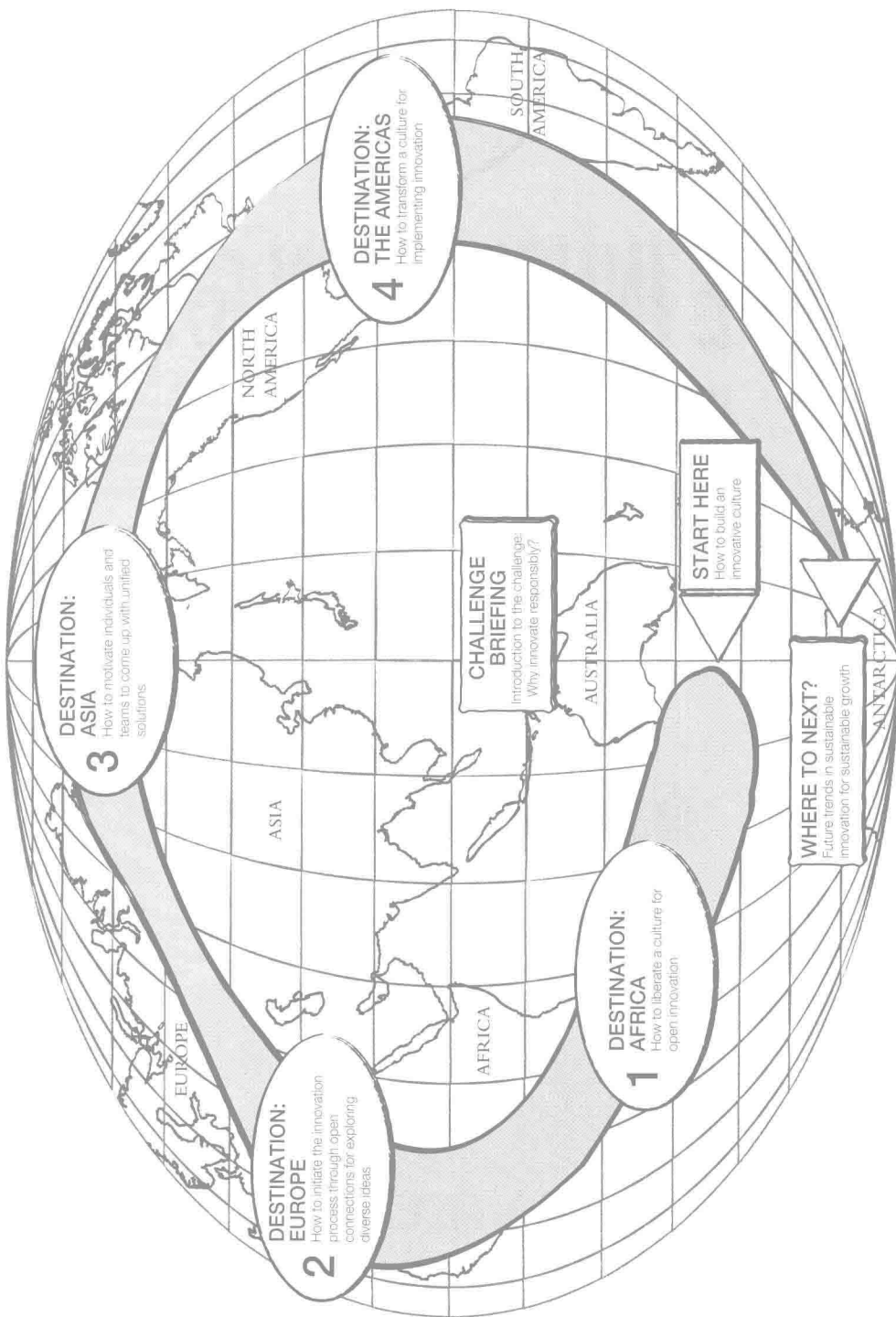
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Andrew and Gaia Grant are best-selling international authors and the founders and Directors of Tirian International Consultancy. They are a dynamic husband and wife team who have worked together for more than thirty years, initially working in the field of education and working for not-for-profit organisations, before moving on to include corporate work to top Fortune 500 companies for the last twenty years. Andrew and Gaia now focus on bringing organisational culture transformation in a wide variety of contexts—from indigenous communities through to corporate CEOs—to support authentic innovation and growth in all sectors and at all levels.

In the corporate sector Andrew and Gaia have worked with market leaders to assist with creating a sustainable innovation culture for purpose-driven innovation in a variety of regions around the world, including Allianz, Barclays, Citibank, Colgate Palmolive, Disney, Dyson, Estee Lauder, FedEx, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, Fuji Xerox, Johnson & Johnson, Mercedes Benz, Nestle, PwC, UBS, Salesforce, Singtel, and Visa.

Their work with not-for-profit development organisations has included assisting with creating a health curriculum designed to reach over 25 million people in India and worldwide (HEPI), drug education for tribal groups in the north Indian tribal area of Nagaland and on the Thai Burmese border (BWA), development in an orphanage in El Salvador (BWA), health education in Sumba Indonesia (Sumba Foundation), and teaching transformational education techniques in the Philippines (The Central Philippines University). They also work with Amnesty International, and with Chilout in advocating to get children out of immigration detention centres.

Andrew and Gaia travelled extensively and worked from a base in Asia for almost fifteen years, and their business continues to operate globally. Currently based in Sydney, Gaia oversees Tirian's international business and works with Sydney University (as a guest lecturer at the Business School, while completing research towards a PhD on creating an innovation culture for sustainability), while Andrew focuses on keynote presenting and executive facilitating. Gaia has previously completed an MSc in Creative Thinking and Grad Dip in Change Leadership (from the State University

of New York Buffalo), along with BA Dip Ed and BD (hons), while Andrew has a Dip Tch, BEd.

The Grants have designed and produced more than thirty unique interactive licensed workshops, simulation games, keynotes and resources, including an investigative simulation game based on their first international bestselling book on the topic: *Who Killed Creativity?...And How Can We Get It Back?: 7 essential strategies for making yourself, your team and your organisation more innovative*. Gaia has also authored *A Patch of Paradise* (Random House, 2002) and *The Rhythm of Life* (Transworld, 1998).

Often requested as keynote presenters and facilitators for international conferences, Andrew and Gaia have delivered feature keynotes at a number of specialist events including TEDx (Hong Kong), World Presidents Organisation (YPO) Global Edge CEO Conference (Australia), The World Innovation Conference (France), HR Summit and WorkTech conferences (Singapore), the Leadership Bootcamp (Middle East), and the American Creativity Association (USA).



In the media, Andrew and Gaia have featured in a number of different international publications, broadcasts including the Harvard Business Review, BBC, Reuters, ABC TV, Fast Company and the Wall St Journal.

For client endorsements and videos:

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(Note that full interviews with some of these people and other thought leaders can be found at www.the-innovation-race.com).

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Preface

INTO THE SHARK TANK

We travel quite extensively, and when we meet new people we are almost always first asked: Where are you from? This question usually helps them make a quick assessment of who we are based on general cultural traits.

Until recently we always answered proudly that we are from Australia, but this response now commonly evokes a fearful reaction: ‘Aargh! Sharks!’ (As daily ocean swimmers we were never especially worried about sharks—until the recent media exposure.) Sometimes the people we meet also raise anxious questions about the deadly spiders, snakes and crocodiles that Australia has become infamous for.

Since *Crocodile Dundee* and Steve Irwin put Australia on the map with their dangerous animal wrestling antics, our country has become notorious for its ‘deadly predators’. Perhaps it is no surprise that such venomous and sometimes fierce animals have survived in our harsh environment, yet we find it ironic that people are so afraid of creatures they are unlikely ever to encounter.

It’s true that sharks can be savage, but in reality you are more likely to be hit by lightning (the odds are one in 3000) or injured by a falling toilet seat (one in 10 000) than killed by a shark (one in 3.7 million). There are also more shark attacks off American beaches than in Australian waters. Australia has little experience of war or terrorism on its home soil and is ranked in the top 10 safest and most peaceful countries to live in, yet it is commonly perceived as an unusually dangerous country to visit or live in. These *perceptions* of reality, mostly based on narrowly focused media stories and movies aiming to shock and entertain, can be so much more compelling than reality itself.

The feeling of terror that can be induced by the *idea* of a shark attack might help you understand the perceptions of the contemporary innovation environment. As one shark attack victim described his ordeal, ‘It’s the fear of being eaten alive, and having no control over it.’¹

The emotionally charged shark theme was exploited by the reality TV show *Shark Tank*, a title with particular resonance in the Australian context. In this show budding entrepreneurs pitch their innovative new product to a panel of successful high-profile businesspeople: the sharks. The result is a suspenseful, gut-wrenching ride as the contestants struggle to survive the ferocious ‘attack’. The ideas pitched range widely, from home delivery catering through portable washing machines to automated toilets. One we have seen was for a surfboard with a shark repellent device attached; perhaps it is only a matter of time before someone designs a toilet safety device to reduce toilet seat malfunction injuries! Contestants range from young mums to high-tech geeks. As they prepare to make their pitch, each contestant must walk down a long, dark corridor past an equally long fish tank containing—you guessed it—sharks.

When they present their idea to the panel, the camera switches between the varying expressions of the business gurus and their nail-biting victims. Following the pitch, each panellist delivers their personal, sometimes brutal judgement on the idea and declares whether they are prepared to invest in it. Years of commitment and perseverance can, in that moment, be either dramatically vindicated or utterly crushed. Finally the contestant is filmed walking back down that corridor of sharks to be interviewed for the last time. It is at that point that it is possible to consider the impact of the event from the contestant’s perspective, to feel the competitive drive for innovation through one individual’s personal experience.

Shark Tank adopts a much more aggressive approach than past ‘inventors’ shows, in which judges were generally polite and encouraging, but it may reflect more realistically just how ruthless the field has become. Today the business environment is harsh and competitive. It’s do or die, the survival of the fittest, the cleverest idea, the best marketing approach, the biggest investment opportunity, finding that slight competitive edge in an already flooded market. Most readers will already be aware of the realities of entering a race like this, and of the sobering statistic that 90 per cent of startups fail.ⁱⁱ The drive to innovate seems to have become a mad cut-throat dash towards an apparently unachievable goal.

On our journeys we have asked a broad range of people what they think the popular phrase ‘the innovation race’ has come to mean: including psychologists and philosophers, anthropologists and academics, indigenous elders and business executives, poets and politicians, scientists and social workers. As we have listened to these varied opinions, we have realised that when you break it down, the three words in this phrase are all significant. First, ‘the’ can imply there is only one approach to innovation. Secondly, the concept of ‘innovation’ is itself often bandied around without a clear

understanding of what it means. And lastly, there is the assumption that innovation is a ‘race’. But is innovation always a ‘race’? Does it need to be a race? We use this popular phrase ‘the innovation race’ to set up a discussion for how this concept has shaped contemporary views of innovation, but the ambiguities inherent in this expression soon become clear. It might be only as you progress through to the end of the book that you will realise how important it is to deal with the contradictions and challenges that this phrase evokes.

To be equipped to navigate the potentially perilous innovation race successfully, we believe it is necessary to change *perceptions* about innovation by challenging the common metaphor. Prolific author and *Harvard Business Review* contributor Scott Anthony has told us that he is concerned that the concept of the innovation race is too closely connected to the idea of the rat race, and the notion that we are moving faster but are still ultimately standing still in ‘a race that can never be won.’ Philosopher, professor, author and past *Psychology Today* editor Sam Keen has shared with us that he believes ‘the weapons race and the nuclear race are symptoms of what can go wrong when we assume innovation is just about unbridled competitive rivalry.’ When we asked *National Geographic* resident anthropologist and award winning author, photographer and filmmaker Wade Davis about his thoughts on the concept of ‘the innovation race’, he asked us to emphasise his beautiful and incredibly powerful words from *Wayfinders* that, ‘Our economic models are projections and arrows when they should be circles. To define perpetual growth on a finite planet as the sole measure of economic well-being,’ he has challenged, ‘is to engage in a form of slow collective suicide.’

It will also be important to dive beneath the surface to look at the deeper factors involved—in particular the cultural change needed to create a climate that supports *sustainable* and *less-competitive* innovation. ‘Innovation is more of a relay race than a marathon,’ says corporate executive Claudio Viggiani, now Director of Social Responsibility at ABIHPEC in Brazil. ‘The important thing is that a GROUP of contributors, one relaying on the others is able to hand-off the baton at the right moment so the ideas can “progress” smoothly until they become applicable realities. This concept encompasses collaboration work and common objectives.’ *New York Times* science editor, columnist and author Adam Bryant shared with us his ‘two cents worth’ that, ‘The companies that will win the innovation race will have the most effective cultures—a workplace where the shared ethos and strategies for teamwork are clear.’ Sam Keen also went on to explain to us the deeper commitment he believes we need to make to get past the potentially destructive common competitive concepts, saying, ‘The most creative innovations are not beating someone else or being number one, but

learning what the world is asking of you and creating in that arena. We have to create from our values.'

In this book we will take you on a whirlwind global ride that will lift you out of your comfort zone and the 'viewer's armchair', and will help you to start looking for these deeper values and seeing things from different perspectives.

We want to show that to survive in the current 'innovation race' a passive armchair position is actually not an option. We will also challenge you to think about the implications, and some useful practical applications, at each stage of the journey so you can become more engaged in the process that we are all, knowingly or unknowingly, a part of.

The innovation challenge

So what is the main conceptual premise of this book? We aim to explore the contemporary concept of 'the innovation race'—to find out who 'wins', who 'loses', who gets 'eliminated' by the standard rules of the game and why—while also challenging this metaphor to see if it provides the best basis for sustainable growth and development that benefits all. We will then explore some potential alternatives as we progress through the book.

Research has revealed that when organisations innovate there is typically a tension between the need for open discovery of new ideas for growth (*exploration*) and maintaining and developing existing systems for stability (*exploitation*). This tension leads to a paradox that can either frustrate or fuel the innovation process, depending on how the potential conflict is dealt with.ⁱⁱⁱ We plan to unpack some of the key factors underlying this tension to reveal how they can be better managed for long-term innovation success.^{iv}

In Part I, we introduce some important concepts we have developed as foundations for the book to prepare you for the journey:

- **Innovation with purpose:** We start with the concepts of *purpose-driven* and *sustainable innovation*—that is, how to innovate with a clear purpose in mind for better connection, more authenticity and long-term viability for the organisation, society and the planet.
- **Innovation for real growth:** Once these needs are effectively balanced we believe it is possible to achieve *transformational innovation*—that is, innovation that effectively manages the tension between exploration and exploitation and uses this dynamic energy to drive authentic growth on all levels for all people.
- **Innovation applications:** These innovation principles can then be applied effectively by aligning the right mode of innovation with the right culture change at the right time through *situational innovation*.

In this section we will also discuss how to develop the right mindset to prepare for the innovation process, and how to understand and incorporate the different elements of the innovation process to launch on the journey.

In Part II we look at four key paradoxical pairings related to the *exploration/exploitation* tension that have been identified as needing to be resolved at each stage of the innovation process (the successful management of these paradoxes ensures the culture for innovation is *purpose-driven*):

1. **Control (*exploitation*) vs Freedom (*exploration*)^v**: For creating a solid, long-term foundation for innovation through questioning assumptions, exploring ambiguities and sparking curiosity and imagination
2. **Focus (*exploitation*) vs Openness (*exploration*)^{vi}**: For enabling ideation and supporting productive new ideas
3. **Individualism (*exploitation*) vs Group Engagement (*exploration*)^{vii}**: For pulling together diverse individual ideas and integrating them into united solutions
4. **Stability (*exploitation*) vs Flexibility (*exploration*)^{viii}**: For testing and prototyping potential solutions and working through to implementation

At each of these stages we will be challenging you to consider some new *stretch concepts*, which are designed to stretch you beyond standard ways of thinking about innovation through synthesising the paradoxes. So at the first stage, rather than choosing control *or* freedom, for example, we recommend considering the stretch concept of *guided freedom*. This concept incorporates the need for both direction *and* empowerment simultaneously. Learning to continually balance the tensions of these paradoxes effectively can help create a sustainable culture that supports innovation over the long term.

Who should read this book?

This book is aimed at leaders interested in building up a contemporary global perspective on innovation, as well as those seeking practical ideas on how to create an organisational culture that best supports innovation. We have been conscious of the need to balance pertinent deeper principles and practical applications. We present ideas that are both strategic and ‘hands on’—a critical combination, we believe, for effective leaders.

We are confident there will be important takeaways for the realists and pragmatics as well as the idealists and altruists among our readers. Leaders today need to synthesise these critical opposed yet complementary skillsets: they need the practical skills to deal with immediate threats and maintain

the status quo, but they also need to be visionary enough to rethink the future and conceive of better ways of doing things for long-term survival.

What are some immediate takeaways for the realists and pragmatists? These include tools for surviving the current innovation challenges by building a solid culture of innovation, and this means identifying the roadblocks and detours as well as the fast-forward strategies needed to stay relevant. For the idealists and altruists, the longer-term implications include strategies for sustainable transformational innovation through deeper culture change. All this means challenging the typical assumption that innovation is about designing bigger, sleeker and faster products and services, and exploring instead how it can bring about creative culture change for all of society.

Enjoy the journey!

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