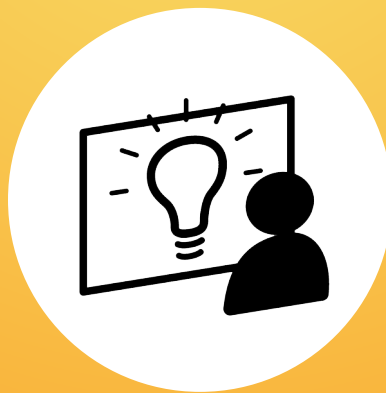# 3

POWERFUL HABITS

OF SUCCESSFUL **INNOVATORS**

Game Thinking

THE
INNOVATOR'S
CHEATSHEET

3 Powerful Habits that separate mega-successful innovators from also-rans

How do innovative projects that break through actually come to life? What separates the mega-successful innovators who create these products from the also-rans? What do they do EARLY ON that increases their odds of success?

After working up-close and personal with several extraordinary teams who managed to create and ship breakthrough hits, I've learned that **successful innovators share 3 powerful habits** that set them up for success. Learning and practicing these habits will help you avoid some of the most common—and costly—mistakes that smart entrepreneurs make building their products.

Some might seem counter-intuitive—but they yield long-term payoff that makes them compelling to understand and adopt.

1 Find & leverage your super-fans — then expand from that base

It turns out that when you're innovating, who you listen to matters. A LOT. By definition, successful innovations end up affecting the majority—but they NEVER start off that way. That's the paradox of innovation: the people in your "addressable market" are NOT the same people that you need to listen to when you're first bringing your ideas to life.

If you're going after a large market, start by getting feedback from a small, passionate group of early customers who are dissatisfied with current alternatives and NEED what you're offering. If you can find and delight your super-fans, you're probably on to something.

> **ACTION STEP:** Ask yourself: *"Who are my early passionate customers? What are their key characteristics and revealing behaviors? What unmet need, desire or urge do they have that my product could meet?"*

Clarify your customer hypothesis by writing down your answers here.

_____

_____

_____

_____

2 Tinker, prototype & assume your first idea might not be right

The second habit is deceptively simple—but critical for success. If you want to build a product people love, SCOPE DOWN—start prototyping and testing your assumptions uncomfortably early. Be humble—find out what's WRONG with your idea as well as what's RIGHT with it.

I've worked on dozens of promising projects—and a handful of mega-hits. Looking back, ALL the hits started with an active, experimental period of tinkering, prototyping & play-testing. There's actually a management theory called the **Stage Gate Model** that outlines this process of testing and iterating ideas. Early on, you run many small, high-learning experiments—and then by passing through a series of "gates" and "stages", the best ideas earn more development resources.

If you adopt this iterative testing process—and train yourself to think like a scientist—you'll dramatically accelerate your learning process, and move much more quickly towards product/market fit.

ACTION STEP: What's the quickest, simplest way to find out what's WRONG with your idea—as well as what's right with it?

What stripped-down prototype can you build that will maximize your learning—rather than prove your idea?

Clarify your prototype hypothesis by writing it down here.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3 Build & test your core product experience from the inside out

Now we've come to one of the most powerful secrets of Game Thinking: bringing your product to life from the inside out. Along with the first two habits, this approach will save you months of time and frustration, and dramatically accelerate your path to product/market fit.

If you want to build a product that people come back to—again and again—you need to create a compelling reason for them to return. In gaming, we call this the "Core Loop"—and successful innovators focus on nailing that Day 21 experience before they get caught up in polishing their onboarding, or designing levels of mastery.

You don't have to be building a game to create a simple, compelling Core Loop. Just stay focused on "finding the fun" (as we gamers call it)—that core value, that **pleasurable repeatable activity that gets people to come back**.

If you want to drive sustained engagement, do what successful innovators do—focus your early efforts on prototyping, testing and tuning your core product experience or Core Loop. It's not the easiest—or the sexiest—thing to design and build—but without a strong Core Loop, nothing else really matters.

ACTION STEP: What's the repeatable, pleasurable activity at the heart of your offering that pulls your customers back? What does your Day 21 customer experience look like? What will customers DO during a typical session?

Clarify your Core Loop activity by writing it down here.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please do one simple thing: right below the video leave me a comment and tell me which of these 3 success habits you are going to implement first—and why.