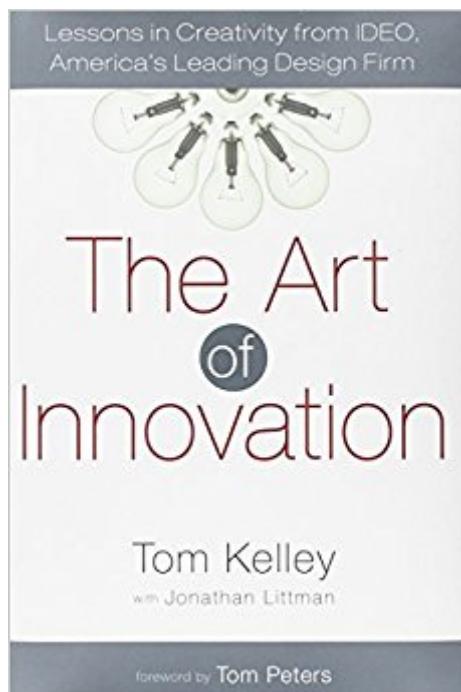


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# The Art Of Innovation: Lessons In Creativity From IDEO, America's Leading Design Firm



## Synopsis

IDEO, the widely admired, award-winning design and development firm that brought the world the Apple mouse, Polaroid's I-Zone instant camera, the Palm V, and hundreds of other cutting-edge products and services, reveals its secrets for fostering a culture and process of continuous innovation. There isn't a business in America that doesn't want to be more creative in its thinking, products, and processes. At many companies, being first with a concept and first to market are critical just to survive. In *The Art of Innovation*, Tom Kelley, general manager of the Silicon Valley based design firm IDEO, takes readers behind the scenes of this wildly imaginative and energized company to reveal the strategies and secrets it uses to turn out hit after hit. IDEO doesn't buy into the myth of the lone genius working away in isolation, waiting for great ideas to strike. Kelley believes everyone can be creative, and the goal at his firm is to tap into that wellspring of creativity in order to make innovation a way of life. How does it do that? IDEO fosters an atmosphere conducive to freely expressing ideas, breaking the rules, and freeing people to design their own work environments. IDEO's focus on teamwork generates countless breakthroughs, fueled by the constant give-and-take among people ready to share ideas and reap the benefits of the group process. IDEO has created an intense, quick-turnaround, brainstorm-and-build process dubbed "the Deep Dive." In entertaining anecdotes, Kelley illustrates some of his firm's own successes (and joyful failures), as well as pioneering efforts at other leading companies. The book reveals how teams research and immerse themselves in every possible aspect of a new product or service, examining it from the perspective of clients, consumers, and other critical audiences. Kelley takes the reader through the IDEO problem-solving method:

- > Carefully observing the behavior or "anthropology" of the people who will be using a product or service
- > Brainstorming with high-energy sessions focused on tangible results
- > Quickly prototyping ideas and designs at every step of the way
- > Cross-pollinating to find solutions from other fields
- > Taking risks, and failing your way to success
- > Building a "Greenhouse" for innovation

IDEO has won more awards in the last ten years than any other firm of its kind, and a full half-hour *Nightline* presentation of its creative process received one of the show's highest ratings. *The Art of Innovation* will provide business leaders with the insights and tools they need to make their companies the leading-edge, top-rated stars of their industries.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Crown Business; 1 edition (January 16, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385499841

ISBN-13: 978-0385499842

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 0.9 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (124 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #23,134 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #16 inÂ Books > Business & Money > Processes & Infrastructure > Operations Research #78 inÂ Books > Business & Money > Biography & History > Company Profiles #78 inÂ Books > Arts & Photography > History & Criticism > History

## **Customer Reviews**

The Art of Innovation is the story of the famous Palo Alto based design firm, IDEO. The book is easy to read and moves quickly. The author, Tom Kelley, is the brother of founder David Kelley. Tom is the General Manager and is an ex-management consultant. This is important because the book really devolves into a light treatise on business management practices. This makes sense since given Tom Kelley's responsibilities at IDEO and his background. It also explains the Tom Peter's Foreword. If you like Tom Peter's books, you will enjoy this book. If you are looking for real insights into the IDEO design process you will be disappointed. Most of the insights are of a personnel management nature, and even those are at a relatively high level. Mr. Kelley pokes more than a few veiled barbs at the slow industrial giants who simply cannot compete with the brain power and management prowess at IDEO. That may sound sarcastic, but Mr. Kelley's pride in his company often crosses that fine line into arrogance. There are a few actual projects described to point out how valuable a certain IDEO practice is. There are repeated references to IDEO's contribution to the invention of the Apple mouse and follow-up work on the Microsoft Mouse. Also, a great deal of time is spent talking about the redesign of the common shopping cart that was done in one week for a segment on Nightline. I know that IDEO has had many important clients and recent important projects. Perhaps they can't talk about them because of non-disclosure agreements. There are color pictures of some products at the beginning of each of 15 chapters but often there is no mention of those products in the text. Some black & white photographs of products and the IDEO workspaces also accompany the text. There are no diagrams or illustrations.

There are dozens of excellent books which discuss innovation. This is one of the best but don't be

misled by the title, "Lessons in creativity from IDEO, America's leading design firm." Unlike almost all other authors of worthy books on the same subject, Kelley does NOT organize his material in terms of a sequence of specific "lessons"...nor does he inundate his reader with checklists, "executive summaries", bullet points, do's and don'ts, "key points", etc. Rather, he shares what I guess you could characterize as "stories" based on real-world situations in which he and his IDEO associates solved various problems when completing industrial design assignments for their clients. "We've linked those organizational achievements to specific methodologies and tools you can use to build innovation into your own organization...[However, IDEO's] 'secret formula' is actually not very formulaic. It's a blend of methodologies, work practices, culture, and infrastructure. Methodology alone is not enough." One of the greatest benefits of the book is derived from direct access to that "blend" when activated. It is extremely difficult to overcome what James O'Toole characterizes, in *Leading Change*, as "the ideology of comfort and the tyranny of custom." He and Kelley seem to be kindred spirits: Both fully understand how and why truly innovative thinking encounters so much resistance within organizations. Whereas O'Toole suggests all manner of strategies to overcome that resistance, Kelley concentrates on the combination ("blend") of ingredients which, when integrated and then applied with both rigor and passion, may (just may) produce what Jobs once referred to as "insanely great."

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