

# Making innovation happen

How Silver Bullet can help

The Silver Bullet Machine Manufacturing Company Limited

**“Unlike cutting costs, or making an acquisition, innovation does not happen just because the chief executive wills it. Indeed, it is confoundingly difficult to come up with new ideas year in, year out - especially brilliant ones. Underneath the gurus’ diagrams, lists and charts, most of the available answers seem to focus on two strengths that are difficult to create by diktat: a culture that looks for new ideas, and leaders who know which ones to back.”**

***The Economist, 4<sup>th</sup> December 1999, page 90***

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# What's the problem?

**Many organisations are very good at generating ideas, but have great difficulty in making something happen, in managing an idea from its genesis right through to full implementation.**

**If this sounds like your organisation, then read on...for we can help.**

**Silver Bullet is a specialist consulting firm dedicated to innovation in all its aspects, from the creative act of discovering new ideas in the first place, to making them happen for real.**

**This particular booklet focuses very much on 'making it happen' rather than creativity and idea generation (we have others that focus on these), so to start with, let's just take a moment to make sure we're all speaking the same language...**

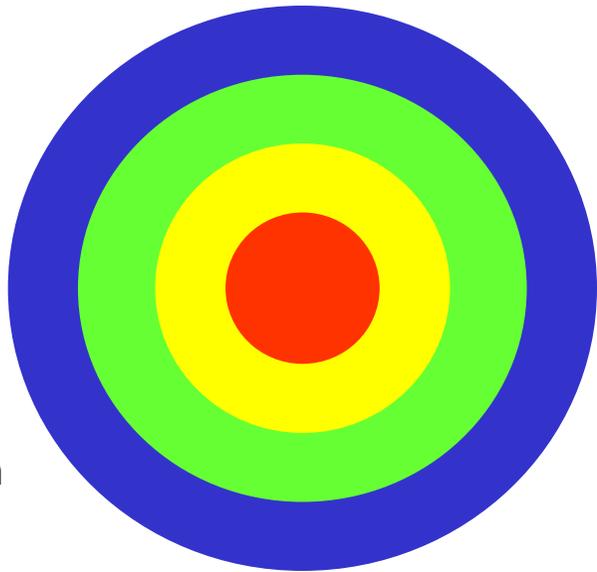
*Innovation is a process...*

 Idea generation

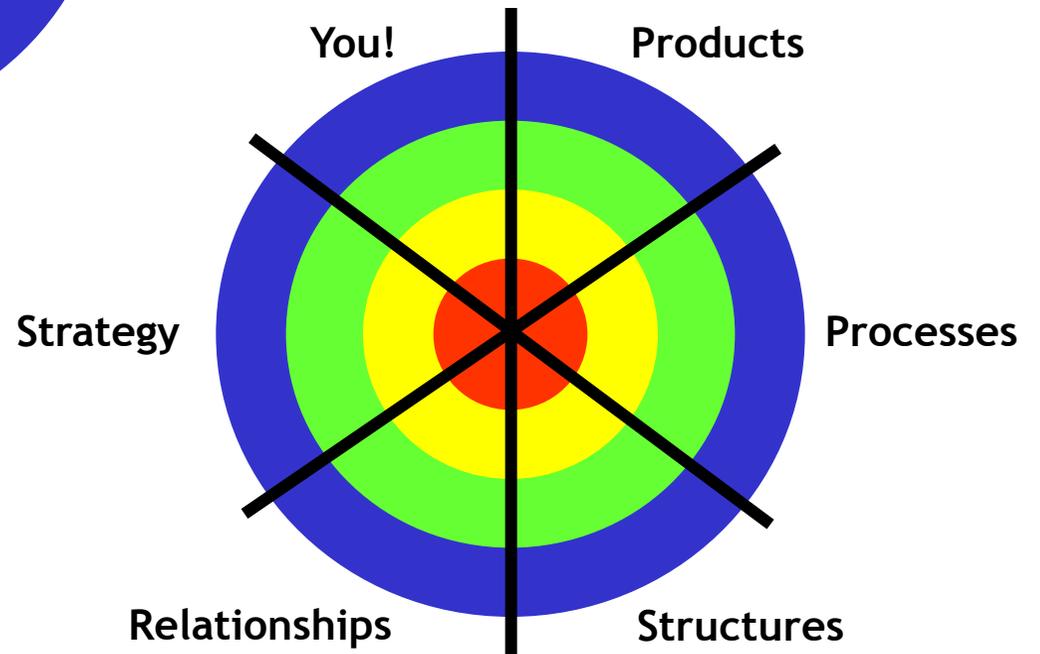
 Evaluation

 Development

 Implementation



*...applied to a number of domains*



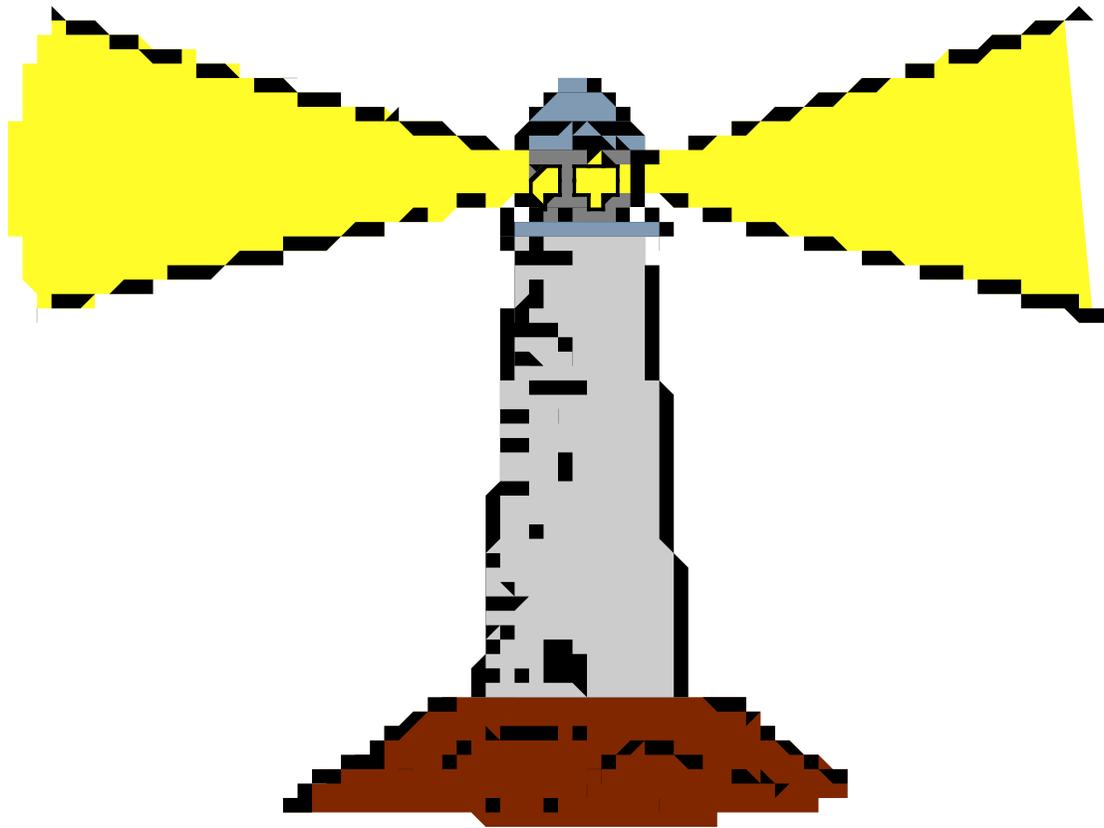
# What are we talking about?

At Silver Bullet, we believe that the term ‘innovation’ refers to all the processes and activities represented on the facing page. In general, ideas must first be generated, and then evaluated to determine which warrant further investment to take them into development and finally implementation.

This four-stage process is most easily recognised in the context of new product development; it also applies to many other endeavours such as process improvement, organisational design, relationship management (not just with customers), and strategic planning too.

In building a culture of innovation, the objective is to make innovation ‘the normal way we do things around here’. To do this, you seek to make innovation:-

- **deliberate** - so that we can have confidence we can do it ...
- **systematic** - by using a well-defined, rigorous, process ...
- **transferable** - in which we can all participate, not just the ‘creatives’ ...
- **repeatable** - so that we can do it again and again, and again and again ...
- **safe** - without betting either our organisation, or our personal career.



## But how do you do it?

Unlike idea generation - which can be done by individuals, but is more powerful and productive in small groups - evaluation, and even more so development and implementation, require co-ordinated and consistent effort across the organisation.

So, to make it happen, you need two 'big things' to be in place:-

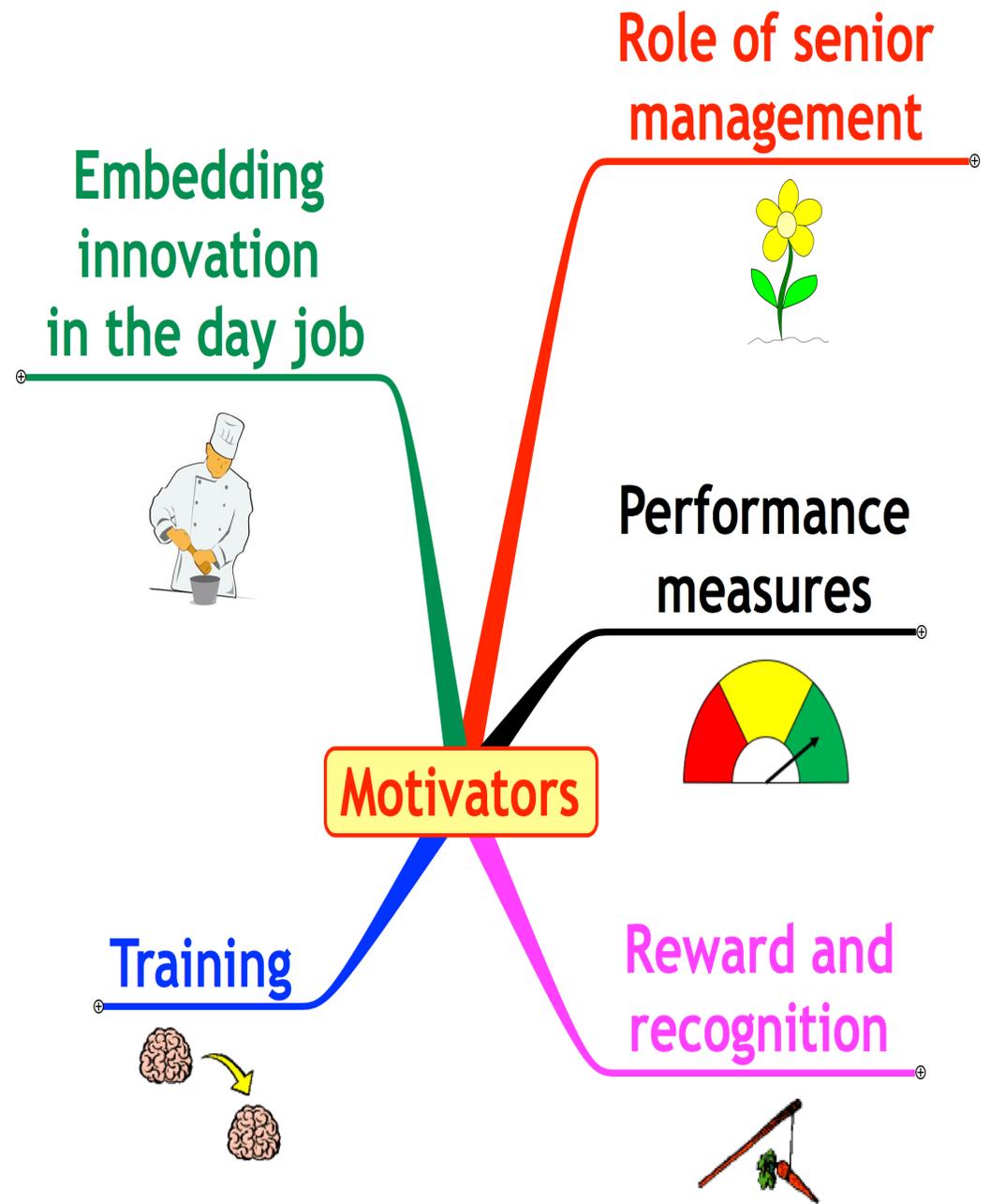
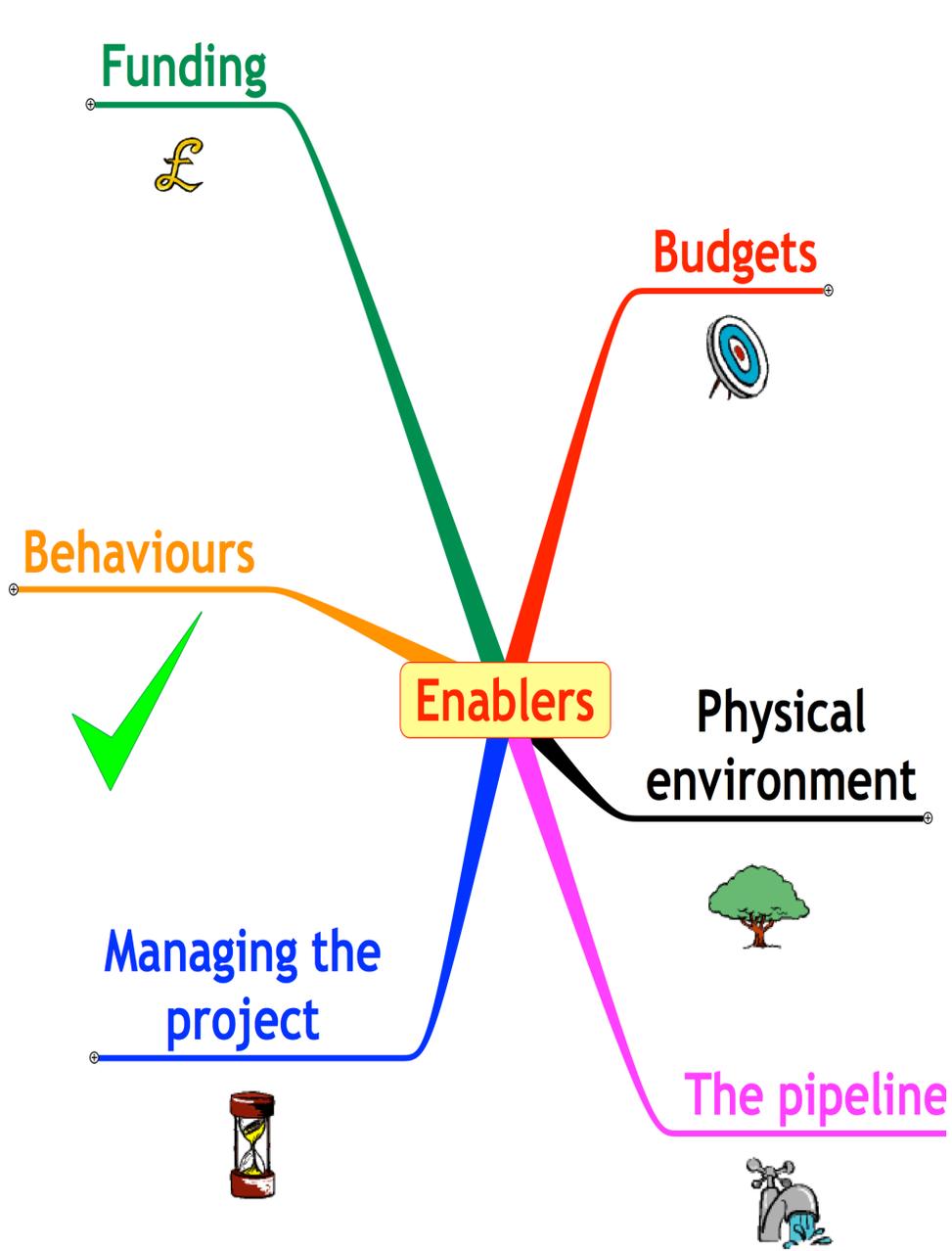
**a fundamental commitment**

**financial 'headroom' to support the investment, and underwrite the risk.**

The fundamental commitment is necessary because to make innovation happen requires energy, enthusiasm, resources, determination and leadership. Innovation is not one of those things that can be 'quick-fixed' - if it was, it wouldn't be a problem. So, if that fundamental commitment isn't there, if you are looking for a quick fix, or just wanting to follow today's fashion, don't do it. Just relax and accept your position in the second division.

Making it happen also costs money, and requires the wise management of risk. So, if you're up against the wall financially, you might not be able to sustain it. It might just be too late.

But if you do have the commitment, and some financial headroom, then you are in good shape to address the range of other things that need to be in place to make it happen for real.



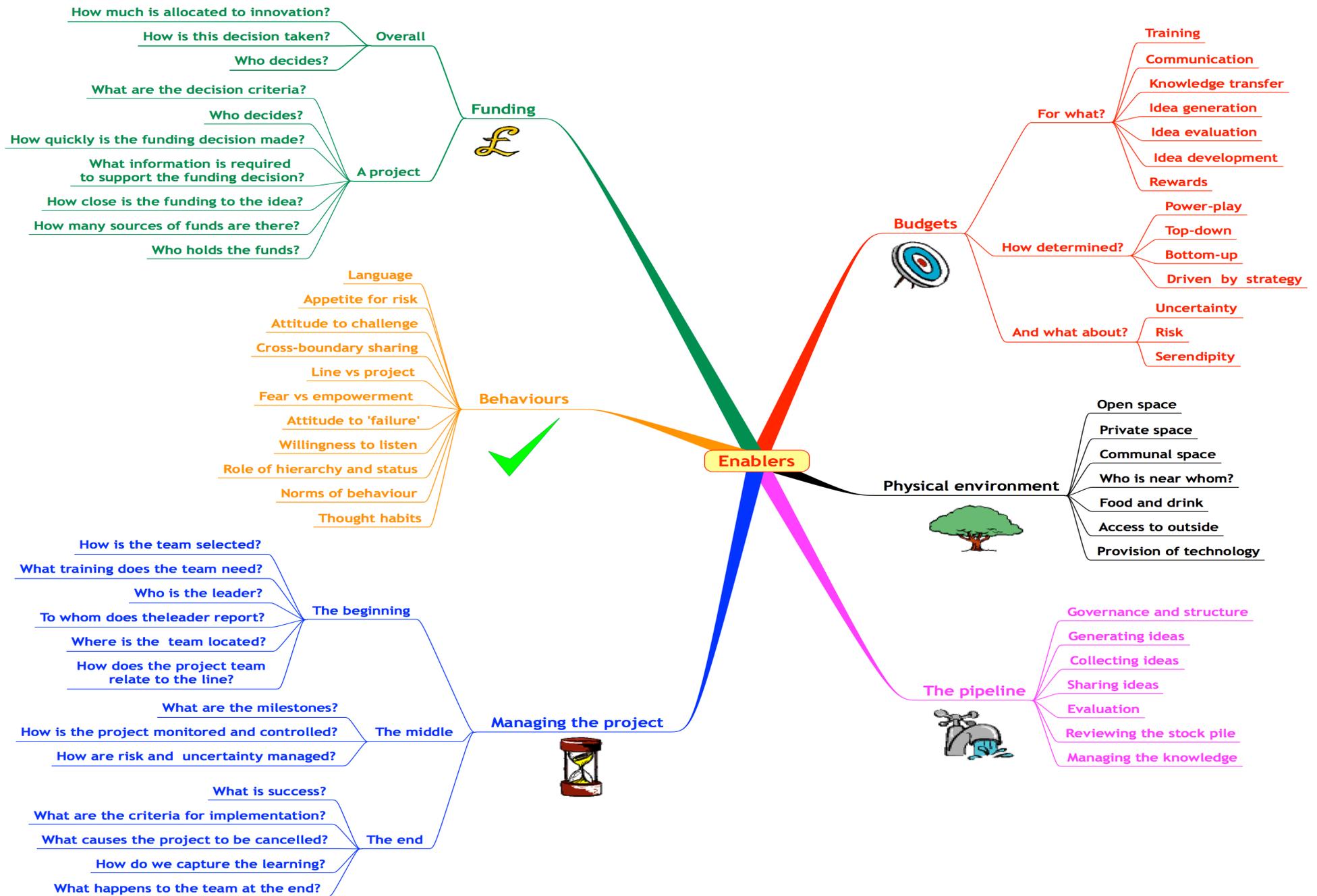
# What do innovative organisations get right?

If you look at really innovative organisations - organisations that can create, and exploit, new ideas again and again and again and again - and compare them to more ordinary, duller organisations, you will discover something very important. **Innovative organisations don't do one, two or even three special, 'creative' things that the dull ones don't. Rather, the innovative organisations do a whole host of things slightly differently, and all in harmony** - a harmony which encourages, nurtures, recognises and rewards innovation.

A dull company promotes its managers for doing a good job; an innovative one also promotes its managers for doing a good job - but in their case, their definition of 'good' includes taking risks, encouraging ideas in others, and showing an ability to learn from mistakes - a much richer definition of 'good' than simply beating this quarter's profit target.

A dull company has a process for allocating funds to new projects. So too does an innovative company - but in the innovative company, the decision will be made close to the origin of the idea, as quickly as possible, rather than being relayed from factory to region to division to group, and taking months in the process.

You get the idea: both organisations are doing what might appear on the surface to be the same things - the difference lies more deeply, especially as regards key **enablers**, which provide people with the right tools and context, and some key **motivators**, which encourage people to participate and give of their best.



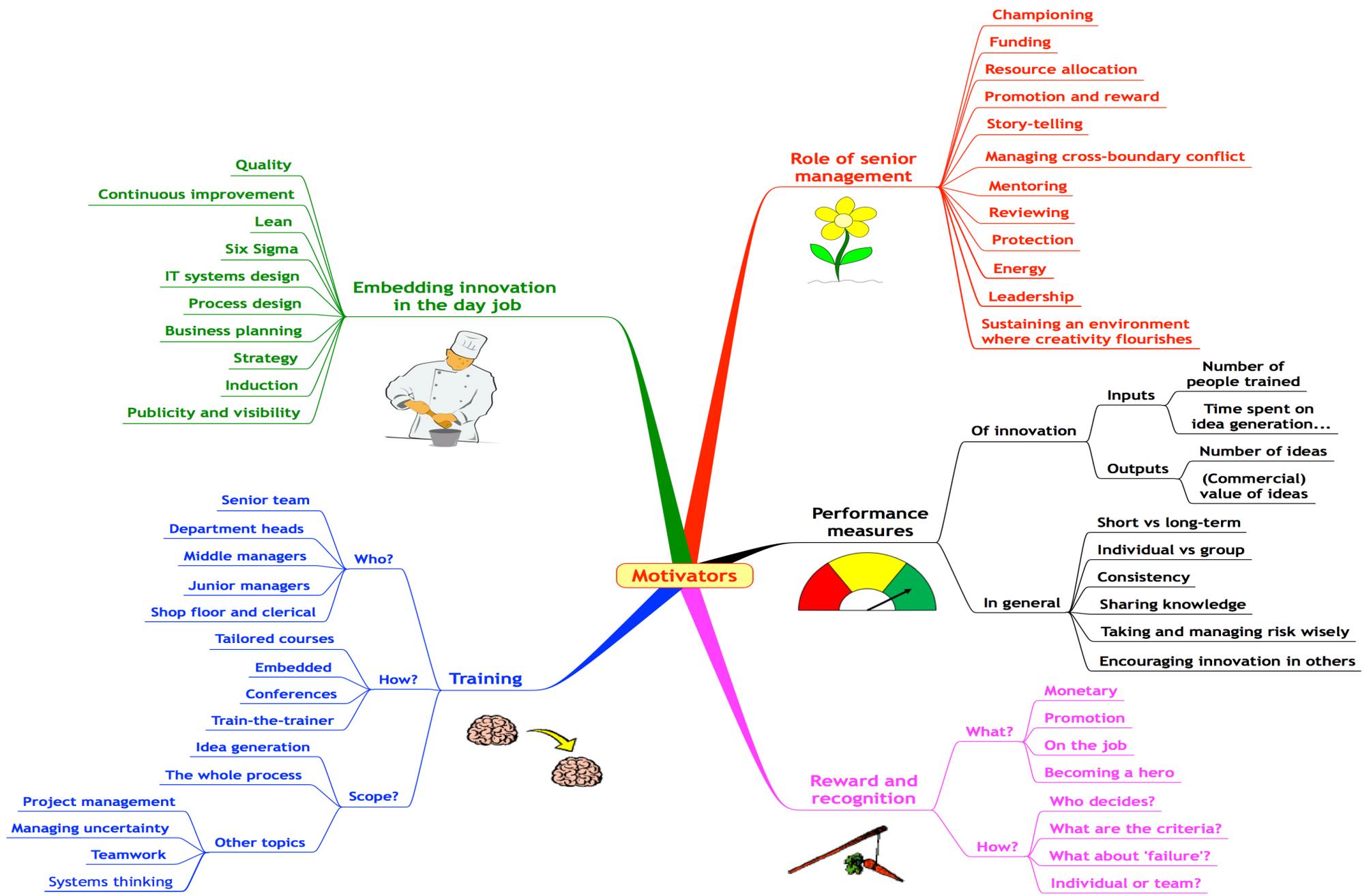
# Enablers

Idea generation is essentially an activity originated by an individual, and fostered by small groups. Making an idea actually happen is very different, for it requires the support, co-operation and resources of the whole organisation. And if that support, and those resources, aren't there, innovation will die, however many ideas are originated.

The check list shown on page 7 identifies some of the key **enablers** that the organisation must provide to equip people with the organisational support to allow innovation to flourish. **Funds** must be available to support innovative projects, and they must be easily accessible to those who needs them; at a lower level, **budgets** must explicitly recognise activities such as training, idea generation workshops, and the evaluation of ideas, otherwise someone will say “that can't happen because it's not in the budget”.

The **physical environment** can have a significant impact on creativity, and it is also enormously valuable to have disciplined **pipeline management** systems to log and track all ideas, so that nothing gets lost. Some line-based organisations have difficulty **managing projects**, for people fear being taken out of the line for 'special projects', and - of course - our individual and collective **behaviours** have a significant effect too.

In an innovative organisation, all these enablers **deliberately support and foster innovation**; in an uninnovative organisation, each of these individual has been designed, or has evolved, in its own right, and without having the encouragement of innovation as an overarching objective. So it's no surprise that they don't.



# Motivators

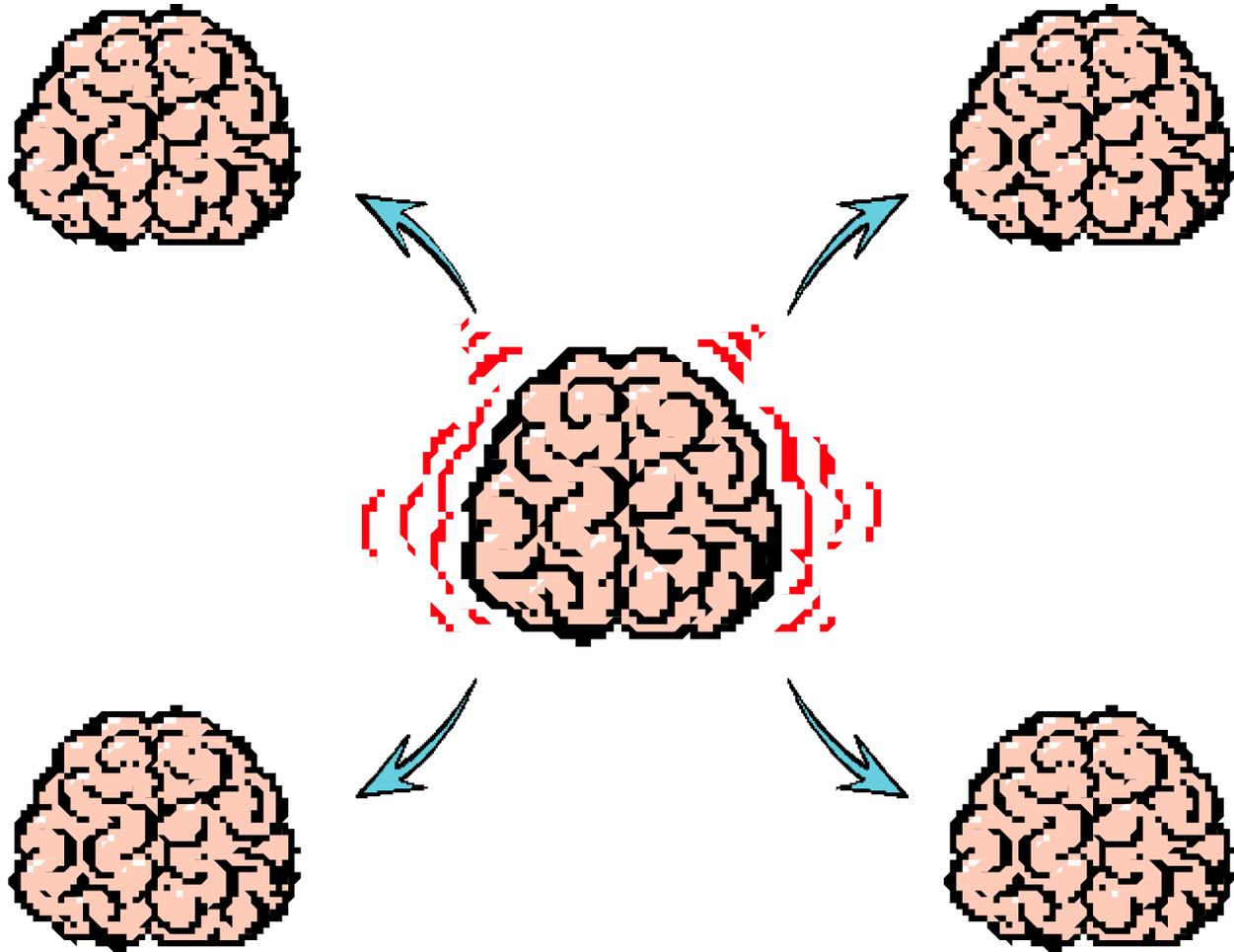
The check-list on page 9 shows the main **motivators** - those features of the organisation that actively motivate and encourage individuals to suggest ideas, and do something with them.

**Training** is key - training in deliberate creativity, in wise evaluation and in running and managing projects. These are skills that can be learnt, and everyone's performance is substantially enhanced as a result. The training must not take place not in a vacuum - how often have you heard, or thought, "that was a fun course, but when I get back to the day-job nothing happens"? To be effective, creativity and innovation must be **integrated into the day-job itself** - and this is a lot easier to achieve than is often thought.

**Senior managers** must 'walk the talk', and sincerely too, and of course the organisation's **performance measures** must recognise the importance creativity and innovation, and people must be **recognised and rewarded** accordingly.

As with the enablers, all the elements of the motivators exist in all organisations. But in an innovative organisation, they have been **deliberately designed to support and foster innovation**; in an uninnovative organisation, each of these individual processes has been designed in its own right, and without having the encouragement of innovation as an overarching objective. So it's no surprise that they don't.

And fixing things isn't 'rocket science'. All that is required is a commitment to do it, and the successful management of a series of well-defined projects to ensure that all the enablers and motivators actively encourage creativity and innovation, rather than inadvertently block them.

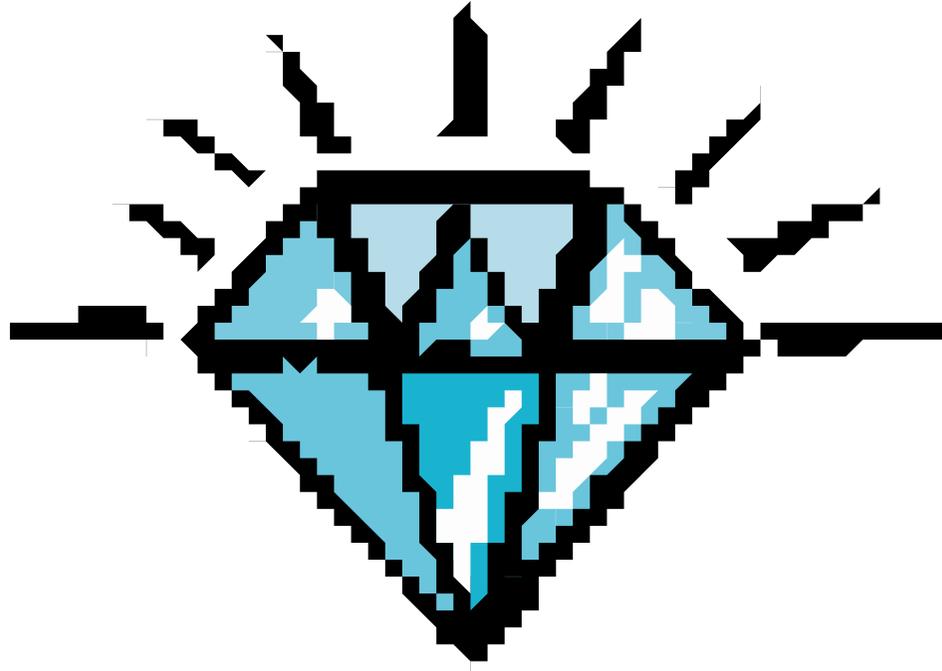


# How Silver Bullet can help

We are expert in all aspects of innovation, from the process underlying the generation of new ideas, to the building of the culture of innovation in which everything can work, and work well.

In particular, we would be pleased to work with you:-

- **To build the commitment to do it.** Championship for a programme is far more robust when built upon the support of colleagues. We have much experience working at Director level, and we can help build - and maintain - the senior commitment required to secure success.
- **To design and carry out the diagnostic as to how to make innovation happen.** As experienced consultants, we have in-depth knowledge of many of the items detailed in the check-lists shown on pages 7 and 9. We can therefore make a major contribution to identifying, precisely, how to make innovation happen.
- **To train, and train-the-trainer.** A fundamental aspect of making innovation happen is equipping people with the tools, techniques and confidence to do it. Part of this is training, so we are very willing to share our knowledge through training and train-the-trainer programmes.
- **To contribute to project direction.** We have much experience of directing and managing large programmes, and would be pleased to contribute to this too.

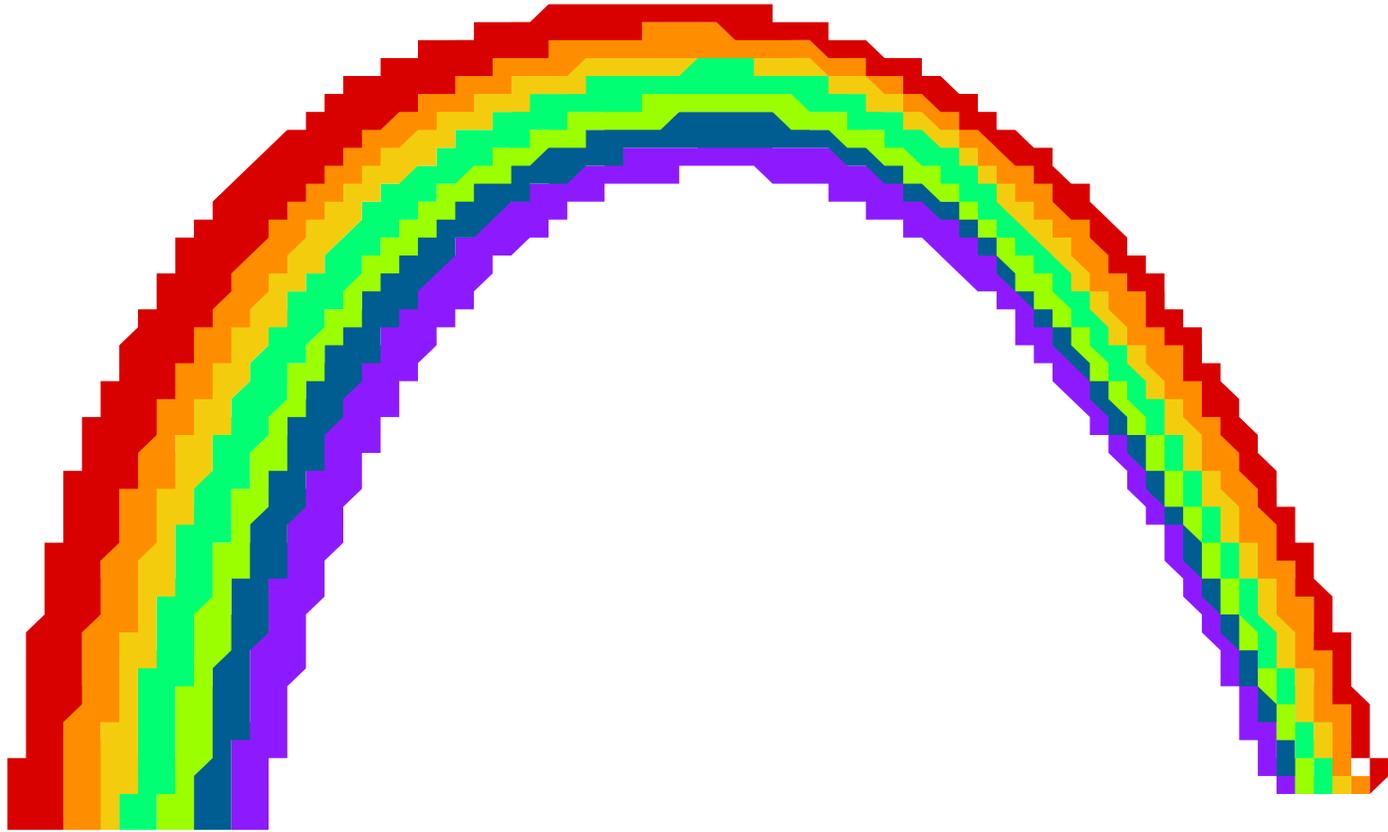


# How Silver Bullet adds value

As a niche consultancy focused exclusively on organisational innovation, we are small, and we do not operate by selling our clients large teams of bright, young, energetic - but also inexperienced and highly expensive - consultants.

Rather, our added-value is attributable to:-

- **Our willingness to share our knowledge, and transfer it to you.** Our knowledge has been built up over many years, and our approach to innovation is - truly - unique. We did not learn it from others, nor at a business school, nor from books - we invented it. Certainly, we acknowledge the work of others such as Arthur Koestler, Edward de Bono and Arthur VanGundy (to name just three); what we have done is to build on their work, add to it our extensive experience of the realities of business, and create a genuinely novel process. A process which everyone in your organisation can learn and use.
- **Our extensive experience of business, managing and change.** We have extensive experience, gained both from consulting and line management, of many aspects of business endeavour, in many sectors, both public and private. We have orchestrated, managed and led large and small projects; we know what works, and what doesn't; and we understand that what works and what doesn't is not absolute, but is sensitive to context.



## Next steps

**Thanks for reading this far!**

**We trust you have found it succinct and thought-provoking.**

**If this captures your imagination, please contact us at:**

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Idea generation,  
evaluation and  
development

# Silver Bullet

Strategy development  
and scenario planning

Making innovation  
happen

The Silver Bullet Machine Manufacturing Company Limited

## Building ultimate competitive advantage

Training and  
knowledge transfer

Building  
high-performing  
teams

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Business and  
market modelling

Conferences