Innovation and creativity often come because the environment allows or encourages it to happen rather than plans for it to happen. For the innovative project manager this “incubation” of future capability rather than only planning based upon a schedule and ROI, while seemingly counter-intuitive, is a project management tool that works.

http://pmtoolsthatwork.com/the-project-management-secret-of-innovation/

As a project manager, you may be accustomed to focusing on projects that maintain service to existing customers. In IT,
those projects are often referred to as “keep the lights on” or operations projects because they are focused on maintaining or making incremental improvements to existing services for existing customers.

So what happens when you find yourself managing a project in uncharted territory? Last summer, Duke University embarked on a new mode of online course delivery called MOOCs (Massive, Open, Online Courses) through a partnership with Coursera (see https://www.coursera.org/duke and http://today.duke.edu/2012/07/coursera).

The project team for this initiative was comprised of professionals from Duke’s Center for Instructional Technology and the Office of Information Technology. We were encouraged from the start to be creative in applying our current experiences to this new form of course delivery. As a project manager, I gave a lot of thought to how I might apply IT project management techniques I traditionally have used to this new paradigm. Those familiar with current literature on project management and innovation will recognize the hallmarks of Agile project planning in this handout.

We applied many of the Agile techniques to our experience in building Coursera courses: self-directed team, iterative planning, Incremental improvements to successive courses based on experience and feedback, etc.

As we move forward into planning a second year of courses, we will continue to utilize an Agile approach until we reach a point where course delivery assumes a more operational aspect.

For a comparison of how the traditional project manager role differs from a more Agile approach, see the compare below.

### Project Manager vs. Project Leader

**Traditional Project Manager:**
- Manages scope, time, resources through sequential project planning
- Focuses on monitoring and compliance
- Is task-driven and process focused
- Strives to protect project against change

**Innovation Project Leader:**
- Facilitates creativity and innovation by enabling team self-direction
- Utilizes an adaptive, iterative planning process
- Focuses on rapid prototyping and incremental delivery
- Expects requirement will change over time through stakeholder feedback
Selected Online Resources

Project Management and Innovation:
http://wiki.nasa.gov/cm/blog/waynehalesblog/posts/post_1236033108908.html

33 Selected Blogs about Innovation, Project Management and 2.0:

The Spectrum of Innovation in IT Project Management:

Barriers to Innovation in Project Management:
http://pmstudent.com/barriers-to-innovation-in-project-management/

InnovationManagement.se:
http://www.innovationmanagement.se

Want More Information?

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