

**GIJS VAN WULFEN**



# ONLINE

**PRACTICAL METHODS, TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS TO KICK-START YOU 100% ONLINE**

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and Rody Vonk**

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# ONLINE INNOVATION PRACTICAL METHODS, TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS TO KICK-START YOU 100% ONLINE

**GIJS VAN WULFEN**

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# ONLINE INNOVATION

If you would have asked me at the beginning of 2020 whether you could effectively innovate 100% online, I would have said, 'NO WAY!' And now I know I was so wrong. Yes, you can innovate your organisation 100% online. You can devise new products, services, experiences, processes, and business models without any doubt. Since 2020 we, and many others with us, have proven this in practice.

Of course, it was quite a struggle to bring our FORTH innovation methodology 100% online, after its being employed as a 'best practice' for initiating innovation offline for 15 years. We made all the beginner mistakes ourselves. We copied the methodology one-on-one from offline to online with eight-hour workshops a day, which was utterly boring. We experimented with online tools, which in those days, could not handle 25 people brain dumping their ideas simultaneously on the digital collaboration board. Everyone's screen froze, and we had to break away from the online brainstorm. And most of us were untrained in handling those online tools, so each time, the plenary session had to be stopped to explain again 'how to vote', for example, on the digital collaboration board. We had a steep learning curve and managed to work out an inspiring online process for the FORTH innovation method, which delivers great results when working remotely.

For almost all organisations, the transition to remote work in 2020 and 2021 was a restrictive work-from-home one that they hadn't been planning to do. They didn't have the communication or collaboration policies, the online tools, nor a working-online culture in place. All at a time when innovation was needed more than ever to deal with completely new market circumstances. As we saw people struggle, making the common mistakes we did too, we decided to write this practical book to guide people to become great online innovators.

ONLINE INNOVATION inspires you with effective online collaboration tools, techniques, methods, and rules to kick-start yourself to innovate your work and your organisation completely online. That's why this is a practical 'HOW-INNOVATE-ONLINE' book. After describing ten common pitfalls, we share some great tools and techniques that work in practice. We discuss the 'Achilles' heel' of innovating online and present you ten methodologies you can use for online innovation in a hands-on way. The Lightning Decision Jam, the Design Sprint, and the FORTH innovation method will be highlighted, and we work out a hybrid version of this methodology. At the end of the book, you find a systematic description of twenty-five tools and ten methods to get a clear overview at a glance to help you pick the right ones for your online innovation journey.

We hope that this book is a support for you as a consultant, coach, facilitator, manager, or student in the field of design (thinking) and innovation. We are sure that innovating online is here to stay. We see a huge increase in hybrid innovation projects, combining offline and online workshops – using all the online advantages while being personally engaged offline.

Next, there are a few people I'd like to thank specifically: my excellent online-skilled co-authors Maria Vittoria Colucci, Andrew Constable, Florian Hameister, and Rody Vonk, without whom I could never have published this book; designer Frederik de Wal for co-creating another book with me in a wonderful style; text editor John Loughlin; and publisher Bionda Dias for her support making ONLINE INNOVATION a reality.

Let's innovate online!

Gijs van Wulfen



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## CHAPTER 1



# ONLINE INNOVATION IS MORE RELEVANT THAN EVER

**New communication – collaborative tools have changed the way we think about working remotely. More and more organisations now embrace working from home, or from anywhere, and have facilitated their employees doing so. For some people, it has even become a lifestyle. They have become digital working nomads, living their dream. They work in coffee shops or co-working spaces where they rely on their wireless internet devices to do their work whenever they want. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic at the end of January, 2020, working remotely from home became a necessity for all instead of a nice option for few.**

## THE RISE OF WORKING ONLINE

For almost all organisations, the transition to remote work in 2020 was a restrictive one that they hadn't been planning to do. So, most employees were not ready for it. They didn't have the communication, the collaboration policies, or the tools. And a lot of organisations had neither a culture-of-working-online in place.

It was one big improvisation when countries went into lockdown in spring 2020. Companies started to adapt in record time to become productive in their new work-online reality. And some of them found their teams and businesses benefiting so much from the new remote setup that they started to consider remote work as an opportunity in a growing digital economy. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, it was predicted that by 2025, an estimated 70% of the workforce would be working remotely at least five days a month<sup>[1]</sup>. That percentage will probably be much higher as organisations embrace working online.

A great example is Facebook. As you can read here, Mark Zuckerberg wants Facebook to be the most forward-leaning company on remote work at their scale in ten years.

### CHART: WE ARE GOING TO BE THE MOST FORWARD-LEANING COMPANY IN REMOTE WORK.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said on May 21st, 2020, that the social media giant will start allowing many of its 50,000 employees and recruits to work from home permanently, adding to a small but growing number of tech companies that have embraced decentralized work during the coronavirus pandemic.

**'We are going to be the most forward-leaning company on remote work at our scale, with a thoughtful and responsible plan for how to do this,' Zuckerberg said in an interview. 'We're going to do it in a measured way over time.'**

**Within the next five to ten years, Zuckerberg anticipates that about 50% of Facebook's workforce will work remotely. That would mean a significant shift in the concentration of personnel that could radically alter how the company operates, as well as have an impact on the San Francisco Bay Area. That process will start with 'aggressively opening up remote hiring' – first in the United States, then elsewhere – beyond the urban hubs where Facebook has offices. 'It doesn't seem that good to constrain hiring to people who live around offices,' Zuckerberg said.**

**Facebook will also let existing employees apply to work remotely. Those who have demonstrated good**

**performance and can work remotely may then be allowed to do so permanently. Facebook has already told the vast majority of staff that they can work from home through the end of this year.**

Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/mark-zuckerberg-half-facebook-may-work-remotely-2030-n1212081>

## THE MINDSET OF PEOPLE ON WORKING ONLINE CHANGED

Working online has been seen by some people as advantageous over commuting to the office every day. A report from 2019 among 2,500 remote workers reveals the most significant benefits remote workers see in working online<sup>[2]</sup>. Having a flexible schedule and being able to work from any location are by far the main benefits.

Another study surveyed more than 4,000 people working remotely during the pandemic to determine what they think of working at home<sup>[3]</sup>. It reveals that both productivity and the work-life balance improved during the pandemic: **'Fifty-one per cent of survey respondents indicate that they have been more productive working from home during Covid-19, and 95% of respondents say productivity has been higher or the same while working remotely. And though there are many reasons why performance has improved (despite the stresses of the pandemic), some of the top reasons respondents gave for their increased productivity include:**

- ▶ Fewer interruptions (68%).
- ▶ More focused time (63%).
- ▶ Quieter work environment (68%).
- ▶ More comfortable workplace (66%).
- ▶ Avoiding office politics (55%).

According to the researchers, 'this improved productivity may help explain why **61% of workers review remote work more positively** and why 50% also say their employer views remote work favourably now. However, 37% of respondents said that they miss "nothing" about the office, and only 4% would prefer to return to the traditional office full-time.'

Isn't that amazing. Only 4% prefer the traditional office full-time. People's mindset changed, as you can also conclude from the quotes of other research presented here by Remoters.net<sup>[4]</sup>. What about you? Did you change your mindset on working remotely during the pandemic?

### CHART: HOW DO EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCE THE SWITCH TO REMOTE WORK?

**Keith, E-commerce and SEO specialist, says: 'Overall, the switch to remote work has been fantastic for me. The freedom has been great. The biggest challenge for me is more pandemic related. I need to grab lunch or a coffee with a friend once in a while. That was the only uniquely positive aspect of being in an office.'**

**David Iwanow, Search and Traffic Lead at Danone, says: 'Went from one to two days a week remote to 5 days a week remote.... I haven't been into the office in ten months but have found my productivity has improved as I'm able to focus on bigger projects [and am] less distracted. The reduced time lost to travel to/from work has allowed more family time with discussions with my manager post-Covid [sic] it will return to one to two days a week in the office, but that might be April/May based on current infection numbers and vaccine rollout plans.'**

**Reji Yates**, Founder at B-DigitalUK, says: *'The switch was good. Obviously, I had to work out a set-up for me to work properly but so far, amazing. It definitely has changed my remote working perception! I think it's brilliant now. I would only consider remote working now ... I absolutely will keep it after Covid.'*

**Areej AbuAli**, Founder Tech SEO Women and In-House SEO Manager, says: *'It was better than expected. I hired, on-boarded, and trained team members fully remotely, and it worked really well. On a personal basis, it's given me so much \*time\* back and helped me save lots of money.'*

**Chris Green**, Head of Marketing Innovation at Footprint Digital, says: *'The switch was relatively easy. We already worked 100% on the cloud and had Slack & Meet. When went from WFH lite to full-remote overnight. Nine-plus months later, I'm missing an office setup. Wherever you are, don't underestimate the importance of being comfortable when working.'*

Source: <https://remoters.net/remote-work-trends-future-insights/>

Of course, it's not all good news. Despite a booming favourable mindset on working remotely, people still struggle with some aspects of it. When asked, 'What's your biggest struggle with working remotely?' to 2,500 remote workers, they said that unplugging after work, loneliness, and collaborating and/or communication were their biggest dislikes about working online.

## THE MINDSET OF COMPANIES ON WORKING ONLINE CHANGED TOO

There has been much debate among organisations about working from home and whether or not it's a productivity boost or productivity drain. Study after study into remote work has made clear that remote workers are more productive than their office-bound counterparts. A nearly two-year study in 2015 by Stanford professor Nicholas Bloom at Ctrip, China's largest travel agency with 16,000 employees, showed an amazing productivity boost among the remote workers equivalent to a full day's work<sup>[5]</sup>. There were several reasons for this productivity boost. First, they were not late for the office. Second, they were not leaving early multiple times a week. And third, they found working remotely less distracting and were able to concentrate more easily at home.

We experienced that asynchronous communication was an essential factor in team productivity when we did our first experiments bringing the proven FORTH innovation method<sup>[6]</sup> 100% online. The offline synchronous way of working with lots of meetings with many people makes it difficult to make meaningful progress because you are tied up in meetings all the time with everyone together. Working online asynchronously has the great advantage that you can work on something 24/7 on moments you chose yourself while not being distracted.

Not only did the mindset of employees, or independent professionals like us, change concerning working remotely. No, also the mindset of employers and their CEOs altered positively. Have a look at the eight quotes of CEOs from a PwC survey of 669 CEOs worldwide during the summer of 2020 that show how they drastically changed their mindset on working remotely, resulting in great enthusiasm<sup>[7]</sup>.

## CHART: HOW DO EMPLOYERS EXPERIENCE THE SWITCH TO REMOTE WORK?

*'We have changed the ways we work, from styles we thought were inviolate to radically different structures and processes. This is supported through the greater use of digital and technological solutions and adopting a more flexible and trusting mentality.'*  
**Engineering and construction CEO, UK.**

*'The pandemic has radically improved customer and employee interest in, and adoption of, digital tools.'*  
**Communications CEO, US.**

*'The organisation has had to pivot very quickly to working digitally, and we fully intend to build on that to transform how we work in the future.'*  
**Technology CEO, UK.**

*'People are moving towards business process digitisation and becoming comfortable with online payments and online transactions. There is a great opportunity for companies and governments to take advantage of digitisation.'*  
**Technology CEO, Sri Lanka.**

*'The new normal of being able to conduct trade without travelling, without personal meetings, and to engage with stakeholders just as effectively has opened a new avenue for massive cost reductions and higher productivity. The need to strengthen the supply chain locally and be self-dependent is also an opportunity to differentiate.'*  
**— Consumer goods CEO, India.**

*'Working remotely has forced us to embrace technology. That technology has taught us that we can be as efficient as, and in some cases more efficient than, before and has provided us with the opportunity to consider [adding] team members who may not be local to our business.'*  
**Asset and wealth management CEO, Canada.**

*'We will spend less time and effort in travelling and introduce dual pricing. Pricing based on remote delivery is a better value for customers and gives staff a better quality of life. We will honour city salaries and allow people to work from wherever they want. The in-person presence will only be required on an infrequent basis.'*  
**Business services CEO, Ireland.**

*'Trust in our employees is at an all-time high. Working from home will become the norm, not the exception, and now we trust our employees to perform without constant supervision.'*  
**Oil and gas CEO, Canada.**

Source: <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/ceo-agenda/ceo-panel-survey-emerge-stronger.pdf>.

## REMOTE COLLABORATION IS HERE TO STAY

The same PwC survey of 669 CEOs shows that 78% agree that remote collaboration will remain<sup>[8]</sup>. This is confirmed by a Gartner survey of company leaders (also summer 2020) in which 80% of the CEOs plan to allow employees to work remotely at least part of the time after the pandemic, and 47% will enable employees to work from home full-time<sup>[9]</sup>.



As both employees and companies are optimistic about working remotely, there's only one conclusion possible: remote collaboration is here to stay.

### **MORE ONLINE TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE AND THEY ARE GETTING BETTER**

The present remote working mega boost would not have been possible without the rapid development of information and communication technologies that have changed our methods of communicating and sharing information. Traditional departments and teams now frequently give way to virtual teams, working intensely with online working tools. These new digital tools have made interactions between geographically dispersed people so much easier.

Collaboration is an essential ingredient for creating. This applies to any discipline of professionals ranging from engineers, to marketers, designers, artists, researchers, and developers. Whether you're working in your office, studio, or home, you need efficient and effective online tools for discovering new insights, sharing ideas, testing them, and transforming concepts in reality. More and more online tools spring up every year while existing ones continually improve their features and functionality.

There are now thousands of digital tools available to effectively work 100% online in teams. They vary from online collaboration platforms like Miro and Mural; video conferencing tools, like Zoom or Butter; tools for workshop preparation and instruction, among which are SessionLab or Loon; tools for prototyping and testing, like Marvel, and Toonly; and tools to make your online workshops more interactive, like Menti-meter and Tschack.in. In Appendix 1 you find 25 online tools to innovate remotely.

### **CHART: THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF ZOOM**

**As you know so well, Zoom is a video conferencing platform that allows people to meet face-to-face virtually. Originally it was meant for enterprises and universities. Now Zoom connects everybody. Zoom is a big story in the technology world, with over 300 million daily meeting participants connecting during the pandemic.**

**Zoom was founded by Eric Yuan. He is a former corporate vice president for Cisco Webex. He had a vision from his college days that technology would one day allow mobile, easy-to-use video calls for people to stay connected. And this became his obsession.**

**He left Cisco in April, 2011. And he took with him 40 engineers to start his new company. In September, 2012, Zoom launched a beta version that could host conferences with up to 15 video participants. And after two years of Beta testing and fixing issues, the Zoom videoconferencing platform was launched in January 2013.**

**Zoom grew very fast. It reached a million users within a few months of its launch, ten million in a year and 40 million by February, 2015. In 2017, four years after the platform's launch, Zoom was valued at \$1 billion, making it what is called a 'unicorn' company. The fast growth, ease of use, and Zoom's reliability were contributing to this significant achievement.**

**Why did Zoom become a success among users? Traditionally, video conferencing platforms were mainly targeted at the business-to-business market**

**and very expensive. Zoom offered customers a 3-in-1 package of video conferencing, mobility, and web meetings all for \$9.99. Zoom was also the first platform that offered mobile screen sharing within video conferences. Zoom even gave users free 40-minute meetings for up to 100 people! That offer is how we often start using it. And a great asset of the platform is that it also works with slow, saturated internet.**

**During the pandemic, Zoom boomed with more than 300 million daily meeting participants. It was the perfect product for meeting virtually with co-workers, classmates, friends, and loved ones during a pandemic. People needed a platform to reach out to each other, and there was one that stood out: Zoom.**

**Also, we professional online innovation facilitators love Zoom. Without a great videoconferencing platform, our online innovation projects would be impossible, and this book would have never been written. The killer feature for us is the break out rooms for collaboration in smaller teams.**

Sources: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonmarkman/2020/10/26/zoom-enters-perilous-new-growth-phase/?sh=36022c75e1e0>, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoom\\_Video\\_Communications](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoom_Video_Communications), <https://www.theaugust.com/featured/zoom-sucess-story-eric-yuan-immigrant-billionaire/>

### **THE PANDEMIC HAS A HUGE IMPACT ON THE WORLD ECONOMY**

The IMF estimated that the global economy shrunk by 4.4% in 2020<sup>[9]</sup>. This makes the great lockdown the worst recession since the great depression of 1930 and far worse than the global financial crisis of 2009. The Covid-19 pandemic caused a crisis like no other with a significant impact on people's lives, livelihoods, and the economic perspective for companies and organisations.

The pandemic created a clear distinction between economic winners and losers, as you can see here<sup>[10]</sup>. We will pick out a few sectors to give you some examples. The housing market was hot in 2020, as people were looking for larger spaces for at-home work and schooling. As we all were at home, the video game industry boomed, too, because it allowed players to pass the time alone while still interacting with their friends. Gaming consoles were sold out, and gaming platforms like Facebook Gaming and Twitch experienced record growth. Amazon and other online retailers worldwide were among the biggest winners because people got very cautious about leaving their homes. The big technology companies are also amongst the winners, like Apple, Alphabet, Amazon, Microsoft, Netflix, and Zoom, since staying at home caused us to connect 100% online. We all needed hardware as digital services. Online creators benefitted, too, as views on digital platforms like YouTube accelerated as we stayed home watching videos on meditation, cooking, and working out.

There are a lot of losers, too, unfortunately. Going on vacation wasn't an option anymore during the pandemic, making the travel and hospitality market collapse. When video conference calls are working just fine for so many of us in business, the question is if business travel will ever recover. Shopping malls and non-food retailers also got in big trouble; many had

Winners and Losers of the Covid-19 pandemic	
Winners	Losers
Housing	Travel and hospitality
Cannabis	Oil
Solar	Banks
Bitcoin	Airlines
Videogames	Malls
Big Retail	Automakers
Big Tech	Manufacturing
Creators	Movie Theatres
Streaming	

Source: <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/12/30/business/winners-losers-2020-business/index.html>

to close as people turned massively to online shopping. Aircraft manufacturers like Boeing and Airbus were hit by the downturn in air travel as their customers delayed or cancelled aircraft purchases. Airports had a dramatic year because global air passenger traffic dropped by 60% in 2020<sup>[12]</sup>. And UNESCO reports that 'In the film industry, it is estimated that ten million jobs will be lost in 2020, while one-third of art galleries are estimated to have reduced their staff by half during the crisis. A six-month closure could cost the music industry more than \$10 billion in lost sponsorships, while the global publishing market is expected to shrink by 7.5% due to the crisis caused by the pandemic<sup>[13]</sup>.'

Both from a personal and a business perspective, the world was turned upside down during the pandemic. After the initial crisis management, the question became how people, organisations, and companies might create a great future again.

## RESILIENCE AND INNOVATION ARE MORE RELEVANT THAN EVER NOW

Resilience is the ability to recover quickly from difficulties. That's the mantra today for many organisations and companies: be resilient to play to win again. They will need to rethink and innovate with great scrutiny in order to create a successful future, because doing more of the same with fewer people often is not an option. Operational excellence, doing better things, or doing the same things in a better way won't help businesses like airports, hotels, theatres, cruise companies, or high street retailers, will it? In this worldwide digitalisation, boom innovation is now more relevant than ever for all organisations. Do you have to re-invent your business too?

Before moving on, let's clarify what we mean by innovation, since the term has been defined in so many ways over the past several decades. In our view,

'An innovation is a feasible valuable offering, such as a product, service, process, or experience with a viable business model that is perceived as new and is adopted by customers.'

Let me exemplify the keywords in this definition:

**Feasible.** Feasibility is a precondition for a new product, service, process, or experience to be launched. If it's not feasible, it's just a dream. Although dreams are a great source of inspiration, they will not provide continuity to your organisation.

**Valuable.** Your customers have to change their present behaviour. They will only adopt your innovation when it brings value to them. Most often, it's a solution for a customer pain point. In other cases, your innovation might even be

fulfilling a long-cherished wish. It has to be relevant to them. The other perspective here is that your innovation should have value for your organisation. It might be financial, like generating additional revenues and EBITDA (earnings before interest and taxes). It might also be strategical by being a way to step into a new market or target a new customer group. Innovation has to add significant value for you and your customers; otherwise, it's not worth the effort, right?

**Offering.** We like to see innovation in broader terms than mere product innovation. That's why we use the word 'offering', which was coined by Larry Keeley in his book *Ten Types of Innovation*. An offering can be any form of a product, service, process, or experience. As early as 1934, the famous economist Schumpeter proposed a broad definition of innovation as he distinguished among new products, new methods of production, new markets, new supply sources, and new ways of organizing enterprises<sup>[14]</sup>.

**Viable Business Model.** Every organisation needs to secure its future, especially now. That's why innovation should provide a viable business model which contributes to the goals of the organisation. This applies to companies, non-profit organisations, and even governmental organisations.

**Perceived as new.** Innovation comes from the Latin word *innovat*, which means to renew or alter. The combination of *in* and *novare* suggests 'to come up with something entirely new.'<sup>[15]</sup> The question is...new for whom? New for you? New for your company? New for your market? New for the world? These days, everybody tends to label everything as 'NEW'. In our view, it's only new when the customer perceives a product, service, process, or experience as new.

**Adopted.** Innovation is only successful when adopted by customers, users, clients, or whatever you may call them. Adoption distinguishes the tops from the flops and is one of the biggest challenges for every innovator. So, add clear value so it will be adopted!

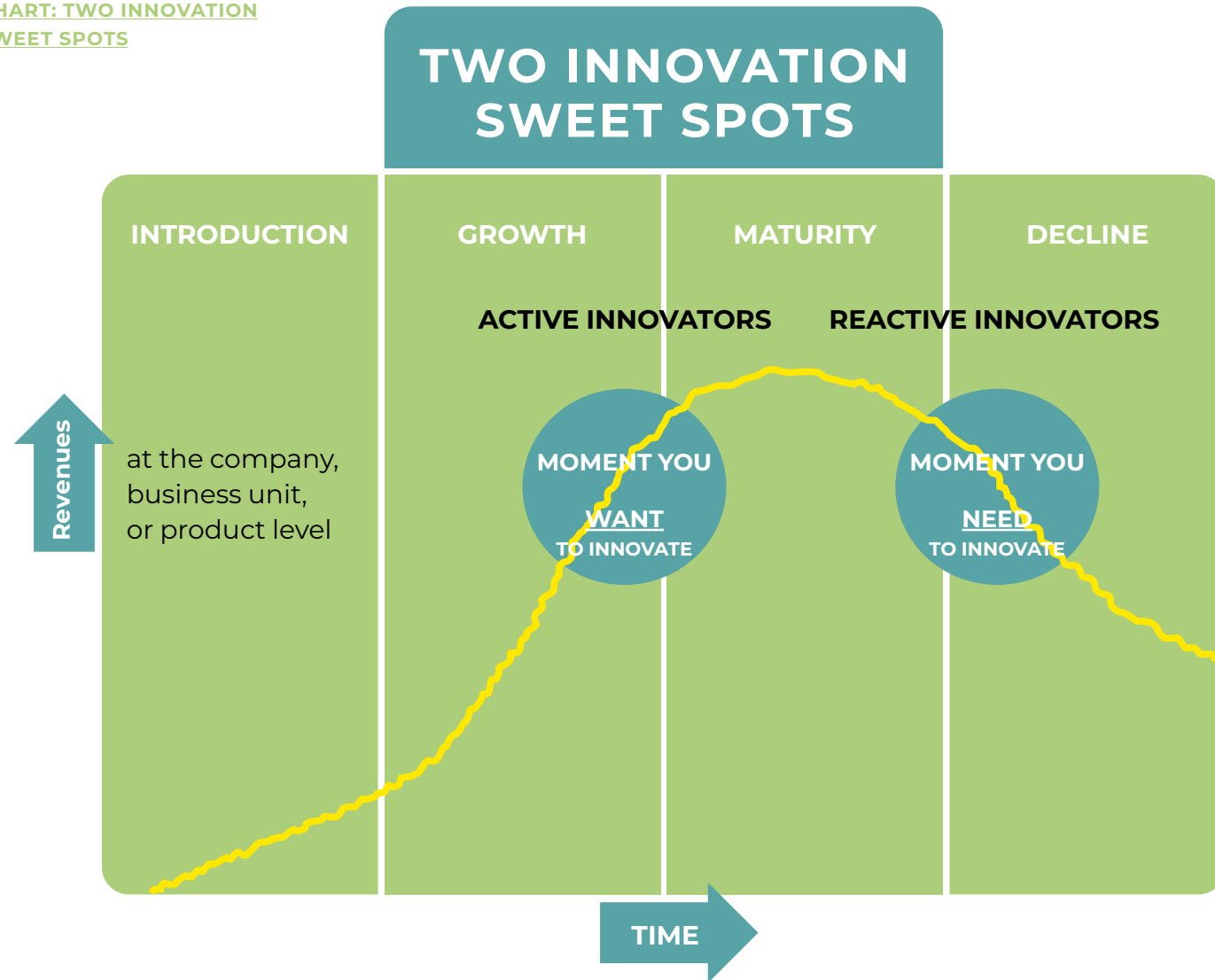
## PICKING THE RIGHT MOMENT TO INNOVATE: NOW

Not innovating is no longer an option for an organisation that wants to be in good shape after the Covid-19 pandemic.

In practice, we see organisations approach innovation in two different ways: those who want to innovate and those who need to innovate. We call those who want to innovate the active innovators and the ones who need to innovate the passive innovators. As you can see in the chart, their roles are defined by the moments they innovate their business. Every company, business unit, or product has its lifecycle of introduction, growth, maturity, and decline. Active innovators who want to innovate give innovation priority at the end of the growth stage. Before they reach maturity, they want to innovate, often for several reasons simultaneously:

- ▶ To keep their revenue stream growing
- ▶ To maintain an innovative mindset
- ▶ To boost internal entrepreneurship (intrapreneurship)
- ▶ To address changing needs and wants of customers
- ▶ To lead in technology
- ▶ To expand their business by new business models, distribution channels, and customer groups
- ▶ To stay an attractive employer on the market for talent
- ▶ To anticipate new governmental regulations or market liberalization

**CHART: TWO INNOVATION SWEET SPOTS**



Reactive innovators, on the contrary, wait. They wait until they get hit by a crisis, their markets saturate or get disrupted by new technologies and/or business models. The Covid-19 pandemic crisis hit all of us overnight. It required an immediate response to save companies from going under. They reorganized their work, went digital, and laid-off people in the short term. Reactive innovators need to prioritise innovation to stop revenues and profits from falling and to build a new future for their organisation.

Both types of innovators have their challenges. The good news for active innovators is that there are plenty of resources available when the company is doing well. Their challenge is to cope with a lack of urgency at the operational level of the organisation: 'Why should we innovate? We're damn busy and doing great!' We guess that most of the winners in the pandemic crisis belong to this category. The primary goal of ZOOM was to handle their growth; though of course, being in tech, they cannot neglect to stay innovative at all times.

The good news for the reactive innovators is that there is currently a great urgency at the operational level of the organisation to solve problems, because there have often been collective layoffs due to the business slow-down or even business-stop. Their challenge is compounded by both a lack of resources and a lack of time, since they will have to move quickly with significant impact.

Are you an active innovator or a reactive one? And what about your organisation? The central question is not if you should innovate. It's HOW you can start and lead innovation the best way. That's why we have written this book because the Covid-19 pandemic has also drastically changed the way we can innovate and has created new digital opportunities, which we will explore with you.

**INNOVATING 100% ONLINE INSTEAD OF OFFLINE**

One day in March, 2020, overnight, all our offline workshops helping organisations innovate their portfolios were cancelled and postponed until further notice. For us, doing nothing was also not an option. We, as innovators, had to innovate, too. And that's precisely what we did. We are all facilitators of the FORTH innovation methodology, a framework that has been used worldwide to jumpstart innovation for nearly two decades ([www.forth-innovation.com](http://www.forth-innovation.com)). FORTH is a scientifically proven method to ideate new products, services, processes, experiences, and business models. It combines business thinking and design thinking. Based on a structured roadmap, appealing new concepts are developed, worked out in business cases, and ultimately accepted by all involved in five steps. An in-person FORTH innovation journey contains 15 workshops with a multidisciplinary team of 10 to 15 people in 15 weeks.

We digitalised our innovation methodology in April and May 2020, experimenting ourselves with different online communication practices and collaboration platforms in collaboration with 25 innovation facilitators from all over the world. And we made all the beginner's mistakes ourselves, which we describe in the next chapter. We had a steep learning curve, even though – as it is for so many experts – we had a considerable knowledge base. We still remember so well how, when we were all online for our brainstorming session, ready to share all our out-side-the-box ideas with 20 or more people, suddenly Mural stopped functioning correctly, which was the unexpected end of our session at what should have been the most creative moment of our online journey. It was all learning by doing. Since then, we experimented 100% online with a lot of innovation methods, techniques, and tools and our major discovery is that online innovation works a little

differently than offline innovation. The devil is in the details, as they say.

Based on our practical experience, we guide you on your online innovation journey in this book. We share practical information on the best online innovation tools in chapter 3, 10 online innovation techniques in chapter 4, 10 rules for innovation in chapter 6 and 10 online innovation methods in chapters 7-10. In chapter 5 will present the Achilles heel of working online and share tips on how to compensate for this.

In chapter 11, we share with you our vision on hybrid innovation and discuss the best of both worlds. In the two appendices at the end, you will find overviews of 25 online tools for innovation and 10 innovation methods summarised in two pages each. Before we go into the details, let's define online innovation first, and discuss why we should consider starting innovation online anyway.

## SEVEN ARGUMENTS TO START INNOVATING ONLINE

Online innovation is an innovation process that is facilitated 100% online. It has become relevant for when you have to work remotely, as during Covid-19 restrictions. To facilitate workshops 100% online to innovate is the only option. Organising offline workshops during a pandemic runs the risk of being postponed...and postponed.... An online innovation process, during which everybody works from home or frankly anywhere, is not vulnerable to these risks and is a certain to proceed toward the progress you need for your organisation or your client.

Besides this obvious reason, we experienced in our online work at least seven other arguments for why you should consider starting to use online methods, techniques, and tools to innovate.

- 1. EASY TO APPLY.** When you work together with others from all over the country, continent, or even across the world, innovating 100% online is an easy way to create together.
- 2. SAVING TIME AND MONEY.** Working online saves everyone both travel time and costs as people can stay home or anywhere else with a good internet connection.
- 3. ALWAYS OPEN, 24/7.** Online innovation gives you the advantage of working asynchronously, which means that everyone can work online at their preferred moment, as the online workshop collaboration boards are open 24/7.
- 4. EVERYONE GETS A FAIR CHANCE.** When you innovate online in a structured way with, for example, the together-alone technique or silent voting procedures, introverts have an equal chance to co-create valuable content both with influencing opinions and decisions as do extroverts.
- 5. EASY TO SHARE.** Sharing inspiration and information in digital formats like videos, jpegs, or documents during innovation projects is very easy on online whiteboard collaboration platforms like Miro, Mural, or Trello.

- 6. YOU BENEFIT AS AN EMPLOYER.** The freedom offered to employees to work wherever they want with flexible hours is an excellent motivation for people who can't stand regular office life. A new generation is growing up as digital nomads.
- 7. IT WORKS.** Argument one through six would be worthless if innovating online wasn't effective. But it is; our practice delineates this. We put the proven offline FORTH innovation method online. After some initial growing pains, it proved to be as effective as offline workshops in most aspects, which we will cover later.

Ultimately, the mindset of people and the organisation about working online changed, and the tools to work remote got better. And now, you too can innovate online very effectively. So, innovate online and take advantage of these seven benefits.

In the next chapter, we will start with ten common mistakes when starting innovation online (which we also made ourselves). Let's innovate 100% ONLINE!

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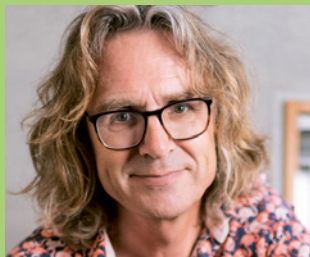
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## KEY MESSAGES FROM THIS CHAPTER

- ▶ **Sparked by the pandemic, a shift from offline to online happened worldwide.**
- ▶ **The mindset of people and organisation on working online changed.**
- ▶ **Online tools for collaboration and communication improved user experience.**
- ▶ **Resilience and innovation are more relevant than ever now.**
- ▶ **Online innovation has different dynamics to offline.**
- ▶ **Innovating online gives you seven advantages.**



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



### Gijs van Wulfen

Gijs (Dutch; 1960) is a worldwide authority in innovation and design thinking. He worked as a marketer in the fast-moving consumer goods industry, and as a strategy consultant before founding the FORTH innovation method in 2005. FORTH is a scientifically proven methodology for the start of innovation, which is implemented on six continents. In 2020 the methodology was taken 100% online with great success.

His third book on innovation, 'The Innovation Maze', was crowned as Management Book of the Year. As a LinkedIn Influencer, he has 330,000 followers.

From Crete, the island where he lives, he inspires people all over the world to be amazing innovators in a practical way with his keynotes, books, webinars, Clubhouse audio-events, and YouTube videos. Recently Gijs is one of the authors of the Future-Fit Manifesto, the successor of the Agile Manifesto of 20 years ago.

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Maria Vittoria is Italian, living in Milan. In her job, she supports leaders and organisations to innovate and to build a culture for innovation. Her expertise is in innovation methods and remote facilitation, as well as in cultural and leadership innovation.

She is a business economist who started her career as a marketing consultant, then became fascinated by design thinking and human experience (HX). Having graduated in Economics, earning an MBA, becoming a FORTH Innovation Master facilitator, Executive Counsellor, and Coach, she likes to combine and merge knowledge and practices to promote innovation, change, and well-being.

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With over 10 years of experience in the producing industry as an industrial engineer and project manager, he made probably all the mistakes in the product development you can. It is this experience he uses to help his clients become unstuck and innovate again. Through his passion for remote facilitation, he is able to enjoy his family life to the fullest and is taking up gardening. He is a big fan of the circular economy and tried to start worm composting about six years ago. After having over a thousand fruit flies on the walls, he figured composting in an apartment has its limits. Since moving to the countryside, he is giving it a second try.

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### Rody Vonk

Rody, based in The Netherlands, has been working as an entrepreneur for almost 20 years. He started his career as a creative concept developer in advertising agencies. Now Rody uses his creative background to develop disruptive ideas and strategies for organisations that become stuck in their daily routine or projects. What he has learned from these assignments are welcome examples and sources of inspiration in his training, workshops, and presentations on Design Thinking, Serious Creativity, and Innovation.

The training Rody facilitates is characterized by the combination of theory and practical group work. Hands-on activities and group discussion as well as interactive exercises and the application of different tools and techniques blend throughout his sessions.

Over the years he has facilitated face-to-face and online sessions around the globe in countries in Europe, Africa, and the Middle-East for hundreds of people with a great variety of job titles (innovation managers, product owners, board room members, R&D experts etc.) for a wide range of (international operating) organisations and multinationals.

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# ONLINE INNOVATION

If you would have asked us at the beginning of 2020 whether you could effectively innovate 100% online, we would have said, 'NO WAY!'. And now we know we were so wrong. Yes, you can innovate your organisation entirely online. You can devise new products, services, experiences, processes, and business models without any doubt. Since 2020, we, and many others with us, have proven this in practice. Innovating online is here to stay.

This book inspires you with effective online collaboration tools, techniques, methods, and rules to kick-start yourself to innovate your work and your organisation completely online. That's why this is a practical 'HOW-INNOVATE-ONLINE' book.

After describing ten common pitfalls, we share some great tools and techniques that work in practice. We discuss the 'Achilles' heel' of innovating online and present ten methodologies you can use for online innovation, hands-on. The Lightning Decision Jam, the Design Sprint, and the FORTH innovation method will be highlighted, and we work out a hybrid version of this methodology. At the end of the book, you will find a systematic description of twenty-five tools and ten methods, clearly and simply, to help you pick the right ones for your online innovation journey.

This book is written for you as a consultant, coach, facilitator, manager, or student in the field of design (thinking) and innovation.

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