FIVE-DAY APPLIED PROGRAMME · ONE LIVE CHALLENGE

Innovation Mini MBA

Learn innovation on the work that actually matters.

Five days. One live challenge from your organisation. Your team leaves with a tested prototype, a leadership-ready pitch and a 90-day plan, and with innovation skills they will use the following Monday.

5	1	90	0
intensive days, in person or live online	live challenge per team, chosen with the sponsor	day plan with owners, experiments and measures	prior innovation training or technical skills required

COHORT PHOTO · TEAMS WORKING ON A LIVE CHALLENGE

A decision the sponsor can act on by Friday

TEAMS OF 4 TO 6

Innovation is a top-three priority for 83% of companies. Three per cent are ready to deliver it.

Boards have never asked more of innovation. CEOs say their companies must reinvent themselves to stay viable, yet most organisations still move resources slowly, generate little revenue from new businesses, and struggle to turn a strategic priority into a tested, funded next step. The gap is capability: the ability to frame a problem, gather evidence, build something people can react to and make a case leaders will back.

3%

of companies score in BCG's innovation "ready zone", down from 20% in 2021, even though 83% rank innovation a top-three priority. Only 12% report a strong link between business strategy and innovation strategy.

BCG, MOST INNOVATIVE COMPANIES 2024

42%

of CEOs believe their company will not be viable beyond the next ten years without reinvention. Around half reallocate 10% or less of financial and human resources from one year to the next.

PWC, 28TH GLOBAL CEO SURVEY, 2025

7%

of revenue over the past five years came from distinct new businesses, on average, across 4,701 CEOs surveyed. The ambition for new value is high. The machinery for producing it is thin.

PWC, 28TH GLOBAL CEO SURVEY, 2025

95%

of enterprise generative AI pilots show no measurable impact on profit and loss. The researchers attribute the failures to a learning gap in tools and organisations. Capability decides whether new technology pays.

MIT NANDA, THE GENAI DIVIDE, 2025

Employers see the same gap in their people. The Innovation Mini MBA closes it in one week.

Analytical thinking is the core skill seven in ten companies consider essential, creative thinking is expected to grow in importance through 2030, and 85% of employers plan to prioritise upskilling. The question is how to build those skills in a way that also moves the priorities they are needed for. One live challenge, one team, five days, and a recommendation the sponsor can act on by Friday.

Sources. BCG, Innovation Systems Need a Reboot (Most Innovative Companies 2024, June 2024). PwC, 28th Annual Global CEO Survey (January 2025; 4,701 CEOs in 109 countries and territories). MIT NANDA, The GenAI Divide: State of AI in Business 2025 (August 2025). World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025 (January 2025).

Most innovation training ends when the course does.

Organisations have paid for the awareness session, the two-day workshop and the online certificate. What sponsors describe afterwards rarely changes: people return with new vocabulary and a few frameworks, and the priority that prompted the spend is exactly where it was. Each conventional route has a limit built into its design.

ROUTE ONE

Business school short courses

Weeks of individual study on other companies' case material. Participants gain frameworks, vocabulary and a certificate. Your own challenge is untouched, and nobody has practised under your constraints or in front of your stakeholders.

ROUTE TWO

Workshops and hackathons

A day or two of energy produces a wall of ideas and a few demos. With no research, no testing and no sponsor decision at the end, the ideas have no route into the business and the enthusiasm fades within weeks.

ROUTE THREE

Consultancy projects

Capable people solve the problem for you and hand over a recommendation. The answer may be good. The capability to produce the next one leaves the building with them.

ROUTE FOUR

Waiting

The default option. Priorities circle through meetings, resources stay where they were last year, and the few organisations that built the capability pull further ahead each quarter.

The challenge becomes the classroom.

Every method is learned by using it on a problem your organisation needs solved, so the learning was never separate from the work.

Start with a live challenge

We work with the sponsor to choose a challenge that matters, agree its boundaries and identify who can offer insight and feedback.

Evidence over opinion

Real voices and data sit at the centre. Simulated findings are labelled. Where testing is limited, teams name the next real experiment and the decision it informs.

End with a decision

Every programme finishes with a recommendation the sponsor can act on: what was learned, where evidence is strong or thin, and the next 90 days.

The disciplines of an MBA, applied to one challenge in five days.

The Innovation Mini MBA connects strategy, customer insight, Design Thinking and Google Sprint methods, Lean Startup experimentation, business model innovation, venture building, financial logic, risk, storytelling and change. Every discipline is taught through use on the challenge your team brings, so the week produces a tested concept and a case for action as well as the skills.

DAY 1

Frame

What problem is worth solving, for whom, and why now?

Output Challenge brief, opportunity map, success measures

DAY 2

Discover

What do people, processes and evidence reveal?

Output Evidence map, sharper opportunity, assumptions to test

DAY 3

Create

Which solution is worth making tangible?

Output Clear proposition and a working prototype

DAY 4

Test

What evidence would justify the next investment?

Output Findings, business case, view of the risks

DAY 5

Pitch

What should the organisation do next?

Output Demo, decision-ready pitch, 90-day plan

ONE TOOLKIT, CONNECTED

Strategy and opportunity selection Which problem is worth solving, for whom, and why now.	**Customer and stakeholder insight** Interviews, observation and data on needs, friction and workarounds.	**Design Thinking and Google Sprint** From a focused question to a prototype people can react to.	**Lean Startup experimentation** Rapid tests that reduce the most important uncertainty.
Business model innovation and venture building How the idea makes and captures value.	**Financial logic and risk** Value, cost, feasibility and what would have to be true.	**Storytelling and change** A recommendation leaders can back and a plan people can run.	**AI as the accelerator** Used at every stage once the method is understood, with the tools your organisation has approved.

1

DAY ONE

Frame the opportunity

What problem is worth solving, for whom, and why now?

Examine the current situation, map stakeholders and constraints, identify where value is being lost and define what success would look like. A broad ambition becomes a focused question the team can answer in a week.

METHODS

Strategy and opportunity selection. Stakeholder and constraint mapping.

WHERE AI HELPS

Research, document review, signal scanning and checking sources.

OUTPUT

Challenge brief, opportunity map and measures of success.

2

DAY TWO

Discover what matters

What do people, processes and evidence reveal?

Interviews, observation and data review uncover needs, friction, workarounds and jobs to be done. The team separates what it observed from what it assumed, and identifies the assumptions that could change direction.

METHODS

Customer and stakeholder insight. Jobs to be done.

WHERE AI HELPS

Interview guides, organising notes, analysing information and spotting patterns, treated as prompts for inquiry.

OUTPUT

Evidence map, sharper opportunity statement and prioritised assumptions to test.

3

DAY THREE

Create and prototype

Which solution is worth making tangible?

Generate a range of responses, select a direction, shape the proposition and build a prototype: a service journey, a process, a digital interface, an AI assistant or a venture concept. Something people can examine and react to by the end of the day.

METHODS

Design Thinking and Google Sprint.

WHERE AI HELPS

Expanding options and speeding production with language, visual, audio, coding and no-code tools.

OUTPUT

Clear proposition and a working prototype or process demonstration.

THE SHAPE OF EACH DAY

Input

Short expert sessions on the method and the AI skill for the day.

Teamwork

Facilitated work on the live challenge, with coaching alongside.

Stakeholders

Time with the people who hold insight, data or a say in the decision.

Presentation

A daily presentation of what was learned and what comes next.

4

DAY FOUR

Test and build the case

What evidence would justify the next investment?

Test the concept with relevant people where access allows, run focused experiments, examine feasibility and weigh value, cost, risk and operating needs. Define what a pilot would have to show.

METHODS

Lean Startup experimentation. Business model and financial logic.

WHERE AI HELPS

Feedback analysis, simple financial modelling, scenario exploration and workflow simulation. Simulated findings are labelled.

OUTPUT

Test findings or a validation plan, business case and a view of the major risks.

5

DAY FIVE

Pitch and mobilise

What should the organisation do next?

Present a leadership-ready recommendation, demonstrate the prototype, show where the evidence is strong or incomplete and make a specific request. Build the 90-day plan: ownership, experiments, resources, measures and decision points.

METHODS

Storytelling and change. Pitching to a decision.

WHERE AI HELPS

Sharpening the story, building presentation materials and rehearsing hard questions. Teams own every claim.

OUTPUT

Prototype demonstration, decision-ready pitch and 90-day action plan.

WHAT THE SPONSOR RECEIVES ON FRIDAY

A decision to make, and the evidence to make it with.

01 A prototype people can react to, built around your challenge

02 A decision-ready pitch that shows where the evidence is strong and where it is incomplete

03 A practical business case and a clear view of the major risks

04 A 90-day plan naming owners, experiments, resources, measures and decision points

ILLUSTRATIVE CHALLENGE

An organisation wants to reduce the time its teams spend resolving a recurring customer problem. The cohort maps the journey, interviews staff and customers, identifies the costly friction points, prototypes a better service and an AI-supported workflow, tests the critical steps and presents a scoped pilot with success measures.

What you leave with.

Two sets of outcomes from one week. The first belongs to the sponsor and the organisation. The second stays with every participant and goes to work on the next challenge.

THE ORGANISATION RECEIVES

Progress on a priority

A tangible concept, a working prototype and a recommendation for each team's challenge.

A stronger decision

Problem definition, evidence, open assumptions, risks and the next step, together in one place for the sponsor.

Lasting capability

Reusable methods, prompts and working practices that the team keeps, and can run again on the next challenge.

A route to action

A 90-day plan naming experiments, owners, measures and decision points, so Monday has a plan attached.

PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO

- / Frame a complex challenge as a focused opportunity for action.
- / Find and assess evidence on customer, employee or stakeholder needs.
- / Generate, select and prototype solutions using innovation methods and AI.
- / Design rapid experiments that reduce the biggest uncertainty.
- / Assess value, feasibility, risks and the route to adoption.
- / Present a credible recommendation and lead the next stage.

AND ONE MORE THING

A working knowledge of where AI fits.

Participants gain a practical understanding of which types of AI suit each stage of innovation work, where they mislead, and how to build AI-supported workflows into their own roles. The method comes first. The tools then earn their place.

Practise the method first. Then apply AI.

AI runs through the week, and it is kept in its place. Teams learn each method together first, then learn where AI speeds things up, where it misleads and how to check its work. Participants use it in six areas, with the tools your organisation has approved.

01
Research and intelligence
Document review, signal scanning and source checking while the challenge is being framed.

02
Insight and analysis
Organising interview notes, analysing information and spotting patterns, with every suggestion treated as a prompt for inquiry.

03
Creative development
Expanding the range of options before the team chooses a direction.

04
Prototyping
Language, visual, audio, coding and no-code tools that make a concept tangible in hours.

05
Testing and decision support
Feedback analysis, simple financial modelling, scenario exploration and workflow simulation.

06
Execution
Reusable prompts, specialised assistants and governed agentic workflows the team takes back to its roles.

Responsible use is part of the method

Protect confidential material. Participants learn which information may be used with which tools, under your rules.

Verify consequential claims. Anything that informs a decision is checked against a source the team can cite.

Document assumptions and label simulated findings. The sponsor always knows what came from real people and what did not.

Keep human judgement with decision owners. AI produces options and drafts. People decide.

Built around your approved tools

The programme adapts to the AI tools your organisation has sanctioned, so what participants practise during the week is exactly what they can use on Monday.

Where access is limited, teams work with the methods and specify the next real-world experiment.

No prior innovation training or advanced technical skills are required. Curiosity and a willingness to test assumptions are.

How it compares with the alternatives.

Each route below has its place. Only one returns progress on your priority and capability in your people from the same week.

	BUSINESS SCHOOL SHORT COURSE	WORKSHOP OR HACKATHON	CONSULTANCY PROJECT	INNOVATION MINI MBA
Works on your live challenge	Rarely. Other companies' cases.	Briefly, for a day or two.	Yes.	**Yes. One challenge per team for the whole week, chosen with the sponsor.**
Who does the work	The individual, often online.	Your people, without research or testing.	The consultants.	**Your people, coached daily, with real stakeholders.**
What the organisation receives	A certificate.	Ideas and energy.	A report and a recommendation.	**A prototype, a decision-ready pitch, a business case and a 90-day plan.**
Capability that stays	Frameworks and vocabulary.	Enthusiasm.	Depends on the handover.	**Methods practised on real work, reusable prompts and working practices.**
Time to a decision	Months, if ever.	Undefined.	Weeks to months.	**Five days to a recommendation the sponsor can act on.**
Evidence standard	Case discussion.	Opinion in the room.	Varies.	**Real voices and data; simulated findings labelled; claims verified.**

A STRONG FIT WHEN

- A strategic priority has stalled and needs a tested next step.
- A sponsor will join the end-of-week discussion and decide.
- You can field a team of people close to the problem.
- Stakeholders and relevant information are reachable during the week.
- You want a shared approach across functions and faster decisions.

A WEAKER FIT WHEN

- You want an introduction for a large audience. The one-day Foundations of Innovation or the half-day executive briefing serve that better.
- The solution is already decided and only needs delivery.
- No sponsor can be present for the decision.
- The team cannot be released for the week.

Thousands trained. Rated by the people in the room.

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PepsiCo	HSBC	Vodafone	T-Mobile
Virgin	stc	Danone	UK Ministry of Defence
Oxford University	Imperial College London	UCL	London School of Economics

PARTICIPANT RATINGS FROM WORKSHOP EVALUATIONS

97% Presentation skills

98% Subject knowledge

96% Organisation of course material

96% Quality of exercises

95% Usefulness and relevance

> "The Innovation Network process helped my team deliver a new snack on to the retail market from concept to launch in 8 months."
>
> GLOBAL DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION

> "We delivered a client brief in roughly half the time, without losing the energy, engagement and personality of colleagues."
>
> GLOBAL KEY ACCOUNT MANAGER

> "The Innovation Fast Track process has enabled me to facilitate and deliver a tangible outcome."
>
> DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



Grant Vernon

FOUNDER, INNOVATION NETWORK

Grant founded Innovation Network and designs and leads its programmes. He has facilitated innovation and AI programmes for defence, government, enterprise and university clients, works directly with senior sponsors on strategy, portfolio governance and capability planning, and leads a network of associate facilitators, assessors and subject specialists engaged by sector and capability.

Questions sponsors ask.

We have run innovation workshops before and nothing happened afterwards. What is different?

The week is built around one live challenge and ends with a recommendation the sponsor can act on. Teams research with real stakeholders, build a prototype, test it where access allows and show where the evidence is strong or incomplete. The 90-day plan names owners, experiments, resources, measures and decision points, so the work has a route into the business on Monday.

Can our people spare five days?

The week replaces months of intermittent meetings on the same priority. The sponsor gets a decision-ready case on Friday and the organisation gets practised capability. The trade becomes clear once the challenge is chosen well, which is why we shape it together beforehand.

Do participants need prior innovation training or technical skills?

No. The programme is designed for innovation, digital, product and change teams, functional leaders and high-potential managers, and cross-functional groups who need a shared approach. Curiosity and a willingness to test assumptions are the entry requirements.

Which AI tools are used?

Yours. The programme adapts to the tools your organisation has approved. Teams learn the method first, then where AI helps, where it misleads and how to check its work. Confidential material is protected and simulated findings are labelled.

What if we choose the wrong challenge?

Choosing it is part of the programme. Before the week we work with the sponsor to select a challenge that matters, agree its boundaries and identify the people who can provide insight and feedback. Day one then sharpens it further.

Can it run online or across locations?

It is designed for in-person delivery and adapts to live online. Programmes run face to face, remotely and in hybrid formats across locations and time zones, with teams in London, South Africa and the Netherlands.

What happens after day five?

The sponsor has a decision to make and the evidence to make it, and the 90-day plan carries the work towards a pilot. Organisations that want to build an internal network of practitioners continue with the six-month Innovation Ambassadors programme or Certified Innovation Facilitator training.

How many people should attend?

Cohorts are sized to the challenge and the number of teams. Tell us the likely cohort size and preferred format, and we will recommend a programme, format and outline plan.

How is the return measured?

Twice. Progress on the priority is visible in the prototype, the pitch, the business case and the decision taken. Capability in people is visible in the work the team produces during the week and in how it approaches the next challenge.

What does it cost?

Programmes are priced per cohort, with bespoke design available. Send us the challenge and the likely cohort size and we will reply within two working days with a recommendation and a quote.

Bring us a challenge worth solving.

Tell us where progress has stalled. In five days, your people can build a sharper understanding of the problem, a tested concept, the evidence gathered so far and a 90-day plan for what happens next. The first conversation is about choosing the challenge and the cohort that will make the programme matter.

1

Send the challenge

A few sentences on where progress has stalled, the likely cohort size and your preferred format.

2

A short call

We understand the challenge and the cohort, then recommend a programme, a format and an outline plan.

3

Run the week

Five days. A pitch to the sponsor on Friday. A 90-day plan with owners and decision points.

PRIMARY NEXT STEP

Send us a challenge and a likely cohort size

grant@innovation-network.co
innovation.training/contact

NEED A SMALLER FIRST STEP?

Start with an executive briefing or a one-day Foundations

The half-day Innovation Best Practice executive briefing or the one-day Foundations of Innovation gives a leadership team a shared view of Design Thinking, Agile, Lean Startup and Google Sprint before committing a cohort to the week.

Grant Vernon · Innovation Network

grant@innovation-network.co · innovation.training/contact
71 to 75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9JQ
We reply within two working days.

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