

# Innovation fetches handsome rewards

**W**E HAVE come a long way since the early days when fire was discovered and infinite uses for it were invented.

We have harnessed the forces of nature to our advantage and all of this has resulted in great improvements in our quality of life.

Benefits are numerous and range from personal to societal.

Today, we want to talk about simple ways to innovate and design to win.

One starting point of the conversation is scientific phenomenon and the end point is a product or a service that humans value and are willing to pay for.

Understanding science is tough, yet translating it to a valuable thing is even tougher. Ask any solar scientist busy inventing economic ways to harness heat energy from the sun.

Yet, the human spirit never gives up. The stakes may be high, yet the winner gets rewarded handsomely.

As the machines become more sophisticated and their use becomes widespread, aspects of design become key to mass adoption.

One such aspect is human intersection, also termed user-experience.

Mobile phones have evolved and so has their in-

terface. It is no surprise that yesterday's phenomenon of people walking around with ears glued to their mobile phone has been replaced with people now walking around with their eyes glued to their mobile phones.

It is incredible how humans respond to what they find valuable.

Historically, innovation used to be about functionality while design used to be about form. The former is closer to technology while the latter to humans. Combine the two (iPhone) and you have a marvel of a product.

Design starts with the customer at the centre and the product is built around him. Making things human, appealing and stylish is part of design. It creates a value and serves a purpose.

New forms of opportunities arise on a continual basis. An interesting one is "micro-ownership" or "access without owning".

It has resulted in micro-services such as payments, renting homes (Airbnb), transportation and logistics (Grab) and finance.

The services may be micro, yet the opportunity is huge as more and more people join the digital economy and go for indulgences made possible by such services.

What we used to take for granted just a few years ago is



**innovation**  
HARI KRISHNA GARG

no longer available in abundance or for free. Water, air and environment are challenges for our generation and opportunities for the future.

Internet is yet another marvel of human imagination. With it, the concepts of location and distance are re-defined.

Do you really know where the other person is when you hear the voice as if you are talking face to face?

Technologies such as artificial intelligence, internet of things, digital economy and e-commerce are expected to bring about efficiencies and transform our way of living.

The whole world is visible to us and we are visible to the whole world. Love, friendship and family are close to us. That would imply that "safety" and "privacy" are perhaps the next big things awaiting the touch of an innovative genius.

The most direct consequence of the Internet is the translation of physical world into a virtual one. Take paper, for instance. From money to media, it is all digital now. We tap our EZ-Link cards and do not buy a paper ticket.

We buy online; brick and mortar are so yesterday for many. The younger we are, the more voracious consumers of Internet we are. Such is life.

Some simple yet most effective ways to invent are unification, reduction, multiplication, divide and attribute dependency change.

Unification is about using one thing for more than one function, reduction being simplifying the product and its functionalities (one wheel is all you need), multiplication is using more of the same (multiple screens for computers), divide is well divide (laptop or mobile with infinite online storage) and

the last one says what you have for function A, modify it for function B (eat ice-cream in winter).

Has everything that could be innovated or designed been innovated or designed? The answer is a categorical no.

The fountain of opportunity and challenges on the outside and curiosity and imagination on the inside are forever happening. There is no end in sight. Cryptocurrencies are happening; so are many other things.


Find a sweet spot for yourself. The joy of discovery and living your dreams is priceless, for everything else, there is online payment. Hopefully, we have lit a fire, or have fanned its flames if the fire already existed, of boundless possibilities with infinite potential and timeless opportunity. Let it burn.

➔ [tabla@sph.com.sg](mailto:tabla@sph.com.sg)

*Associate professor Hari Krishna Garg is from the Electrical & Computer Engineering Department, Faculty of Engineering, National University of Singapore.*

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