GEORGE KRASADAKIS

INNOVATION MODE

Designing Innovative Companies in the Era of Artificial Intelligence



AUTHOR'S EDITION

INNOVATION MODE PUBLISHING

Forewords by Alex Adamopoulos and Mathew Hughes

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Foreword by Alex Adamopoulos: Building Companies That Live Innovation

There's a moment in every organization's life where it hits a wall.

Not because it's run out of ideas—but because it's run out of clarity. Clarity about what to focus on. Clarity about what to stop doing. Clarity about who leads the change, how to fund it, and how to bring people along. That moment—when excitement fades and fatigue sets in—is where most innovation efforts die.

But it's also the moment when something powerful can begin, if we have the right mindset and the right map.

That's what George Krasadakis offers in *Innovation Mode* . Not just a book but a blueprint for what it really takes to build innovative companies in today's world—companies that don't just talk about innovation but live it in their culture, in their systems, and in their everyday decisions.

George doesn't romanticize innovation. He doesn't treat it as the exclusive domain of creative elites or moonshot thinkers. He understands, like all seasoned leaders do, that true innovation is often messy, difficult, and deeply human. It involves challenging entrenched behaviors, rethinking priorities, and creating the conditions for new ideas to take root and grow. And it asks for something few leaders are trained to give: permission—for people to try, to fail, to learn, and to keep going.

What makes this book exceptional is its grounded empathy for both the people doing the work and the leaders responsible for making it possible.

Why this book—and why now?

We live in a time where the pace of change is dizzying. Emerging technologies like agentic AI aren't just augmenting how work is done—they're starting to shape what work gets done, how decisions are made, and what gets prioritized. In this reality, the traditional separation between strategy and execution, between ideation and delivery, no longer holds. AI can scan for opportunities, test assumptions, even generate product roadmaps. But AI can't tell you what's

worth fighting for. It can't build trust. It can't rally a team around a shared sense of purpose. That still falls to us.

And this is where George's vision shines.

He sees artificial intelligence not as a threat but as a transformative enabler—one that, when combined with human creativity and good leadership, can compress innovation cycles from months to days. But for that to happen, leaders must rethink their systems, their roles, and their expectations. That's what this book prepares them to do.

The heart of the matter: leadership, systems, and belief.

Over the years, I've worked with some of the world's most admired companies, helping them rethink how they build products, develop talent, and deliver value. One truth that emerges again and again is this: innovation doesn't fail because of a lack of good ideas. It fails because the environment doesn't support the realization of those ideas.

George introduces us to the architecture required to change that. His framework—built around Opportunity Discovery, Validation, and Realization—isn't just process for process's sake. It's an intentional system that helps teams and organizations move from inspiration to implementation. It gives innovation a home, a rhythm, and a standard of excellence. And importantly, it creates clarity around roles—what leaders need to own and what teams need to be empowered to do.

But perhaps even more valuable is what George helps us feel: the belief that change is possible.

In a world where transformation fatigue is real—where leaders are exhausted from initiatives that go nowhere and employees are jaded from promises that don't materialize—this book offers something rare: a hopeful, practical path forward.

Culture is the soil, not just the scenery.

Innovation doesn't happen in isolation. It happens in environments where people feel safe to experiment; where failure is seen as learning, not liability; where curiosity is rewarded; and where the company's purpose is clear and compelling enough to warrant the effort.

As I've written before, if your leadership team isn't behind innovation, it's already failed—you just don't know it yet.

George understands this deeply. His chapters on culture, teams, and leadership read like a guide for human-centered transformation. He offers frameworks for building innovation "dream teams" not as elite task forces but as enablers who bring the rest of the organization along. He articulates the importance of language—why even defining what "innovation" means in your context can unlock alignment and momentum.

He also offers a lens of realism. Innovation is not always comfortable. It can feel slow. It can create tension. But those who persist, and who invest in the right systems and mindsets, build something enduring.

To the leader holding this book: If you're reading this, you're probably already asking the right questions:

- How do we keep up with the speed of change?
- How do we empower people to do their best thinking?
- How do we make innovation sustainable—not just sporadic?

Innovation Mode will help you answer those questions. But more than that, it will challenge you to lead differently—to lead with empathy, to design systems that support learning, to model the behaviors you want your teams to adopt, and to build a company where innovation is not a side activity but the core of how value gets created.

Because the truth is, companies that operate in "Innovation Mode" aren't just more agile or more digital. They are more human. They listen better. They adapt faster. They serve more meaningfully. And in the long run, they win.

Let this book be your guide—and your invitation to lead that kind of company.

Alex Adamopoulos
CEO, *Emergn*
Tampa, FL, USA

Foreword by Mathew Hughes: Solving the Innovation Enigma

I was thrilled when George Krasadakis invited me to write the foreword for the second edition of his groundbreaking book, *The Innovation Mode*. George has long had a keen interest in innovation, with his books *60 Leaders on Innovation* and *60 Leaders on Artificial Intelligence*, both of which I had the honor of contributing to, providing a rich set of insights into what the future may hold for innovation and technology-driven innovation. Innovation remains the one true enigma among organizations. It is essential and must be nurtured, yet as executives, managers, and entrepreneurs, we struggle to truly harness its potential. Why is that?

Innovation is the lifeblood of all organizations, and those that do not innovate risk squandering the future and falling behind more nimble, creative, and innovative rivals. No senior executive, manager, or entrepreneur wants to face that scenario. We do not choose to make decisions that limit or even cripple the ability of our organizations to create wealth or to survive. Instead, executives, managers, and entrepreneurs make well-intended decisions that may inadvertently close the innovation tap—be that by restricting the flow of ideas to what the organization knows best, limiting the space to be creative by choosing to refine what the organization has always excelled at, diverting resources to more immediate worries, or being so focused on the now that we lose sight of pioneering new frontiers. The innovative organization is something that needs to be constantly worked on and nurtured—it is a myth to think that past success inoculates us against whatever the future may bring.

Innovation Mode is a powerful compilation of ideas that weave people and culture as the fabric of the firm, with innovation capabilities as the threads that knit together an organization's capacity to innovate. My metaphor here is deliberate. Using fabric to represent people and culture captures the foundational, interconnected nature of these elements in an organization; threads symbolize innovation capabilities as essential but flexible components woven into the larger system. A tightly knit fabric is resilient, just as an organization with the right cultural and human connections fosters innovation. Different innovation capabilities (threads) contribute to the

fabric's texture and durability. Together, the organization's ability to innovate depends on how these threads are continuously woven and reinforced to enable people to innovate. The ongoing process of weaving innovation into an organization's cultural fabric ensures that it remains dynamic, resilient, and capable of evolving in an ever-changing environment. There is no finer pressure on executives, managers, or entrepreneurs now than to craft the innovative organization.

It is fitting that the tagline to the *Innovation Mode* is "Designing Innovative Companies in the Era of Artificial Intelligence." When I reflect on the Preface for the first and second editions, it is remarkable how the first edition correctly foresaw the pending rise of AI in our lives, work, and daily language. The speed at which AI-driven innovations have transformed the landscape of people's lives, the markets we serve, the products and services we provide, and the future for innovation begs an immediate question: What is next on the horizon that will change again what we thought we knew? Innovators will shape the future. With the insights in this book, I hope it will serve as a superb reference and resource for those seeking to design innovative organizations and spearhead the next generation of innovations, large or small, groundbreaking or gradual, that change the world around us.

The book provides an excellent overview and reference point about people, culture, and capabilities as the key pillars of innovation and practical ways to discover, validate, and realize opportunities on the road to innovation. I encourage readers to dive into these chapters and absorb the wealth of insights available.

Dr. Mathew (Mat) Hughes, PhD
Schulze Distinguished Professor and Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, School of Business
University of Leicester
Leicester, UK

Preface to the Second Edition

Six years ago, I closed the first edition of this book with a prediction:

> "In a fully digitized environment powered by Artificial Intelligence [...] the focus shifts from running the business to pursuing opportunities [...] In the organization of the future, humans will play a substantial role in forming opportunities through business creativity."

This future is now here. Artificial intelligence already powers essential business functions and redefines every part of the business that relies on digital operations. Yet this is just the beginning. Emerging Agentic AI is poised to transform how businesses operate: AI agents are autonomous software components capable of perceiving their digital environment, making decisions, and taking actions toward specific goals with limited or no human oversight. This technology will fundamentally change how companies operate, as AI agents will soon begin to take over complex workflows and accelerate decision-making cycles. At the same time, AI becomes more capable of understanding structured data and can connect to corporate data stores, identify patterns, answer business questions based on structured data, and generate compelling data stories that summarize various aspects of the business. AI dominates the business world: simply put, a well-integrated AI system knows what's happening inside the organization, what's happening in the broader market, and how the organization performs. By leveraging this rich and dynamic context, AI can enhance business operations, inform decision-making, and optimize processes. Beyond processes and optimization, artificial intelligence is entering more creative areas, rewriting the rules for corporate innovation.

AI joins the innovation effort not only as a *thought partner* helping human innovators shape ideas but also as an *extraordinary innovator*, capable of generating ideas and product concepts, building prototypes, and shaping strategies within minutes. Upon a prompt, an opportunity brief, or even a signal from the market, AI agents can use the company's full context, along with the latest market insights, to frame problems, propose solutions, and conceptualize products or even entire business ventures. While hallucination remains an issue, AI-generated ideas frequently demonstrate remark-

able creativity and novelty. Considering the rate of progress, AI will soon evolve from a thought partner to a chief innovator, capable of *orchestrating* the entire corporate innovation process and optimizing multiple functions such as *market intelligence*, *business experimentation*, and *opportunity discovery*, potentially compressing innovation cycles from months to days.

Innovation disrupts itself. In this AI-powered world, the corporate innovation function faces a radical transformation. When AI enables anyone to generate brilliant ideas, shape strategies, and soon build digital products, the ability to *conceive* and *implement* becomes less important. At the same time, new competencies emerge as critical success factors for innovation: separating signal from noise, recognizing genuine opportunities, racing to market, establishing partnerships, and architecting smart in-market experimentation frameworks that maintain products differentiated. Consequently, a modern organization's most vital innovation capability is a scalable *opportunity discovery*, *validation*, and *realization* function—a "system" of talented cross-disciplinary teams powered by AI that can pursue multiple opportunities simultaneously. In this environment, innovation success increasingly depends on *in-market product growth* and ecosystem development, which involves connecting stakeholders, forming strategic alliances, building market trust, and driving momentum.

Beyond corporate boundaries, AI is fundamentally reshaping markets at unprecedented speed. As intelligence and knowledge become commoditized and available through simple APIs, established products and entire categories are under extreme pressure. AI services are displacing traditional digital products, sophisticated user interfaces are shifting to conversational experiences, and specialized applications are losing ground to comprehensive AI platforms. Moreover, this revolution extends beyond software: AI-powered robotics is already transforming manufacturing, logistics, transportation, and automotive industries, and connected devices will soon be powered by the most advanced AI models. What makes our era so special, though, is that these changes unfold simultaneously across industries and at an unimaginable speed, thus driving massive market disruption and, ultimately, the formation of entirely new ones.

At the same time, AI makes innovation easier than ever by removing barriers that once made innovation exclusive to well-resourced organizations. With an estimated 5.6[1] billion digital users and 20 bil-

[1] https://www.statista.com/statistics/325706/global-internet-user-penetration/

lion connected devices[2] in 2025, businesses operate in a massive network of digital resources, a global "digital fabric" that provides data, market and consumer behavior signals, knowledge, services, and a *wealth* of digital building blocks and open-source software that can be used in the corporate innovation context: Humanity's accumulated knowledge is available through a simple HTTP request. This digital reality creates unprecedented opportunities for innovation by revolutionizing access to technology, talent, resources, and knowledge.

Advanced technology that once existed only in expensive labs is now widely available through API services that can be integrated into applications by anyone with basic programming skills. Cloud services and serverless architectures have simplified hosting complex solutions at scale, while modern engineering tools have shortened development cycles. Companies can access a global pool of talent available through dynamic working models via online platforms, while Open Innovation enables strategic partnerships that can accelerate complex innovation efforts. With the current state of technology, it is easier than ever to grasp the dynamics of the global ecosystem and pick important signals regarding customers, brands, competitors, startups, and emerging consumer trends. When processed properly, these signals help companies—and their AI agents—understand their economic environment and discover *unmet* or *unimagined* needs.

While the opportunity to innovate is immense, competition is becoming increasingly intense and unpredictable. Our AI-powered world has removed barriers and blurred industry boundaries, enabling newcomers to build products rapidly using cloud computing, open-source software, AI coding platforms, and global talent networks. Competitive pressure intensifies from technology giants and startups across the globe. In this landscape, corporate innovation shifts from nice-to-have to *existential capability*. Organizations must prioritize a systematic approach to innovation, not only to launch new products but to reinvent themselves.

In this environment, innovation and adaptability are not just competitive advantages but survival traits, as companies will increasingly need to reimagine their core offerings or pivot toward new opportunities. Those companies that don't react fast are at risk of being displaced by AI-native competitors who can innovate faster. The pace of change demands not just adaptation but proactive

[2] https://www.statista.com/statistics/1183457/iot-connected-devices-worldwide/

opportunity-seeking: continuously sensing the global market and effectively pursuing high-potential opportunities.

This book provides a unique framework for corporate innovation, designed with artificial intelligence at its core. The first chapter introduces the core concepts of innovation by providing essential definitions and explaining the different types and styles of innovation. The next chapter puts these definitions into perspective—it presents the outlook of a modern, innovative organization and describes the most important failure factors for corporate innovation, ranging from *leadership failures* to *capability gaps* and *cultural blockers*. The third chapter explores the importance of people and culture in corporate innovation, describing the role of the *chief innovation officer*, defining a generic innovation executive role, and presenting the synthesis and responsibilities of the innovation "dream team," along with unique insights into innovation culture.

Chapter 4 presents the essential innovation capabilities, while Chapter 5 covers in detail the most important *innovation workshops* and how they are being reshaped by AI. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 present three critical, independent capabilities that shape the company's innovation core: *opportunity discovery*, *validation*, and *realization*, respectively. The opportunity discovery presents the idea assessment framework and how it is used by human and AI evaluators to flag opportunities; moreover, it introduces a novel, futuristic setup where AI *proactively* and *autonomously* discovers opportunities in the organization's context. Opportunity validation presents how to use business experimentation to obtain real-world evidence and produce insights-backed recommendations about the next best step of a business opportunity. The opportunity realization chapter explains the *AI-powered product development* function, starting with defining great MVPs and testing them in the market through fast product innovation and experimentation cycles. Chapter 9 presents a holistic *innovation measurement* framework that helps leaders understand the organization's innovation performance, orchestrate the innovation function, and steer the innovation transformation program.

The final chapter combines everything into a single, detailed *innovation masterplan*: it provides leaders with actionable guidance on how to empower their companies to innovate and drive them through a continual improvement journey to the *Innovation Mode—the* ultimate state where innovation happens organically. The chapter explains the architecture of the innovation program and presents

the technological, cultural, and process-level change required to achieve the ultimate state of innovation. Through a system of six phases, the program introduces more than 70 activities, events, or innovation capabilities that gradually empower the organization to drive significant outcomes through innovation.

This book is designed for innovation and business leaders interested in establishing a powerful innovation function and transforming their organization into a fast, agile, and AI-powered company.

You will discover essential information, novel ideas, and unique insights on how to use artificial intelligence across the innovation process, events, and programs. You will learn how to design world-class innovation teams and structure organizations for innovation at scale, as well as how to build the essential capabilities needed to establish a powerful AI-driven 'innovation engine.'

Additional content, templates, and resources are available at theinnovationmode.com.

George Krasadakis
Dublin, Ireland · 2025

Preface to the First Edition

At the time of writing, it is estimated that there are 4.5 billion active Internet users along with 30 billion connected devices. We live in an era of unprecedented access to knowledge, talent, and digital resources. Our modern times are characterized by a massive, ongoing transformation that impacts every aspect of human life—from education and healthcare to entertainment, travel, and transportation. In the business world, digital technology drives an equally dramatic impact by changing the way we work, how we build products, and operate services.

This revolution is the result of breakthrough innovations in many fields, such as hardware, software, networking, and technologies like big data and artificial intelligence. The Internet and the Web empower the formation of online communities and distributed teams that collaborate in entirely new ways. Movements such as open source, open innovation, and open collaboration reshape the way we think about business. At the same time, flexible and remote working models emerge in the so-called gig economy, while entrepreneurship and startup initiatives are on the rise. This cultural shift, along with the general availability of some of the greatest technologies of all time, set the stage for radical innovation across sectors and geographies—and this stage is available to all, enabling relatively small companies, startups, or even individuals to disrupt the status quo and challenge established services and companies. Typically, these "outsiders" see the world through a digital lens and are faster in adopting the latest technologies; as a result, they tend to be more innovative when designing products, services, or business models. Consequently, established companies are at risk of being disrupted and outperformed. Corporate leaders realize that innovation is the only way to stay relevant and stay in business.

This "new order" in terms of technology, culture, and connectivity creates tremendous opportunities for both incremental and radical innovations. At the same time, the process of innovation itself is now faster than ever. Companies that have both the knowledge and the willingness to innovate have a distinct advantage over the established ones that take a more risk-averse position. Innovation-led organizations have the chance to stay ahead of the game and thrive. Companies that overlook the value of innovation or treat it

frivolously will eventually get disrupted. Leaders need to transform their organizations toward a new model that incorporates innovation as a fundamental capability—fully embedded in operational aspects and well-aligned to the purpose of the company. To stay relevant, companies need to adapt fast and reset the way they work, communicate, collaborate, and pursue financial success.

The purpose of the book is to help business leaders rethink their corporations as agile, innovation-led organizations. At the same time, it aims to guide innovation leaders on how to design, initiate, and execute a robust transformational program. Through concrete proposals, original ideas, and best practices, it offers actionable guidance on how to drive the cultural and technological change through a structured transformation program and a continual innovation improvement process.

The book takes a holistic view of innovation by examining the role of people, culture, technology, and processes. Innovation is seen as a fully integrated function that is powered by people and streamlined by technology. While it emphasizes the importance of culture, it also presents how digital technologies can redefine the ways companies innovate. The book introduces a robust innovation framework, a set of capabilities that empower the company to systematically capture market signals, spot opportunities, and react wisely through streamlined innovation processes such as ideation, prototyping, and experimentation. Furthermore, it presents a detailed innovation transformation program—a masterplan of work streams, events, and activities that help the organization move fast toward the Innovation Mode—the state where great innovation happens naturally, in an optimal balance with operational activities. By adopting the innovation-led model presented in the book, organizations can become more innovative and eventually gain competitive advantages.

This book is intended for business, technology, and innovation leaders. Readers will find essential information and unique insights on technologies, processes, and methodologies that can help them embed innovation into their corporate reality. Engineering managers can use this book to identify the technological components required to empower fundamental processes of innovation, such as ideation, idea evaluation, innovation measurement, gamification, and knowledge management. Innovation and digital transformation managers will find practical advice, ideas, and recommendations on

how to design a winning innovation transformation strategy, inspire people, and grow a vivid community of innovators. Corporate leaders will get answers on how to measure success and orchestrate the end-to-end innovation process.

Additional content on innovation, along with templates and other artifacts, can be found online at theinnovationmode.com.

George Krasadakis
Dublin, Ireland · 2020

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The full book

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