



COMPETING VALUES FRAMEWORK (CVF)

What is the Competing Values Framework (CVF)?

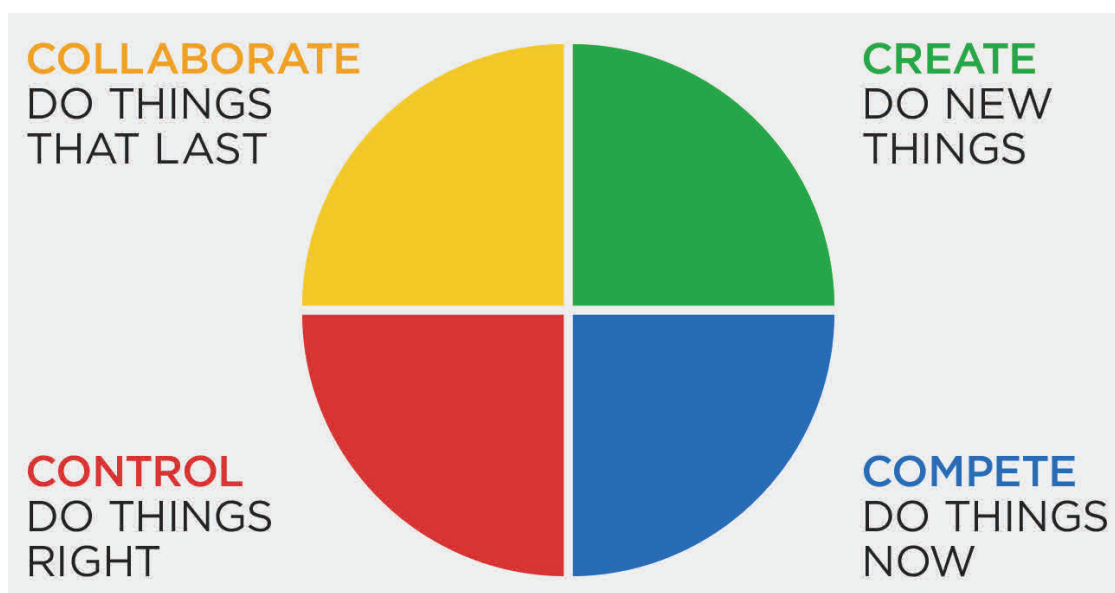
The CVF is based on the principle that there are competing tensions or forces that exist in every situation and everyone. Each pulls you one direction at the expense of another. These tensions produce the conflicts that you face every day: is it more important to you right now to attend your daughter's recital or run the strategic meeting for that merger and acquisition work? Both are important, but yet very different.

The CVF takes account that your lives are complex and intertwined with others. The high price of gas may cause you to change your commute habit or the food you eat. Your parents' declining health may precipitate your move to be closer to them. In choosing your innovation approach, you need to take account of all these forces, controllable or not. You need to understand how the world works around you. The CVF helps you do just that. It helps you spot opportunities to innovate and open your mind to new possibilities. It helps you conduct "prismatic thinking."

Two Positive Tensions and Four Approaches to Innovation

There are two positive but competing tensions. The first one deals with the magnitude of innovation (how much); the second with the speed of innovation (how fast). These two tensions outline the four approaches of innovations: create, control, compete, and collaborate. Each is associated with a different color: green, red, blue, and yellow.

These approaches of innovation are like a prism. Light is everywhere, but unless the power goes out, we take it for granted. Only when we see a rainbow or when someone shines light through a prism are we reminded that the light we live and work by every day contains all the colors of the rainbow. In the same way, every challenge or problem can draw on all the "colors" of innovation, but most of the time we're not even aware that those colors are all around us. In prismatic thinking, we break the light of innovation into its component colors. Each of these is a way to make your situation new and improved, yet each one gets different results. Let's get to know each of these approaches a little better.



CREATE

Greens experiment and explore. Generalists and artists, they enjoy finding multiple answers to problems and are able to easily shift directions while they are problem solving. Greens are what many people think of first about creativity or innovation: the wild-eyed scientist in his lab, the novelist in his garret, or the musician playing all night in the club. Creates live to generate new ideas and approaches, and they guard their freedom. They will set aside norms and rules in the service of their emerging vision, which usually emphasizes new ideas, flexibility and adaptability. Their motto could be, "Do things first."



Green innovations can be the biggest and most valuable forms of change: new discoveries, original processes or points of view, unique expressions of vision. They have the potential to change the world around them by creating entirely new categories. But while create innovations can have the biggest impact when they succeed, they have the greatest chance of failure. Taken too far, a create approach can become a chaotic, endless series of wild experiments with no useful results.

CONTROL

Now let's look at the opposite innovation approach: Red. Reds are systematic. Careful and practical, they innovate in the opposite way from greens. Rather than trying to invent a game-changing new creation, reds build change in small, careful steps by taking something that is already good and modifying it to make it better. The control approach, more than the other three, is focused not only on improving growth but on reducing failures to ensure security and efficiency. In the control world view, there is a right way and wrong way, governed by fix laws. There is a procedure to disposing medical waste. If they had a motto, it might be, "Do things right."



The control approach is the least risky and the most reliable, but its rate of change is the smallest. And taken too far it becomes a tangle of rules, red tape, and bureaucracy that can strangle the very creativity it requires.

Tension No 1: How Much?

The create (green) and control (red) approaches to innovation are opposites. While Greens have an external orientation in life and love flexibility, Reds are inwardly oriented and count on stability. The tension between these two approaches is accentuated in the resulting magnitude of innovation: the size of change you need in your life and the amount of risk you're willing to take on. Do you need a little something new in your life? Or do you need a whole new life? How ambitious are you? The create approach produces high reward with high risk and the control approach gives you smaller reward accompanied by smaller risk.



Let's look at the next set of innovation approaches, which bring a different tension in your life.

COMPETE

Blues love challenges. They see the world as a game with winners and losers, and feel motivated by clear goals and specific rewards: money, power, and other tangible forms of success. These are people who like to get things done and see results immediately. They find competition exhilarating, and enjoy

the hard work necessary to win. If blues had a motto, it would be “Do things fast.” Blue parents emphasize that school is a place to earn high grades and win access to profitable careers.

This form of innovation is the fastest of all four to show results, and it can achieve prosperity and physical fitness. Taken too far, however, the compete approach can lead to reckless pursuit of short-term gain at the expense of anything else: “Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing.” It is also hard to sustain: its “sweat shop” approach gives little concern to long-term well being.



COLLABORATE

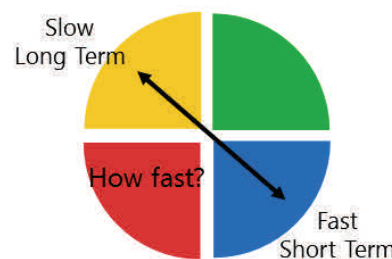
The opposite of the compete (blue) approach is the collaborate (yellow) approach. Yellows connect. They like to work where they can nurture a community based on trust, commitment, and lasting relationships – the sort of places that get known as “great places to work.” If they had a motto, it might be “Do things together.” Collaborative parents emphasize school as a place for lifelong learning and friendship, and many are found working in schools and universities, human resource departments, and in the helping professions.



The Collaborate force is the slowest forms of growth because it focuses on building the underlying organizational culture and competencies required to sustain it. Taken too far, however, a “collaborate” approach becomes a pleasure cruise where everyone helps everyone else feel all right, but no one gets anywhere.

Tension No 2: How Fast?

There is a natural tension between the compete and collaborate (blue and yellow) forms of innovation. This tension comes down to a basic decision about time: how fast does your innovation need to happen? Can you change through self development which takes longer but maybe more sustainable? How long will your opportunity remain? If you need to act immediately, then you need to consider the compete approach. If you have more time, the collaborate approach may be more beneficial.



Prismatic Thinking

Every person – like every business, every community and even every country – favors one of these four approaches over the others. You may already have a sense of which of the four approaches describes you. You may also be feeling, already, that not one of these can describe you completely. Both of these responses are essential for rethinking your approach to innovation. Just as almost every person is either right-handed or left-handed, and favors the dominant hand when doing manual tasks, you need to know which you are and when that might not be an advantage. At the same time, just because you are left-handed doesn’t mean you’d agree to tie your right hand behind your back. In reality, all situations, practices, and people employ multiple approaches to innovation, but like people who are left- or right-handed, they tend to favor one over the others, for better or worse, depending on the goal. The question is how to best use your hands, or your approaches to innovation, together.