



Interview with Ron Roberts, co-author of  
**Junkyard Games: The Outrageously Fun Innovation Simulation**

**Q: How do you define innovation, and why is it important to organizations today?**

**A:** Creativity is the act of coming up with something new – a product, service, concept, material, device, application, or process. Innovation is the act of integrating that creation into the day-to-day operation and activities of society so that there is a high, constant, and sustainable demand for it.

Innovation is the lifeblood of organizations because it generates the new products, services, and processes needed to meet the ever-changing needs of clients and consumers in a world driven by rapid and often unforeseen change.

**Q: Who needs to be innovative?**

**A:** Everyone needs to be innovative. And everyone *can* be innovative. Whether you are a scientist in a lab or a maintenance person helping to keep the offices healthy and free from bacteria, everyone at all levels – in every organization – has firsthand knowledge that can be beneficial to improving performance and success.

**Q: Is it possible to learn how to be innovative?**

**A:** Yes! Anyone can learn how to be innovative simply by practicing on a regular basis. It also takes courage – courage to overcome the natural fear that is associated with innovation. Courage to think outside of the box. And courage to take a risk and tell others about your ideas. But if you can overcome this trepidation, you may be the lucky one who comes up with the brilliant idea that changes the way your company does business, saves the organization significant amounts of time and money, or dramatically increases performance.

It's entirely possible that your first idea – or your 25<sup>th</sup> or 100<sup>th</sup> – won't be a smashing success right out of the box. But it is important to remember that one new idea can trigger a whole host of new ideas amongst you, your team, or the organization. So while your idea may not be accepted as it was originally conceived, it may spark an innovative idea in someone else.

**Q:** *Junkyard Games* introduces a 7-step innovation process. How does this model work?

**A:** To put it very simply, the 7-step innovation process is a way of moving from a gut feeling or raw concept to a well-oiled, valuable product or service – and all of the necessary steps in between.

**Q:** How would you use *Junkyard Games* to solve a problem?

**A:** *Junkyard Games* allows participants to practice the 7-step innovation process and apply it to problem solving in a logical, simple, and easy-to-use way. Participants are able to achieve their goals and objectives through innovation to solve any problem, simply by following the steps outlined by the model.

**Q:** What are the primary benefits of using *Junkyard Games* in the training classroom?

**A:** One of the primary benefits of using *Junkyard Games* in the training classroom is the hands-on, tactile, and visceral experience it gives the audience. Participants get to feel the excitement of innovating, and they are able to see the many different ways they can be creative and innovative. As a facilitator, it is amazing to watch learning in action. Even though each team starts the simulation with similar materials, the results are always creative and varied. It is exciting to watch innovation come from within each person, and to see the different results it yields each time.

**Q:** What makes *Junkyard Games* an effective learning tool?

**A:** A few high-level adult thinkers learn through insight, but the majority of people tend to learn from repetition, and from trial and error. *Junkyard Games* enhances both components of learning. It incorporates both insight and brainstorming, and there are repeated opportunities for the group members to practice their ideas through trial and error until they get it just right. Through constant repeated effort, previously unseen ideas can surface and become more conscious. And as consciousness changes, so does the process of innovation and of learning from both mistakes and successes.

**Q:** Do you have a specific experience using the product that you can share?

**A:** Yes, I recently worked with a group of pharmaceutical strategic planners. They were charged with the challenge of discovering new and innovative ways to introduce environmentally friendly methods to improve their organization's manufacturing processes, both in the short term and as far out as 20 years from now.

I used *Junkyard Games* as a way to encourage innovative thinking and introduce the 7-step model. The audience had a great time playing the game, and afterwards we applied the principles of process improvement and innovation to their specific green manufacturing challenge. The level of brainstorming within the group was off the charts! They were very

pleased with the results, and we ended the session with ideas and a process they could put into immediate motion.

### **About the Author**

Ron Roberts, co-author of *Junkyard Games*



Ron Roberts is a recognized consultant, trainer, and author. An expert in the field of accelerated experiential learning, he has created more than 70 games, tools, and digital applications, and holds six patents on learning technology. Ron has a master's degree in counseling psychology, serves as the president of two companies, Action Centered Training, Inc. and ACT Games, and is a professor in both the management and communications departments at Penn State University.