

Brant Cooper | edison365 Podcast

Stewart Noyce: [00:00:00] The Edison 365 podcast explores the best practices and deep insights of modern-day Edison's people who innovate 365 days of the year. This podcast is brought to you by Edison 365 the company that enables idea management from idea to business impact.

Well, hello everyone and welcome to the Edison 365 podcast. My name is Stewart Noyce, and I'm joined by my partner Dennis Hoel. Guest today is Brant Cooper CEO and founder of moves the needle a global Innovation consulting firm with deep roots in The Lean Startup movement Brant. Thank you very much for taking this interview with us today.

Brant Cooper: [00:00:42] Thanks for having me.

Stewart Noyce: [00:00:44] Yeah. Can you tell us, well, just start with how you came to start moves the needle?

Brant Cooper: [00:00:49] Sure, so I lived through the DOT com boom and bust so I was started guy up in the in the San Francisco Bay Area, worked at a number of startups experience IPO acquisition, rapid growth that then tailed off and also crushing failure.

So. I had a number of different roles from it manager to running Professional Services to product management and running marketing and in Partnerships and all of that type of stuff, served on executive teams was a founder of a couple of the failures. So, you know broad experience in the startup world. After the bus there were a bunch of people that were talking writing in conversations around you know, why are we trying to make startups look like big businesses when the successful startups don't operate that way.

So, can we codify a bit? What successful startups look like how do they operate? And out of those conversations emerged, you know some writing by Steve blank and Eric Ries started talking about Lean Startup stuff, and I had launched my own marketing Services called sales and marketing R&D, which was trying to bring the engineering rigor to the sales and marketing side of the house.

And so, there was a bunch of people talking about this stuff. And so I decided to write a book, self-publish, "Entrepreneurs guide to customer development", first book they talk about customer development and Lean Startup and product Market fit and all of these things that a lot of people were, you know, trying to wrap their arms around. And Eric Rise Lean Startup book sort of blue that market open and large Enterprises were starting to take a look at this because, well large Enterprises launched products that nobody wants and that's really expensive, more expensive than in the startup world.

So I followed up with the New York Times bestseller, "The lean entrepreneur", a real deep dive into how you how you develop customer empathy and run experiments and what data metrics you should be looking at. And about that time formed a company called moves the needle partnered up with Aaron Eden who was responsible for scaling these Lean Startup techniques plus design thinking across Intuit - and Intuit has had a number of successes

based upon these principles. So, we decided to combine our efforts take it to the Enterprise that was 2014 and off were running.

Stewart Noyce: [00:03:31] Okay, so fast forward to today. What do you think is the big problem that you now address with moves the needle?

Brant Cooper: [00:03:39] Yes, that's funny. Back in the you know, what all of his stuff we're starting we're saying "this is just for scalable startups. You know, that's our Market, nobody else". This was back. When I wrote the first book when Eric Ries has book, you know was read by corporates.

We're going like "Okay corporates can use this but only for disruptive innovation. It's only for the real radical stuff". And manufactures forward, you know, 5-6 years from when we started the company. It's everybody inside the enterprise has to adopt what I now call is the entrepreneurial spirit.

So basically, you know, there's different ways to operate within uncertainty and the bigger and the more successful the business that you're in your used to operating in execution mode. A matter of fact, you hear that all the time, especially from you know mentors and from investors. "You just have to execute go out and execute, you know, that's for winners."

But the thing is that if you execute in the face of uncertainty, what do you do - you fail. So really what it ends up being is that you need this balance between learning and executing, and you have to make sure that you're not executing on what you don't know but on what you know, and that you have a different process for turning the unknown into the know.

And so now what we do is we apply these techniques, this entrepreneurial spirit, this combination of design thinking and Lean Startup and agile anywhere inside the business that that faces uncertainty. And so if you're trying to hit your numbers this year or next year, you know, you're mostly an execution mode, but you might not know how you're going to hit all your numbers.

So that means there's uncertainty there. So, you're balancing a lot of execution with a little bit of learning mode. If you're in the on the Innovation team and you're supposed to be Reinventing Your Business and that's going to take five six seven years for that to come to fruition - then you're doing massive amount of learning and exploring and only small smaller bits of execution. And so, there's a Continuum all across the business and you have to learn how to balance those two things.

Stewart Noyce: [00:05:46] Yeah, so you really started to go into what the solution looks like that you know that essentially moves the needle is offering here. It must be some combination of these methodologies and practices. Could you take us through what that looks like for typical client?

Brant Cooper: [00:06:02] Right? So, you know again, we operate differently based upon whether we're on that mostly execution side versus The Innovation side. We have a number of products - basically we run our version of Sprint's, you know design Sprint's we call them lean Innovation Sprints. Inside those Sprints we're doing sort of a really rapid learning by

doing is or applying it to real world projects. We're combining agile practices with empathy work and how to run disciplined experiments. We then can expand upon that and run accelerator programs for these companies. So those, you know, even in the startup world the 90-day cohort is sort of arbitrary, but we dutifully follow that - so we run 90 day cohorts, we teach leaders had to act like investors, so we run growth boards or innovation boards. We're doing leadership workshops at the same time because they have to learn new skills. So those are the primary things that we're doing will build up an internal training program. If you want we can do some strategy work, we can do some portfolio management, but primarily we're teaching people how to operate differently when they face uncertainty and then how to balance that learning with that with the execution mode.

Stewart Noyce: [00:07:16] So, are most of these client's larger companies?

Brant Cooper: [00:07:19] They're all large companies. We've got some mid markets - we probably done a couple of startups that are well, you know have lots of investment. But primarily we're working, you know with Fortune 500 or Global 1000 companies.

Stewart Noyce: [00:07:36] Right and do they end up working with you for quite a while then are they, you know use establish a relationship and then that relationship last for several years or is this more of a one-off "hey, solve a quick problem and get out. "

Brant Cooper: [00:07:49] Yeah, I kind of depends on how Deeply they buy into our story right? So, we've worked with companies that are fully bought into everybody needs to learn these principles and how to apply them and those engagements last for years. We have some companies that are going listen, we just you know, we need a we want to Sprint here. We want to kick off teach us how to do this and then we'll run with it. Maybe we do some follow-on coaching with them as they go through the process and then we've got, you know, everything in between where innovation groups or product teams want to infect the rest of the organization, but it just doesn't catch hold the company's maybe not quite ready or perhaps they're using and different set of methodologies and so, you know we work with them for several months and then let them go on their merry way - so it varies quite a bit

Stewart Noyce: [00:08:39] Sure. What makes you so special at moves the needle I mean, what's your secret sauce as it?

Brant Cooper: [00:08:46] Well, there's two things. I think that we demonstrate thought leadership. I think we're one step ahead of the competition in seeing why these principles need to be applied. I think that there's a lot of people out in the Innovation world that talk about "an ambidextrous company" or a "bimodal operating system" and that view basically you split the organization into 95% just keep doing it the way you're doing it and the other 5% is "okay you guys are going to be the ones that operate differently."

We see that as the failure. The world is changed. This uncertainty pervades the whole organization. And so, if you just leave your future to this Innovation group that's operating in this search mode and they're not going to see the ROI for five six seven years. Those companies aren't going to survive or the program is not going to survive because these companies are so desperate to figure out how they're going to find their growth in the next

few years, that that bimodal system just fundamentally doesn't work. And so, I think we're out in front in the thinking on that.

I think the second thing is that when we, our DNA is this combination of design thinking and The Lean Startup experimentation plus the agile structure, which is really important in teaching these organizations how to how to run a team that's autonomous, you know, tackling these problems and I think that there's other companies, other Consultants, other organizations that really their DNA is one of those three things and then they start tacking on the other and it again, it's just not as effective because it's just not inside of, them that they're just not bought in. They don't necessarily understand why you're doing you know what you're doing when.

And I think that the third and maybe the most important is our people we have entrepreneurs. We have entrepreneurs that have also worked in large companies and we have a large company innovators that have come to work with us so that we have deep empathy deep understanding for our corporate clients. We understand the issues that they're facing and how tough it is. To get the change in Behavior that's really required up and down the stack from the front lines to the c-suite. So, I think that those are probably our three top reasons that that we've been successful.

Stewart Noyce: [00:11:07] Yeah, excellent. What would you say your greatest accomplishment has been to date with moves the needle?

Brant Cooper: [00:11:13] From a from an impact perspective, I think that one of the leading programs out there in the world is ING's agile and PACE program. And basically, this is the this is pretty radical what they're doing at ING. Basically, they are converting all of their business units into agile in the sense that spotify's engineering team does it. So no longer are the departments, they are chapters and guilds - I don't want to go too much into that. But it's this is really this built-in cross-functional agile teams, and it's a bank that's doing this. So that's insane to me. It's so forward-thinking. And of course, we were deeply embedded in all levels at ING helping them convert people into working this new way.

And again, it's been from the front lines to the c-suite, and from the near-term horizons of how we're going to apply this every day to how we also going to apply this to you know, Reinventing banking. So, I'm super proud of our effort there and we're you know, frankly, we're trying to bring that to two other organizations as well.

Stewart Noyce: [00:12:30] Okay, so if that's if that's for real that's pretty world changing. I mean if you can get a bank to think agile from, you know, from within that's pretty astonishing.

Brant Cooper: [00:12:40] It is astonishing and I don't want to take too much credit their the leadership at ING decided to do this before they had ever heard of moves the needle and there's a bunch of people inside of ING some who've moved on now that that were influential and there were outside Consultant - Boston Consulting Group, I think was big in there and some other, you know outside influences for sure. So, this was not invented by

moves the needle and then executed by moves the needle. We were we were partnered with them as well as others to make this extraordinary step.

Stewart Noyce: [00:13:19] You know, large organizations, for them to change they have to want to change you can be there to help them and but they still have to want to do it don't they? So, what's up for you in the next 12 months? What's the objective now?

Brant Cooper: [00:13:35] Well, I think that it's we just need to continue to eat our own dog food to be honest. We have to we have to figure out you know, where an our funnel our value stream funnel do we need to improve our performance in order to keep growing, in order to bring this to more and more Enterprises.

So I think that we're in you know, sort of quote unquote execution mode, but in our world that means also a balancing of the learning and executing so we are always running experiments inside of our organization to figure out you know, how do we stay ahead and how do we move, faster and you know, how do we help more organizations.

Stewart Noyce: [00:14:18] Now, that's brilliant. Well, you know what you have done a bang-up job on this this first section and I am really excited about this interview. We're going to send it over to Dennis now, he has a few questions and then when he's finished, he'll send it back to me and will dig into lean process a little bit more.

Dennis Høier Hoel: [00:14:39] Thank you Stewart Brant. I'm really curious about how you've experienced the role as an innovation teacher change over the past decade. Would you be able to share your thought on that?

Brant Cooper: [00:14:53] You know, to be honest. I think that you know, I can't tell you why this this sort of learning mode comes to me. You know, I think that there are entrepreneurial characteristics that may be described that. But you know, there's always that sort of a mixture of humility and arrogance too, right? And the humility is that, "man, I don't know everything." And I'm telling you straight up. There's a lot. I don't know but it also means that I go into my life everyday willing to learn and you know, so that's the humility part of it.

And I guess there's the flip side which is, you know, its confidence bordering on arrogance perhaps is a better way of putting it. But we're the ones to do it. I mean, I truly believe we're thought leaders out there and that we've got a take that other people don't have. Now that doesn't mean nobody's at it. There're definitely other people that got it. Ooh, that's one of the things that you learn, I guess. Back to the humility side really quickly is there's no new ideas Under the Sun. There are other people that have these ideas and they're out there doing them as well. But I guess I think that fundamentally I'm confident that we're the right ones to do it and I'm always in learning mode. And so those are, you know, I need to keep that balance myself in order to. To keep us moving forward.

Dennis Høier Hoel: [00:16:25] Yeah, and actually that's a beautiful transition to my next question referring back to your Ted Talk in 2013. You talked about how the world needs more Visionaries or these people that relentlessly pursue change. Right now, do you feel like we're currently at a stage where you will find these Visionaries everywhere or are, we stuck with a Visionary myth as you call it?

Brant Cooper: [00:16:47] Wow, that man that's a great question. I think we'll continue to have the both. So I think that the myth of the Visionary is a storytelling thing, you know, I think it's kind of too bad in some sense, but you know, human beings are storytellers and we love Legends and we love myths. And so, you know, we love to look at what's happened in the past and come up with these stories. And if these stories are used to inspire people to go into the future that's you know, that's amazing. And I think that there's a lot of value to that. I think that the downside is that if people take these stories too literal: in other words, Steve Jobs truly was a Visionary and could predict the future.

I think that that sets the wrong tone right that that maybe gives you the arrogance but not the learning mode, not the self-awareness to know that you actually can't predict the future and that you don't know and that you have to go into learning mode. So I think that the strength of the Visionary is, hey, I do want to change the world the strength of the Visionary is also: I don't necessarily know how I'm going to do it and frankly - I think Steve Jobs is a great example of that. You know, he made a lot of mistakes. He made a lot of Errors. He was wrong multiple times. But if we if we accept the assumption that his vision was to put a computer in everybody's pocket.

Holy crap, I think he did it, right. I think he actually achieved that but he didn't do it with the you know, the Lisa and he didn't do it with the company NeXT and he didn't do it with the you know the iPod Shuffle. You know, it took a lot of iterations in order for him to achieve that it's not that he foresaw.

It's that that was the change that he wanted to make. So, I think we are entering an era where, you know, through the rise of freelance. Rise of the fact that everybody's going to be responsible for their own economy again, which is sort of a something that was true, you know, pre-industrial age. I think that there's an opportunity for there to be, you know, three billion Visionaries if we can teach these people the right way to go about it.

Dennis Høier Hoel: [00:19:05] Yeah. So, when you're running Innovation workshops with different levels of management, what are some of the key differences in motivation attitude or behavior that you notice?

Brant Cooper: [00:19:16] Well, so when you're in the lower parts of the organization, there's a lot of anxiety and fear around them. You know people believing that they're going to get in trouble, that this violates some rules, if it violates compliance, they're not allowed to talk to customers this way, that they're not allowed to you know, there's a lot of fear around whether this is actually going to advance their career or if they do something wrong. Are they going to get fired? I think that in the when you go onto the opposite side up to the management level - there's also a lot of fear, and there's also a lot. You know that these people are getting out of their comfort zone and I think their fear is that they know that something has to change but they have no idea how to do it. And so, they've become leaders because they're very good at what they've done which is typically execution mode.

They're very successful at managing another people's execution. They're very successful at hitting numbers and all of these leading teams and all of these things that got them to where they are and got their companies to a successful as they are. But now that we're in a new

world. They're like well heck I don't really have no idea how what I'm supposed to do in this new world. And so, the commonality is that, you know, there's fear on both sides, but the reasons the reasons are different.

Dennis Højer Hoel: [00:20:46] So they can definitely be resistance from all levels of the organization when it comes to Innovation. And in your book the lead entrepreneur. You also talk about the Innovation Spectrum. So, what is that and how can today's entrepreneurial or corporate interpreters leverage that to disrupt markets?

Brant Cooper: [00:21:06] Yeah, so that the Continuum is the way I describe it now. It's really, it's sort of that idea of the level of uncertainty. And so, I think that you know in the past maybe I described it as being a level of innovation. Those things are related, but they're not exactly the same thing and let me give a quick example of what you're trying to do is find where your growth is coming from five years from now - there's a multiple number of ways that you can do that you can actually do, you know, breakthrough Innovation where you're trying to invent a new business model or trying to even disrupt your current business model and it's going to take five plus years to do that and that would be on one end of the Continuum break.

Through Innovation and there would also be massive amounts of uncertainty. You could also take an existing product and say I'm going to go launch it in a developing country. There's really no innovation there really but it still might take five years for you to get the return on investment launching in a particular emerging economy. But you want to start today, right? You can't wait three or four years to do it you have to start today. And so, there's still a massive amount of uncertainty there, but there's no innovation. And so, I think that's super interesting and I think it's one of those things that organizations have a really super tough time putting their head around.

So, the time Horizon is the same but how you're going to get there. There's a whole other continuum. There's a completely separate access on you know, the type of products or services or marketing or sales or business model or pricing or distribution or all of these other things where there's still a massive amount of uncertainty, but how you're going to accomplish it really doesn't have anything to do with Innovation. And so that's part of the challenge is to get companies to think about their product portfolio and how that they expect that to play out over a time period, and then look at all of these other Alternative acquisition investing in startups Tech scouting modifying existing products to fit into new markets, finding adjacent markets to go into with existing products changing, adding new products that don't take you know, five years into existing markets.

Anyway, there's a whole portfolio of ways that you can actually, you know, find new growth and those need to be on the table and we need to figure out who's responsible and how you're going to fund it and how you're going to allocate the resources to it over these time horizons. And so I think that we're in an era now where portfolio management if we call all of that portfolio management, it's a big job and it's not something that can be done, really, on an annual budget basis. It has to be checked in and this is sort of the fundamental of agile. You have to be able to check that stuff into that on how are we doing? And what are

the metrics where we're measuring in order to you know, indicate our progress and how often are we going to check in on those metrics?

And how often are we willing to change those plans based upon what we're learning? So, there's a lot of I mean, I think that there's a lot of uncertainty in turmoil even in how we're going to Grapple with this new world.

Dennis Høier Hoel: [00:24:38] And I think that with the continuous innovation or using the emerging and disruptive Technologies are going to make it even harder for a lot of companies to make a decision of what direction to go because you know, we're obviously in a very digital age and I guess my last question before I hand it over to Stewart again is; how can large Enterprises as well as startups overcome some of the challenges that follow digital transformation?

Brant Cooper: [00:25:05] Well, I think that the basically companies need to stop treating digital transformation as a buzzword as a catch-all as a solve all digital transformation should be applied within that portfolio management that I'm talking about. Where does it make sense to do that?

We've done these workshops for example back, you know when lemonade, but you know, the insurance startup was really popular. We were running these workshops with insurance companies. And you know, our process has people going through, you know, defining the customer defining the problem, you know, understanding it deeply going out and talking to customers and making sure that you've got your persona correct and you've described the problem right and no matter how much we did that work when we got the solution mode. The solution was always, you know, peer-to-peer insurance.

And we're like no. No, that's not a solution to a problem. That's a technology. "What is your product peer-to-peer insurance!" It's a you know companies get stuck on this stuff. They get stuck on. I don't know blocking, you know, Internet of Things. No, those aren't Solutions. There's a Technologies. So, I think digital transformation is the same thing people need to stop running around and going like we need to do digital transformation. It's not the same thing as the what I'm talking about digital transformation has a role to play in there somewhere.

But you really need to go and assess the opportunities and understand your customers and run these experiments to even determine whether digitization is the right strategy for you know for a particular time Horizon and growth objectives that you're trying to achieve. When it comes to startups. I guess I would say the same thing though.

It's hard to imagine startups that don't have some sort of digital technology nowadays anyways, but people need to not.... Stewart you were you sort of alluded earlier to like, oh Brant you went right to the solution, which is such a classic thing for an entrepreneur to do what's worse is to go to a technology first, right? I mean not that that's not even worth going to a solution first. It's hilarious. We get hung up on this technology. And you know, what?

Here's a really disruptive company, right Airbnb. Was there any technology that was actually Innovative there? No. Uber no Technology Innovation, so people need to stop getting hung

up hung up on the buzz words and the technology and start looking to the customers in the problems that you're trying to solve.

Dennis Højer Hoel: [00:27:41] To me it's great to see that you have such a passionate response to this because I recently graduated and from Hult international business school with a degree in disruptive innovation. And there was one thing that they just kept packing into our brain so that that is: fall in love with the problem not the solution because there are so many examples of companies and entrepreneurs having this technology, you know, and they're just looking for a problem to put this technology or the solution into this.

Brant Cooper: [00:28:10] Oh, yeah, I agree. Totally I'm glad that they were teaching that to you inside of a disruptive innovation class because that would seem like that would be ripe, for you know, believing in the in sort of the technology first. So, I'm glad they caught it that way.

Dennis Højer Hoel: [00:28:27] Yeah, I think that will be a from my side Stewart.

Stewart Noyce: [00:28:30] Yeah, thanks. Thanks Dennis. So Brent I'm super excited about the approaches that you've taken at moves the needle that get to this issue of how do you identify the Innovation and then how do you roll it out? So, you are there at the beginning of lean or the lean methodology and I'm really interested in this this your particular take on this.

What would you say are its greatest strengths as a methodology and then maybe if you would contrast that to the weaknesses it has?

Brant Cooper: [00:29:08] So I'm going to start with the ladder so. So, in lean Innovation and Lean Startup, the problem is the word lean. So, I wasn't around for the beginning of lean. You know goes back to really the manufacturing Lean manufacturing back in the 50s. And so, Eric Ries chose that name lean in Lean Startup, you know purposely which I totally dig it, but. The problem is everybody sort of drops the word startup or innovation and then you get to lean, and the original precepts of lean were around reducing waste. But like if you look at the Toyota, you know, they knew the customer they knew the product, right?

They knew the solution. And what they're trying to do is make it more efficient to produce these cars and reduce the waste and increase the value that was being provided to the to the customer. And so that was all great and frankly still applies today in. The Lean Startup World though and in lean Innovation, you don't really necessarily know what the customer problem solution is. So, you actually are trying to reduce the waste in figuring that stuff out. And so, there's a fundamental kind of a misunderstanding of Lean Startup and lean Innovation because of people not sorted equating it back to those to those, you know, originally Lean manufacturing days. And so I think that a lot of the I think there's like a lot of criticism of Lean Startup out there and it tends to not look at the right definition the people who are criticizing it tend to make up their own definition of what Lean Startup is and then and then, you know sort of knock down a strawman and so that's kind of too bad.

I mean like we get all the time. "Oh, that doesn't work for our business model. It doesn't work for Hardware. It doesn't work for pharmaceuticals."

And if I actually put it to anybody inside of any company in any industry and I say well listen, would you like to reduce the waste in producing new products and services? Well, of course they do. Okay. Well then lean startups right for you. I mean it's as fundamental is that.

And you know, really Steve North or Eric Ries really defined how you actually do it, which I'm very glad about because that allowed other people like me and asked Maura and you know been jóska bits and just a ton of other people to develop their own methodologies about how you apply these fundamental principles. So, I think that there's nothing wrong with the principles. I can't even imagine what the scenario is where somebody would say. Yeah, you know waste is okay. So fundamentally, I think that. You know, these things just should be applied. We emphasize again not to belabor the point that that if you're faced with uncertainty, you can't really practice lean manufacturing because you don't know and so that's where our application of lean Innovation is helping inside that uncertainty. If you're if you fully know what you need to create right, there are instances. -You're building a jet engine. Even if there's a small amount of uncertainty around, something there 99.9% of that jet engine you know has to be developed in a particular way. Well, you don't need to like do a two-week Sprint in order to while you're creating a jet engine. You don't need to, you know, run an experiment on how to create that engine, so fundamentally, you know lean manufacturing is important, there may be lean Six Sigma is important there when there's no uncertainty.

And so I think that you know, people don't want you don't the way I describe it Stewart is that if you're building a new jet propulsion system lean Innovations great because it's uncertain if you're actually installing a jet engine on a plane. Please don't use lean Innovation use lean Six Sigma. We know that we got to get it on there, right, you know lives are at stake. So, I think that the strengths are really around the reducing wasted figuring out. How do we provide value to customers? That's the strength of lean Innovation. I think that there's a lot of difficulty in understanding your customers the right way these days.

I think it's hard to figure out what are the problems that are worth solving that, you know market segments have or that are solvable, you know, we often chase problems that actually are so ingrained in the human being that it's quite possible that those problems aren't solvable. I think that it's easy to get stuck in an experiment mode where you're only running experiments and you never get to the point of actually producing product.

And so that's one of the tougher things that that you know that we've tried to work through. I also think that fundamentally: It's hard for people to scale their learning. So in other words, it's pretty easy to figure out your Market segment and go talk to 10 people and nine out of ten might go, you know, give you some evidence that your idea is spot-on and you should build it and you take that to your boss and they're like, we're not going to invest in something that 10 people said they like.

So how do you scale the numbers in order to convince management that that this is the right way to go is really one of the biggest hurdles. I think in the application of the lean Innovation stuff. So, I'm not positive. I answered your question, but I'll pause there.

Stewart Noyce: [00:34:52] A good place to pause. I will say that you answered the question and then gave me a whole bunch of other questions. So I let's start with the first thing which is that one of the arguments I had heard about lean early on - when I say lean, I mean like you said Lean Startup or lean Innovation - was that it had an overemphasis on sustaining Innovation. But what from what you're what you just said and from what I've heard from others; It's not as much about. Painting as it is about testing ideas. Is that fair?

Brant Cooper: [00:35:30] Yeah, that's totally fair. I think that I've heard that one a lot too. And I think people are just they're just confused. I mean the fact of the matter is that I don't know. What's the number I'll just throw it out ninety-nine out of a hundred startups are working on something that's super incremental. Yeah, and so people are just equating that to Lean Startup instead of equating that to the fact that you know, most entrepreneurs want to build a want to build a smartphone app. Not a jet propulsion system.

Stewart Noyce: [00:36:05] There you go. So why don't we see if you got a perspective on Zero to One by Peter Thiel? That's a book I read a few years ago that really dug into this idea that we should all be swinging for the fences. Is that something we should be doing?

Brant Cooper: [00:36:21] No, I think that like fundamental Silicon Valley myth. I think that having lots of people swinging big is great. And I think Venture capitalists should be, you know, investing heavily in people that are swinging big.

That's really what Venture Capital markets are for but think. I really believe the trend in our economy is you know sort of this thing that I said earlier where people are going to return or are returning to being responsible for their own economy. And so, to me that means that if you want to make a small change in the world, well more power to you take care of yourself.

Take care of your family take care of your community, you know, whatever, you know, whatever drives you but if you want to make a big change in the world. Well, that's awesome, too. So, I don't know I guess I think it's sort of its arrogant the billionaires to turn around and go like hey, everybody goes swing big. You know, I think people are going to be responsible for their own economy. And so, people need to be able to go small or big depending upon you know, what are their values? What are their needs? What are they trying to accomplish? And really, I think that it's an empowering way to live no matter whether you're going big or small.

Stewart Noyce: [00:37:41] Yeah, that's fair. I let people make their decision about where they fit on the Innovation Spectrum as it were, you know, what they can accomplish perhaps.

Brant Cooper: [00:37:50] What I mean. I just again it's sort of. In my first book, I alluded to an article where you know, the writer said something very similar, like oh entrepreneurs should start stop making, you know iPhone apps and make you know, jet propulsion systems. And I'm just sitting there thinking that's not it just does it's not the way things work; you know people don't sit there and make choices. Oh, am I going to go invent a space rocket or an iPhone app? I mean, it's just it's so absurd that anybody would claim that somebody thinks that way. And you know even Thomas Edison listen, you know, he didn't

invent the lightbulb he went and looked at other patents and said hey, this would be something cool to take the.

In a matter of fact, it was really the goal of the patent system at the very beginning. It's why it's in our constitution. It's not so people can hoard patents and run around and claim how many patents that they have or patent, you know business processes or these other ridiculous things. The idea was is that people there are inventors out there.

They're not necessarily the ones that take it to Market and other people go into the patent portfolios and go hey, I'm going to see if I can take this to Market and then they cut a deal with the owner of the patent. We've gotten so far away from that but man that's the way Thomas Edison. That's the way Thomas Edison started. He did not have the idea for the light bulb it already existed.

Stewart Noyce: [00:39:13] Yeah. No now work. We've come around to my question about tools because you just mentioned Edison and we are in fact sponsored today by edison365 so are there tools that you're thinking about that that you use in this process that we should be considering?

Brant Cooper: [00:39:30] Yeah, I mean, I think that there's a lot of great tool that's totally ironic. I had forgotten that we had edison365 on there and I'm curious what edison365's take on that. I think it you know, obviously the man was brilliant, but what he was brilliant at was running experiments. Right. So, the lightbulb already existed but it wasn't marketable because nobody had figured out what the right filament was to make it marketable.

And so, Thomas Edison won that race through thousands of experiments figuring out what the right material is for the filament to make it marketable. So, you fast forward all of these years these decades. And the lesson that everybody's taking from you know, the light bulb that goes off over your head is that you have to sit down and build the product even though it was Thomas Edison that actually ran experiments to figure out what was marketable.

And so, I love to bring that full circle because that's really what you know, lean Innovation is about is running the experiments to figure out. Hey, should we build this? And what will it take for us to actually be successful but back to your question about tools. So, you know, I'm a big fan of personas used to be made up allegations of all of these Behavior characteristics and demographics and they never described a real human being.

I want people to create personas that describe a real person who really needs your product. And so we have a bunch of free tools on our website product customer product Solutions zooms that help entrepreneurs, you know drill down to what is what is the right market to focus on and what is the what's the right functionality in your product in order to solve a real problem?

So, I think Persona tools are great. We have an experiment tool which leads people through how to run a disciplined experiment because people are very lazy about experiments they'll run off and they'll do something and then they'll call it an experiment later. We like a disciplined approach put a stake in the ground.

How many people are going to behave in a particular way that indicates that they want the value that you're offering? So, it's super important that people ask customers to predict their own future - customers are horrible at predicting their own future. They'll say "buy" when they really can't ask them how much they'll pay none of that works. So that's why you run experiments is ordered in order to get somebody to behave in a way that indicates that they want something.

So, there's a lots of blog posts and articles on that on how to run those experiments. A lot of the structure inside of agile is important. I don't think everybody needs to you know, go through a full scrum training or any of this but you know personal Kanban boards, I think are awesome the concept of running a Sprint so that you're defining with your team what you're going to accomplish in the next Sprint and I don't really care whether the Sprints are one week - two weeks a month. I really don't care. It can be longer depending on what your building and the idea is to run the stand-ups to get everybody on board about how they're feeling and what are they working on and what roadblocks they have in front of them. You're running Retros in order for people to be able to discuss how things went and Improve the performance of the team you're doing demos to share with each other. So, people can understand the larger context of what's going on inside of the organization during these demo days. So, there's a bunch of agile tools that I think are important to the process as well.

So if that's what you meant by tools, those are the type of tools that I'm a fan of in terms of digital tools, you know, idea tracking being able to Tech track ideas from inception all the way through whether they you know achieved in our theirs the goals that they wanted and are their insights that were gleamed along the ways that even if you have failure you have these insights that can be shared with the rest of the organization.

There's you know, I'm a big fan of communications tools like zoom and like slack. I'm a big fan of slack though. You know that can become almost as unwieldy as some of the other Communications tools, but you know, there's a lot of Distributing teams out there. My company is a distributed team, so that makes it even a bigger challenge. There's a TechStars company that I've been helping in La called Parable that does a remote agile tool for retros that I think is pretty cool that I've been playing around with. Yeah, so maybe I'll pause there again. See if I was you know on the right track there.

Stewart Noyce: [00:44:22] You know, I think you were absolutely on the right track a number of really interesting points both on the methodology side and on the on the digital side the in the actual implementations that we tend to use in our day-to-day we've actually done really well in this interview. We've covered a lot of ground Brent and it looks like though that Dennis might have one more question before I finish up. So, Dennis, why don't you shoot?

Dennis Høier Hoel: [00:44:50] Yeah, that's right. So, Brent, I'm a huge sucker for organizational culture. And now I know that there are a lot of innovation teams out there both old and new that are sitting inside of an organization that doesn't necessarily take them seriously. So, or that they're resistant to them for whatever reason what are some

concrete steps that they can do to build more trust and excitement about what they're there for?

Brant Cooper: [00:45:16] Yeah, I think that I think you're right on I think that they're you know, there are a lot of innovation teams Innovation Labs that suffer from that. I think that there's a number of things they have to be sure that they are shining a light on not only their accomplishments but everything that they're doing - so it's another reason why I like all of the you know, the agile stuff and Kanban boards and you know our experiment loops and that sort of thing, you know, put those up in public places so people are asking questions about the work that's being done there. I'm a big fan of TechStars style emails where their startup teams send emails out in a the same format every week or every two weeks or maybe every once a month send them to all the stakeholders get people more and more people to opt into it and basically you're sharing:

- Here's what we accomplished, here are metrics, here are big wins, here are our needs, your our obstacles here how you can help you know, and you kind of put it in up an executive summary make the email really super concise and send those updates out often. It's amazing to me that Innovation teams still get stuck in, you know these annual review cycles and they haven't shared what they've been working on for the past year and that's just way too late. That's a good way to get. To get shut down you have to act like a start-up, and I think Innovation teams know that when they're approaching the outside world IE. Their customers, but they forget that they need to act that way to their internal stakeholders. There's still a start-up they have to go do empathy for their intimate internal stakeholders, you know, they're not getting attention because their leaders are suffering from trying to accomplish, you know, they're near term goals. So, if I'm in an internal Innovation team, I'm going to go to leadership. I'm going to go to a business unit leader and I'm an understand that business unit leader deeply I'm going to do some empathy. I'm goanna understand where they come from. What's their background? What keeps them up at night? What are the problems that they're trying to solve for?

And then maybe what I'm going to do is say listen, I can help you solve some of those near term problems using my Innovation methods, and if I do I want you to back our efforts in some of this longer term.

Dennis Højer Hoel: [00:47:34] Exactly. So what I'm hearing is, you know be empathic be clear and active and loud and transparent in the way that you communicate your idea your work throughout organizations and to all the stakeholders in the project. Thank you very much for that.

Brant Cooper: [00:47:50] You eat your own dog food. That's the bottom line right hard. It doesn't taste very good. So, I mean, yeah.

Stewart Noyce: [00:47:57] Well, maybe you have to tell him to drink their own champagne.

Brant Cooper: [00:48:01] I know! I was joking about that with my team the other day. I mean that people act like that's the same phrase. But of course, everybody wants to drink

their own champagne. What's negative about that, eating your own dog food means you got to put up with all of the stuff that's hard. There's nothing hard about drinking champagne.

Stewart Noyce: [00:48:16] There you go. You put up with what's hard. But the beautiful thing about this process that you're sharing with us is that the method Lean lends itself to regular results. And if you have regular results, there's no reason not to just share them at the time they're available. And in a way with Innovation, one of the things that's really different about it is that you have to be more open. If you have a strategic plan and you're going to go charge the hill sometimes, yeah, you want to be really kind of quiet and you might want to protect your strategy so it doesn't get disrupted. But the reality is that in the process of understanding, you know, your next step you really have to be open and that's I think probably one of the maybe one of the hardest things for a larger company to figure out.

Brant Cooper: [00:49:09] Yeah, I agree with that. I think it if you're if you're actually tasked with doing breakthrough Innovation that is going to compete against your existing business model - I am a fan for hiding that that startup way out remote somewhere because that can wreak havoc but to be honest most companies that are you know, running these Innovation Labs aren't really doing that stuff.

That's really super disruptive or break through a matter of fact, one of the biggest challenges with the labs is that they're sort of given that challenge but again, Their budgets are reviewed on an annual basis. And you know, you're just not going to demonstrate return on investment if what you're trying to do is develop something that's five or six or seven years down the road. So that's sort of the modern innovator's dilemma.

Stewart Noyce: [00:50:00] Yeah. There you go... For another day though because we have, we have really used quite a bit of time. On this one, but I still have room for you to answer your own question. So, is there anything that we have not answered that you really are we have an ask that you really want to answer today?

Brant Cooper: [00:50:20] Yeah, I don't think so. I mean I it was a great conversation. I guess, you know how people can get ahold of me. You know. I'm at Brad Cooper on Twitter and LinkedIn and Facebook and I'm happy if people want to send me an e-mail Brant@BrantCooper.com. The website is movestheneedle.com, and you know, we've been doing we've been doing you know our own podcast. We have articles out there and case studies and also the free tools that I mentioned in people are welcome to come and download the tools that we do have up there.

Stewart Noyce: [00:50:53] Very good. Thank you very much Brant. This has been a great pleasure today.

Brant Cooper: [00:50:58] Thank you. had a good time. Thank you, guys.

Dennis Højer Hoel: [00:51:04] Thank you for joining us on today's episode of the Edison 365 podcast.

We certainly enjoy the conversation and hope that you're left with more knowledge of the Innovation space. We have more exciting guests coming up. So, make sure to like to subscribe and share this podcast with your network. Also, if there's anyone you'd like for us to interview next make sure to leave that in a comment or send us an email to the email address in the description. Thanks again to our guests and we're looking forward to seeing you in the next episode.