



# MIX HACK CHEAT SHEET

## HOW TO CRAFT A WINNING HACK



### ADDRESS AN IMPORTANT PROBLEM

The first question to ask yourself is: does it tackle a root cause or a deeply embedded pathology of organizations? You have to commit to a big problem to make a big impact. Some ways in to the truly juicy challenges:

**Look for the intractable trade-offs.** Can you turn an organizational “either/or”—freedom or discipline, short-term earnings obsession or investment in and exploration of new ideas, scale or agility—into a transformational “and”?

**Turn an organizational “can’t do” into a “can do.”** Have you ever said (or thought), “That could never happen in our organization,” when confronted by an inspiring tale of transformation or positive change? Now imagine how it might.

**Define the dogma.** Root out and name the assumptions and orthodoxies so entrenched they disappear even as they surround us, like century-old wallpaper.

What are the beliefs that we mistake for natural laws? Such as “it takes a burning platform to provoke real change” or “you can’t manage without managers” or “people serve the organization” or “senior executives set strategy.”

**How does your innovation challenge some management orthodoxy?** How would your innovation help upend management-as-usual?

### Example Hacks:

**Hacking Executive Compensation with Dynamic Incentive Accounts**

**Develop and Nurture the DNA of a New Capitalism: The For-Benefit Enterprise**



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## OUTLINE A CLEAR AND PRACTICAL SOLUTION

Describe the workings of the idea(s) in as much detail as possible. Define the specific management challenge you're tackling, set the stage (what's the macro and micro context), describe what triggered your idea, introduce the key characters, unpack the mechanics of your solution, make a case for how your approach has changed or will change a management process or orthodoxy.

- How does your new tool/process/approach actually work?
- Who is involved? Where do they sit in the organization?
- And how does this affect the working life of real people in the organization? Give concrete examples of a few steps that can be taken to make your idea come alive. Can you share examples of your idea working in the real-world? Doesn't matter if it's anecdotal or hard data, just show how the ball has moved (and continues to move).

### Example Hacks:

**Blank Checks: Unleashing the Potential of People and Businesses**

**Global Solutions, Local Failure: Overcoming Barriers in Implementing Open Innovation**



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### MAKE IT BOLD

It's nearly impossible to overstate the gravity of the status quo. Cutting through rules, defanging the powers-that-be, wading through the sludge of bureaucracy, and detoxing the pervasive culture of fear and mistrust in our organizations takes real intestinal fortitude. "Modern" management may have generated vast prosperity, but it has also dulled the imagination and dampened the spirit of too many creative individuals.

What we need now is fresh air and genuinely original approaches to the most fundamental organizational processes: how opportunities get identified, how decisions get made, how resources get allocated, how power gets exercised, how tasks, work, and roles get assigned, how performance gets measured, and how rewards get shared, just to name a few.

Some of the boldest experiments we've seen on the MIX have grown out of the realization that there's

literally "nothing to copy" (as was the case with software company [Atlassian's original and energizing approach to performance reviews](#)) or a complete flip of convention (as Owen Buckwell demonstrates in his [courageous transformation of a public housing authority](#) to serve the tenants and the people who do the work—rather than the boss and government-set targets).

#### Example Hacks:

**Retire a Little—Enabling More Fulfilled Working Lives**

**Why Points Trump Hierarchy**



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## THINK EXPERIMENTS AND PROTOTYPES

In addition to embracing revolutionary goals, your hack needs to outline evolutionary steps to get there. This will often entail designing an experiment or prototype that . . .

- Can be developed in the space of a few weeks and which can validate your idea in the space of a few months
- Relies on volunteers rather than “conscripts”
- Doesn’t require multiple levels of approvals
- Is feasible within existing budget constraints
- Is fun and informal
- Can run in parallel with “legacy” management practices and processes

**Quick tip:** When it comes to hacks, sometimes the best experiments and prototypes have the narrowest focus. For example, it’s one thing to take on the challenge of making organizations more collaborative and another to **craft an experiment for promoting, measuring, and rewarding** what Andrew McAfee calls “enterprise helpfulness.” Or, instead of broadly tackling the issue of “transparency,” what about imagining a **radical approach to email communication**?

### Example Hacks:

Operating Unit Peer Reviews

Open Up Clip by Clip

FOR MORE ON HOW TO CRAFT A COMPELLING HACK, [READ THIS GUIDE](#)