



**Get Smart**

White Paper

# Go Innovate! Now What?

SCORE: AN EFFECTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR  
THE FRONT END OF INNOVATION



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RESEARCH WITH A POINT OF VIEW

[standpointgroup.com](http://standpointgroup.com)  
[info@standpointgroup.com](mailto:info@standpointgroup.com)

Marketing and R&D teams are under intense pressure to generate new revenue and profit through innovation. Many teams become overwhelmed by the request and struggle to decide where to start. An effective framework for managing the Front End of Innovation (FEI) may be the right solution to kickstart innovation and improve outcomes. The following best practices in the FEI will increase your odds of commercial success.

The Front-End-of-Innovation (FEI) is the process whereby customer needs are established, opportunities are identified, and concepts are developed before entering the formal product development process.

## Know the Strategy

Most organizations think that “innovation” is only about product development—new gizmos among your existing markets and customers. Far too often, organizations jump on the product development train without a thorough



analysis of their current customers and markets. But growth can come from any of these four strategies: market development, market penetration, diversification, and product development. Before investing heavily in new product development, examine penetration of existing products with existing customers. Achieving greater market penetration is often less risky and more profitable.

If the strategy is market development or diversification, this will also influence how you approach the innovation assignment.

## Have Your Own Definition of Innovation

Having a sharp definition of what is considered “innovative” is essential. This definition also determines your risk vs. reward profile. If the goal is “new to world” products, then prepare to spend more money on riskier projects. While the risk for failure is higher, the payoff for successful launches could be enormous.

If the goal is “new to company”, the risk is smaller, since the focus is on bettering something with a track record.

Before defining an innovation assignment, be very clear on your goals (new-to-world, line extensions, product improvements, etc.) and your overall risk vs. return tolerance.



## Invest in the FEI

Effective FEI will require a commitment of time and money. It should involve a cross-functional team (marketing and R&D) and have executive sponsorship. But it’s money and time well-spent. Ultimately, the outcome of a FEI assignment is three-fold:

- Identify opportunity areas and develop an innovation roadmap
- As it relates to ideas and concepts, kill early and kill fast so that you focus on the right projects
- Focus on fewer, bigger launches

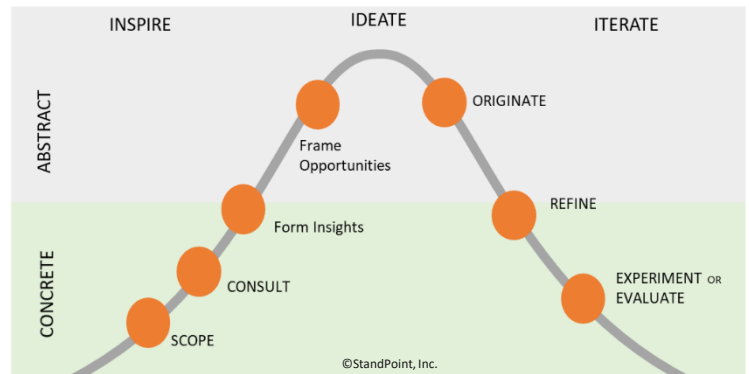
## Use a FEI Framework

# SCORE

We advocate the **SCORE** framework for managing the front-end-of-innovation and ensuring that only the strongest ideas move forward. Because the **SCORE** framework is highly immersive, it is also very effective at aligning internal teams on the greatest opportunities.

**SCORE** begins with the *SCOPE* phase, which involves scoping the assignment, determining what is in-bounds and out-of-bounds.

In *CONSULT*, we engage the customer/consumer/end-user to better understand problems, needs, pain points, motivations, beliefs, etc. From there, we form deep insights and frame opportunities into an innovation roadmap.



The next step, *ORIGINATE*, is to create original solutions via carefully managed internal or external brainstorming. The *REFINE* process involves working with internal teams or customer/consumer/end-user groups to develop product concepts using the ideas from brainstorming. The last phase is re-engaging the customer/consumer/end-user to *EVALUATE* (and prioritize) concepts or to *EXPERIMENT* with a prototype.

Over the next several pages, we further define each step in **SCORE**.



This is the process for setting the parameters of the innovation assignment. A proper *SCOPE* is essential. If the scope is too narrow, you run the risk of getting too many incremental ideas. If the lens is too broad and blue-sky, the outcome is not actionable.

Key questions to guide scoping decisions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- What is the playing field? How far do you want to stretch outside of current capabilities and competencies? What are the brand latitudes?
- What is the category of products or services where you seek an innovation?
- What types of innovation are you seeking: products, services, new business models, new claims, etc.?
- Who should we engage to really understand needs and pain points?
- Who else in the ecosystem can enable or roadblock innovations in this playing field?
- What background work has been done thus far that might play a role in scoping or serve as input to the process: competitive analysis, trends analysis, or technology scan?
- What do we already know? What do we not know? What do we need to know?
- What macro trends are creating demand?
- What ideas, concepts, or prototypes already exist in the idea bank? What amount of vetting has been done on these items?
- What core capabilities or technologies could the organization scale?
- What hypotheses do you have regarding needs, pain points, or problems within the areas of interest?
- If we invest in an assignment, how will success be defined?
- As we progress, what criteria will we use to prioritize ideas and concepts?

Before proceeding to next steps, a precise understanding of the playing field and various customer/customer/end-user segments is essential.

If not clearly defined, this may require some preliminary research to identify which segments to include in the innovation assignment.

The lack of a precise definition on segments is a common pitfall and can greatly impact the viability of next steps.

### Understanding Playing Field and Consumer Segments

BoatCraft, LLC historically manufactured small watercraft for 1-2 people—mostly canoes and kayaks. As part of its innovation strategy, it re-defined its playing field to include non-motorized watercraft for 3-4 people. Its first step was to identify all the consumer segments in this expanded playing field. There was significant diversity in consumer segments when looking at use occasions, consumer needs, and mindset. The team could not address all these new segments in one innovation assignment and decided to limit its learning plan to two of the highest-potential segments in the playing field.



The *CONSULT* phase is intended to build empathy with the consumer/customer/end-user. The goal is to fully understand met and unmet needs, pain points and problems, desires, motivations, and beliefs. This is often done through qualitative research.

If the number of needs and pain points is large, the prevalence and importance can be validated prior to next steps. Oftentimes, understanding priorities is necessary before moving into idea generation and concept creation.

The final output of *CONSULT* is a series of opportunity areas (OAs) like the one below. OAs are generated by highly skilled analysts who synthesize the insights from the *CONSULT* phase, past research work, macro trends, and more.

Each OA is hinged on known customer insights and needs and will serve as your innovation roadmap.



OAs serve as input into your brainstorming process. During brainstorming, the goal is to focus on generating a large quantity of ideas without worrying about quality. A trained facilitator is highly recommended as he or she can lead an internal or external team to maximum output.



In the *REFINE* stage, common ideas are grouped and converted into product and service concepts. A best practice is to involve the consumer/customer/end-user in this process as they can ensure the output is attuned to their needs and guide the team on what is desirable and feasible. At this stage, the goal is the quality of the concepts versus quantity of concepts.



In the last phase, concepts are re-presented to the consumer/customer/end-user for final vetting. During this encounter, the goal is to ensure the concepts are written in the right language and gauge overall enthusiasm for the proposed solutions. An emerging best practice (where it is feasible) is to create prototypes or a minimally-viable product for more specific and concrete feedback.

## Closing

The necessity of understanding your customers' needs is not new. What is often lacking is a framework—one that is not too rigid and not too loose—to manage the FEI.



- Does your organization need a responsive helping hand when conducting do-it-yourself research? Our consultants are available to assist with problem definition, project scoping, reviewing discussion guides, reviewing questionnaires, interview coaching, and more. This is the best way to offer your team the training and support they need to elevate customer understanding across the organization. Blocks of time can be booked according to your needs. [Contact us](#) for more details.
- [Check out our event calendar](#) for upcoming workshops related to rapid fill of your new products pipeline.



You can [Kickstart](#) the concept development process with a workshop focused on your own specific goals. It is an excellent way to align the cross-functional team, enhance skills, roll up internal ideas, and identify gaps in your knowledge.