



**mhca's e-Newsletter**

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## **The Two Types of Innovation**

*A Guest Article from Comedian, Author & Speaker Jeff Havens*

Greetings, all! I'm writing this from the back of a giraffe. I'm upside down, too, since that makes the blood flow to my head more quickly. Oh, and I'm wearing a toga that I hand-crafted from a World War II parachute. I'm doing this because I'm a maverick who thinks outside the box. Also because I like the way giraffes smell.

And that's how innovative thinking is often presented to us – something that requires thoughts and actions completely outside of our normal experience. We almost exclusively focus on the achievements of disruptive innovators, people whose genius seems to come out of nowhere. Albert Einstein shocked the world with his theory of relativity, and way back some caveperson thought up the wheel when everyone else was content to just do pencil rolls down hills. This type of innovation dominates our discussion, and it would be easy to think that it's the only type of innovation there is.

But innovation comes in two flavors. There's the big explosive kind – streaming content, airplanes, nuclear power. And then there's the boring version of innovation, the kind that gets almost no attention because its story takes too long to tell. These innovations are a collection of incremental improvements that sometimes takes years, even decades to come to fruition. They are infinitely more common than disruptive innovations, and here are a few examples:

**Television** – One of the most world-changing inventions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century actually took decades to put together. It began as early as 1850 with the ability to transmit still photographs; was later augmented by a dizzying array of spinning disks, mirrors, and various tubes; finally became practical in the 1920s when image amplification was perfected; and has been tweaked and modified ever since.

**Wheels on Luggage** – This one is my favorite, because it didn't become popular until the late 80s. (We apparently decided that putting somebody on the Moon was a less complicated task.) But the Roll-aboard, invented by Robert Plath, was simply the next step in a concept that had existed since at least 1880, when the first patent for wheeled luggage appears. No fewer than three patents for wheeled luggage were approved before Plath's breakthrough, each of which made his innovative leap that much easier.

**The Internet** – See pretty much everything I said about the television.

**Insurance** – There are approximately a million kinds of insurance today, including insurance for companies that insure insurers. (Was that confusing enough?) The amount of innovation in the insurance industry is mind-boggling, and it all owes its roots to the Babylonians, who are the first civilization in recorded history to have offered insurance for ship captains and others in the maritime industries.

The point is, a lot of the innovation that becomes industry standard is the result of a slow evolution of ideas and processes, rather than the massive bursts of ingenuity that tend to grab every headline. I don't mean to suggest that disruptive innovation isn't important. It definitely is, and I hope you spend some time today thinking big, wild thoughts. But as you do, don't discount your smaller, more mundane ideas. More often than not, those are the ones that will become the innovations you actually use.

## Hear Jeff in Scottsdale!

Jeff will join us in Scottsdale next month to talk about how small changes in communication can strengthen relationships, increase loyalty and create an unbreakable culture of teamwork. All session participants will also receive copies of two of Jeff's books, *Innovation Made Simple* and *Unleash Your Inner Tyrant!* [Register online](#) now and we'll see you there!

More News from mhca!



## Winter Conference

Join us in Clearwater Beach for our Winter Conference and Annual Meeting. This is our most well-attended meeting of the year and our hotel block will sell out quickly. For conference and hotel information,

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