

# **Passion and Purpose are Levers for Sustaining Collaborative Innovation**

**Alaina Love, CEO  
Purpose-Linked Consulting**

Collaborative Innovation (CI) at its best is more than just an act of diverse individuals bringing their skills and expertise to the challenge of solving a problem. Done well, CI incorporates the whole of the individual and applies it to the task at hand. However, traditional CI approaches suggest only three important factors for success:

1. Tools that allow strategic communication about innovation
2. The capacity to continuously vet ideas, so that the best ideas bubble to the top, and those that will fail become quickly evident
3. Leaders that work to eliminate any barriers that block innovation

Yet, expanding this list to include the qualities that participants bring to the CI process allows silos to be shattered within the organization and within the individual. Instead of focusing only on the skills, subject matter expertise and experience of individual participants as the benchmark qualities for inclusion in the process, what shift could be achieved if an individual's passions were also considered? Passions are deep drivers of behavior that are integral aspects of personality. Since personality impacts nearly every human interaction, especially when individuals are working closely on the kind of high stakes, fast-paced projects emblematic of CI initiatives, instead of ignoring the elephant in the room, I suggest leveraging it. Doing so would allow participants to bring their skills to the table and the insights born of their years of experience, while also liberating them to bring passion-driven perspectives to the discussion. Rather than being constrained in their approach to the issue, or restricted in their thinking, it would invite participants to connect the deeper aspects of who they are, and the diverse insights

born of their passions, to the solutions they are seeking to develop for the organization.

As a contextual framework for the discussion, the connection between purpose and passion is an important consideration. Fundamentally, this framework is built upon the notion that an individual's purpose functions as the primary catalyst for igniting passion. Passion, in turn, operates as the intrinsic attribute which informs and influences an individual's overall approach to work and life.

The larger challenge in applying passion to the toolkit of collaborative innovation is defining passions into an identifiable and measurable forms. The logical perception is that passions are as varied as the individuals who might be engaged in a CI project, and that is indeed true. Yet, like skills, passions can be codified and measured so the collective passions of a CI team can be understood and leveraged.

Through the fieldwork of Purpose Linked Consulting coupled with and informed by the empirical literature on socio-cognitive identity development, ten different passion archetypes have been identified. These ten archetypes are present in everyone to greater or lesser degrees, but we each demonstrate a preference for particular passion archetypes. That preference influences the contribution that each member of a CI team can offer to the process. Specifically, these contributions relate to the way in which an individual interfaces with others involved in the CI process, as well as how they contribute to the creation and utilization of knowledge, an essential currency in collaborative innovation.

Consider the unique focus of each of the ten passion archetypes, and their role on any team collaborating with the intent to innovate:

### PASSION ARCHETYPE CONTRIBUTIONS TO COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION TEAMS

ARCHETYPE	IMPACT
<b>Altruist</b>	These humanitarians seek innovations that achieve results through solutions that benefit the world at large and honor the brand of the organization.
<b>Builder</b>	Courageous goal seekers and risk takers who will challenge CI initiatives with an urgency to deliver results, they're a driving force for defining or expanding an organization's presence in the market.
<b>Connector</b>	Adept negotiators and relationship builders who seek understanding of all sides of an issue, these accomplished communicators will bring ideas and people together for effective collaboration.
<b>Conceiver</b>	These "intellectual acrobats" think outside the box, imagine new possibilities, push boundaries of conventional thought and drive innovation.
<b>Creator</b>	Artisans whose thought patterns focus on translating ideas through aesthetics and beauty. They build emotionally resonant artistic representations of potential solutions in order to engage others and build commitment.
<b>Discoverer</b>	Explorers and idea validators who combine logic and linear thinking with intuition to uncover hidden truths and contribute to innovation.
<b>Healer</b>	With a passion for creating peace where there is turmoil and mending broken relationships or broken spirits, they work to strengthen individuals and teams, especially when times are challenging during the CI process.
<b>Processor</b>	The sustainers of structure, function and tradition, they provide the framework for developing systems, analyzing information, and establishing and maintaining quality standards as innovations are created and vetted.
<b>Teacher</b>	Passionate about new information and new ways of viewing the world, they create the foundation for sharing wisdom and learning, the single greatest assets of the CI process.
<b>Transformer</b>	Alchemists and change agents who thrive in chaos and ambiguity, while leading the quest for improvements in products, systems, business processes, cultures and individuals.

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The consequence of utilizing the passion archetypes of participants involved in CI initiatives is that it invites individuals without technical expertise in a particular area to offer valuable passion-driven insights about solutions being put forth. Those insights often reveal whole new avenues of inquiry that have not and should be explored.

Consider for example a leadership team that I worked with recently. The group was divided into three sub-teams, each given a strategic issue specific to their business for which they needed to develop innovative solutions. The sub-teams did not have a full complement of all passion archetypes, so participants were encouraged to vet their solutions with members of other teams who had the passion archetypes that their group needed to source. Each time this was done, participants reported that their solutions improved, sometimes dramatically.

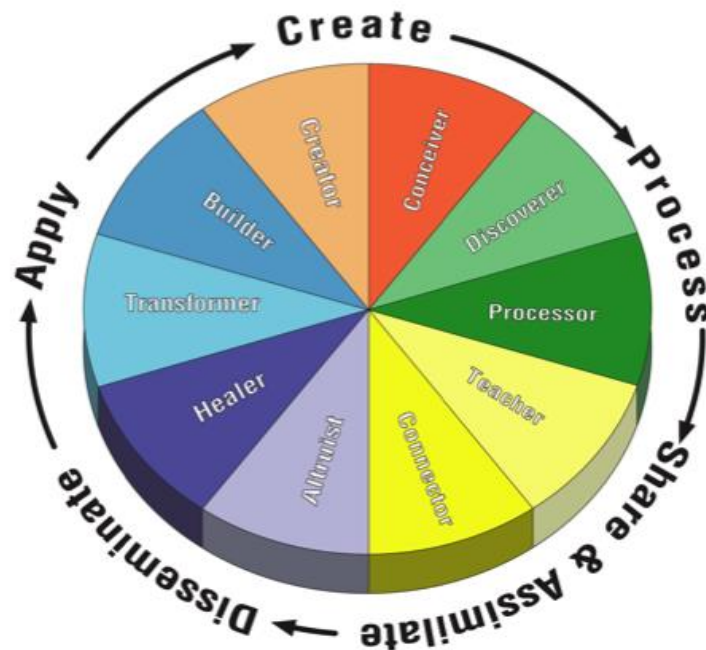
One sub-team, as a case in point, was struggling with the challenge of broadly improving innovation across the company in a variety of areas important for

securing leadership in market. They wrestled with a variety of ideas about how to institutionalize innovation but were developing solutions that merely chipped away at the problem. There was no Conceiver or Creator on their team, so they sourced these passions from other groups. Two individuals with those passions immediately identified a solution that positioned the company to more aggressively approach innovation. The Conceiver could see possibilities that others on the team had not and the Creator translated those ideas into an artistic form, helping the team to visualize the possibilities. The result? The team proposed and received approval from the board of directors to create a dedicated innovation center, a laboratory for breakthrough ideas, shielded from the bureaucracy that often crushes transformative thinking. Their solution was bold and made innovation a true corporate priority.

### **Knowledge Building During the CI Process**

While we can think of the passion archetypes as ten distinct purpose-derived personality factors that influence individual and team behaviors, they also work in partnership to help CI teams develop and utilize knowledge throughout the CI process. As depicted in the graphic below, there are five modes of influence that passions have on knowledge generation, but the most essential thing to note is that this influence has the potential to be continuous. That's why understanding how the passions of members of any CI team impacts the way the team develops and reacts to knowledge is so essential.

## Passion Driven Knowledge Cycle™



From: [The Purpose Linked Organization](#), by Alaina Love & Marc Cugnon



### Creating New Knowledge, Innovations and Strategies

Conceivers are a source for mold-breaking ideas. They thrive in environments where they have the freedom to think in non-traditional ways and ideate outside of common boundaries of thought. They are the foundation of the innovation engine and drive the Create side of the Knowledge Cycle. It is valuable to partner them with Creators, who are particularly adept at taking those ideas and translating them into artistic forms that help others understand and attach to the idea, intellectually and emotionally.

### Processing Knowledge

When ideas, strategies or concepts are handed off to Discoverers, their instinct is to vet them, to see if the ideas can withstand greater scrutiny. Discoverers will ask, “Where has this idea been implemented previously and what were the outcomes?”

Will this idea solve our problem or push innovation to a new level, and is there evidence that it's workable?"

While they are benchmarking and investigating, Discoverers gather lots of information and data, the analysis of which is a sweet spot for Processors. Processors help others on the CI team make sense of the data by packaging the information so it is readily utilizable by others, an especially important step that supports knowledge utilization.

### **Sharing and Assimilating Knowledge**

Innovative ideas are valuable only to the extent that the whole team is equipped with the learning necessary to apply them. Teachers play a crucial role in helping others develop the skills and experience necessary to contribute to the application of ideas, while Connectors build relationships broadly across the team and even across organizations to shepherd ideas across silos and functional boundaries. They are the architects of assimilation, so innovative ideas gain traction throughout the CI process.

### **Dissemination of Support for Managing the Impact of Knowledge**

Altruists examine the wide-ranging impact that an innovation-driven decision will have on the broader goals and values of the teams and organizations involved in the CI process. The Altruist will ask, "Is this innovation in alignment with what we say we stand for as an organization? Will we make a positive contribution to society by implementing it?" They act as a moral compass that keeps the team on its true north.

Healers, meanwhile, appreciate that new innovations often emerge from significant change, and change creates pain points in the organization that must be managed. The Healer will ask, "How is this innovation going to impact the way individual employees feel about their role? Does it create fear in the workplace that we need to manage?" Healers work below the radar to prevent team disruption and the

disenfranchisement of valued talent by disseminating support to help others navigate the pain of change successfully.

### **Applying New Knowledge**

The Transformers and Builders on the team are most intrigued by how innovations will be applied in the marketplace. Transformers, in particular, enjoy examining an innovation to seek new ways it can be further refined or improved. Meanwhile, Builders focus on new stretch goals that can be achieved through the innovation, whether or not there is a playbook for how to accomplish those goals. With extreme drive and courage, these archetypes translate innovations into market blockbusters.

Considering passions as a valuable tool in the CI process expands opportunities for collaboration and supports the team in maximizing diverse input, beyond the ideas of those team members whose job roles and skills seem to align with solving a particular challenge. Passions, in essence, are a substrate from which innovation can be birthed. Leveraging them offers a competitive advantage that may make the difference between generating an outcome that is successful versus one that is significant.

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Alaina Love is CEO of Purpose Linked Consulting (PLC) and a nationally recognized expert in leadership purpose and passion. She is co-author of the bestselling McGraw-Hill book, *The Purpose Linked Organization: How Passionate Leaders Inspire Winning Teams and Great Results*.

Over the last 18 years, Purpose Linked Consulting has conducted research and created programs to support leadership and team development, with a specific focus on employee purpose and passion. PLC's work has shown that individual fulfillment and inspirational leadership are the keys to creating the level of employee engagement that produces outstanding business results and a thriving

culture.

Prior to founding Purpose Linked Consulting, Alaina was the Executive Director of Human Resources for Merck & Co., Inc., where she was responsible for worldwide HR services for the sales and marketing division of the company, supporting over 15,000 employees around the globe in a division that generated \$12.3 billion in annual sales