



This post originally appeared on LinkedIn [here](#).

By: [William Treseder](#)

We love learning at [BMNT](#). There are always ways to improve, and books are a fantastic source of distilled wisdom that you can apply in real-world situations. Below is a list of books we're reading.

Think of this as your “Recommended Reading for National Security Innovation”.

[Man’s Search for Meaning](#). Few books capture the human experience like this one, and certainly not in such a short book. BMNT is a mission-driven organization, and so are the customers with whom we work. We each need see ourselves as part of a larger narrative That provides meaning to the hard work of problem-solving.

[***Boyd: the Fighter Pilot who Changed the Art of War***](#). John Boyd is a legend for his pioneering work on the OODA Loop and Energy Maneuverability. This biography sheds light on what it really takes to change business-as-usual inside the Pentagon.

Innovation requires sacrifice.

[The Innovator’s Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail](#). Constant change is a reality for our customers. We need to understand the drivers of these changes, how they are perceived, and predict likely responses. This book offers key insights to the nature of management in an era of adaptive threats.

Innovation is not about little improvements.

[Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail](#). This is a very important book. It is more like a journal article: short and dense. Read it as a checklist, and make sure you satisfy at least the majority of the conditions described. Without a solid foundation, innovation isn’t sustainable.

Most innovations will fail.

[**Four Steps to the Epiphany.**](#) This is the ultimate entrepreneurial reference guide. It's shocking how much wisdom is condensed in here. Everyone should have a copy.

There is process behind innovation; it's not about genius or luck.

[***The Obstacle is the Way: the Ancient Art of Turning Adversity into Advantage.***](#)

Resiliency is a key trait for people who want to innovate inside large organizations. This book helps reframe your thinking from complacency to a relentless bias toward action.

There are thousands of "no's" en route to the "yes".

[***Peripheral Vision: Detecting the Weak Signals that will Make or Break Your***](#)

[***Company.***](#) This is a favorite of our Managing Partner, [Pete Newell](#). Few leaders have a solid grasp of how to think about opportunities and threats outside the national security arena. This book offers some useful models.

Somewhere, someone is building something that will erode your advantage.

[***Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future.***](#) This is another condensed gem. It's full of little clues into the complex and misunderstood world of Silicon Valley. The value for an "outsider" is massive, especially if you want to pick up some of the language that tends to be so confusing. Bonus points if you combine this season bombing [HBO's Silicon Valley!](#)

Innovation means betting against the market.

[Change By Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation](#). Read this book looking for threads at which you can pull, not specific/actionable recommendations. The book can feel a little divorced from the reality of government work, but that's part of the value. Even a few insights can be reduced into practical changes to apply.

People are at the heart of every innovation.

[Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential Within Us All](#). Don't believe the lie that bureaucrats—or "regular" people inside bureaucratic organizations—can't solve their own problems. You don't need "creatives" or consultants to come in and tell you what you do. Instead, you need to create the space and incentives to tease out brilliance from the people you already have.

Your people are the solution, not the problem.

[Talking to Humans](#). A very tactical book with a lot of implications for people who are responsible for the execution of innovation activities. As with most systems, "garbage in garbage out" is a problem with innovation. If you think you can survey people to learn what they think/need/want, then you should read this ASAP.

Innovation is about sociology first, then technology.

[Sprint: How to Solve Big Problems & Test New Ideas in just Five Days.](#) We

adopted—then adapted—certain portions of the Design Sprint almost immediately after we heard about it. This 5-day process offers a logical sequence for a small team to rapidly work through a specific project. Again, very tactical but useful in the right context.

Innovation works best in small teams.

[The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses.](#) This book is at the bottom of the list for two reasons:

it's not that useful in the context of government organizations; and people would complain if it wasn't here. Fortunately it's a fast read. You may feel like you're missing out if you don't read it, so go ahead. But it will only reinforce what you've already figured out if you made your way through even part of the list above.

Test, test, test, test, test, test, test, test, test...

What would you add to the list? What are we missing?

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[BMNT](#) is a close-knit team of people leveraging an ever-evolving methodology to solve challenging problems. We aren't a traditional consultancy because no one "outsources" their problems to us. Our mission is to hardwire you to solve your own problems.

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