

12. Take the First Risk

The last item in the Innovator's Toolkit is an often overlooked but critical component of successful innovations.

As an innovator, being closely connected to the people and communities you are trying to help will allow you a deeper understanding of the risks—and rewards—of their entrance into employment, retail, and other markets. Similarly, you can increase your impact by understanding and helping to underwrite the political risk intrinsic to both new ideas and to disruptive ideas.

See below for a number of ways you can use risk to your unique advantage:

Seeing Opportunity Where Others See Liability

- Mitigate risk by helping clients become better informed or trained.
- View clients not as passive consumers but as potential producers.
- Open markets to excluded or underserved citizens by recalculating potential rewards and risk.

Taking First Risk

- Use deep knowledge of community to understand obstacles and barriers to market.
- Invest financial or political capital to underwrite risk.
- Spend reputational or political capital to open the space for innovation and change; assuming full responsibility for its outcome.
- Overcome specific barriers by providing extensive supports yet insisting on quality and strict accountability.

Calculating (and Sharing) the Return on Investment

- Share credit for success with your partners, especially those who have taken financial, political, or reputational risk including elected and other public officials
- Recognize where investment success can lead to ancillary benefits.
- Build broad-based good will and momentum for further growth and success.