Entrepreneur & Family
BUSINESS COUNCIL

Innovation in Entrepreneurial and Family Businesses

MODULE TWO

Patty Rioux
President
patty@teamodea.com

Innovation in Entrepreneurial and Family Businesses

- Define innovation in plain language
- Identify six types of innovation you can pursue right now
- Build an innovation input system
- Shape a culture that ships ideas, not just collects them
- Choose the right investment mix
- Four facilitation tools to move from idea to implementation

What Is Innovation?

Deliberate change that creates new or protected value for customers, the company, or the team, on a repeatable rhythm.

Innovation is fuel. It keeps your business and your team relevant.

“Innovation is saying no to a thousand things.” — Steve Jobs

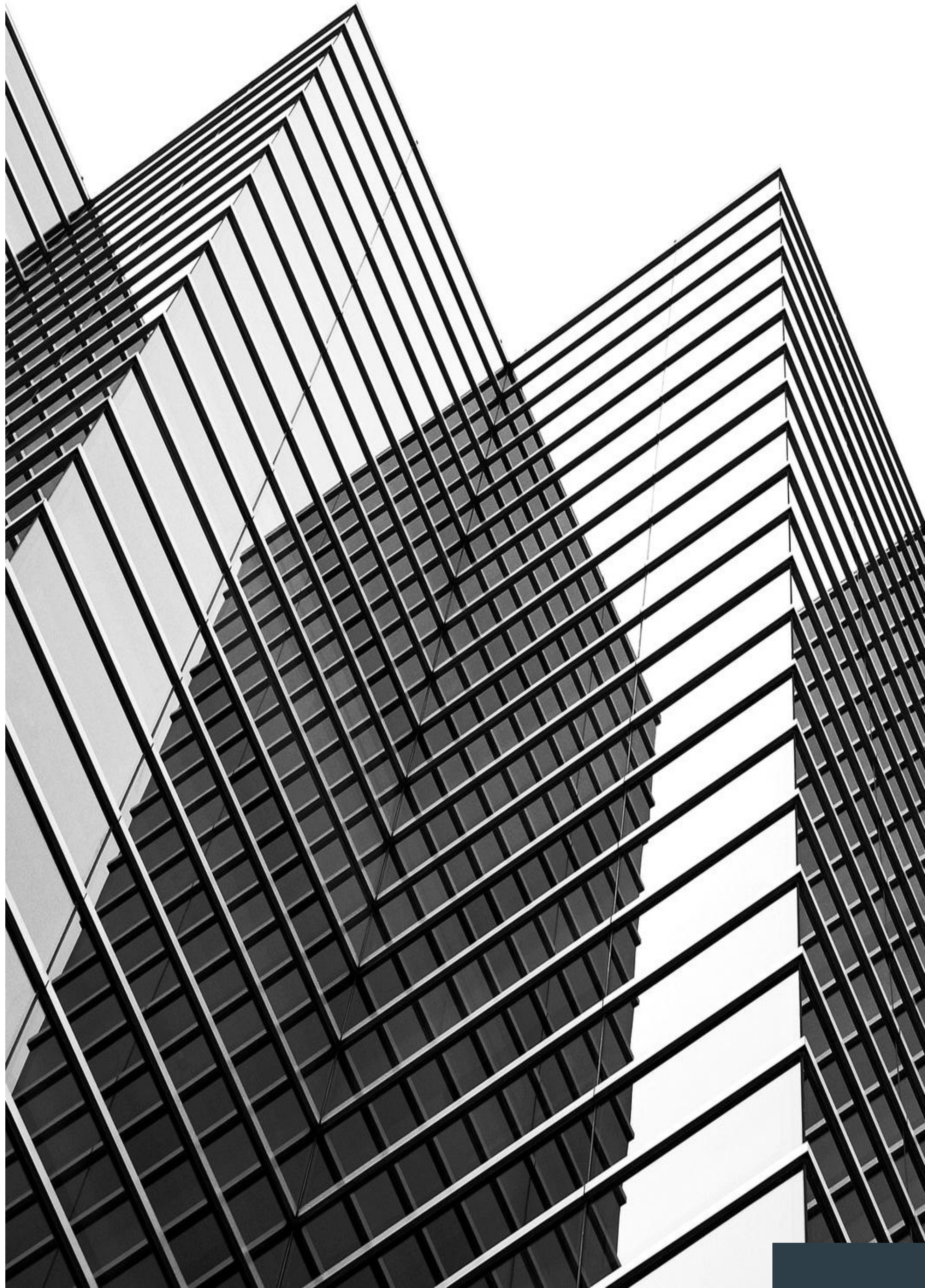
What Is Innovation?

What it **does**:

✓ Creates value
✓ Builds capability and energy on the team, not just features
✓ Protects relevance as markets and tech shift
✓ Repeats as a practice, not a onetime event

What it **is not**:

≠ Activity without impact
≠ Pet projects that never meet a customer
≠ Tech for tech's sake



Where Innovation Can Be Found

Five places to focus your innovation

Go To Market Innovation

Change how you find customers and how they buy from you.

Sell the same offer to a different type of customer. Example, if you sell to factories, try warehouses or hospitals.

Identify new paths to reach buyers. Example, list on a marketplace, work with a local distributor, or set a referral deal with an installer.

Repackage how you sell.
Example, a starter package for new buyers,
a priority package for people
who want speed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Who already looks a lot like our best customers?

Where do our buyers spend time before they talk to us?

What would make a buyer say yes today?

Product Innovation

Make what you sell easier to understand, faster to use, or better at the main job.

Remove one confusing step. Example, ship parts preassembled so setup is faster.

Add one thing customers already do on their own. Example, include a common adapter or a ready template.

Create a fast ship version. Example, a standard size or kit that leaves in two days.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What do customers do right after they buy that we could build in?

Where do new users get stuck?

If we had to cut delivery time in half, what would we change first?

Process Innovation

Fix the steps inside your business so work flows faster and with fewer mistakes.

Provide quotes in one day by using a standard menu, templates or technology.

Kit the most used parts so your assembly team members stop walking back and forth.

Standardize intake with a five-field form so jobs start with all details needed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Where do jobs sit and wait?

What mistake happens most and why?

What would a new hire trip on tomorrow?

Technology Innovation

Technology is not the innovation. It enables innovation by making good ideas repeatable, faster, and easier for customers.

Show real-time inventory and lead times on your site or a simple portal.

Use QR or barcodes at each step to track parts and document process.

Put simple sensors on critical items (temperature, vibration, fill level) to trigger service before failure.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What can a customer do without calling us today, and what's the next step towards self-serve?

Which task repeats daily that automation or AI could start or finish for us?

If volume doubled tomorrow, which step must be automated first to keep up?

Customer Service Innovation

Make it easy to buy, easy to use, and easy to stay.

Show price and lead time up front. Ranges are fine, surprise is not.

Offer a fast start package. Day one win built in, small scope, fixed price.

Simplify billing. One invoice per job, plain language, line items, access saved payment method.

Make reordering effortless. Reorder from past jobs, one click for repeat items, suggested quantities.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What can a customer do without calling us today, and what's the next step towards self-serve?

Which task repeats daily that automation or AI could start or finish for us?

If volume doubled tomorrow, which step must be automated first to keep up?

Inputs for Innovation

- Voice of customer
- Team ideas
- Problems & gaps
- Data & metrics
- Partners, vendors, peer groups

Voice of Customer

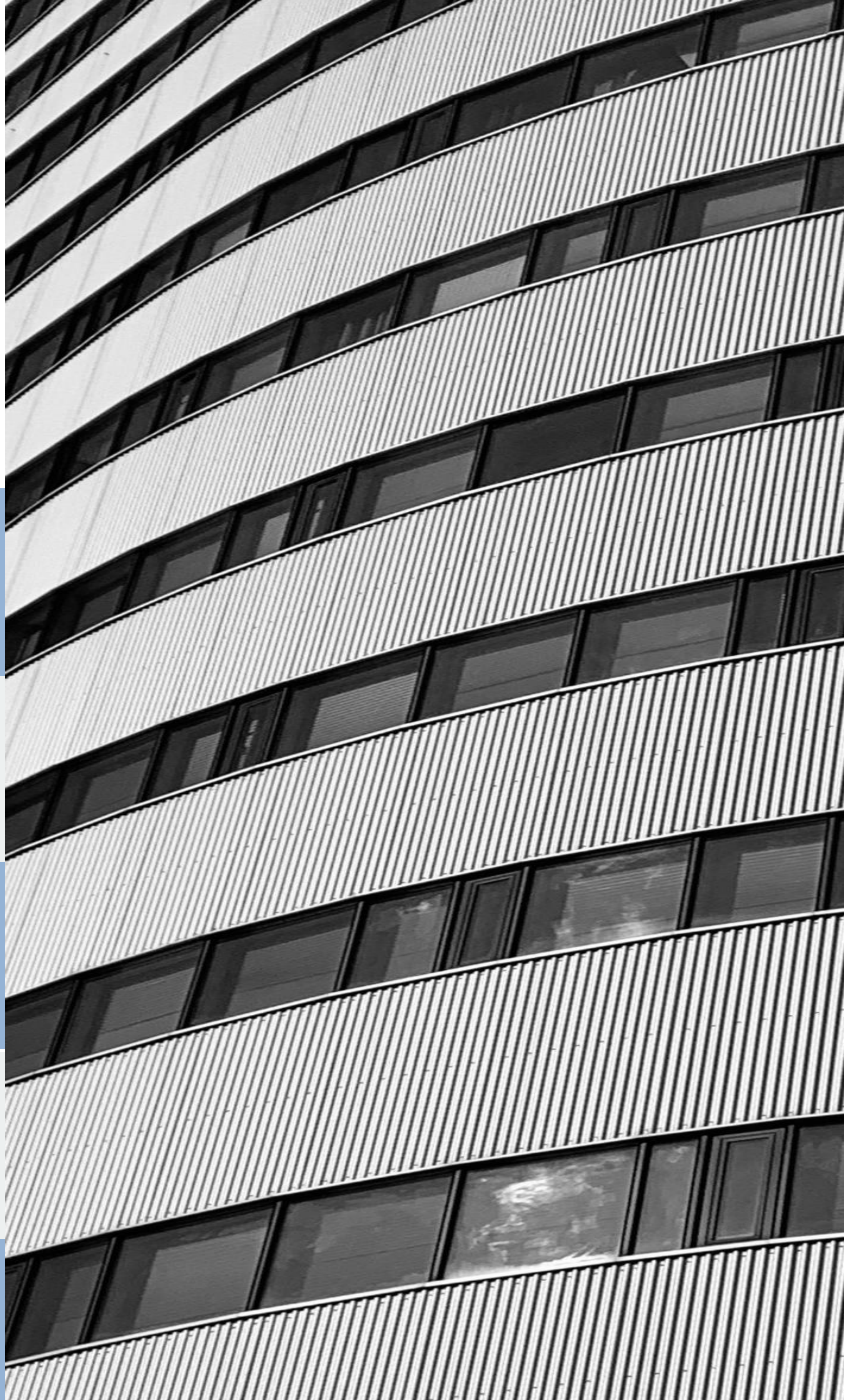
Weekly micro-calls: 3–5 ten-minute chats; rotate new/lost/current customers.

Shadow the work: One ride-along or screen-share per month. Observe, don't participate.

One-question pulse in invoices/portals: "What could we do better?"

Mine what already exists: Tag service tickets, call transcripts, and emails for friction, inputs, requests, common "nice-to-haves"

Close the loop: "You said / We did" update each month to show changes made.



Team Ideas

“What If” Circle (15 min): Rapid-fire “What if we…” ideas, no debate. Post the top three to the idea backlog.

Win Walkthrough: Pick one recent win; walk the steps that worked. Extract one repeatable move and standardize it.

Time-thief snapshot: One 15-minute audit per week per person: “What stole time?”

Automation wish list: Tasks the team believes software/templates could assist with.

Knowledge gaps: Questions asked 3× in a week → create/upgrade a how-to or template.

Problems + Gaps

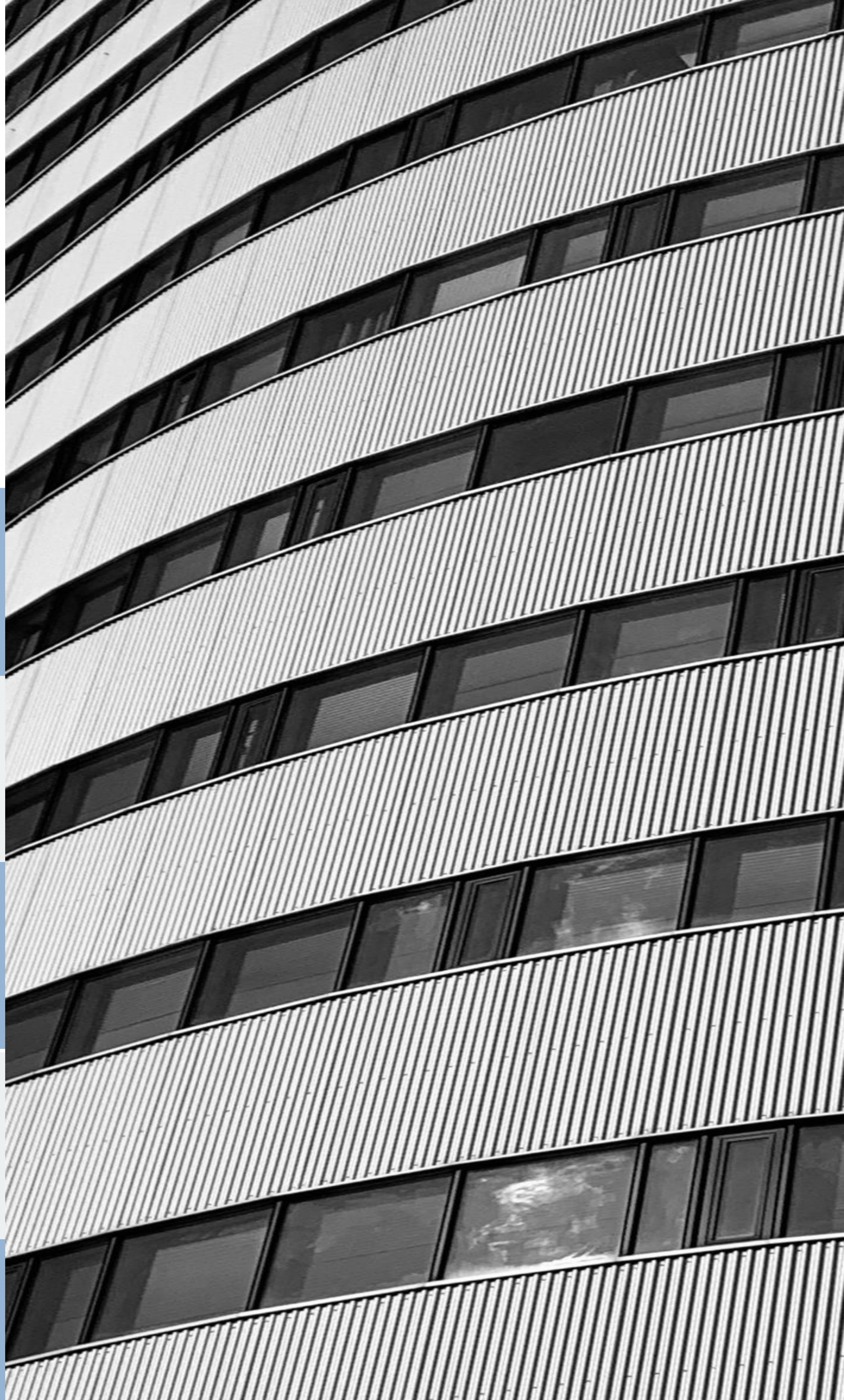
Bottleneck map (time-in-stage for every job)

Workarounds wall (photo or note of every “we just do X” hack)

Handoff bounce count (when work comes back, note why)

Missed promise tracker (ETAs, specs, scope changes)

Overtime & queue heatmap (where work piles up, by day/team)



Data and Metrics

Operational metrics: Quote turnaround, on-time rate, rework, percentage to spec, returns.

Leading indicators: Queue time, unplanned overtime, “Where is it?” calls.

Customer signals: NPS, renewal timing, repeat order rate, churn reasons.

Financial drivers: Gross margin per job, hours per unit, input costs.

Expanded data sources: Email threads, call recordings, chat logs, service notes.

Partners, Vendors, Peer Groups

Suppliers & partners: Quarterly check-in—what's coming, what's end-of-life, what's new in pricing.

Trade associations & peer groups: Cadence of connecting for what members have implemented and benchmarks you can "borrow".

Regulatory & standards: What will force timeline, labeling, safety, or data changes in the next 12 months?

Talent market signals: Roles competitors are hiring for (skills hint at where the puck is going).

Macro triggers: Lead-time trends, freight costs, energy rates, anything that changes your buyer's urgency.

Field trips & shop swaps: Quarterly visit to a non-competitor with high discipline or innovations you admire.

Culture of Innovation

Continuing education

BrainFood

Leadership

Continuing Education

Make it predictable. Keep it small. Tie learning to an action..

30 MINUTES
A WEEK

TEACH
THE TEAM

ONE ACTION +
TAKEAWAY

BrainFood

Keep it relevant and repeatable. Build a simple feed, not a firehose..

ONE PODCAST OR ARTICLE A WEEK

ONE CUSTOMER STORY A WEEK

ONE OUTSIDE VISIT PER QUARTER

Leadership

“Innovation is saying no to a thousand things.” without squashing it.

PROTECT TIME FOR EXPLORATION

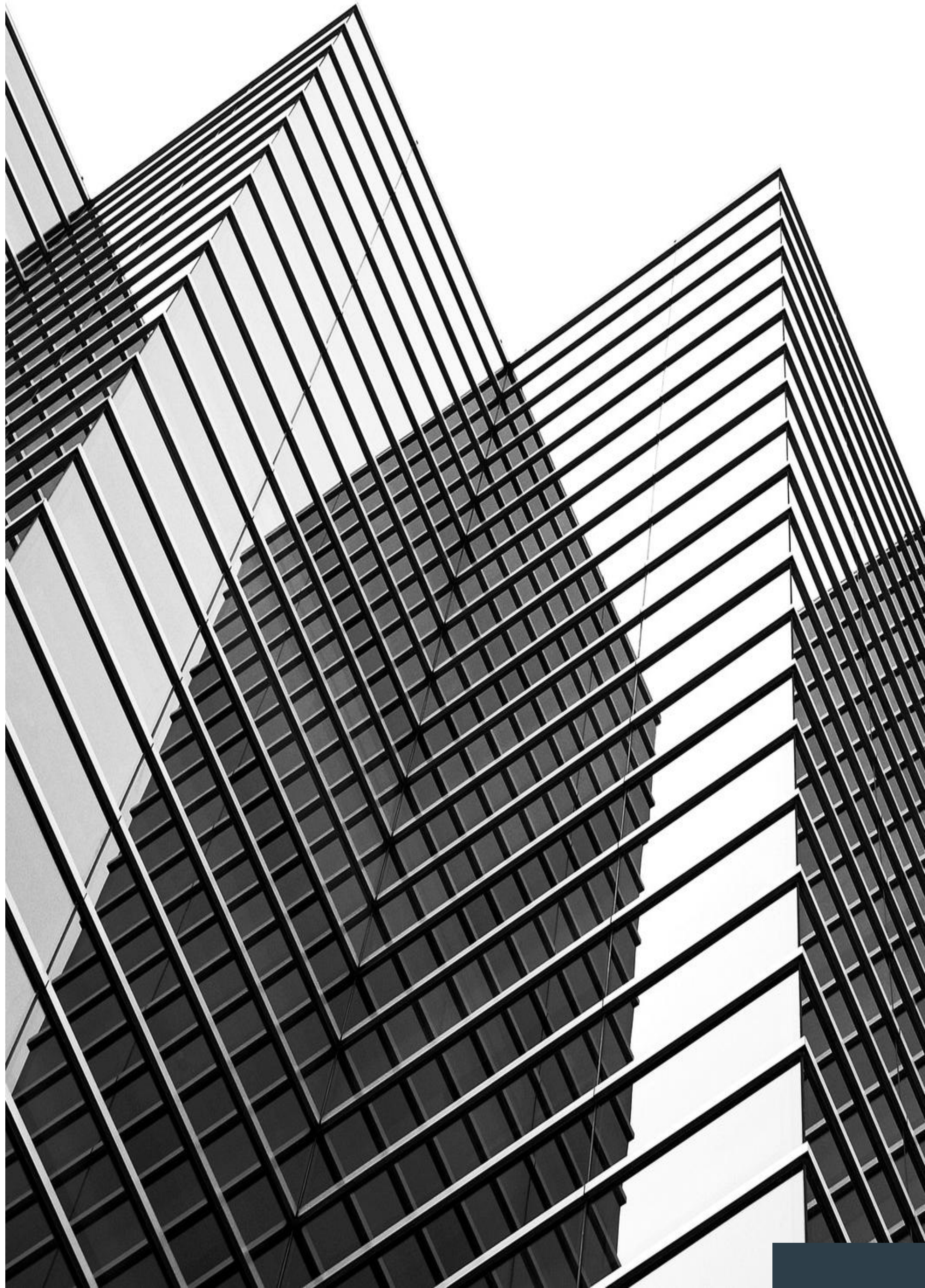
ASK LOTS AND LOTS OF QUESTIONS

SAY NO OFTEN – BUT WITH ENCOURAGEMENT

And of course, Budget + Time

Budget
- Make it a line item, not a leftover
- Explore
- Build
- Scale

Time
- Often even harder to come by
- Weekly 60 minutes – on the calendar
- 10-day Sprints – 45-day MVPs



Innovation Facilitations

GO-TO-MARKET CANVAS

10 DAYS – 10 MONTHS – 10 YEARS

COMPRESSION PLANNING

MVP CRITERIA

Go To Market Canvas

Who’s it for (one line)
Problem to solve (in their words)
Promise (remove friction, provide certainty, save time)
Product/Service/Offer
Price/range
Path to buy (where/how they say yes)
Proof (3 bullets: one result, one photo, one quote for success)
Lead time/availability
First 30-day test (target date)
Success metric and kill rule
Owner

WHEN YOU ARE IN NEED OF A FAST YES OR NO

10 Days – 10 Months – 10 Years

10 days: What we will ship (small, visible, customer-facing or internal with proof)
Metric for 10 days: One number we expect to move
10 months: What will be real (repeatable result, not a concept)
Milestones for 10 months: 3 checkpoints with dates
10 years: What it could become (direction that guides choices)
Risks and guardrails: what we will not do, budget/time caps, safety/quality rules
Owner and demo dates: names on 10-day demo and 10-month review

WHEN YOU WANT TO BALANCE THE SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM

Compression Planning

Borrows Disney's storyboarding discipline using visual cards on a wall to move from ideas to decisions fast

Combats chaos, HIPPO, loudest voices, "we tried that and it didn't work", etc. while providing immediate prioritization and group consensus

Rounds of reduction: generate options → cluster themes → choose top 3 moves

Output: 3 moves/options/decisions with owner, metric, date

MANY OPTIONS AND/OR LOTS OF STAKEHOLDERS AND OPINIONS

Minimal Viable Product (MVP)

Problem / Opportunity and who it impacts
Core outcome to prove (what changes for the user)
Smallest thing to show it (what we will build/do)
Evidence we'll collect (photo, timestamp, metric)
Success metric and kill rule
Time restriction and budget cap
Owner and demo date
Pilot customer(s)
Risks and guardrails (quality/safety/brand)
Next step if it works (what we scale)

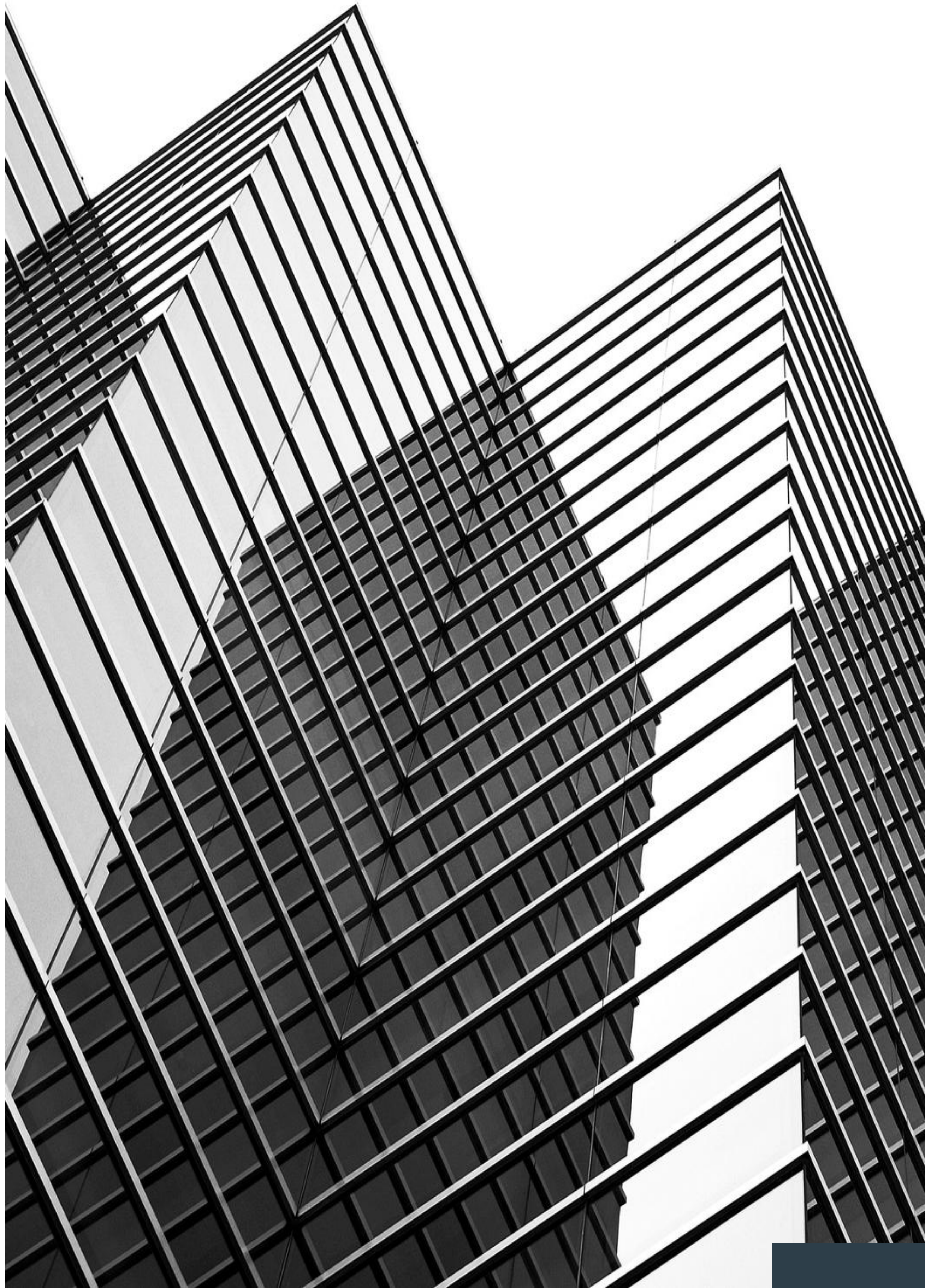
FITS BEST FOR PRODUCT OR TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

Group Exercise: Compression Planning

Let's help EFBC innovate

- What programming innovations should we add for 2026?
- How can we increase participation in the Hub?
- What additional services can EFBC offer to increase value to members?

Group Exercise: Audience Issue / Opp



Three Takeaways

INNOVATION
IS A HABIT

SAY NO A LOT
WHILE KEEPING
ENTHUSIASM

START SMALL
MEASURE
REPEAT

Entrepreneur & Family
BUSINESS COUNCIL

Innovation in Entrepreneurial and Family Businesses

MODULE TWO

Presenter Contact Info

Patty Rioux

ODEA | Trybl

patty@teamodea.com