

Slow Down, YOU'LL GET THERE FASTER

WHERE AI MEETS THE HUMAN CONDITIONS FOR INNOVATION

There are so many evolving narratives around AI. Most are centred on efficiency – the idea that we can accomplish our work faster, more accurately, and more cheaply. Operational efficiency is great, especially if it creates space for more fulfilling, less mundane, ‘higher-value work’ – the kind that improves the lives of our stakeholders, institutions, and brands. That’s the promise, right?

Creating fundamentally new forms of value has long been the domain of disciplines like innovation and design thinking. The books highlighted below explore many of these ideas and long predate the rise of AI. It’s worth reflecting on how some of their core principles and best practices are being reshaped by AI, and where they still require a distinctly human touch.

*Where Good Ideas Come From:
The Natural History of Innovation.*
Steven Johnson

*Design of Business: Why Design Thinking
is the Next Competitive Advantage.*
Roger Martin

*Design Works: A Guide to Creating and
Sustaining Value through Business
Design, Revised and Expanded Edition.*
Heather M.A. Fraser

Empathy

AI is transforming how we analyze data. We can interrogate datasets and even “converse” with them in powerful ways (e.g., digital personas). But the art of listening, face to face, with open minds and genuine curiosity, leaving space for the exploration of experience, remains one of the most powerful ways to uncover new opportunities.

Facilitation

AI can help us synthesise research, structure agendas, and even suggest frameworks for collaboration. It can prepare us for the room. But it is far from being able to replace the critical role of the facilitator. Like a conductor, a skilled facilitator reads the room, navigates tension, draws out quieter voices, and shapes how ideas emerge through collaboration.

Productive Error

AI continues to “hallucinate,” and while that remains a risk, error has always played a role in discovery. Unexpected outputs and wrong turns can open new directions if we are willing to explore them. If the goal becomes eliminating error entirely, we risk losing something essential. Sometimes the detour is where the real insight lives.

Underneath all of this is a simple tension: AI allows us to move faster. But innovation has never been about speed alone. It often begins as a “slow hunch”, something incomplete that takes time, interaction, and iteration to fully form.

So in the race toward speed and efficiency, we should be intentional with the time AI gives us back, and ask an often-overlooked question:



**Which parts of our work
actually get better
when we slow down?**



DAVID W. BROWN

Partner, EVP Healthcare Strategy
No Fixed Address Health
david.brown@nfahealth.com

