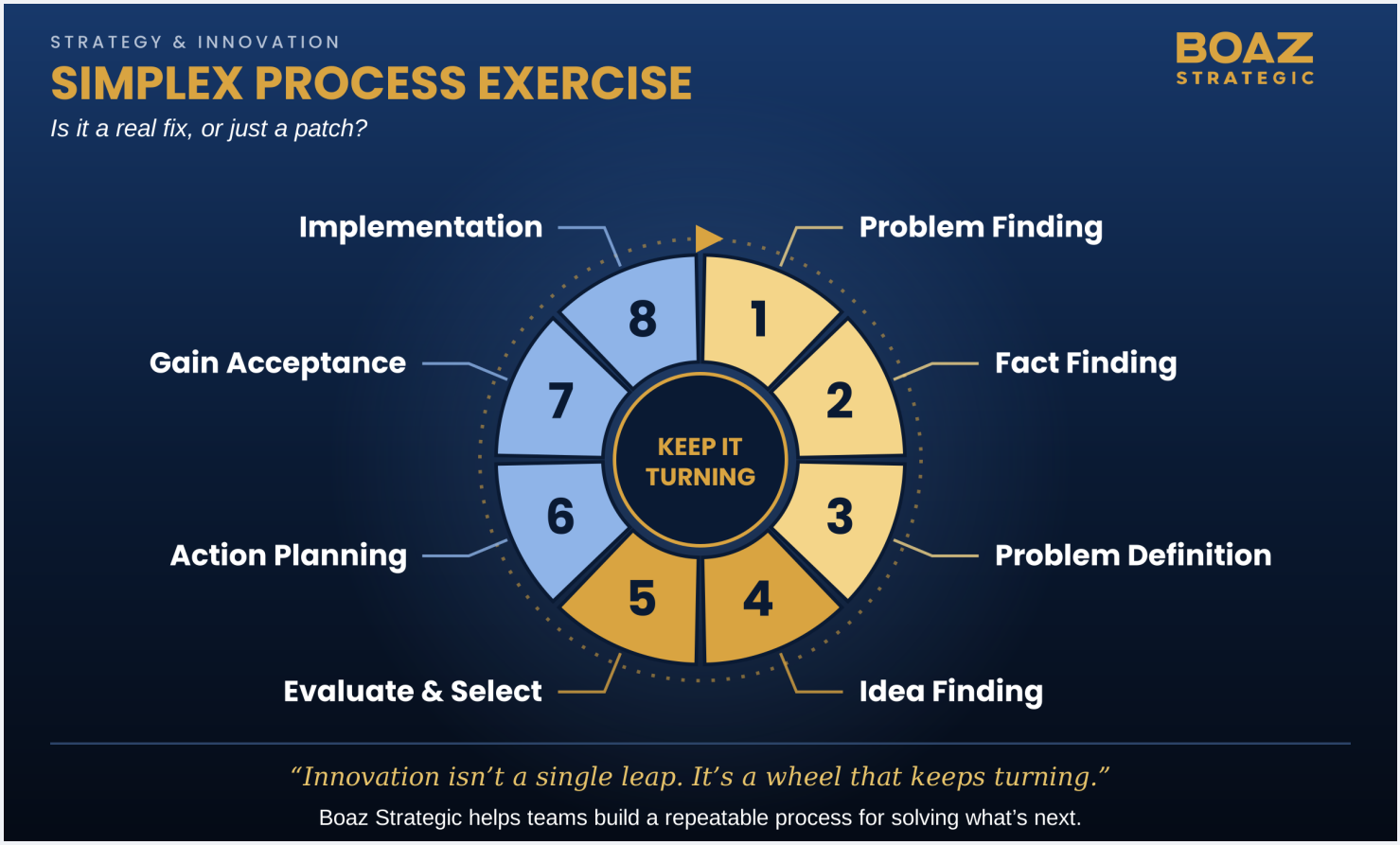


Are your fixes real, *or just patches?*

> *Innovation isn't a single leap. It's a wheel that keeps turning.*

Most teams solve a problem once, move on and are surprised when a version of it resurfaces six months later. That is not bad luck. It is usually a broken process.

Thomas Wedell-Wedellsborg, writing in Harvard Business Review, surveyed 106 C-suite executives from 91 companies in 17 countries. A full 85 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their organizations were bad at problem diagnosis, and 87 percent agreed that the flaw carried significant costs. Their struggle, he found, was not solving problems but figuring out what the problems are.

A real fix survives the next quarter.

Management researcher Min Basadur, professor emeritus at McMaster University, modeled innovation as a circle rather than a straight line. His Simplex Process has eight steps: problem finding, fact finding, problem defining, idea finding, evaluating and selecting, action planning, gaining acceptance and taking action.

The first three steps decide what you are solving. The next two turn ideas into a practical solution. The last three, planning, earning buy-in and implementing, make it real. Then the cycle restarts, because implementation surfaces a new problem worth solving. That is the point, not a flaw.

Try the Simplex Process Exercise.

Pick one problem that keeps coming back and give your team an hour. Walk it through all eight steps in order, writing one answer for each. When you define the problem, Basadur suggests asking "Why?" to broaden it and "What's stopping you?" to narrow it.

Generate ideas before you judge any. Then choose one, plan it, talk to the people who must carry it, and act. Finish by asking what new problem your fix revealed. That is where the wheel turns.

At Boaz Strategic, we help teams build a repeatable process for solving what's next, not just what's now.

Basadur, The Power of Innovation (1995); McMaster University; Wedell-Wedellsborg, HBR, 2017

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