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## The analysis & implementation of key innovation methods in order to prove that innovation is required for promoting market growth in the United States track & field industry

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THE ANALYSIS & IMPLEMENTATION OF KEY INNOVATION METHODS IN  
ORDER TO PROVE THAT INNOVATION IS REQUIRED FOR PROMOTING  
MARKET GROWTH IN THE UNITED STATES TRACK & FIELD INDUSTRY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
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in

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by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

In relation to the rest of the world, the track and field industry within the United States lacks interest from the public. The market makes a name for itself during the short period of time the sport is televised in the Olympic Games. This is a problem for the elite athletes who are considered professional but have little to show for this title. The current marketing strategies and distribution of wealth within the industry are ineffective and detrimental to the future success of the sport. We must point the finger at the governing powers and demand a change. I believe that this change comes in the form of innovation. We must find ways to innovate the sport in order to attract the attention of the public on a regular basis, which will result in added revenue and market growth. To do this, we have to cater the marketing efforts towards the experiences had by both athletes and fans of the sport. In my thesis, I address this issue knowing very well that innovation is key beforehand. The paper is outlined similar to what a marketing plan would look like in the business world. I begin with providing an understanding of innovation and how the process works. From there, I incorporate six important aspects to innovation that are required for success. With these tools on hand, I then produce a framework for identifying the need for innovation. This framework encompasses the problem, the industry, research efforts, creativity and risk measures, and finally the concluding remarks and recommendations from the information gathered. By combing data that shows financial instability, insight from elite athletes and the frustration from current fans of the sport, my study proves that innovation is a necessity. With that, I propose three recommendations based on level of effort and difficulty. The best-case scenario for innovation efforts involves the creation of a new competition stadium, the employment of enthusiastic and knowledgeable commentators, better standards for television coverage, and more organized funding for promotional aspects of the sport.



# **CHAPTER 1:**

## **ANALYSIS AND CONSTRUCTION OF INNOVATION FRAMEWORK**

### **Defining Innovation and The Various Forms Found Within Business**

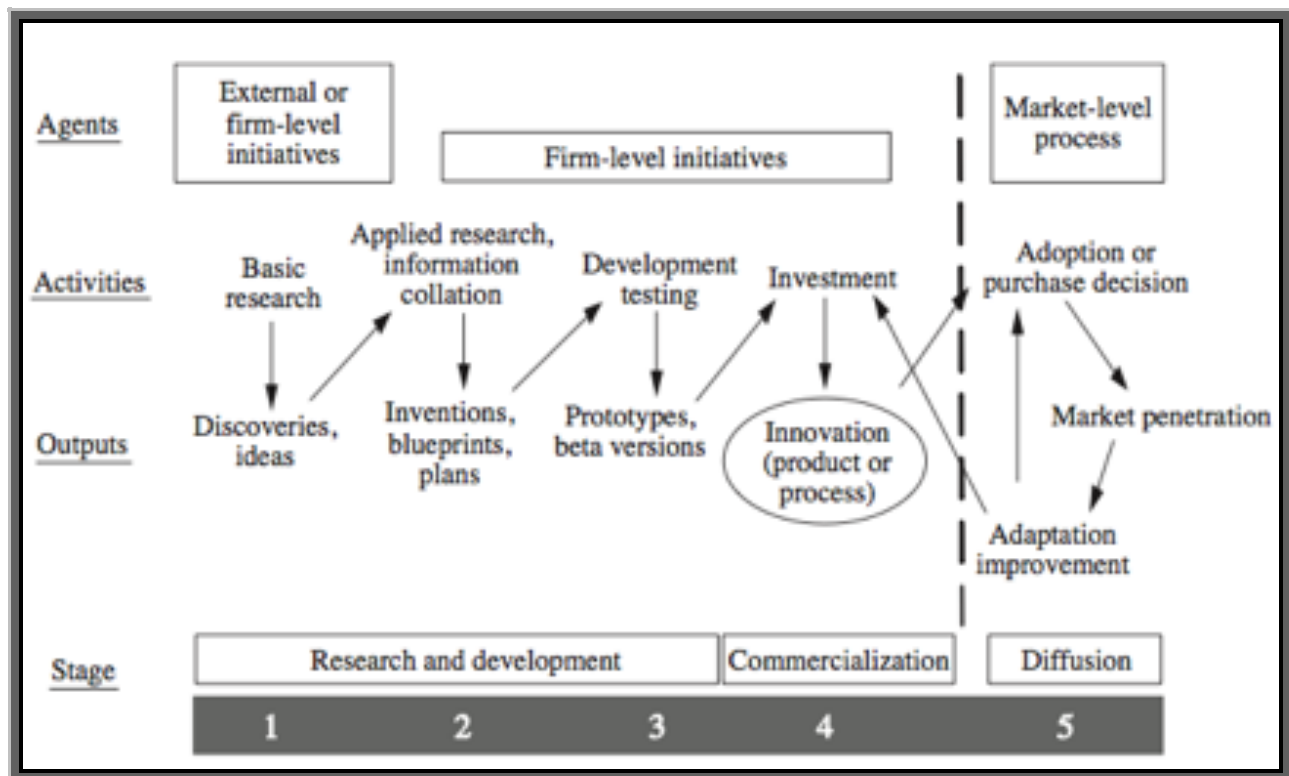
The body of this paper begins by defining the concept of innovation and providing the process by which an organization performs it. It then becomes the task of selecting an appropriate innovation framework to effectively analyze specific problems in order to come up with a best practice for creating solutions through analysis and experimentation. From there, the chosen framework will map out the rest. The term “innovation” deals with applying new ideas that will create better solutions for the needs and/or requirements of certain industries, markets and/or consumers. In business, innovation is the channel with which businesses can promote growth into its existing market or into new ones.

While this paper deals with seeking out best practices for the marketing and innovation process within a sports industry like track and field, it is still essential that the framework being used encompass some basic yet accurate and appropriate phases that would be typical of a creative brief or marketing plan template. Examples of such appropriate phases would be an overview of the industry, defining a problem or finding an unmet need, an analysis of the market with its competitors, opportunities, and possible solutions.

Early in my research, I looked for professional and scholarly examples of what an innovation process might look like in a diagram form for simple comprehension. In *The Nature and Importance of Innovation*, written by Christine Greenhalgh and Mark Rogers, innovation is defined as, “The application of new ideas to the products, processes, or other aspects of the activities of a firm that lead to increased ‘value.’ This ‘value’ is defined in a broad way to include higher value added for the firm and also benefits to consumers or other firms” (Greenhalgh and Rogers, 2010, 4). The “value added” to both the firm and consumer enhances the “growth” of the business into existing or new markets. Greenhalgh and Rogers then provided an explanation of the various stages within the innovation process:

At each stage of the process there are activities requiring inputs of knowledge, embodied in skilled personnel and specialized equipment, and investment of time in using these resources. Additionally, each stage, if successful, produces an output, initially intangible in the form of new knowledge but later tangible if applied to goods for sale—although sometimes remaining intangible if applied to some kinds of service activities. (Greenhalgh and Rogers, 2010, 6)

Figure 1 in the diagram below represents the innovation process that Greenhalgh and Rogers use for enhanced knowledge:



(Figure 1: *What Is Innovation?* Greenhalgh and Rogers, 2010, 7)

The first three stages (1-3) make up the “Research and Development” phase. It is at this point in the innovation process that the acquisition of specific knowledge takes place. For an organization to better understand their goal, it is a necessity that all appropriate research is done on the issue itself. This may include certain background knowledge, added research to new concepts, the assembly of plans for new processes, creative brainstorming, building prototypes for either products or services, etc. According to Greenhalgh and Rogers, this is where the term “new invention” may be brought up in conversation. Stages (1-3) are described as representing pre-market activity or the time before the innovation reaches the business environment.

Moving on to stage four, which is titled “Commercialization”, we see from the diagram that this is the time where the innovation is actually achieved and becomes a marketable product or service. Investments by intrigued outside sources comes into play here and triggers the start of a chain of events shown in stage five called “Diffusion”. According to Greenhalgh and Rogers, the “Diffusion” stage covers the adoption or purchase of the new product, concept or service, which increases or better develops the market penetration. The authors emphasize that the innovation process is never linear. Quite frequently, you will see that there is constant feedback between the various stages. From the diagram above, consideration has been made for this idea of feedback between stages four and five. “As consumers, or other firms, start using the innovations, they often adapt or improve them, or relay information on how to do so back to the innovating firms. This type of refinement, or incremental innovation, is often very important as the initial product or process is rarely perfect” (Greenhalgh and Rogers, 2010, 7).

In this section of the chapter, the authors then distinguish between “incremental” and “drastic” innovation. The term “incremental innovation” deals with the minor adjustments made to existing products, concepts or services. The explanation above that dealt with the constant feedback between “Diffusion” and the others innovation stages is a good example of “incremental innovation”. On the other hand, “drastic innovation” is the creation of a completely new type of product, concept or service that has the capability of forming new genres of innovative products. Distinguishing between “incremental” or “drastic” innovation may be something to consider when deciding on the best course of action for the track and field industry here in the United States.

### The Ten Types of Innovation

After analyzing a standard layout to innovation that took into consideration the various directions the process could go in, I then wanted to find out if there were different styles to the entire process itself. In other words, I wondered if there were different approaches to innovation based on what kind of goal

or end result was trying to be attained. I came across a company by the name of Doblin that specializes in helping businesses innovate. The prelude to their book titled, *Ten Types of Innovation: The Discipline of Building Breakthroughs*, goes into much detail on the many innovation opportunities that business organizations sometimes miss due to too much emphasis and focus on improving their products or services. “For many years, executives equated innovation with the development of new products. But creating new products is only one way to innovate, and on its own, it provides the lowest return on investment and the least competitive advantage” (Doblin, 2011). The ten types were originally organized in 1998, but Doblin prides themselves on the fact that they have been scientifically studying and improving the list since then. I have provided the ten types of innovation in Figure 2 below:



(Figure 2: Image provided by Doblin, *Ten Types of Innovation*, 2011)

It appears that the list has been broken into three categories: Configuration, Offering and Experience. The first four types of innovation found within “Configuration” seem to be strategies for companies to use in order to improve their internal aspects as a means to promote better external results. The “profit model” is described simply as how a company makes their money.

**Innovative profit models** find a fresh way to convert a firm’s offerings and other sources of value into cash. Great ones reflect a deep understanding of what customers and users actually cherish and where new revenue or pricing opportunities might lie. Innovative profit models often challenge an industry’s tired old assumptions about what to offer, what to charge, or how to collect revenues. This is a big part of their power: in most industries the dominant profit model often goes unquestioned for decades. (Doblin, 2011)

The next type of innovation found in the “Configuration” category deals with innovating the company’s network. More specifically, Doblin describes this strategy as the way companies create value through connecting with others.

In today's hyper-connected world, no company can or should do everything alone. **Network innovations** provide a way for firms to take advantage of other companies' processes, technologies, offerings, channels, and brands —pretty much any and every component of a business. These innovations mean a firm can capitalize on its own strengths while harnessing the capabilities and assets of others. Network innovations also help executives to share risk in developing new offers and ventures. These collaborations can be brief or enduring, and they can be formed between close allies or even staunch competitors. (Doblin, 2011)

Next we have the innovation strategy that deals with improving a company's structure. Doblin describes this as compiling and aligning the talents and assets that your company has in order to find better success and grow.

**Structure innovations** are focused on organizing company assets — hard, human, or intangible — in unique ways that create value. They can include everything from superior talent management systems to ingenious configurations of heavy capital equipment. An enterprise's fixed costs and corporate functions can also be improved through Structure innovations, including departments such as Human Resources, R&D, and IT. Ideally, such innovations also help attract talent to the organization by creating supremely productive working environments or fostering a level of performance that competitors can't match. (Doblin, 2011)

The last innovation strategy found within the "Configuration" category deals with the analyzing and improving the process by which a company goes from input to output. It is described as how a company uses specific methods in order to do its work.

**Process innovations** involve the activities and operations that produce an enterprise's primary offerings. Innovating here requires a dramatic change from "business as usual" that enables the company to use unique capabilities, function efficiently, adapt quickly, and build market-leading margins. Process innovations often form the core competency of an enterprise, and may include patented or proprietary approaches that yield advantage for years or even decades. Ideally, they are the "special sauce" you use that competitors simply can't replicate. (Doblin, 2011)

The next category that Doblin provides in its list is called "Offering". This seems to include innovation strategies that deal with the products of innovation, which tend to be what most companies become fixated on. Doblin warns that when a company focuses too much of their attention on the innovation of a product, they tend to forget that this strategy can be easily copied by competitors. This category only takes up two of Doblin's ten innovation strategies, which is another reason for companies

not to get so absorbed in them. But they are still important to understand when choosing the best or best assortment of methods. The first innovation strategy of this category deals with product performance. Doblin describes it as how a company develops distinguishing features and functionality to their products or services.

**Product Performance innovations** address the value, features, and quality of a company's offering. This type of innovation involves both entirely new products as well as updates and line extensions that add substantial value. Product Performance innovations that deliver long-term competitive advantage are the exception rather than the rule. (Doblin, 2011)

The other innovation strategy found within this category deals with the product system of a company. Doblin describes it as how a company creates complementary products and services in order to strengthen position in the market and keep competitors from penetrating your connections.

**Product System innovations** are rooted in how individual products and services connect or bundle together to create a robust and scalable system. This is fostered through interoperability, modularity, integration, and other ways of creating valuable connections between otherwise distinct and disparate offerings. Product System innovations help you build ecosystems that captivate and delight customers and defend against competitors. (Doblin, 2011)

The last category provided by Doblin deals with the "Experience" that comes from using a company's product or service. In other words, this category provides strategies that target specific ways to address the value that customers want and feel from the products or services they use in order to promote growth and sustainability within a market. The first innovation strategy found in this category deals with the quality and amount of emphasis placed on the service to consumers. Doblin describes it as how a company supports and amplifies the value of their offerings.

**Service innovations** ensure and enhance the utility, performance, and apparent value of an offering. They make a product easier to try, use, and enjoy; they reveal features and functionality customers might otherwise overlook; and they fix problems and smooth rough patches in the customer journey. Done well, they elevate even bland and average products into compelling experiences that customers come back for again and again. (Doblin, 2011)

The next innovation strategy in the “Experience” category deals with the channel through which a company links their products or services to the consumer. Doblin describes these channels as the various forms of purchasing that a consumer can take advantage of.

**Channel innovations** encompass all the ways that you connect your company’s offerings with your customers and users. While e-commerce has emerged as a dominant force in recent years, traditional channels such as physical stores are still important — particularly when it comes to creating immersive experiences. Skilled innovators in this type often find multiple but complementary ways to bring their products and services to customers. Their goal is to ensure that users can buy what they want, when and how they want it, with minimal friction and cost and maximum delight. (Doblin, 2011)

The third innovation strategy found in the “Experience” category deals with a company’s specific brand and how they can leave a positive lasting impression with their consumers. Doblin describes this as how a company represents their products, services and business.

**Brand innovations** help to ensure that customers and users recognize, remember, and prefer your offerings to those of competitors or substitutes. Great ones distill a “promise” that attracts buyers and conveys a distinct identity. They are typically the result of carefully crafted strategies that are implemented across many touchpoints between your company and your customers, including communications, advertising, service interactions, channel environments, and employee and business partner conduct. Brand innovations can transform commodities into prized products, and confer meaning, intent, and value to your offerings and your enterprise. (Doblin, 2011)

The last strategy of the “Experience” category and final innovation type deals with analyzing and promoting customer engagement with a company. Keeping good relationships with end users and learning about how they think can greatly benefit a company’s future innovative success. Doblin describes this strategy as how a company fosters compelling interactions.

**Customer Engagement innovations** are all about understanding the deep-seated aspirations of customers and users, and using those insights to develop meaningful connections between them and your company. Great Customer Engagement innovations provide broad avenues for exploration, and help people find ways to make parts of their lives more memorable, fulfilling, delightful — even magical. (Doblin, 2011)

I felt it necessary to provide descriptions for all ten of Dolbin’s innovation types to help myself and the reader understand the many directions that a company or organization can consider when looking for an innovation strategy to improve their specific situation. Sometimes companies or organizations don’t realize the lost opportunities that can result from changing something internally

rather than externally or vice versa. As I go about my own process of proving that innovation is key for the future success of the track and field industry, this list will help me decide which route or combination of routes should be considered and implemented by the governing powers. I will refer back to Doblin's list later on in my thesis after analyzing the specific problems found within this industry.

### Selecting a Suitable Innovation Framework for Case Analysis

All of the information provided above was some of the initial criteria I required of myself as I began the research process. With these concepts in mind and my perception that the track and field industry is in dire need of growth or "added value", I began researching for any studies or applied methods of innovating specifically in sports. From knowledge and expertise gathered prior to forming my thesis, I am certain that a professional sport like track and field can only innovate if the business model aimed towards improving the fan and athlete experience. Much of the frustration within the sport originates from these two groups of people. This idea will most assuredly promote both the growth and the value added to the industry and its consumers. While the five stages of innovation shown above would be an ample amount of information to go forth with, I still wanted to search for something more specific that dealt primarily with the creativity mindset of a concept like athletics. Whatever innovation process I eventually ended up with, it would have to encompass some sort of approach or involve phases similar to the diagram above that could solve these certain issues. Early on, I came across an unlikely individual whose background geared more towards consulting with coaches and athletes rather than providing a business-worthy innovation plan. From his website titled, *Championship Thinking Coach*, Jim Meier described himself as,

A trainer to coaches, schools, sports teams and individual amateur and professional athletes in the core areas of sports psychology, leadership, team development, innovation, management and student/athlete and parent relationships. His work is laser focused on 1) directly assisting athletes and teams tap into and display their inner greatness and 2) with coaches, schools and professional teams in strengthening winning traditions. (Meier, 2005-2014)



But before even knowing who Meier was, I came across an article of his titled, “*Creativity, Innovation & Change in the World of Sports*” while scanning for information related to innovation in sports. In this brief article, Meier discusses six creative categories that he feels to be essential in order for innovation to occur. “This topic covers what innovation is, the logical reasons why innovation is so important for sports organizations and teams competitive edge and growth” (Meier, 2005-2014). As I initially skimmed the document, I found that much of the material was quite relevant to what I was looking for as the framework for this thesis. But as I continued to read the article over and over again, I became a little hesitant realizing that this was not entirely geared towards what I believed it to be. It should have been obvious too as the website’s main objective is to act as an athletic consultation. This process that Meier describes is the innovation that comes from internal affairs dealing with coaches and athletes. It is a step-by-step process on how to work one’s creativity to find new ways of improving athletic performance. In other words, it was helping individuals experience their sport better. But those three ideas, “creativity”, “improving performance” and “experience” kept my attention focused. This could be enough to justify that the process here would help me generate an appropriate innovative marketing strategy. Meier provided the following six creative categories, which do not appear to be in any specific order:

- **Creative Category 1: Acquisition and Creative Storage of Knowledge Applied to Sports**

The three characteristics of this category are: curiosity, creative memory and expanded background of fundamental knowledge.

Combined, these three characteristics increase the likelihood for creative thought and action. By using these characteristics, a wellspring of information is sought and obtained then enters the brain and becomes stored and retrievable from many more cross-reference memory files to expand knowledge. (Meier, 2005-2014)

After analyzing this first category, I was encouraged by the “creative memory” and “expanded background of fundamental knowledge” that Meier describes. Similar to the process of constructing a creative brief in marketing, specialists have to acquire much needed background information about a specific industry, their client, the client’s competitors and how the consumer generally responds to

the client's product or service along with other outside areas of expertise in order to put together a worthy proposal. This was a good step in the right direction.

- **Creative Category 2: Problem/Opportunity Focus, Analysis and Resiliency Applied to Sports**

The three characteristics of this category are: Analysis and synthesis, discernment and selectivity and persistence and concentration.

Combined, these three characteristics develop the tenacious investigator in you; the Quincy's, Sherlock Holmes' of the world that doggedly dig for facts and truth. Category 2 is more a left-brain vs. a right-brain set of functions. (Meier, 2005-2014)

This second category also sparked my attention. Analyzing data that relates to specific problem is a very important stage in market research. The "analysis and synthesis" and "dig for facts and truth" helped me to believe that this stage could also be used in my specific marketing framework.

- **Creativity Category 3: Motivation and Self-Confidence Applied to Sports**

The three characteristics of this category are: sensitivity to problems/issues, tolerance of isolation and self-confidence and tolerance to risk.

When developed, these three characteristics form the foundation of courage needed to move beyond psychological and emotional comfort zones. By developing strength in Category 3 you learn how to free yourself up from fear of failure, which in sports, is often the biggest barrier to creative thinking and acting. Category 3 is more mindset than pure skill set. In addition to teaching what this category means, tools and techniques for raising the self-confidence bar in order to attack barriers for improvement will be given. (Meier, 2005-2014)

I like the fact that this third category emphasizes that ideas encompassed are more of a mindset than pure skill set. People may often forget that having strong qualities of motivation and self-confidence when dealing with tolerance to risk should not be overlooked in an innovation process. In the struggle to always stay ahead of the game or reconstruct a failing market, business owners, entrepreneurs and marketing specialists have to take risks when trying to promote growth in their specific industry. Too often, opportunities are lost due to the fact that governing powers want to feel as financially comfortable as possible for as long as possible.

- **Creative Category 4: Trust of the Unconscious, of Feelings and Uncertainty Applied to Sports**

The three characteristics of this category are: Openness to feelings and the unconscious, incubation and tolerance of ambiguity.

Combined these three characteristics unleashes your intuitive power which leads to feeling more comfortable at not needing to know the answer at every step in the creative, change, improvement process...a critical aspect for leaders, coaches and players alike. Category 4 has much to do with sharpening instinct, trusting your hunches and gut feel when clear evidence to do so remains illusive and hidden. (Meier, 2005-2014)

I perceived this forth category as feeding off of the third in that as we take risks, some outcomes or knowledge gathered along the way is not going to be completely transparent. There is nothing wrong with this result as change always provides us with new feelings and new ways of thinking. In Meier's terms, an athlete should welcome the confusion their body experiences during change, as it is a necessary tool to use to promote a strong level of athletic adaptability. Similarly in marketing, the same standards should be welcomed rather than frowned upon.

- **Creative Category 5: Idea Generation Applied to Sports**

The three characteristics of this category are: idea flexibility, fluency of ideas and anticipation of productive periods.

These three characteristics comprise the ability to both churn out many ideas including the use of current strategies, technologies, teaching tools and personality dynamics in new ways. Category 5 is where brainstorming and like methods live and flourish. It also includes learning to know your own rhythms when idea generation is greatest. (Meier, 2005-2014)

The fifth category also sparked my interest as it clearly describes the process of taking what has been sought out to generate new ideas and possible solutions. The phrase, "learning to know your own rhythms" that Meier describes, demonstrates to me that successful innovation comes from quality research and gathered areas of expertise. This section is very similar to what marketing specialists would include towards the end of their creative briefs when it's time to come up with possible solutions to satisfy certain needs or to correct certain issues within an industry.

- **Creativity Category 6: Imagination, Playfulness and Originality Applied to Sports**

The three characteristics of this category are: imagination, toying with ideas and original thinking.

These three characteristics bring forth the energy-producing child in you, which are the core of creativity and innovation. Essentially, creativity is play at the higher level. Category 6 is all about developing and giving free reign to the right brain activities of imagination, reconfiguration of raw “materials”, word-play and the like. (Meier, 2005-2014)

As with any sort of innovation, the process of coming up with new ways to market new or existing products or services is not an easy thing. If it were easy, the meaning behind innovation would not be the same. Innovation is the art and practice of stepping out into uncharted territories in search of things that can sometimes not be fully anticipated. This sort of feat cannot happen all the time. We humans are neither incapable nor willing to constantly change and adapt *all* the time. But every now and then, some brilliant mind finds a need or fix that we never knew existed. That’s just the way it goes sometimes. It takes “imagination” and “toying with new ideas” to make it work. The “free-reign” of imagination comes from motivation, self-confidence, willingness to take risks and trust of the unconscious, which Meier has described in previous categories. I believe this to be the same strategy that should be taken on by members of the track and field industry.

### Adjustments and Implementation of the Framework for Case Analysis

After comprehending and elaborating for myself the ideas that were comprised in each of Meier’s six creativity categories, I soon realized that this “Innovate or Evaporate in Sports” did in fact create an appropriate framework that I could use for my thesis. Through examination of the characteristics that Meier provides for each category, I was able to find that many of the tactics and strategies listed can similarly be found within certain marketing plan templates and innovation processes used in particular marketing or business situations. In order to proceed and feel confident about how I would go about structuring the framework for my thesis, I had to satisfy two specific needs of mine.

First, I had to look past the fact that Meier geared this article towards coaches and athletes. Through my examination, analysis and elaboration on how Meier defines each category with the help of descriptive characteristics, I think that there is enough evidence to suggest that this innovation process can be used for my specific purposes. Second, I had to come up with an organizational scheme that would present the innovation process appropriately within a business context. Fortunately, it appears that the six creativity categories are not in any sort of implied order. The article seems to be merely a list of strategies to use. With that, I had the ability to rearrange the categories in a way that would make presenting a problem, data, an analysis, and a solution easy to follow. Without taking away from Meier's original purpose, I was able to use his article as a tool and cater his insight into a worthy innovation process for the track and field industry. I now provide the same six creativity categories previously mentioned above along with a reiteration on characteristics that Meier uses to describe them. This time, however, they are arranged in the order that I will use for this thesis:

### **PART I: Problem/Opportunity Focus, Analysis and Resiliency Applied to Sports**

The three characteristics of this category are: Analysis and synthesis, discernment and selectivity and persistence and concentration.

Part I will be titled, *PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY FOCUS*. As with any sort of marketing research, construction of a creative brief or marketing communications plan, the first step in the process involves the ability to identify a problem or need. Similarly with innovation, the same sort of scenario takes place. It may even be the case that a certain opportunity within an industry has come about and the need for an effective marketing strategy is crucial. In part one of this thesis, I will identify a few specific problems and opportunities that deal with the track and field industry's inability to effectively market itself. To do so, I will analyze the current market within the United States and provide appropriate data that demonstrates the financial burden placed on athletes who wish to become professionals and compete for their country. I will also include comments made by a professional athlete who has experienced these issues first hand and has been a key player in promoting the "elite athlete" experience.

Their expertise in how the sport works on a business level will also be very valuable when coming up with possible solutions. After I have identified the specific problems, I will then be able to communicate the goal of this thesis research and then work towards possible solutions that fit the criteria.

After the specific problems have been identified, I will then emphasize the importance of understanding what type of innovation is required for the process to be a success. To do this, I will list any innovation types from Doblin's *10 Types of Innovation* that incorporate certain aspects of the issues I have addressed thus far. From there, it then becomes the task of innovators in the track and field industry to decide which type of innovation process results in the best outcome for the sport. I have chosen to place this method here as it not only comes at the end of identifying the problem, but also fulfills the "selection" part of Meier's creative category described above. This final section of Part I is very critical to the innovation process as it proves that there is not only a need for innovation, but also that there is a specific style to use in order to see results that meet the requirements of the industry.

## **PART II: Acquisition and Creative Storage of Knowledge Applied to Sports**

Meier provides three characteristics for this category: curiosity, creative memory and expanded background of fundamental knowledge.

Part II will be titled, *THE ACQUISITION AND CREATIVE STORAGE OF KNOWLEDGE*. After some specific problems have been identified, it then becomes the task of acquiring as much relevant and useful information as possible in order to analyze the situation in more detail. In part two of this thesis, I will look at the constants and variables in the sport of track and field to help identify what aspects can be worked on without disrupting the athletes and their events. Next, I will look towards the efforts made by small organizations within the United States along with those made by organizations in other countries in order to see what has been a success and what has been a failure. By acquiring this information, a better assessment can be made as to what tactics and strategies are the most effective and why. I will also provide insight from professional athletes whose expertise from the business side of track and field will be a valuable asset to this section. The final piece of this section will involve a qualitative survey

analysis that I conducted to help solidify the public perception on certain issues in the sport of track and field. All of this acquired knowledge will help me begin the process of coming up with a feasible and effective way to innovate the sport.

### **PART III: Attitude and Mindset Required in Order to Innovate Applied to Sports**

- **Imagination, Playfulness and Originality Applied to Sports**

The three characteristics of this category are: imagination, toying with ideas and original thinking.

- **Trust of the Unconscious, of Feelings and Uncertainty Applied to Sports**

The three characteristics of this category are: Openness to feelings and the unconscious, incubation and tolerance of ambiguity.

- **Motivation and Self Confidence Applied to Sports**

The three characteristics of this category are: sensitivity to problems/issues, tolerance of isolation and self-confidence and tolerance to risk.

Part III will be titled, *ABILITY TO TRUST THE PROCESS, SYSTEM AND RISKS INVOLVED WHILE IN SEARCH OF CREATIVITY*. After reviewing Creative Category's 6, 4 and 3, it seemed as though I could combine them into one group and cater it towards the attitude and mindset a person or group of people should have in order to successfully innovate. While each section listed above has its own important aspects, I felt it appropriate to group them together and discuss Part III as the time in an innovation process where risk must be acknowledged in order for brainstorming, cognitive mapping and creativity to come into play with the help of Meier's best practices for such work to be effective.

### **PART IV: Idea Generation Applied to Sports**

The three characteristics of this category are: idea flexibility, fluency of ideas and anticipation of productive periods.

Part IV will be titled, *CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INNOVATION*. This is where the generation of solid ideas takes place along with the presentation of possible solutions to the issues listed in this thesis. At this point of the paper, I hope to have come up with enough insight and information to conclude that innovation is key to making track and field a more

popular sport within the United States. Furthermore, I will summarize my thoughts on what type(s) of innovation strategy would be most effective to provide as a solution. Part IV will also include my innovation recommendations, signs of innovation currently at play in the sport of track field and what other outside sources tell us is in the future for the sport. These suggestions will help me to form my conclusion on this very specific topic with the hopes that it also helps athletes, fans, governing powers, marketing specialists and others to realize that innovation is the only way for our sport to market itself more effectively.



## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **PART I: PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY FOCUS**

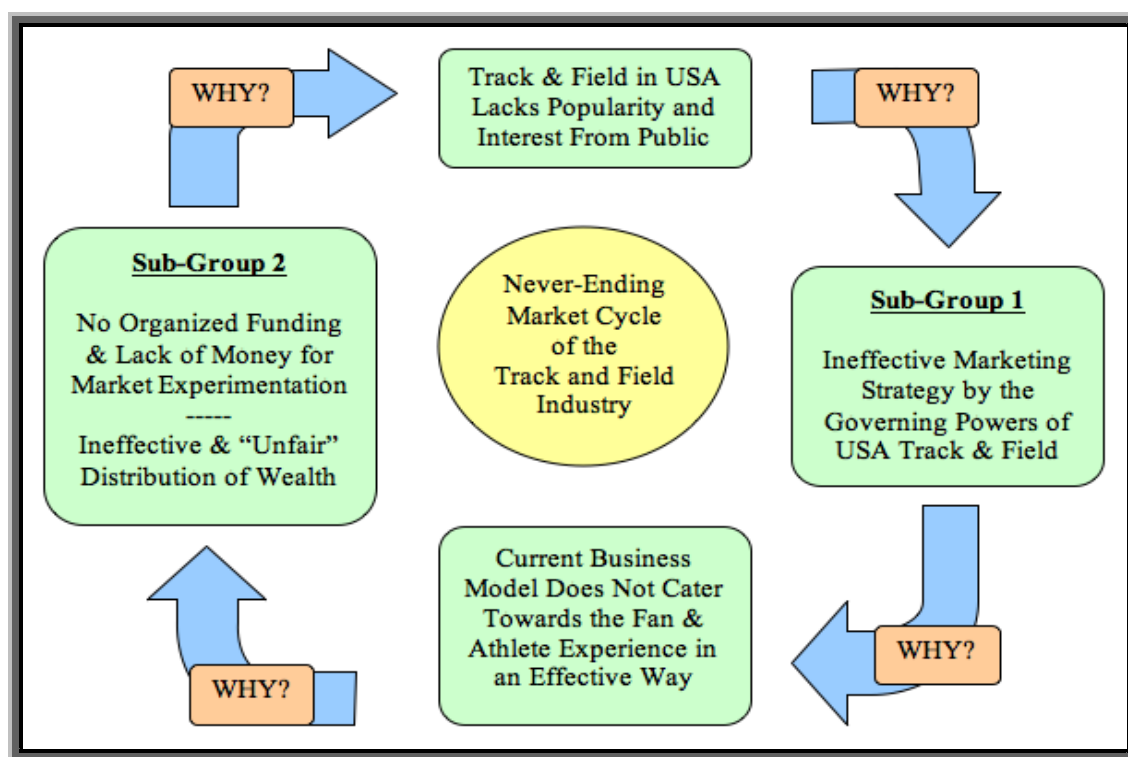
#### **Why Track and Field's Industry Seems to Lack Popularity From Consumers**

Staying true to the proposed framework for finding ways to innovate the sport of track and field, Part I begins with identifying the problem. Upon beginning my research, I wanted to understand exactly why much of the United States does not consider track and field to be a popular sport. This will be the main issue that I try to address in proving that innovation is key. When I initially began asking questions and seeking advice from outside sources, I was met with negative connotations defining the sport as that of “lacking excitement” and being “boring to watch”. To me, this meant that the way track and field is presented to viewers has been unsuccessful in recent years. It also suggests that there may be a lack of education about the sport itself, given that there are so many events that make up a track and field competition. It can be frustrating to viewers who do not understand what is happening right in front of their eyes. Given the fact that public education and viewer satisfaction were poorly, I concluded that the marketing strategies put in place by the governing powers of track and field within the United States were being administered ineffectively. In my opinion, it would seem that a good marketing strategy would seek to improve something along the lines of the “fan experience”. This perception of mine would be what I identified as the first of two sub-groups making up this problem.

Another issue or sub-group if you will that has come up quite frequently in my research involves the financial burdens that professional track and field athletes face. This is not only a frustration amongst current athletes but also a deterrent to those who possess a lot of talent and would possibly consider becoming an elite athlete. However, the issue does not stop there. It seems that the governing powers of track and field within the United States along with certain organizations like the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) have been reaping much of the rewards off of the athlete's performances. A case could even be made that some of the most popular sponsors of track and field athletes are also doing some of the same things. The amazing physical abilities of these athletes are what increase the media hype and ratings during the World Championship or Olympic year. By examining these two sub-

groups more in-depth, I will be able to conclude that innovation of the sport and quite possibly the marketing strategy is the only way to improve the perception of track and field. From there, I can then begin the process of collecting methods and forms of best practices for innovating in this type of industry. If you recall from my framework section, the term “innovation” deals with applying new ideas that will create better solutions for the needs and/or requirements of certain industries, markets and/or consumers. It is without a doubt that the track and field industry has many areas in need of fixing and I believe innovation to the sport is the solution.

For fluency and organization in my thesis, I then attempted to map out the issues that needed to be addressed. Throughout the research process, I found myself always asking myself why an unfortunate circumstance was happening. After tracing the issue back to yet another situation, I realized that the whole issue with track and field’s lack in popularity is the result of a never-ending cycle that has taken over this industry’s market. The image below demonstrates this never-ending dilemma. Please note that I myself have had over 10 years of experience as both a track and field athlete and avid fan. These issues that are displayed in Figure 3 on the next page are my perception of what is occurring in this country.



(Figure 3: My perception of the Never-Ending Market Cycle of the Track and Field Industry)

At the very top of the image on the previous page, I begin with the overall problem that track and field lacks popularity in the United States. From there, I asked myself why this is the case. It is without a doubt that the reader can come up with a number of reasons. For example, the most common rationale may be that the country already has enough popular sports like football, baseball, basketball, soccer and hockey. The team sport mentality is very strong within the United States and the tradition of these games carry's on. However, I look at other sports that are still quite new to this country such as the X-Games, Winter Games and Cross-Fit Games. Their growth has been exponential in recent years and they are all about the most extreme individual talent. All of these sports have found ways to market themselves effectively in order to maintain what is desired in their specific industries. The issue I see with track and field is that the sport has been presented to people in one way and one way only since the very beginning. Referring back to the comments I made at the beginning of Part I, individuals described track and field as “boring to watch” and “lacking excitement”. Minor attempts have been made in recent years to add hype or some kind of special atmosphere to events around the United States, but the results have only shown short-term effects. Time must be spent analyzing the ineffectiveness of whatever marketing strategy is currently in use.

But then I had to ask myself why the market strategy appeared to be ineffective. Given all of the reasons listed above, perhaps the governing powers of track and field were not putting enough emphasis on the fan and athlete experience prior to and during a track and field competition. In my familiarity as a track and field athlete, competitions are always centered on the event schedule in which they are run along with the type of facility that they are held in. This takes away the opportunity to work promotional aspects, special media opportunities and once again the experiences had by fans and athletes. Everything is on the clock and it screams a “get in and get out” mentality. With so many events taking place for both the men and women, it comes as no surprise that this is the reality for track and field competitions. Perhaps innovating the marketing strategy is not the only adjustment that has to be made. There may be

some value in breaking down the standard stadium and competition structure, while at the same time keeping the same rules and regulations.

The governing power of track and field, which refers primarily to the organization known as United States Track and Field (USATF), is not some thrown together outfit. The organization itself does very well and has a business structure similar to other athletic companies in the United States. They have a marketing department that works at promoting the sport, as they control the many different groups like USATF Youth, USATF Masters, USATF Special Olympics and USATF Race-Walking. I again asked myself why the USATF hasn't realized that the market for track and field could be a lot better or that the fan and athlete experience should be the number one priority. I came to the next realization that experimentation and innovation in sport requires an abundant supply of money. Given that the USATF has a lot of branches under their control, perhaps money is an issue when it comes to marketing the sport as effectively as they could. However, it was through word of mouth that I discovered this might not entirely be the case. Many have called the governing powers of track and field a bunch of monopolies, reaping the rewards off of the hard work it takes for athletes to train four years and produce amazing performances at the Olympic Games. All the while, they are being marketed for the sport and major competitions but receiving no form of stipend in return. As mentioned before, professional athletes struggle to maintain their training, as funding is very limited and reserved only for those who produce the most media hype.

Once again, I found myself asking more questions. Why is it the case that there is no organized funding for market experimentation? Why is the distribution of wealth so skewed? The answer was both frustrating and ironic. There is a lack of money in the sport due to the very fact that the sport is not popular to begin with. It makes complete sense. Track and field fans generate money. Airtime on television generates money. Media hype and social media trending generates money. While the sport has all of these, they are nowhere near the magnitude of other sports in this country. If this is the case, there should be absolutely no question that innovation has to take place. A new form of track and field has to

surface or the marketing strategy has to target the fans and athletes in a more effective way. The sport has been untouched for decades so it's no wonder we don't see a change. The famous quote by Albert Einstein says it best, "Insanity is defined by doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." As frustrating as the never-ending cycle was to me, I had to move forward and figure out if there was room to make changes that would disrupt the natural flow.

### Supporting Information to Sub-Group 1

I defined Sub-Group 1 as the ineffective market strategy currently in place by the governing powers of USATF. Additionally, I perceived that the existing business model and marketing efforts were not catered to improving the fan and athlete experience. Being that the fans and athletes are the main drivers to this industry, it's troubling to think that decisions aren't being made for what's in their best interest.

Throughout my research, I kept coming across comments made by World and Olympic Champion shot putter, Adam Nelson. Having just retired from what can undoubtedly be described as an astounding and highly decorated career, Nelson now focuses his attention on solving very similar issues that I have addressed thus far. Having graduated from Dartmouth with a business degree, Nelson understands the marketing side of things. Through learning much about him, Nelson seemed most adamant about giving elite athletes a voice in the industry while also finding value and money-making opportunities for track and field outside of the Olympic Games.

He too believes that the future success of track and field ultimately comes down to improving the fan and athlete experience. I have had the pleasure of speaking with Nelson in person, over the phone and through e-mail. I originally called upon Nelson in the spring of 2012 to help me with one of my first studies dealing with other issues found within the track and field circuit. More specifically, the study dealt with the ability for amateur athletes to be more financially successful by improving their personal brand. With all of the knowledge Nelson shared with me, I had no doubt in my mind that he too had

been doing his research for quite some time. Nelson had an answer for everything and it sounded like I was not the first person to ask. In December of 2011, he teamed up with Flotrack.com, which is a site dedicated to track and field that acts as a hub for blogs, news, videos and much more. In this three-part interview, Nelson was asked all sorts of questions that I feel are quite valuable to my research. For this section, I will incorporate some of Nelson's initial comments that aid in understanding the ideas presented in Sub-Group 1.

In one of the first conversations I had with Nelson, he brought up the concept of the "Big Three", which was comprised of the three premiere events in track and field: the 100m sprint, the mile and the marathon. All of these specific events have a great following with an abundant amount of money and sponsors following suit. According to Nelson, all of these events address and service certain needs required by fans. The events themselves are self-explanatory. On a grand stage like the World Championships or Olympic Games, the winner in each of these events is identified as the world's fastest individual respectfully. All that is required for running is a pair of shoes. Running itself is a natural movement for human beings and can be found in plenty of other sports. However, only in track and field is this concept the sole determinant of what constitutes a winner. Thus it is easy for viewers to understand and relate. The opportunity to watch someone run 100 meters in less than 10 seconds while they themselves can only ever dream of running under 15 seconds is amazing to them. Because of this simplicity, the "Big Three" satisfies a huge market. Shoe companies have used this reality to their advantage and thus have focused their attention on those athletes who bring more of the fan's money into the market. And rightfully so as most companies would strategize their marketing efforts in this fashion. But the problems that surface from this decision made by the governing powers of track and field is that it focuses the attention of fans on only two major competitions while also never even giving a chance to many of the amazing athletes in other event groups that the United States produces.

Nelson remarks that, for the most part, sponsorships in the sport of track and field are the only way marketing opportunities can take place. Even then they are still very exclusive to certain athletes

and do not effectively portray the broad spectrum of events the sport has to offer and quite frankly, show off to the world. When asked to discuss the monopolistic nature of sponsorships, Nelson replied, “Amateur sports are a system full of a bunch of monopolies. There are certainly some monopolistic components to the sponsorship side of the sport. All of those guys know each other. They all talk and they all know what the right value is for an athlete” (Nelson, 2011). Nelson once again brought up the fact that unless an athlete competes in one of the “Big 3” events in track in field, the chances of having some sort of unique set of sponsorship opportunities is very rare.

The governing powers of track and field are a complete monopoly. They dictate the terms. The United States actually has strong voice within the federation more so than other countries. But at the end of the day, the USATF is still responsible for many different levels of track and field. They just don’t have the resources to cover all of those properly. We’ve got to do something to change that and the athletes right now are the ones who don’t have any power or a voice. When you don’t have a voice in a system like this, you’re going to be exploited. That’s what’s happening. (Nelson, 2011)

Nelson continues by weighing in on the lack of voice within the athlete community. The voices that the athletes currently do have are deficient in significant power and weight, which makes it very difficult to offset many of the decision-making processes being executed by the governing powers. Since his retirement from the shotput, Nelson has been working on improving this issue. When discussing his involvement with associations that work to give track and field athletes a voice in their sport, he provided his insight on management issues that have come up in his work:

Our biggest challenge right now (referring to the track and field industry) is managing the sport for elite athletes as a profession. Right now, we (track and field industry) manage the sport to give out money. And as a result, it’s sort of the difference between a charter school and a public school. The charter school gets paid for results and the public school gets paid to satisfy some certain criteria. We want to start paying the USATF or whatever the organization is that governs the professional side of the sport for results. The fact is, the money that goes out to the elite athletes is not a lot. (Nelson, 2011)

Nelson is quite adamant about the ability for athletes to have a voice in their sport. It seems like a fair concern, considering the fact that we see athletes in many popular televised sports like the NFL and the NBA having the ability to make a difference through their athlete associations. Nelson’s last comments concerning this topic were that the United States has a lot of athletes who are not being

properly addressed, valued and heard. To him, this is a big failure on USATF's part. In another part of Nelson's interview with Flotrack, he discusses sponsorship issues, rules regarding logos and the need for change in order to put track and field athletes in a better position financially. He is asked to provide his thoughts on how the governing bodies within the track and field industry can manipulate certain situations when dealing with the athletes in order to never get the short end of the stick. Nelson replied, "All of the organizations in the amateur sports movement have absolute power. And they can dictate the terms to the athletes and that goes for the International Olympic Committee (IOC), all of the federations and all of the Olympic committees underneath them as well as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)" (Nelson, 2011). He continued by explaining that the Olympic athlete "experience", meaning the amount of time invested to train and perform, is not just about the struggle as Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the IOC and father of the Olympic Games, would say. "We do this full-time. And I'm not saying that we deserve to make any more money than the guy who works a 9 to 5. But the problem is there are a lot of people making a lot of money off the work that we put in to it" (Nelson, 2011).

The last sentence of this comment summarizes the issue at hand in a nutshell. But by contradiction, almost every article I have read that allows viewers to voice their own opinions shows that a majority of these people still do not understand the situation. Without understanding what the core frustration is amongst track and field athletes, they respond with comments like, "Nobody is forcing these athletes to compete in their sport. If they don't like how much they're getting paid, too bad. They can go find something else to do. Track and Field will never be a popular sport. That's just the way it is." And these comments show that they are missing the point. The Olympic Games has always been a very profitable event for the governing powers and sponsors. And just like Nelson says, "the problem is there are a lot of people making a lot of money off the work that we put in to it" (Nelson, 2011).



Which brings me to an article titled, “The Intrinsic Value of Elite Athletes” written by Nathon Ikon Crumpton. The subject matter deals with setting the record straight on the perceived notion that all Olympic hopefuls and elite athletes are complaining about money that they feel entitled to.

Among the cynical and unimaginative members of the sporting world, there is a pernicious myth that Olympic athletes are not value adding members of society. Instead, they are unrepentant moochers getting rich and famous by reenacting a crude form of tribal warfare and competing in irrelevant sports. As the erroneous stereotype goes, they’re just glorified hobbyists, competing in the nebulous realm between amateurism and “real” professionals like NBA, MLB, and NFL players. And when they don’t receive expected compensation for their efforts, they get accused of greed, unpatriotic behavior, and self-entitled bitching. (Crumpton, 2013)

Crumpton provides his own estimate that less than 5% of Olympians and Olympic hopefuls fit the stereotype described above. The other 95%, according to Crumpton, struggle to make a living while at the same time training to become valuable members of society. “Doubtlessly, we all strive to become the successful kings and queens of our respective sports...but most of us know full well that the likelihood of such a future is tiny, especially since most Olympic sports do not hold wide public interest except for a few minutes every four years” (Crumpton, 2013). He continues by saying that in between those few minutes, four years of dedication, sacrifice and unimaginable hard work are spent.

And while the physical and mental challenges are daunting, the financial burden is often the most difficult. For starters, US athletes receive no government funding for their Olympic endeavors. Moreover, even though the US Olympic Committee (USOC) – a Congressionally chartered non-profit organization ostensibly designed to support American athletes – received over \$338 million in revenue in 2012, athlete stipends across many sports were indiscriminately cut, forcing some to apply for food stamps. (Crumpton, 2013)

Crumpton then provides us with the astonishing fact that at least fourteen United States Olympic Committee (USOC) executives received over \$250,000 in compensation while one went home with nearly \$1,000,000 in 2012. “Yet the strongest woman in America lives in poverty, or that more than half of the top-10 ranked track & field athletes earn less than \$15,000 a year from their sport.” Crumpton continues by providing the intrinsic value of elite athletes.

The most obvious benefit we provide is by being worthy role models to the youth of a nation, and citizens writ large. And while the economic value of being a role models is imprecise, there is little doubt that in an age when the American Medical Association declares obesity a “disease” and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention warns of an “obesity epidemic,” the nation could use more athletes as role models, not fewer. (Crumpton, 2013)

To conclude on Crumpton’s remarks, I have provided one last comment by Nelson who gives us the reality of the life track and field athletes live while the money they make for the organizations rarely ever goes into their pocket.

“Let’s face it, the bottom line is we’re all trying to be professionals but most of us have to work a full-time job just to pay for this habit we have. That’s unacceptable anymore. Particularly when you see the amount of money that comes in to the sport. We feel that if there was somebody looking after the interest of the elite athletes and forcing the agenda of the elite athlete that we can really change that model and produce a model that benefits the elite athletes, is profitable for the meet organizers, and also grows the popularity of the sport in general. At the end of the day, there’s a lot of money that changes hands at the management level that doesn’t actually pass down to the elite athletes. We want to change that equation. (Nelson, 2011)

The supporting information for Sub-Group 1 found here in Section 2 shows that there is not only an issue with the marketing strategy of track and field, but a large and unfair financial imbalance amongst the athletes and the organizational leaders. Adam Nelson shared his thoughts on the monopolistic nature of amateur sports likes track and field as well as shedding light on the fact that the governing powers can rely on the fact that the marketing involved for the “Big Three” is all that is needed to ensure that their positions are secure. Without a voice to oppose these unfair methods, athletes can do nothing sit back and hope they make it to the Olympics on their dime. Nathon Ikon Crumpton then shared his thoughts on the intrinsic value of elite athletes to show just how unfair the situation really is when *all* Olympic hopefuls really are a powerful asset in their communities. All of this talk about the financials leads me into finding supporting data for Sub-Group 2, which I will now discuss.

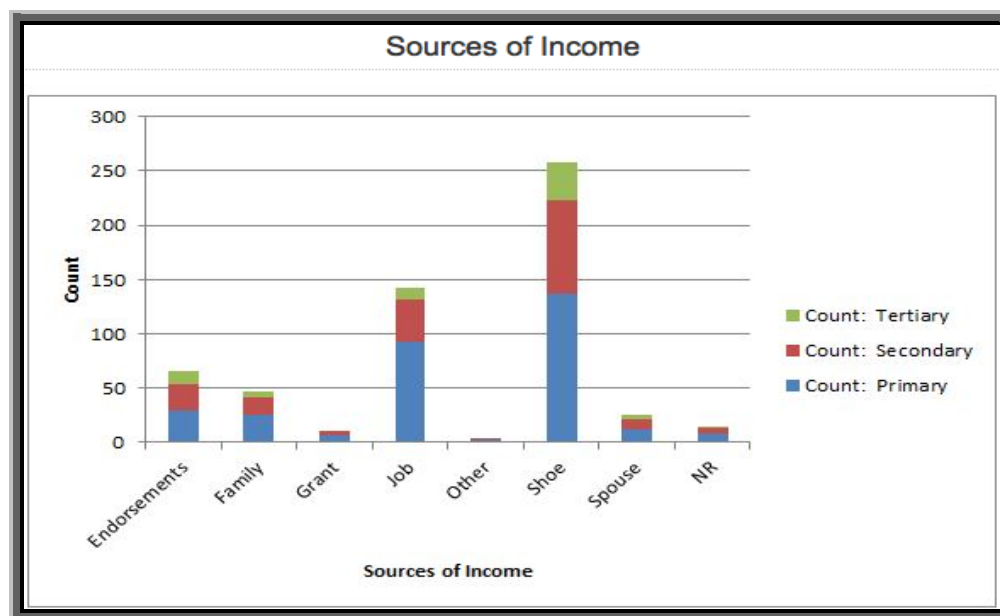
### Supporting Information to Sub-Group 2

I described Sub-Group 2 as part of the never-ending cycle where much of the issues regarding track and field’s lack in popularity are also a result of the ineffective management and distribution of

money that is being circulated within the industry. To help support this claim, I began looking for information or data that would help prove that these notions of mine were true. In the process, I found that it would also be important to understand the current state of affairs for athletes within the sport of track and field. More importantly we must analyze the spread when it comes to the financial hardships, limitations and struggles that have a huge impact on an athlete's ability to sustain the precedence of their training. The following two articles provide statistical analyses that are quite beneficial to this research. These articles have been provided by the Track and Field Athlete Association also known as TFAA, which is a "501(c)(4) organization formed to support the rights and interests of professional track and field athletes" (TFAA, 2014). The site continues by explaining that, "Numerous national and international organizations are chartered to advance and promote the sport of track and field. Unfortunately none of these organizations represent the collective interests of the elite, professional athletes that make the sport viable" (TFAA, 2014). This site has been increasing in popularity with the help of former elite athletes who want future generations to excel and prosper from the sport the love and enjoy. Coincidentally, Adam Nelson happens to be a leader of this exciting new movement. "The track and field athlete's association is designed at helping the elite and professional athlete in track and field. What we want to do is really improve the experience for the elite and professional athletes in track and field" (Nelson, 2011).

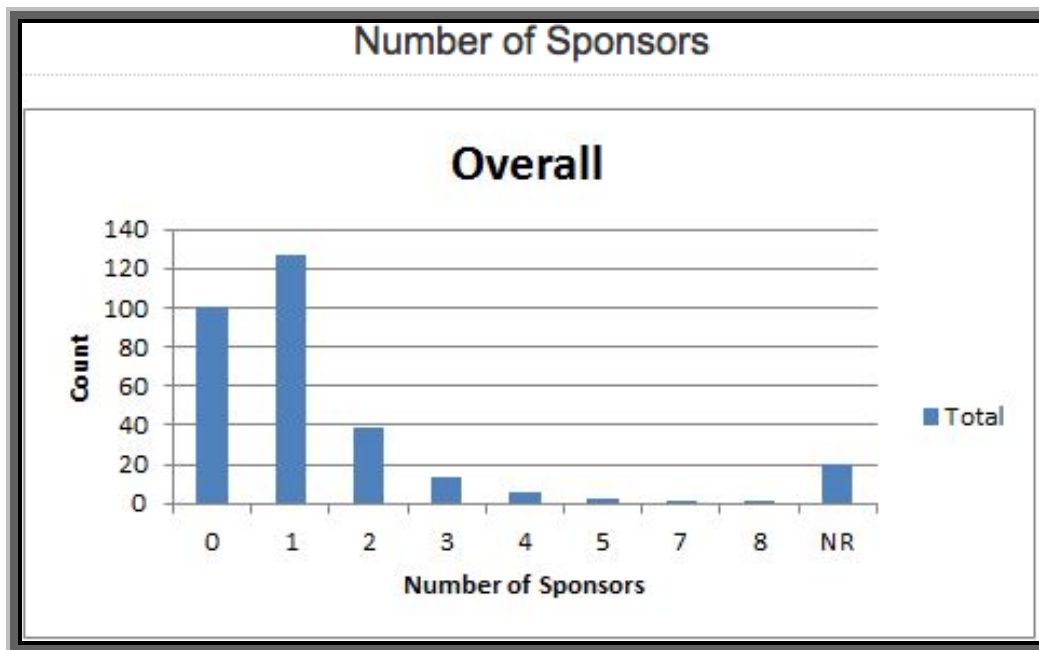
The first article titled, *2013 Track and Field Elite Athlete Survey Results*, provides us with quantitative data showing demographic information about track and field athletes within the United States. It helps us visually understand where individual athletes lie within certain financial categories of track and field. The following report was produced by Andrew Begley who compiled data from 312 surveys taken at the 2013 USA Track and Field Championships in Des Moines, Iowa. Initial survey questions dealt with an athlete's age, event in track and field and how many years the athlete has been competing as an elite athlete. It should be noted that the term "elite athlete" refers to those athletes who are able to continue to compete post-collegiately. After reviewing the survey results, it seems that many

of the athletes involved have or had some sort of financial support during the 2013 season. The following graph shows sources of income reported by the athletes:



(Figure 4: Andrew Begley and Tim Huntley. *2013 Track and Field Elite Athlete Survey Results*, 2013)

The graph in Figure 4 evidently shows that shoe sponsors are a major source of income for athletes. And it makes sense seeing that shoe companies like Nike, Reebok, Adidas, New Balance and Asics sponsor a majority of track and field athletes exclusively. If you take a minute to think about what the marketing strategy behind a shoe sponsorship actually is, it would seem that these sorts of contracts would be available primarily for runners and sprinters whose athletic performance relies heavily on the shoes they wear. Furthermore, the simplicity in the concept of running shoes is also a way for fans to relate to the athlete when they have the ability to buy the shoe online or in stores. Coming in second behind shoe sponsorships is the income received from an athlete's job. This means that a majority of athletes, with the potential to make an Olympic team, must sacrifice training and recovery time to work a job that will help support their aspirations financially. This is an unfortunate circumstance that is all too reoccurring in this sport.



(Figure 5: Andrew Begley and Tim Huntley. *2013 Track and Field Elite Athlete Survey Results*, 2013)

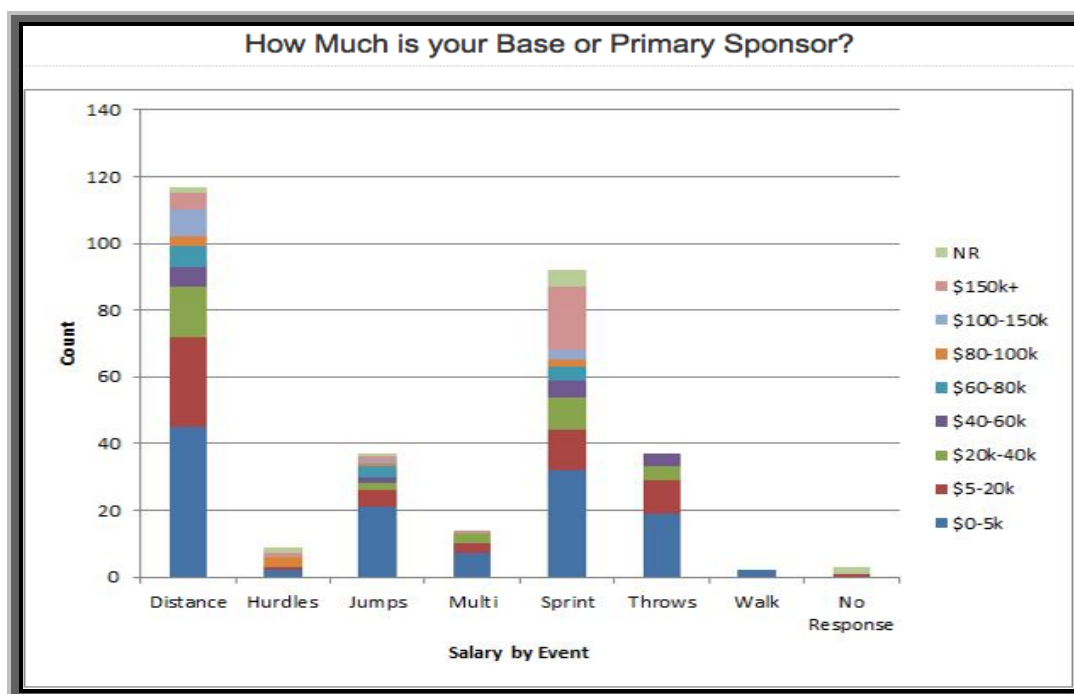
Figure 5 shows the number of sponsors that elite track and field athletes are associated with. Roughly 39% of elite athletes who responded to this question have no sponsor at all. And they are considered elite athletes! Additionally, a majority of elite athletes, coming in at roughly 43%, have only one sponsor. This is a result of athlete exclusivity demanded of sponsors.

When discussing issues concerning sponsorships, Nelson told Flotrack that the IOC intends to create a blackout period where they will crack down on any sponsorships a month prior to the Olympic Games. Nelson replied, “That’s freaking ridiculous”. As he understood the rule, his sponsor Saucony could not market him as an Olympic athlete prior to the 2012 Olympic Games. The IOC apparently does not want to handle the thousands of potential outside channels that would market the games for fear of detrimental effects to the aura that is the Olympics. “That’s such a huge hit to the athlete’s ability to make money and the problem is, the IOC has a different charter. They’re trying to promote the Olympic games themselves and sell the Olympic games and not be so concerned with the athlete experience. It’s really up to the individual athletes or their Olympic federations to create the funding for them” (Nelson, 2011). I included this information here as reinforcement to the fact that those elite athletes who have 1-2 sponsors with enough trouble as it is, have to abide by these rules and thus lose all major marketing

opportunities. Think about this what is happening here. In the month prior to the Olympic Games, when most people are beginning to tune in and read up on local athletes who will be competing, all outside promotions that could benefit an athlete and their respected sport have to cease so the IOC can dictate what is in their best interest for money making opportunities. Nelson then provides an example between the relationship of the elite athletes and the IOC:

I go to the Olympic games and win a gold medal. How much does the IOC pay me? ZERO. What did it cost me to get to that Olympic games? A total of fours years minimum along with tons of sacrifices.... But it's the experience that Pierre de Coubertin (Founder of the IOC) valued greatly for the athletes; the Olympic experience and 4 years of it. And now the IOC is in a situation where they are making quite a bit of money every single year and yet they're not distributing that wealth to the athletes that perform well and help build the brand of the Olympic games. That's a problem. (Nelson, 2011)

Referring back to the chart, we see that the percentage of elite athletes having more than one sponsor begins to trickle down substantially. Why does it drop off so quickly? There are a few factors that need to be taken into consideration in order to answer this question. First off, the current business model for track and field only allows for the very top athletes to have a chance at prevailing financially. Furthermore, only a small percentage of even these top athletes (those who participate in a certain sprint or distance event) can train and live comfortably or above their means.



(Figure 6: Andrew Begley and Tim Huntley. *2013 Track and Field Elite Athlete Survey Results*, 2013)

To support my claims made from the previous data, the graph in Figure 6 clearly shows that more sponsorship opportunities are readily available to sprinters and distance runners more so than for jumpers, throwers and multi-event athletes. It should be noted that some sprinters chose to categorize themselves as hurdlers, even though they are considered a part of the sprint events. Previous comments made by Adam Nelson in regards to the “Big Three” show just how much of an impact it has on sponsors and the financials for elite athletes.

But even with the “Big Three” dominating the market and sponsors following suit, there is still a financial issue amongst a majority of athletes. If we take a look at the salary spread of each event (depicted by different colors in each bar), even the sprint and distance data shows that a majority of salaries are between \$0 and \$40,000, which is a good start, but definitely not enough money to support the time and work required to be an elite athlete. Another thing to take away from this graph is the limited sponsors and small salaries available to the jumps, throws and multi events. Perhaps sponsors don’t see the value from these athletes because the track and field industry does not market these event groups as well as they could.

As mentioned before, one of the aspects of track and field that Nelson appears to be adamant about changing is how the sport revolves primarily around the Olympic Games, which only happens once every four years. When asked if the Olympics are good for the sport of track and field, Adam comments that the games are a bit of a double-edged sword.

Without the Olympic games and our relationship to the Olympics, we have no way to make money because the sponsors have made it clear that this is where the real value in track and field is right now. On the other hand, I really can’t agree with a lot of the marketing choices that the IOC makes and that passes all the way down to the IOC to the IAAF and USATF that limits sponsorship opportunities for track and field athletes. The people that pay to see the Olympic Games go to see the best athletes in the world and compete on the greatest athletic stage in the world. While other countries have a different support system and fewer athletes that attend it (so it works a little better), our country is in a situation where it’s feast or famine. You know exactly who makes the money at the Olympic Games because you see them regularly on TV and pre/post Olympic Games. (Nelson, 2011)

The information by Nelson would seem to support the data provided in the previous chart depicting the amount of money specific events receive from sponsors.

This next article written by TFAA Member Jack Wickens is titled, *How Much Money do Track and Field Athletes Actually Make?* This study attempted to gather as much supposedly “secret” and unknown information as possible that dealt with the money actually being made by elite athletes of track and field:

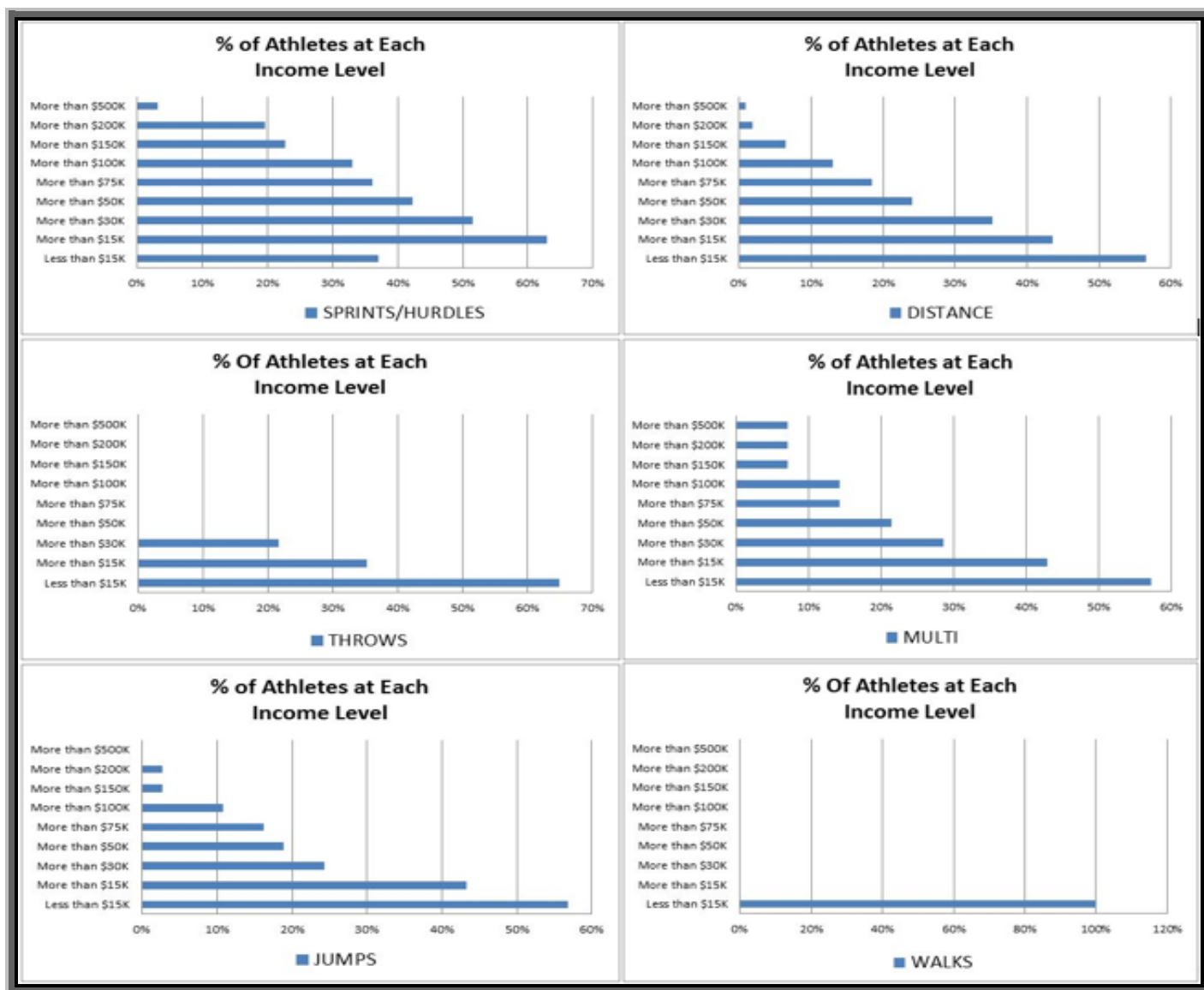
There are many things that cause this lack of public transparency about professional track & field athlete earnings – not the least of which is that the primary source of this income (shoe company sponsors) is negotiated privately with each individual athlete/agent, and the contracts often contain performance trigger points and bonus clauses that add unpredictability to the contract value. Also, sources that are visible, like prize money, are generally too small to generate much public attention...This “secrecy” may be an inevitable element of our athlete’s “independent contractor” status but in some ways it has not helped advance the sport, has not helped attract young athletes, and has not helped the negotiating leverage of our athletes. (Wickens, 2012)

This study occurred in two parts. The first examination took place on May 8th, 2012 roughly a month out from the Olympic Trials. In this article, Wickens presents the findings of an income study where he then attempts to list the potential benefits from the provided information along with a summary of the findings. The second examination took place on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and was a continuation of the first by only adding a few more pieces of statistical data to support earlier claims.

In the first article, Wickens asks, “What value can come from transparency about professional track and field athlete income levels?” He presents four possible benefits from gathering the information. First, “The data could bring clarity to the critical need for our sport to explore business model and branding improvements and/or athlete contractual models that could elevate the sport, “grow the pie”, and enhance income opportunities for our athletes” (Wickens, 2012). It should be noted here that Wickens mentions the critical need for track and field to explore a new business model and branding strategy, which supports my thesis claims. Second, Wickens says that the data “could inform young athletes and top collegians – and help them make fact-based decisions about their career choices. Today some high potential athletes underestimate the potential of a professional track & field career”



(Wickens, 2012). He believes that the gathered data could help athletes approach sponsorship negotiations in a more informed and confident manner. And finally, Wickens says that the data could raise public awareness that track and field is a true professional sport and that our nations aspiring athletes need support. It just so happens that the United States is one of only a few nations in the world that does not financially support Olympic sports. This makes our nation's track and field athletes greatly dependent on the corporations within our industry as well as financial support from other sources.



(Figure 7: Jack Wickens, *How Much Do Track and Field Athletes Make?*, 2012)  
 (\*See the appendix for charts showing an approximate breakdown of income sources for each event category)

The charts presented on this page are separated by the athlete's event and present statistical data first gathered by the USATF Foundation and reconfigured into bar graphs. They reflect on the

percentage of track and field athletes at each income level. “Dollar amounts below reflect total of sponsorship contracts and bonuses, prize money, grants, and stipends. No estimated value is included for part-time job income, career support, health insurance or injury support services, training center services, or tuition grants” (Wickens, 2012).

In summary, Wickens explains that the income opportunities readily available to track and field athletes are on a very steep slope. After reviewing Begley’s athlete survey earlier, I mentioned in summary that only a fraction of the smallest percentage of elite athletes could potentially enjoy the comforts of a sustainable income. However, as Wickens puts it, “even they can fall hard in a short period if performance lags or injuries intervene” (Wickens, 2012). What is apparent and unfortunate from the information provided from these two articles from the TFAA is that an athlete’s “world ranking” and “event” within track and field greatly determines their potential earnings. And rightfully so as there are obviously similar credentials are required even in other professional sports and in the regular working world. But the amount of hoops elite athletes are forced to jump through would suggest that the equilibrium between apparent success and reward is a little off. Wickens finishes the article by providing a list of factors that he considers could help determine if an athlete can acquire a sustainable income from sponsors. It serves as an educational piece as well:

- An athlete’s age and perceived future potential to achieve a lower ranking or win medals.
  - Past Olympic or World Championship medals & past USA National titles.
  - The simple but powerful label of ‘Olympian’ for those who have ever achieved this status.
  - Charisma/Beauty & perceived fan engagement skill
  - Agent quality & ability/standing in the industry to solicit offers from multiple shoe sponsors.
- (Wickens, 2012)

Wickens continues with some more pieces of statistical data:

- Approximately 50% of our athletes who rank in the top 10 in the USA in their event make less than \$15,000 annually from the sport (sponsorship, grants, prize money, etc.)
- Approximately 20% of our athletes in top 10 in the USA in their event make more than \$50,000 annually.

- Athletes outside of a top 10 USA ranking, other than some sprinters, milers, and distance runners, can expect to face very limited (if any) income (Wickens, 2012)

### Selecting an Innovation Type



(Figure 8: Image provided by Doblin, *Ten Types of Innovation*, 2011)

Now that the market problems and financial issues in the sport of track and field have been identified, I now refer back to Doblin's *10 Types of Innovation* to come up with the best recommendation for how independent groups, organizations or governing powers should attempt to innovate effectively.

From within the "Configuration" group, innovators should seek out strategies that include the profit model, the network and the structure. These are innovations that will produce results both internally and externally. According to Doblin, great profit models "reflect a deep understanding of what customers and users actually cherish and where new revenue or pricing opportunities might lie. They often challenge an industry's tired old assumptions about what to offer, what to charge, or how to collect revenues" (Dobin, 2011). Yes, the track and field industry does a great job promoting their running events. But think of the potential market they could be generating money from and in turn, putting back into the sport for more future success. By focusing on what is demanded by the users, organizations will be able to produce a more desirable growth. Also mentioned earlier, Doblin describes the network strategy as connecting with other business entities to create value. By experimenting and using creativity, innovators can use networking as a means to an end that satisfies both fans and athletes. There may be new ways to perceive the sport with the help of companies that were never even considered before. Lastly we have the structure strategy, which involves organizing and aligning the

talents and assets of a company. I look towards the physical make-up of track and field competitions and everything that is encompassed with it. Perhaps the structure of the competition facilities is strong in some areas while weak in others. There may be opportunities to reconfigure the setup in order to promote the fan and athlete experience.

From within the “Experience” group, innovators should seek out strategies from the service, the channel, and from customer engagement. “Service innovations ensure and enhance the utility, performance, and apparent value of an offering” (Doblin, 2011). By servicing fans and athletes in a more effective way at a competition, from the internet or television, and by other means, more compelling experiences arise which creates a need and want for future promotion. Feeding off of service innovations, the channel strategy looks towards improving the channels to which organizations connect with the end-users. There may even be opportunities for the organizations within track and field to innovate in how they sell merchandise, promote events on the Internet and television, and even connect with fans at the events. This also feeds into the final strategy I perceive to be useful. Improving customer engagement is one of the main issues within the sport of track and field. The sport lacks popularity because fans have a hard time being and feeling included. Innovating in this way is how you foster compelling interactions. “Great Customer Engagement innovations provide broad avenues for exploration, and help people find ways to make parts of their lives more memorable, fulfilling, delightful — even magical” (Doblin, 2011). Innovators need to find ways to create incredible experiences that keep fans coming back for more.

The information provided by Doblin helps to effectively evaluate the specific needs of every individual company or organization. So with that, I leave it to the entrepreneurs and innovators of track and field to base their strategy off of the assessment of these ten types of innovation and implement them into a best practice model for future success.

### **CHAPTER 3**

## **PART II: THE ACQUISITION AND CREATIVE STORAGE OF KNOWLEDGE**

Action sports were nothing 25 years ago. They were a bunch of guys that hung out at a park and did tricks on their skateboards and bikes. Now it's a huge industry because they listened to what the fans wanted. They found a way to match the fan experience with the athlete experience to create this awesome experience for people to go and see, which is also great for television. There's a way to do that with track and field. We have 10 million roadrunners in this country. We have the highest participation in high school sports of any sport in the country. Yet we haven't found a way to monetize it. We need to work on that. (Nelson, 2011)

As I have mentioned many times in the paper thus far, the necessity of having a background of knowledge is vital to putting together a worthy and feasible innovation strategy. Christine Greenhalgh and Mark Rogers dedicate a large portion of this idea within their Research and Development stage. In their analysis of innovation, they write, "Innovation occurs at the point of bringing to the commercial market new products and processes arising from applications of both existing and new knowledge" (Greenhalgh and Rogers, 2010, 5). The ability to obtain as much useful information for the purpose of further research is highly valuable to a company or organization. The Princeton University Press describes this value as the "human capital". "When knowledge is embodied in individuals it is often referred to as *human capital*, to distinguish this valuable asset from physical capital, such as machinery or buildings. For an individual, the acquisition of new skills and knowledge through education and training increases his/her human capital" (Greenhalgh and Rogers, 2010, 6). It would make sense that a worthy background of knowledge be essential for innovation, as creativity sparks from experience.

In an industry like sports where you have the organization along with the athletes and fans, many worthy contributions can come from each of these groups. In track and field, there is an abundance of athletes who want a better situation for the sport. If there was an opportunity for all concerned athletes and the governing powers to come together and collaborate on certain issues, the results would be much more productive.

## The Constants and Variables of Track and Field

Which leads me to my first topic within this part of the thesis. I find it necessary to assess the constants and variables within the track and field industry to see what can be innovated without disrupting the natural flow of the athletes and the sport. For constants found within the sport, I look to all rules and regulations regarding each individual event in track and field. These incorporate aspects such as the marking and fouling of field events, the qualification and disqualification of sprints, implement size, height, length and weight, timing, and everything involved with the setup for a particular event regarding the track, field, runway or pit size. These are the rules and regulations that make up the validity of each event. It is within these boundaries that athletes cater their training to. I perceive nothing to be wrong with these aspects of the sport.

When it comes to the variables of track and field, I look to the scheduling of events, the venue, the fan experience, the visual experience and the athlete experience along with the structure and layout of a track and field stadium. Fortunately, these aspects of the sport can be manipulated to fit the needs of fans and athletes without disrupting or taking away from the official process of the competition or qualification of times, distances or marks. I believe that there is a very big opportunity for the governing powers of track and field to find ways of innovating these aspects in order to enhance the fan and athlete experience of a competition. Enhancement of these factors will most assuredly increase revenue, word of mouth, publicity, engagement, athletic performance and most importantly the sport's popularity.

So what would these changes or alterations look like to someone who does not entirely understand these concepts? For as long as the sport of track and field has been around, the competition has been set up within the confines of a large stadium, similar to that of a football or soccer stadium. The outer portion of the competition ground is dedicated to a 400-meter oval track with 9 lanes and a width of close to 30 feet. So while running events may put the fans up close, it does not stimulate their senses when the field events take place. The field events are made up of all running and jumping events. Unless the competition venue is for a World Championship or an Olympic Game, many times you will find that

certain field events like the throws are discarded to outside of the stadium for “safety” purposes. Both setups for the field events are not adequate for an athlete’s need to connect with fans. Nor is the setup adequate for fans that want to feel like they are part of the action. With this frustration comes experimentation. The following images are examples of such successful experimentation:



(Figure 9: Images provided by Team ISTAF Indoor Berlin, 2014)

In probably one of the most glorious countries to be a track and field athlete, Germany really hypes up the crowd. These images were taken from one of their most recent indoor competitions where spectators were treated to star-studded performances by Germany’s best along with invited foreign athletes. As runners passed the finish line, giant torches exploded with flames. As the shot put and discus landed past certain marks, the flames reignited. Favorable music blasted from speakers, beer and beverages were accessible and the announcers were enthusiastic. This is not the only place in Germany where you will find an exciting venue for track and field. During the outdoor season, fans focus their attention towards the competitions that take place in Halle where the same features are provided.



(Figure 10: Photos by Fredrik Karlsson and Nwet.se, Skansa Open/Karlstad Grand Prix, Sweden)

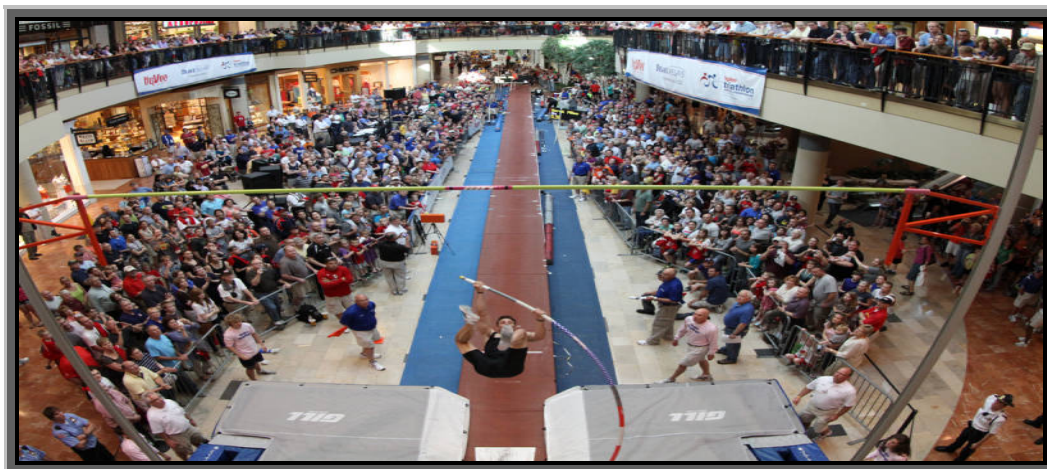


Similarly in Sweden, the creation of “Hammer Throw Over The River” in Karlstad has been quite a hit. The Skansa Open and Karlstad Grand Prix teams put together a makeshift hammer circle and cage on the edge of a 75-meter wide river. The goal was for athletes to clear the river with the hammer for an added adrenaline rush. Just to the left of the cage, a large stone bridge hosted the thousand or so people who couldn’t help but be entertained by these steel-throwing junkies.



(Figure 11: Photo by Jeff Jacobsen, 2011 Kansas Relays Shot Put Competition)

Even here in the United States, we see small groups putting in the extra effort to test new ideas out and get the crowd excited. At the Kansas Relays, event coordinators decided to take the shot put away from the stadium constraints and set up a makeshift circle with a sector made of sand in the middle of downtown Lawrence. Here, spectators got to see the top-ranked shot putters in the world compete. Music blasted, beer was served and announcers were enthusiastic. Over 1,000 people attended.



(Figure 13: Photo provided by Drake Relays, *Pole Vault in The Mall*)



At the Drake Relay's in Des Moines, Iowa, spectators were treated to "Pole Vault in The Mall". From the image, you can see how close people could get to the action. Even the fans on the second level of the mall could relate to how high these incredible athletes were jumping. This was a great experiment by members of the Drake Relays event committee.



(Figure 14: Photo provided by USATF, *Hammer Time 2012*, Nike World Headquarters, Oregon)

Lastly, we have the "Hammer Time" competition at the 2012 US Olympic Trials held within the Nike World Headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon. This setup was the first of its kind and also a great success despite the reason for its origination. Sports like the hammer throw are perceived as dangerous and many times are forced out of the track and field stadium. The main venue for the trials that year was held at the University of Oregon, also known as "Tracktown USA". The original hammer throw competition field was turned into a warm-up facility for runners, forcing this ancient sport to look elsewhere for athlete qualification. Organizers quickly scrambled to come up with ideas for what they could do and the end result was a success. Both the fan and athlete experience were catered to. The venue was spectacular and the crowd attendance came close to 3,000 people.

## Survey Results and Concluding Remarks Based Off of Gathered Information

These are just a few examples of creativity and experimentation being made. What can we learn from this and then apply into bigger and better things? Of course, who's to say that these events have left a lasting impression or that they were necessary to begin with? Rather than stress too many of my own thoughts on this topic, I looked for reinforcement from athletes and fans. In the spring of 2013, I conducted a qualitative survey to gather opinions and advice from the very people who live for the sport of track and field. Over 160 people took part in the survey with 79% classifying themselves as fans of the sport. The survey was aimed at finding similarities and differences between the popularity of track and field within the collegiate and professional circuit. For the purposes of my thesis, I find that the data related to the professional side of track and field is more useful given much of my discussed content thus far. The following images below show certain information that I believe to be helpful in acquiring knowledge for the benefit of innovation.

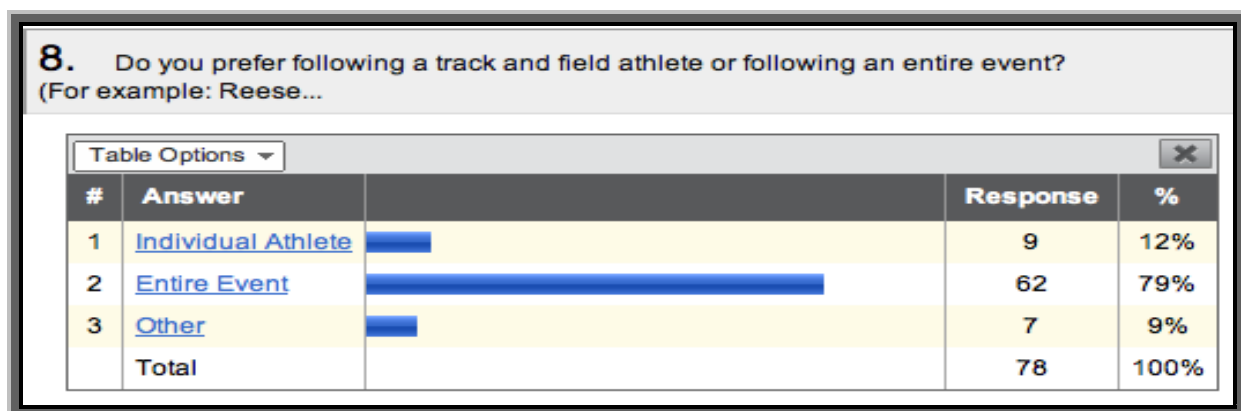
**2.** Please rate your typical personal experiences for each of the following aspects of a PROFESSIONAL tr...

#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	<a href="#">Watching a team competition</a>	1.00	5.00	2.81	1.32	96
2	<a href="#">Watching individual athletes</a>	1.00	5.00	4.33	0.94	107
3	<a href="#">Physical layout of the event</a>	1.00	5.00	3.43	1.12	103
4	<a href="#">Track meet schedule spanning 2 to 3 days</a>	1.00	5.00	3.14	1.08	100
5	<a href="#">Viewing the competitors within the event</a>	1.00	5.00	3.82	1.10	105

(Figure 15: Image provided by Michael Lauro, *Insight Into The Popularity of Track and Field Survey*, 2013)

Survey participants were asked to rate their experiences regarding certain aspects of a professional track and field meet. I took notice to the physical layout of the meet, the meet schedule and the viewing capabilities of fans at the meet. When asked to rate these experiences on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poorly and 5 being excellent, the average value for all three experiences was around a 3, which signifies “ok”. I was not so concerned with experiences #1 and #2 due to the fact that watching a

team competition is not typical in professional track and field unless it is the Olympic Games and watching individual athletes is redundant of experience #5.



(Figure 16: Image provided by Michael Lauro, *Insight Into The Popularity of Track and Field Survey*, 2013)

Question #8 also looked promising for my research. Participants were asked to provide their preference on watching an individual athlete, the entire event or another form. The results show that 79% of people enjoy watching an entire event over anything else. From where fans are able to view competitions nowadays, it is easy enough to spot an individual athlete from a distance or what bodily shape has run fast, jumped high or thrown far. But these fans want to be a part of the action. This specific data should confirm that improving the fan experience is key.

If that wasn't enough proof, a series of questions were then asked that required participants to answer through a text response. My strategy in asking these questions was that I could accumulate as many personal opinions on various matters as possible and then organize them into groups for analysis. Some of the questions that were asked include, "What do you feel would improve the 'fan experience' of a professional track and field competition?", "When you are attending a professional track and field competition, what is the most frustrating aspect?" and "When you are watching a professional track and field competition on TV, what is the most frustrating aspect?"

I compiled the answers, categorized the essence of each of those individual answers and then organized them into groups based on certain aspects of track and field:

### Media-Related

- Improved visibility for fans and athletes
- Proper publicity/ads for athletes and events
- Improved television coverage
- Improve the promotion of competitions
- Emphasize more focus on “extreme” aspects of track and field

### Reporting/Coverage

- Improve or qualify the event education of commentators
- Provide the fans with more enthusiastic announcers
- Have reports that emphasize more focus on “extreme” aspects of track and field

### Stadium Structure

- Improve seating and event proximity for better viewing by fans
- Create a more efficient schedule for viewing pleasure
- Time-efficiency/ Reduction of lag-time at competitions

### Financials

- Invest more money into the sport
- Allow free reign for athletes to pursue sponsors

The results from this survey show that fans, for the most part, are “ok” with the current format of track and field. However, when given the opportunity to express their opinions on certain matters, fans are quick to elaborate on their frustrations with the presentation of the sport. Furthermore, there appears to be a great deal of consistency among the various answers gathered. Many of the comments aimed towards finding solutions, which was quite beneficial to the outcome of the thesis. The four groups above reinforce much of what has been discussed thus far in my thesis and should be greatly considered by the governing powers of the sport as well as any future entrepreneurs or innovators.

**CHAPTER 4**  
**PART III: ABILITY TO TRUST THE PROCESS, SYSTEM AND RISKS**  
**INVOLVED WHILE IN SEARCH OF CREATIVITY**

Importance of Risk-Taking in Innovation

Every professional sport that grows and survives takes risks and innovates... As athletes, we have to be willing to take risks that we're not used to taking. (Nelson, 2011)

This quote by Adam Nelson says it best. He not only points the finger at the governing powers within the track and field industry, but also the athletes. Nelson previously stated that there needs to be a stronger voice from the athlete community in the decision making process. Risks also need to be taken by the USATF, USOC and all other small up-and-coming organizations that have already perceived the need for innovation. But athletes have to do their part as well and step out of their shell by finding ways that they can improve the sport through their own innovative and marketing strategies. It ultimately comes down to whether or not a group or individual is willing to think outside of the box, trust their unconscious and play the game of chance

When it became the task of reconfiguring Meier's Creative Categories to benefit my innovation framework, I decided that categories 3, 4 and 6 would be better suited as one category in this thesis. These sections now combine to provide some descriptive words such as "imaginative", "toying with ideas", "openness to feelings and the unconscious", "tolerance of ambiguity", "sensitivity to problems/issues", "tolerance of isolation and self-confidence" and "tolerance to risk". By providing the information in this manner, I could then cater it towards the attitude and mindset a person or group of people should have in order to successfully innovate. In Part III, I strongly emphasize the need for innovators to take risks, as I believe that this is a major barrier in the track and field industry. Many of the issues that I see within this sport's circuit seem to be because no one is willing to take a chance, experiment, be creative or play around with new ideas or concepts involving athletes or the competitions. It is apparent that most companies and organizations have an abundance of business professionals with plenty of scientific knowledge on their side. However, what seems to be lacking and

underappreciated is the ability for an organization or members of an organization to be motivated and to use creativity and curiosity in their problem solving methods. The track and field industry has nowhere near the financials of other major sports, so this may be a reason for the lack of risk-taking. I will use the following excerpts from online articles to prove that the current way of thinking needs to be altered in order for beneficial results to be achieved.

Some groups may believe that an individual who takes risks is asking for trouble. Sooner or later, their actions will only results in detrimental effects to the company they work for. There is too much risk in... risk-taking. It is the very essence of the word. In order to take risks, be ready to have a separate pile of money that you are willing to part with. However, there are some people within the business world who strongly encourage the position of a risk-taker. When the job is handled correctly, the results are in the company's favor. Henry Doss, a contributor to Forbes.com, wrote an article titled, *Three Critical Innovation Roles*. One of these roles is described as the Risk-Taker. "There is a difference between risk and foolhardiness. Innovation risk-takers know this" (Doss, 2013). Doss explains that despite their reputation, risk-takers make informed and well-educated risk maneuvers rather than what most people may think are spontaneous decisions where consequences are not considered. "The innovation risk-taker brings good judgment and self-awareness to everything, but understands that there is a point – just there, beyond the safe, beyond the secure – where there are disproportionate rewards" (Doss, 2013). He continues by saying that many errors or failures in business come from ineptitude rather than the results of proper risk-taking. In the areas of a company where extensive research is performed, long conversations are routine and creativity is promoted, you'll find many risk-takers amongst the ranks. Doss concludes this part of his article by stating that, "Risk-takers resist the temptation of the status quo and continuously push organizations into new – and quite possibly innovative – areas" (Doss, 2013).

## Risk Management

This concept leads me into the next article titled, *Risk Management and Innovation*. In this Bloomberg Businessweek piece, Mark W. Johnson explains the most successful and efficient innovators have an approach that most people would assume to be a deadly combination. However, there appears to be a very strong relationship between innovation risk management. The first counterintuitive observation that Johnson provides is that, “Risk management isn't the antithesis of innovation; it's the essence” (Johnson, 2010). The strength of innovation efforts is greatly determined by the way an organization regards the concept of risk management. Johnson continues that risk management is the core competency for innovation. “For these innovators, whether in new ventures or in a corporate setting, the ability to identify, prioritize, and systematically eliminate risks is what drives innovation forward” (Johnson, 2010). Risk management is welcomed as a learning process rather than as a safety procedure. Changing the connotation changes how we look at things. Innovators use risk management to promote experimentation with components and combinations in order to find the best results.

The second counterintuitive observation that Johnson provides is that, “Risk management isn't the brake on innovation; it's the accelerator” (Johnson, 2010). When risk management is treated as a learning process rather than a safety procedure, innovation is propelled forward at a much faster rate, as all aspects of these efforts are positive reinforcement. It allows companies to have wiggle-room for testing a small portion of the market before taking the next big step. Without testing or data, how do you quantify results or make decisions?

The third and final counterintuitive observation that Johnson provides is that, “Real discipline in innovation risk management means a more relaxed approach to the financials” (Johnson, 2010). This third observation sparked my interest primarily because it brings up the financial issue in regards to innovation. Looking at the track and field industry along with its governing powers, this seems to be a major concern and justification for why new strategies cannot be with.

In genuinely new-business innovation projects, it is critical to release the leaders of the effort from the norms and metrics of the core business. While experimentation speeds the time to a viable business innovation, it does not necessarily lead immediately to the kind of large-scale growth or increased market share that are usually the barometers of performance in the core business. (Johnson, 2010)

Johnson explains that when a new-business innovation fails to generate the desired growth or market-share gains, the innovation effort is abandoned too early in the process or more money is invested to push it forward. “In the first instance, a more patient company often comes along and succeeds with a similar value proposition. In the second, we often see ‘zombie’ innovation projects that limp along, continuing to suck good money after bad” (Johnson, 2010). According to Johnson, the ability to acquire the correct value proposition first makes all the difference. From there, an organization can then assess the rate at which it converts assumptions into certain knowledge. By using financial measures that correctly depict the innovation process at this stage, organizations are then able to determine whether the new business can be made profitable. “That is the real financial discipline in innovation risk management: the unswerving ability to resist applying the wrong kind of financial metrics at the wrong time and so unwittingly choke off growth potential before it can reach full fruition” (Johnson, 2010). Johnson concludes that one of the biggest mistakes made by some companies is that they incorrectly perceive risk management to be an aspect that must be administered to the innovation process rather than used as a supporting mechanism. This is what separates the successful and efficient innovators from the rest.

#### Continued Insight into the Importance of Risk in Innovation

In a book titled, *Robert's Rules of Innovation*, Robert F. Brands discusses the concept of risk and innovation in many different business situations. Within his website that promotes this text, Brands dedicates a few articles of his that deal with this issue and that can be found amongst the chapters in his book.



It is no hidden secret that innovation is a necessity to compete in today's marketplace. Often hailed as the Holy Grail for which every organization should strive for, sustainable innovation requires a strategy from start to finish. From the "I" of Inspiration to the "N" of Net Result, you must commit yourself to the process in order to succeed. (Brands, 2013)

In one of the first sections of this article, Brands provides us with information about how the world's most innovative companies work with risk, observation and measurement. He offers the example of Nike's *Fuel Band*, which is an electronic movement meter that you wear around your wrist during the day. It was also the first of its kind. Nike also worked on their invention of the *Flynit Racer*, which was a shoe that was the lightest running shoe ever thought imaginable. As a result, this forced Nike to change all future manufacturing processes so materials would now cater fashionably and efficiently to the technology breakthrough of the shoe. Brands remarks that, "Not many companies, much less a company already successful and thriving, would take such a big risk in the name of innovation. Risk requires investment (people, time, capital), and willingness to invest without ROI assurance" (Brands, 2013). Perhaps it is the quick return on investment that the organizations in track and field are so concerned about. With so little funding in the sport already, or what seems to be the case, it comes as no surprise that the governing powers do not want lag time between results. Like I have mentioned before, risk has earned the reputation of being no good. However, Brands replies the same way that Doss and Johnson do in that the most successful innovative companies understand this issue and have designed ways to handle it appropriately so the risk is under as much control as possible.

Later on in the article, Brands provides us with another concept titled, *Walking on the Edge with Innovation*. He cites John Hagel and John Seely Brown of the 2012 Aspen Institute Roundtable Discussion on the fact that,

The place where innovation is most likely to flourish is not at the core of an organization but at the edge 'where the weight of inertia is less inhibiting and where disruptive initiatives are more likely to be tolerated'. Edges are described as peripheral areas where growth has the highest potential. They can also be the riskiest. By contrast, the "core" of an organization or market is where the money and resources are located. The core is also the most resistant to change. The core makes up the central or essential part of a company, market, or industry. (Hagel and Seely, 2012; Brands, 2013)

I struggle with this concept. If I were to describe the edges and core of the track and field industry, the sport itself and every form of running, jumping and throwing would be at the core. The events are what they are and they make up the industry. As far as the monopoly of governing powers within the sport, I have a hard time agreeing that they make track and field what it is today. I like to think that they are a variable in the hopes that other groups are in the process of penetrating the industry. Therefore, I would place them and all of their so-called “marketing efforts” towards the edges. If the edges are where growth has the highest potential, let the innovation strategies commence. It is the governing powers of track and field that are in charge of the presentation, promotion and perception of the sport.

Brands provides his reader with four key questions to ask themselves in order to promote innovation within their organization:

- Do you allow free research and development (R&D) time?
  - Do you invest in innovation: money, people, and resources?
  - Do you celebrate failure and risk taking?
  - Are you willing to bring the core of your business to the edge?
- (Brands, 2013)

Furthermore, he emphasizes that organizations should encourage well-reasoned risk taking, testing, and trust. Brands continues that organizational leaders need to empower other members to do their best work even ideas or creative aspects fail. “Encourage or insist upon a plan to be presented first, to ensure understanding and buy-in across the affected organization. Know your tolerance for risk and failure in the pursuit of innovation. The key however, is to make failure a ‘learning experience’.” In another section of the article, Brands brings up this idea again.

For an organization to benefit from innovation, leaders and team members alike must welcome – and grow from – failure. Innovation can only be achieved by taking risks. It may mean failing more times than succeeding in order to reap the sweet fruits of your labor in the end. Rather than view failure as inherently bad, successful innovation requires that executives and teams commit to learning from each experiment gone bad – and incorporate those teachings into the next endeavor. (Brands, 2013)

Innovation requires thorough testing in pursuit of success. Brands explains that all things should be measured and accounted for whether the outcome is success or failure. In my opinion, this would

seem to add to the acquisition and creative storage of background information for future ideas and experimentation that Jim Meier's Innovation Categories suggest. Lastly, there needs to be a high level of trust. The ability of an organization to trust its members in pursuit of new ideas is a valuable asset as long as there are safety measures put in place to prevent any damage due to the failures of these ideas and experiments. My takeaway from this part of the thesis is that successful innovation requires much investment with creativity, curiosity and the courage to wander into uncharted territory. In order to be proficient with these methods, it must be accepted that not everything can be foreseen nor can it be planned for. There are methods to assess and control these types of situations to provide companies with as close to a best decision as possible. Of course, they are not 100% full proof. That is the very essence of innovation. That is why competition exists and why some companies prevail while others do not. Part of innovation is the ability to effectively feed off of former ideas when there is a need for change. To do so requires risk and a proper best practice of risk management. Risk should not be looked down upon; it should be embraced. Innovation is an experiment of sorts. It requires a culture of risk, opportunity and challenge" (Brands, 2013).

**CHAPTER 5**  
**PART IV: CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR**  
**INNOVATION**

Closing Remarks

The final part to my reconfiguration of Jim Meier's innovation framework discusses the concept of idea generation applied to sports. I interpreted this creative category as the solution phase. In Part I of my thesis, I presented marketing and financials issues within the track and field industry that were prohibiting the sport from growing at its potential rate. With the help of outside researchers, the Track and Field Athlete's Association, and Adam Nelson, I was able to compile data proving that the current distribution of wealth to athletes and to certain aspects of the sport is inefficient and needs to change. From the marketing standpoint, I once again looked to Nelson for information being that he has been through the athlete experience. With this knowledge, I then did my best to depict what seemed to be a never-ending market cycle into a diagram form. By doing it this way, it gave me the opportunity to visualize the problems at hand and play around with different strategies for penetrating the cycle while seeing what the results might look like. Identifying the specific problems also gave me the ability to work with Doblin's 10 Types of Innovation to figure out which innovation strategy or combination would be the most effective at growing the track and field industry.

In Part II, I discussed the value and importance of having a healthy background of knowledge that compliments the specific research process at hand. I believed that this Creative Category would be best placed directly after identifying a problem, as this is typically how marketing research would be performed. Within this part of the thesis, I identified the sport of track and field a little more in detail while also providing what I believed to be the constants and variables. With this information, I was able to determine what aspects of the sport could be altered without damaging it in the process. I relied on examples from other parts of the world as well as some found here in the United States, where creativity in what makes up an event competition was met a spike in interest. This demonstrated that the events themselves did not change. It was the ability for meet organizers to cater towards the fans and athletes

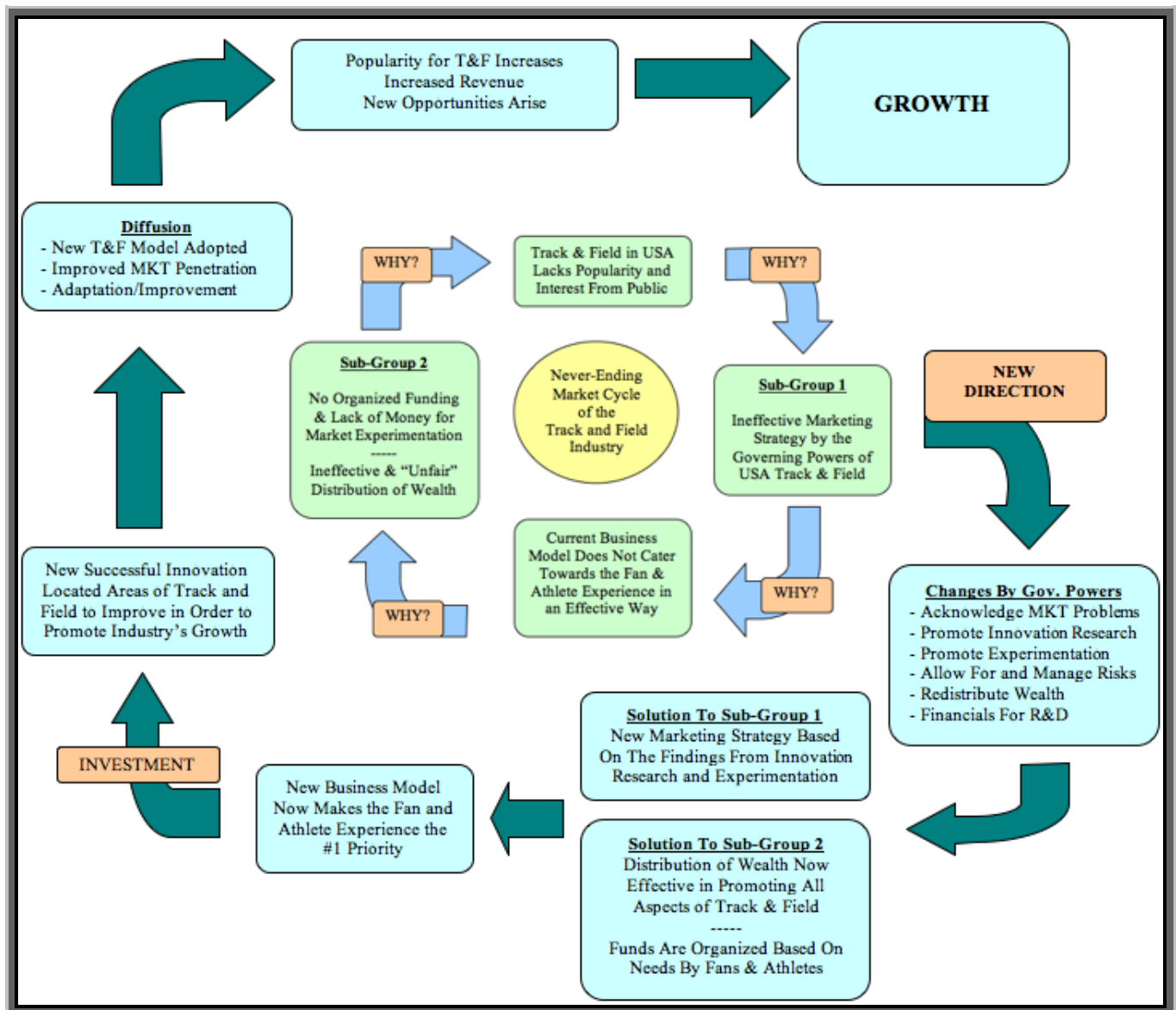
and give them an incredible experience that they would never forget. In order to solidify these predictions, I provided the results from a qualitative survey I conducted where information gathered from participants showed that all answers could be organized into four distinct categories that would enhance the fan and athlete experience.

Part III combined three of Meier's Creative Categories after perceiving them to be interrelated. This part of the thesis then described all aspects of the creative process that companies and organization need to embrace in order to effectively innovate. When toying with ideas, experimenting and testing the market, a lot of risk is involved in order to make a valid assessment. I spend a lot of time emphasizing not only the important of risk-taking, but also the methods of risk management to prevent damaging effects to a business. The reason I am so adamant about this concept is because I perceive this to be one of the strongest reasons why the governing powers of track and field have not embraced a correct innovation strategy. The many experts that I referenced in this part of the thesis believe that innovation and risk-taking must go hand in hand.

This leads me to Part IV, where my recommendations are made. I will provide three recommendations based on level of difficulty and amount of reconfiguration. But the first order of business would be to find the best way to penetrate the never-ending market cycle of the track and field industry. In the following diagram, I provide the old cycle mentioned earlier in my thesis along with a new direction for the industry to go in, given that they abide by the necessary requirement of an effective innovation process.

#### Changing the Current Market Cycle of the Track and Field Industry

By following the new direction, which generates from Sub-Group 1, the first task at hand is for the governing powers of the track and field industry to acknowledge the true issues that are having a negative impact on the sport. They must promote all that is required of effective innovation research and plan the financials accordingly.



(Figure 17: My perception of how to change the Never-Ending Market Cycle)

The result of these changes will solve both Sub-Group 1 and 2's initial problems and lead to a new business model that makes the fan and athlete experience the #1 priority. From here, I used a direction based off of the diagram provided by Christine Greenhalgh and Mark Rogers that shows investment is the last step before complete innovation. It then heads to the Diffusion stage where the new track and field business model is accepted and adopted by the industry's consumers. This will hopefully improve the market penetration and lead the way to future improvements. The end result is a steady market growth, which generates money for the sport and the athletes who make it what it is today.

## Recommendations Based on Research and Innovation Methods

### 1<sup>st</sup> Recommendation: Best-Case Scenario

In this strategy, innovation R&D is used to find ways of improving all aspects of the categories listed at the end of the qualitative survey. All that is encompassed in the new diagram above best describes this scenario. With media-related items, better marketing efforts will be made to improve the coverage, promotion and visibility of athletes on television and online streaming. This involves the use of experienced, enthusiastic and well-educated commentators who help fans understand exactly what is going in a competition. This also involves steering away for live footage that only highlights the long distance races while many other events are underway. Adding variety is key here. Experimenting with publicity tactics will also be important. The emphasis needs to be on the extreme side of many of these sports.

With this revamp in promotion and coverage of events comes the possibility of changing the stadium structure. Finding ways to improve the visual friendliness and excitement for fans is the number one priority with this strategy. Seating should be designed around the make-up of each event. For example, the long jump runway and pit is a very narrow setup. Innovators should consider placing seating very close in proximity to the specification of the sandpit for added pleasure and excitement from not only the fans, but the athletes as well. Perhaps elevated seating along the runway may be a fun idea to try. Another example would be throws events that is one of the most difficult group of events to see being that they all lie in the center or outside of the stadium. The same principles apply here. Model the seating structure after the layout of a throws sector. Elevate seating around throwing circle to ensure no distractions while also giving fans the ability to see just how far athletes are throwing. Perhaps have seating near the end of sector that is protected from implements but also fun for those fans that enjoy being up close to where the objects land.

Lastly, the financials cannot be an issue. Risk-taking is promoted because an efficient risk-management program has been placed along side the innovation strategists. The governing powers must

also reevaluate their distribution of wealth amongst the sport and its athletes. The issues of athletes and multiple sponsors must also be addressed with the governing powers of track and field along with the US and International Olympic Committees. To do this effectively, the athletes must have a voice. The TFAA and the USATF must find common ground and work together for the good of the sport.

The United States actually has strong voice within the federation more so than other countries. But at the end of the day, the USATF is still responsible for many different levels of track and field. They just don't have the resources to cover all of those properly. We've got to do something to change that and the athletes right now are the ones who don't have any power or a voice. When you don't have a voice in a system like this, you're going to be exploited. That's what's happening. But in the process, we'll find a better model. As athletes, we have to be willing to take risks that we're not used to taking. (Nelson, 2011)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Recommendation: Middle of the Road

With the fan and athlete experience continuing to be the number one priority, the same improvements to media-related aspects should be considered. The reporting and coverage of individual athletes and full competitions should also be altered in a way that excites, engages and educates fans on the athletes, the performance and the difficulty. These kinds of fixes do not require an abundant supply of money. All that is necessary for these changes is a knowledgeable innovation team who go through the correct process with the interest of the fans in mind, not the organizations. At the end of the day, the fans determine whether or not the industry can grow.

There could also be some wiggle room with the financials. With the stats provided by the TFAA within Part I of my thesis, the current distribution of wealth is not beneficial to the sport. An analysis of the budget and location of certain funds could help solve some of these issues.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Recommendation: The Least Amount of Work

While I hope that the least of amount of work is never done in an attempt successfully innovate the sport of track and field, I provide the bare-minimum of what the governing powers of the track and field industry should do. With the fan and athlete experience still in mind, media-related aspects like improving television coverage and focusing on the more action packed events should be worked on.



There is no reason for every lap of a 10-kilometer race needs to be covered. Especially when other athletes whose individual performances take up but a small fraction of the time are all competing. Commentators have an obligation to the viewers in knowing the events and the athletes they cover. Education and excitement are very important here.

If the governing powers of track and field are not going to budge on the financial issues surrounding the sport, they at least need to allow athletes to find their own ways of making money, even if it include multiple sponsors. The USOC and ISOC need to understand this as well.

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The sport of track and field grows as a result of the collaboration between the fans, the governing powers and the athletes. Without a voice in this system, athletes will be exploited for their performances and the required adjustments to the market of the sport will never be made due to a poor and incomplete analysis. The bottom line is that risks must be taken to successfully innovate. I believe that the risks are keeping the monopolistic governing powers from working with the athletes to find a better tomorrow. It is my hope that the findings within this thesis not only serve as a reinforcement to what I have learned but also become a key driver used by the governing powers of track and field from this day forward, given that this paper proves innovation is a necessity.

The bottom line is, if nobody's trying to make the innovations happen and follow through on them with the actual resources to do it, they're not going to happen.... We can't be afraid of it. We have to mature as a profession otherwise we are going to fall back into an amateur status and nobody wants that to happen. (Nelson, 2011)

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## APPENDIX

### Relevant Extra Material

(The charts below are the financial breakdowns of those athletes who fall under the category of having an income based of their athletic performances. These charts are in reference to the graphs on pg. 33)

EVENT	World Leaders Name Recognition Stars	Consistent Top 10 in World	Top 10 to 25 in World	Outside Top 25 in the World
<b>Sprints &amp; 400m</b>	<b>\$400K+</b>	<b>\$75 – 200K+</b>	<b>\$10 - 75K</b>	<b>\$0 – 25K</b>
<i>Typical Income Sources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shoe Contracts: Base plus bonuses</i></li> <li>• <i>Secondary Sources: Appearance money, prize money, USOC/USATF Performance Pool Funding, Stipends</i></li> <li>• <i>Access to Olympic Training Center services</i></li> <li>• <i>Free USOC Health Insurance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shoe Contracts: Base plus bonuses</i></li> <li>• <i>Secondary Sources: Prize money, USOC/USATF Performance Pool Funding, Int'l Competition Grants, Stipends</i></li> <li>• <i>Free USOC Health Insurance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Less than 50% have Shoe Contracts(other than gear)</i></li> <li>• <i>Key Sources – Prize Money &amp; Foundation Grants</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Most get Performance Pool Funding &amp; free USOC Health Insurance</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Part-time work is common</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Occasionally sponsored &amp; some gear-only deals</i></li> <li>• <i>Key Sources – Prize Money &amp; Foundation Grants</i></li> <li>• <i>Part-time work is essential</i></li> </ul>

EVENT	World Leaders Name Recognition Stars	Consistent Top 10 in World	Top 10 to 25 in World	Outside Top 25 in the World
<b>Hurdle events, 800m, Decathlon</b>	<b>\$150K+</b>	<b>\$30 – 100K+</b>	<b>\$10 - 50K</b>	<b>\$0 – 15K</b>
<i>Typical Income Sources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shoe Contracts: Base plus bonuses</i></li> <li>• <i>Secondary Sources: Appearance money, prize money, USOC/USATF Performance Pool Funding, Stipends</i></li> <li>• <i>Access to Olympic Training Center services</i></li> <li>• <i>Free USOC Health Insurance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>More than 50% have Shoe Contracts: Base plus bonuses</i></li> <li>• <i>Secondary Sources: Prize money, USOC/USATF Performance Pool Funding, Int'l Competition Grants, Stipends</i></li> <li>• <i>Access to Olympic Training Center coaching &amp; housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Free USOC Health Insurance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>About 30% have Shoe Contracts(other than gear)</i></li> <li>• <i>Key Sources – Prize Money &amp; Grants</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Most get Performance Pool funding &amp; free USOC Health Insurance</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Part-time work is common</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Rarely sponsored; possibly gear-only</i></li> <li>• <i>Key Sources – Prize Money &amp; Foundation Grants</i></li> <li>• <i>Part-time work is essential</i></li> </ul>

EVENT	World Leaders Name Recognition Stars	Consistent Top 10 in World	Top 10 to 25 in World	Outside Top 25 in the World
<b>Jumps, Throws, Heptathlon</b>	<b>\$100K+</b>	<b>\$20 – 75K+</b>	<b>\$10 – 35K</b>	<b>\$0 – 10K</b>
<i>Typical Income Sources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shoe Contracts: Base plus bonuses</i></li> <li>• <i>Secondary Sources: Appearance money, prize money, USOC/USATF Performance Pool Funding, Stipends</i></li> <li>• <i>Access to Olympic Training Center services</i></li> <li>• <i>Free USOC Health Insurance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>About 50% have Shoe Contracts: Base plus bonuses</i></li> <li>• <i>Key Sources: Prize money, USOC/USATF Performance Pool Funding, Int'l Competition Grants, Stipends</i></li> <li>• <i>Access to Olympic Training Center services</i></li> <li>• <i>Free USOC Health Insurance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>30% or less have Shoe Contracts (other than gear)</i></li> <li>• <i>Key Sources – Prize Money &amp; Foundation Grants</i></li> <li>• <i>Most get Performance Pool funding &amp; free USOC Health Insurance</i></li> <li>• <i>Part-time work is common</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Rarely sponsored; possibly gear-only</i></li> <li>• <i>Key Sources – Prize Money &amp; Foundation Grants</i></li> <li>• <i>Part-time work is essential</i></li> </ul>

EVENT	World & USA Leaders Name Recognition Stars	Consistent Top 15 in World	Top 5 USA	Top 5- 20 USA	Top 20 to 50 USA
<b>1500m/Miler, Roads</b>	<b>\$300K+</b>	<b>\$150K+</b>	<b>\$70 – 500K+</b>	<b>\$15 – 30K</b>	<b>\$0 – 15K</b>
<b>5K, 10K, Roads</b>	<b>\$250K+</b>	<b>\$120K+</b>	<b>\$60 – 400K+</b>	<b>\$15 – 30K</b>	<b>\$5 – 15K</b>
<b>Marathon</b>	<b>\$400K+</b>	<b>\$200K+</b>	<b>\$100 – 600K+</b>	<b>\$30 – 75K</b>	<b>\$5 – 25K</b>
<b>Steeplechase, Roads</b>	<b>\$100K+</b>	<b>\$80K+</b>	<b>\$15 – 70K+</b>	<b>\$5 – 15K</b>	<b>\$0 – 5K</b>
<i>Typical Income Sources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shoe Contracts: Base plus bonuses</i></li> <li>• <i>Secondary Sources: Appearance money, Track &amp; Road Race prize money, USOC/USATF Performance Pool Funding</i></li> <li>• <i>Access to Distance Center services &amp; stipends</i></li> <li>• <i>Free USOC Health Insurance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shoe Contracts: Base plus bonuses</i></li> <li>• <i>Other Sources: Track and Road Race Prize money, USOC/USATF Performance Pool Funding, Int'l Competition Grants</i></li> <li>• <i>Access to Distance Center services &amp; stipends</i></li> <li>• <i>Free USOC Health Insurance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Shoe Contracts: Base plus bonuses</i></li> <li>• <i>Other Sources – Track &amp; Road Race Prize Money, USOC/USATF Performance Pool Funding</i></li> <li>• <i>Access to Distance Center services &amp; stipends</i></li> <li>• <i>Some get free USOC Health Insurance</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>More than 50% have Shoe Contracts</i></li> <li>• <i>Key Sources – Road Race Prize Money &amp; Grants</i></li> <li>• <i>Access to Distance Center services &amp; stipends</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>About 25% have Shoe Contracts</i></li> <li>• <i>Key Sources – Road Race Prize Money &amp; Grants</i></li> <li>• <i>Some have access to Distance Center services &amp; stipends</i></li> <li>• <i>Part time work is common</i></li> </ul>

## **VITA**

Michael Hays Lauro, a native of Providence, Rhode Island, received his bachelor's degree at Louisiana State University in 2012. In his final semester, he grew an interest for continued research in marketing aspects of athletes after completing independent studies pertaining to these topics. As his interest grew, he was encouraged by members of the LSU E.J. Ourso College of Business's Marketing Department to enroll in graduate school in the Department of Liberal Arts. This would allow Michael to obtain specific knowledge on the topics of his choice. He will receive his master's degree in May 2014 and plans to use the findings of this thesis towards his career aspirations.