**Deconstructing Innovation**

No one ever starts a company, leads a department or runs an IT organization to embrace the status quo. But do you ever wonder how Steve Jobs became the world's most recognized and prolific innovator of the 21st century? What secret intellectual sauce did he and other founders and CEOs of game-changing companies possess when their business ideas forever changed life as we know it? A few years ago, my research on the topic led me to a book called *The Innovator's DNA*, where I found that an innovator’s secret sauce is not wholly due to birthright, genius, divine intervention, magic or luck. That’s good news for most of us. What innovative entrepreneurs and executives consistently do, however, is engage a set of five skills that set them apart from ordinary managers: *associating, questioning, observing, networking and experimenting*. I’ll briefly review the first two in this post and take up the others in subsequent blogs.

The first of the five skills, *associating*, refers to the ability to make connections across often unrelated questions, problems or ideas. The "associational thinker" can then identify and link together combinations of problems, ideas or observations to produce new business ideas.

Posing questions that challenge the status quo is yet another skill mastered by successful innovators. A passion for *questioning* (measured, of course, by the number and nature of questions asked) to uncover new insights and possibilities provides a solid background for discovering opportunities and new business ideas. Our customers, by the way, have already tapped this skill, having questioned their former identity and access management implementation in an effort to improve productivity and security effectiveness.

So, how does this map back to you and me? For me, building solutions means *creating* the bar, rather than just *setting* it. Looking for ideas, often from other industries, that can be used to create more value and efficiencies in the IAM market. For you, it may mean achieving the goals of your operation through new and totally unexpected ways. In any case, looking at the story behind specific innovations can be fascinating and well worth a quick read. More later.