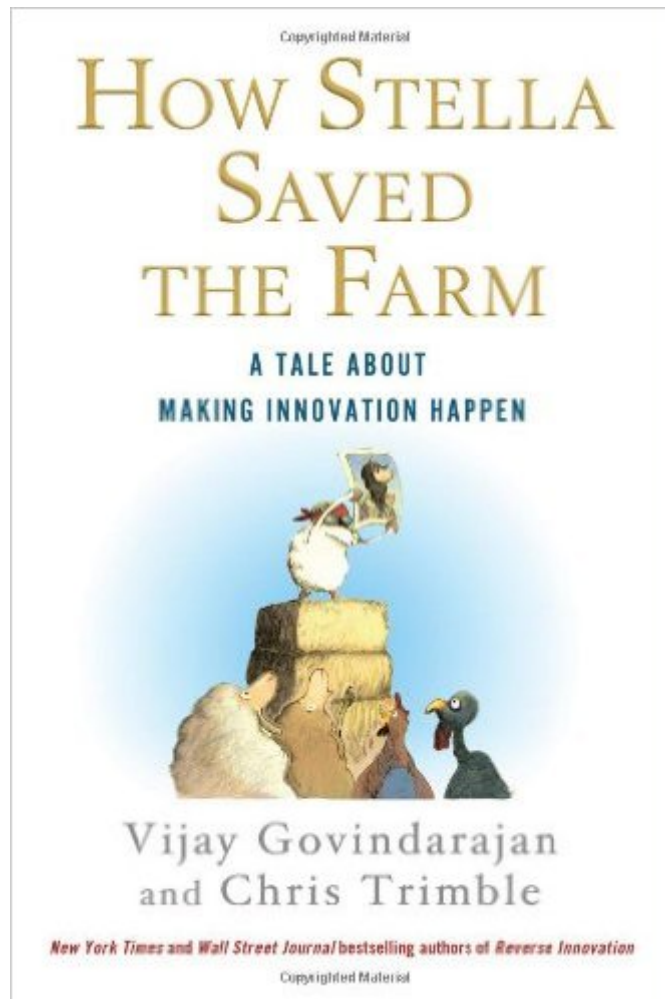


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# How Stella Saved The Farm: A Tale About Making Innovation Happen



## Synopsis

How Stella Saved the Farm is a simple parable about making innovation happen. Written by the authors of the New York Times bestselling *Reverse Innovation: Create Far From Home, Win Everywhere*, the story resonates in organizations of all types—public sector, private sector, and social sector, from mammoth corporations to small organizations employing just a few dozen people. The parable is about a farm in trouble. Bankruptcy, or the grim prospect of being acquired by a hostile competitor, threaten. The farm succeeds only if the team pulls together and innovates. The main characters in the story—Stella, Deirdre, Bull, Mav, Einstein, Rambo, Maisie, and Andrea—are all like people you know, maybe even yourself. The tale includes an unexpected leadership challenge, an ambitious call to action, a bold idea, countless internal obstacles and conflicts, fears, joys, triumphs, and even a love interest. It's a story that can be enjoyed by anyone. *How Stella Saved the Farm* delivers eight simple lessons to guide innovation initiatives to success. It prepares business leaders to avoid some of innovation's most toxic myths, teaches how to build the right kind of team, and shows how to learn quickly from experience.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book uses storytelling in the form of a fable to teach a limited number of lessons and / or principles about how to make innovation happen. While it is true that one of the biggest challenges involved in making innovation happen is realizing when to engage in such an undertaking and pull the trigger in the first place, this book is focused primarily on helping readers cope with various

challenges arising from the "execution" portion of making innovation happen, and less so on processes and tasks occurring beforehand, such as how to generate ideas, evaluate them for innovativeness, feasibility, and other attributes, and then select one or more of them for implementation. The lessons that the authors hope the readers of this book would remember revolve around what kind of help should be given to the point person tasked with planning and rolling out the new products and / or services, and how that person's performance should be evaluated. The authors also provide advice on team building and conflict resolution. This book is a quick read, and is intended to be a lighter version of the authors' longer, more traditional, and more comprehensive book entitled: "The Other Side of Innovation: Solving the Execution Challenge." Both books have their own merits. Go for the more comprehensive book if you need or are interested in the details, but if you don't, this more accessible version should be just fine. I should point out, however, that the more comprehensive book is not that much more difficult to read than this one, so if you prefer to or can only own one of them, go for the more comprehensive book.

This story offers incredibly valuable insights into what can help innovation succeed or cause it to fail. In an organization that already had a "performance engine" that is well established and operationally sound, introducing an innovation unit can be perceived as a threat to the integrity and efficiency of the performance engine, rather than be recognized a key to the organization's long-term success and survival. At first you may wonder why Chris Trimble and Vijay Govindarajan, two Tuck professors, chose to write a parable about farm animals rather than a traditional business school textbook to explain their ideas. But just as George Orwell so effectively used the characters and plot in *Animal Farm* to convey political and social commentary, so too do these authors use the animals on Windsor farm to dramatize just what it takes for innovation to succeed. By using a parable, the authors remove most of the extraneous detail that typically clouds corporate case studies, thereby making the basic principles plainly evident. In addition, the story is designed to prompt discussion among those who have read it to answer the question, "Who saved the farm, and how?" The book is well written, humorous, and easy to read, and undoubtedly each of the animal characters will bring to mind someone you know. This is a must-read for anyone planning on launching an innovation team or program.

On the surface, this is a story whose main characters are barn animals--Stella (a creative sheep), Marcus (the aging stallion CEO), Deidre (Marcus' daughter, a mare, and successor to run the farm), Bull (the ops guy for the main farm), Mav (the renegade innovator), and others. At its core, the story

about how a farm, run by (very literate) animals, competes with "humans" and their huge new tractors. On the surface, it looks like a simple fable. However, so was George Orwell's *Animal Farm*! Fable and allegory have long been the craft of authors who really wanted everyday people to understand complex ideas. Vijay Govindarajan and Chris Trimble--both experts on innovation--have written a book for everyone about how innovation works successfully in companies. Read it, heed the wisdom, and watch your organization prosper.

Executing innovation is never easy and this clever little fable illustrates the common challenges that arise. It also teaches the principles, or lessons, that work to meet these challenges. The authors state their intent for the book: "Our intent in this book is to focus on a handful of the most fundamental principles for managing an innovation initiative, not to thoroughly examine the subject." Eight fundamental lessons are taught through the use of adroit and humorous storytelling. A family business is trending to fail - what can the owner and employees do to innovate to reverse the trend? The lessons the book teaches are grounded in over 10 years of research on innovation. Having started several businesses myself, and having directed a private school of 450 students that was in bankruptcy when I took over, I recognized and identified with many of the issues this imaginary family business faced. It reminded me of how challenging entrepreneurship is. There are such highs and lows. This amusing fable can be read in a couple of hours. The lessons are highlighted within the narrative. It would be helpful to have the lessons in mind if you are tackling similar challenges. There are thoughtful questions at the end of the story to discuss if reading the book is a group activity. The story itself is colorful, lively and well-written. I saw in the acknowledgements that the authors hired a fiction writer and editor to "sharpen the prose". You can tell as the narrative is tightly written. This book would be helpful for business classes, corporate training, teams and entrepreneurs. It's an easy and amusing read and the story format makes the learning sweeter to digest.

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