



# 3 Things Leaders Must Do in 2026



**Marisa Kopec**  
President



**Arij van Berkel, Ph.D.**  
Chief Product Officer

# Lux Is Decision Insurance

By accurately predicting which opportunities matter most, Lux provides leaders with the assurance to place the right marketing and innovation bets powered by a **unique vantage point** that blends **deep science** with a panoramic view across industries, technologies, and cultures.



Spot  
opportunities



Predict  
market  
timing



See reality  
from the  
hype

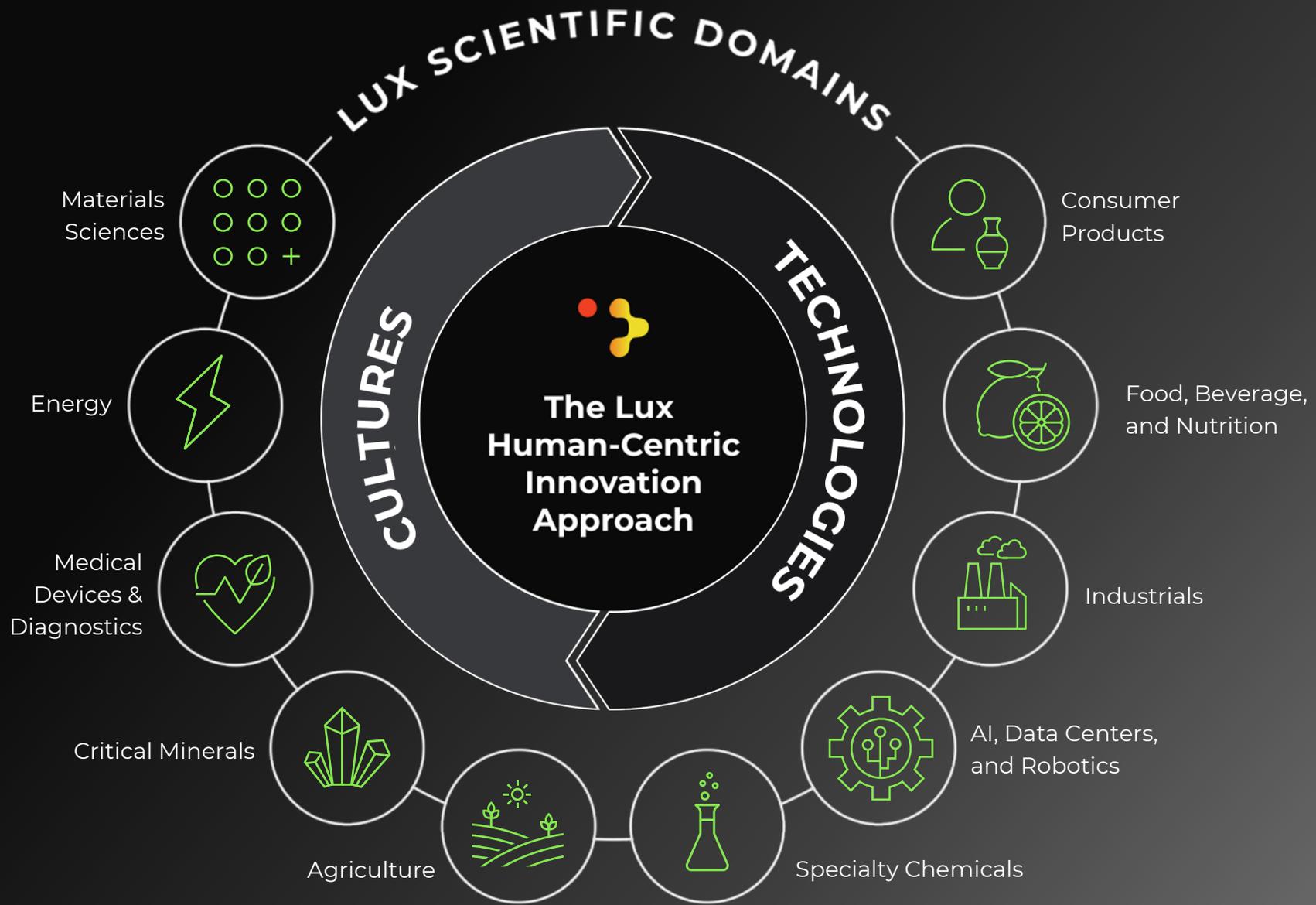


Derisk  
strategies



Validate  
decisions

# A Unique Vantage Point



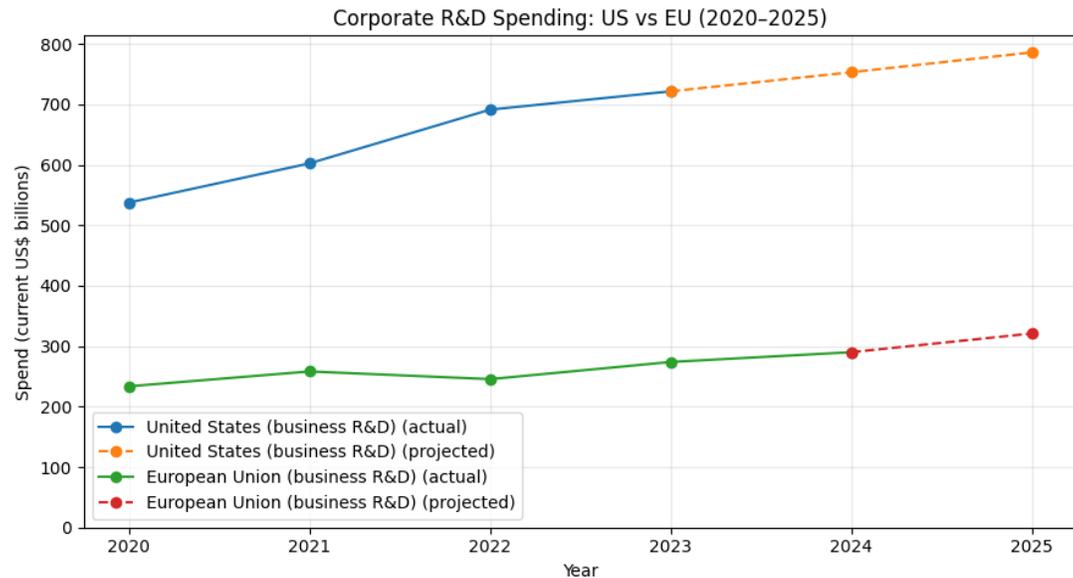
“ ”

The future  
belongs to the  
discontented.

Robert W. Woodruff,  
a historic leader of The Coca-Cola Company



# Long-Term Innovation Strategy: Critically Important



Lux recommends that leaders push hard on imagining the future of innovation and leading their organization through the prism of technology and cultural change.

# 3 Things Innovation Leaders Must Do

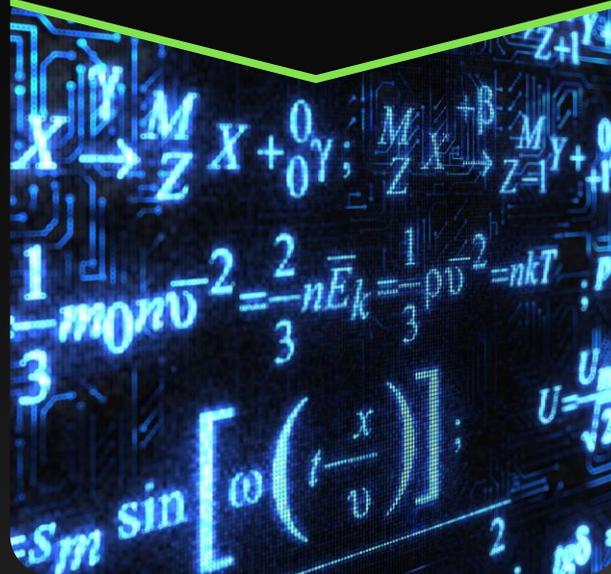
1

Align  
Innovation



2

Articulate  
Risks



3

Benchmark  
Performance



1

# Align Innovation



# Align Innovation Workflow

Lux recommends that leaders break down the barriers between marketing and innovation silos to increase NPI success rates.



# The Lux Innovation Model



## Inspire

Discover and define opportunities that are technically possible and emotionally inevitable.



## Illuminate

Build organizational belief, alignment, and a clear business case for innovation.



## Ignite

Bring ideas to life through validation, piloting, and commercial launch.



### Marketing



### Innovation



Source: Lux Innovation Process

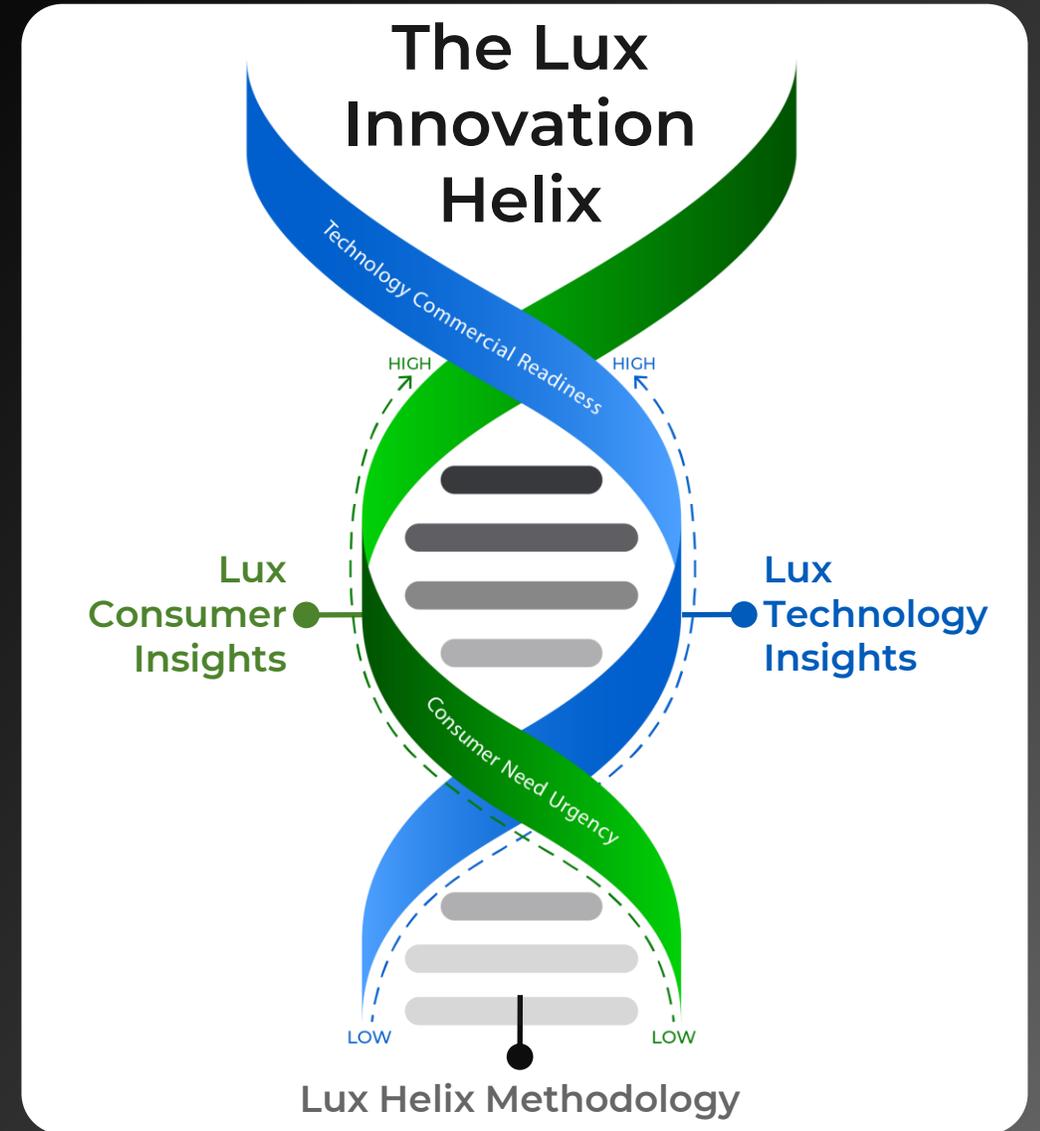
# Align Innovation Inputs

Lux recommends that leaders solve for the disconnect between external market needs and internal technology roadmaps.



# Align Buyer and Tech Insights

Lux recommends that leaders engineer their innovation strategy and technology roadmaps to solve for unmet human needs.



# Innovation That Matters

Lux recommends that leaders work to predict market opportunities and technology timing to create products that will expand and grow their portfolio.

## Consumer unmet need to tech alignment

	Digestive Comfort	Enjoyable Flavors	Tailored Nutrients	Healthy Appearance	Clean Labels	Quality Protein	Allergen Free	Dental Health	Trustworthy Claims	Tech Totals
Eubiotics	4	3	4	4	3	1	3	3	3	23
Lipids	4	5	4	5	4	1	5	3	4	29
Encapsulation or coatings	3	3	4	4	2	1	2	3	3	20
Cell-free systems/enzymes	4	2	3	4	3	3	4	5	4	24
Preservatives	3	4	2	2	4	3	2	1	3	23
Algae production	2	3	2	4	3	2	2	2	2	19
Alternative protein	1	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	17
Phytochemicals	3	2	2	2	3	1	1	3	3	15
Microbiome analysis	4	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	3	13
Targeted antimicrobials	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	9
Ingredient Informatics	3	2	3	2	4	3	4	1	3	24
Sensory analytics platforms	2	4	2	1	2	4	2	1	4	18
<b>Unmet Need Totals</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	

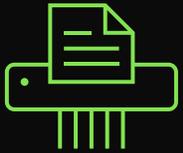
2

## Articulate Risk

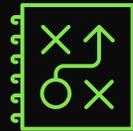
Innovation gets  
killed because of  
**risk**, not because  
there was not a  
business case.



# The Elements of Risks in Innovation



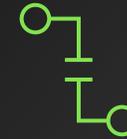
**Betting on  
the wrong  
technology**



**Having the  
wrong GTM  
strategy**



**Missing the  
right timing  
in the  
marketplace**



**Misallocating  
precious R&D  
capacity**



**Backing  
ecosystems  
that won't form**

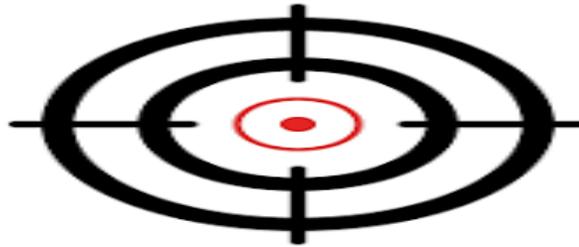
# Decision Distortion

Innovation failure comes from misreading, stretching, skewing, or missing the signals that shape decisions. Bottomline, it is really hard to “see” risk.



## Grounded

Signals are visible, interpreted correctly, and acted on.



## Skewed

Signals are visible, but interpretation is distorted by internal forces.



## Occluded

Critical signals are unseen or structurally ignored.



# Core Elements of Enterprise-Level Risk

---

Lux observes organizations struggling to make decisions due to a lack of consistent language for discussing and assessing risk.



Societal risk



Financial risk



Technology risk



Reputational risk



Legal & regulatory risk



Environmental risk

3

# Benchmark Performance

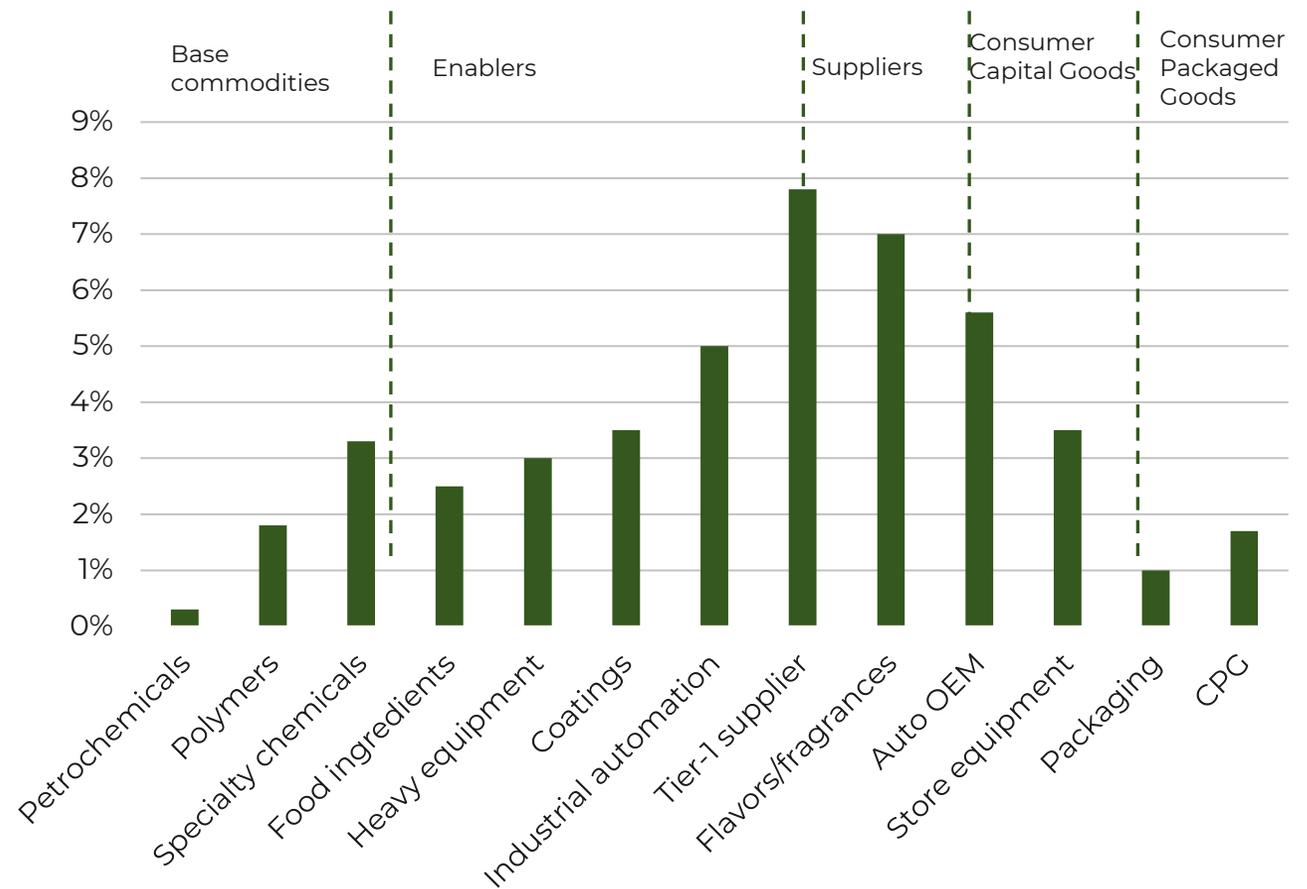


# Innovation Happens Across Segment Boundaries

The heavy lift for technology development happens in the middle of the industrial value chain.

Lux recommends that you benchmark innovation across your value chain.

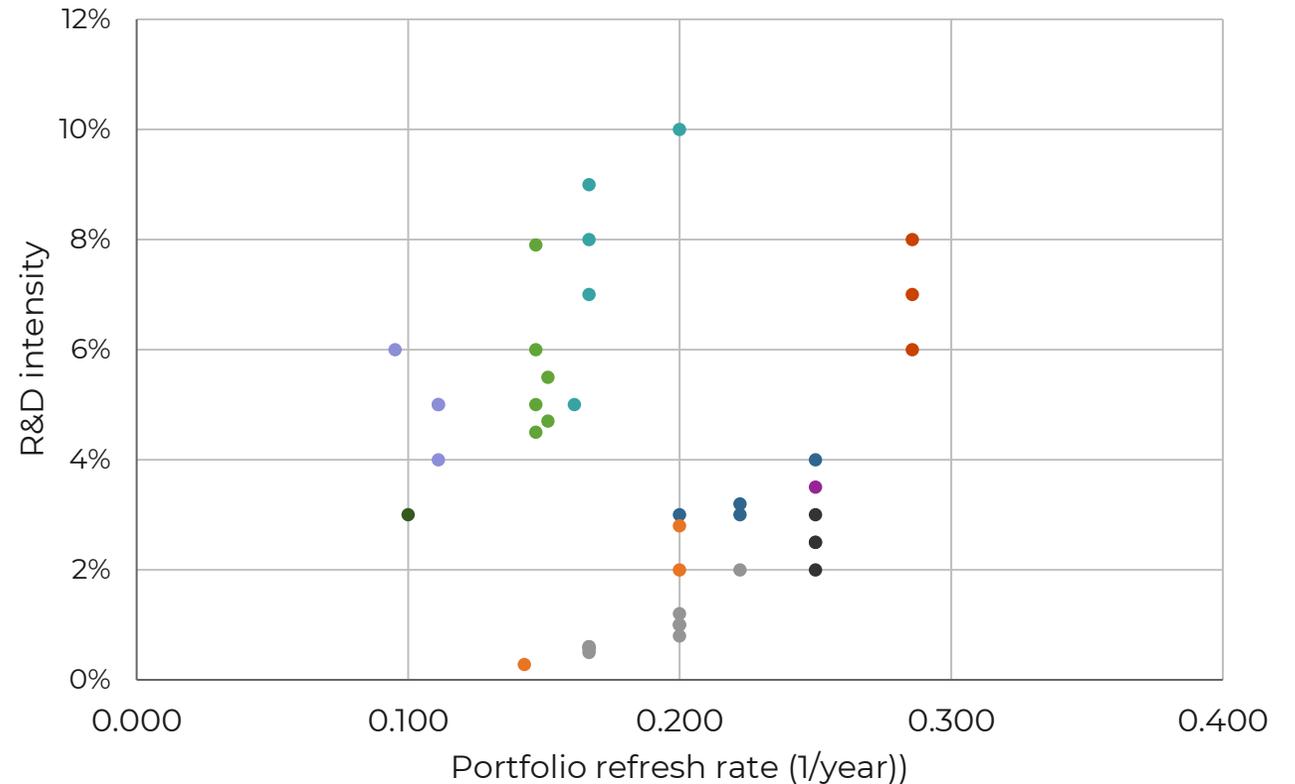
## Median R&D intensity



# Benchmark R&D Intensity vs. Product Life Cycle

Lux recommends that you consider the rate of rejuvenation of your product portfolio when benchmarking your R&D expenditure.

## R&D intensity vs. product life cycle



Product life cycle  
duration

10  
years

5  
years

3  
years

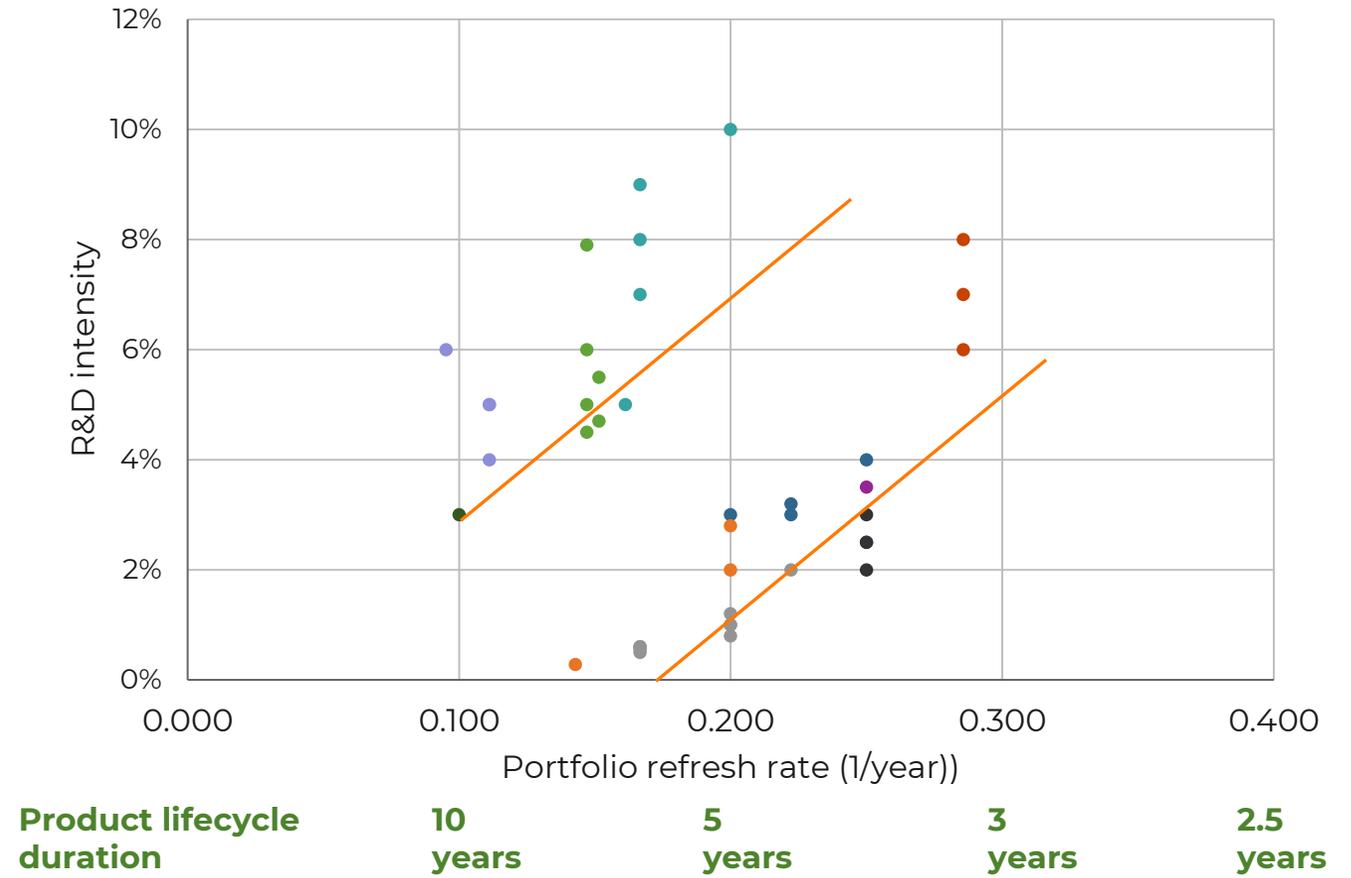
2.5  
years

# Interpreting the Benchmark

There is a clear correlation between product life cycle and R&D investment.

Still, there's also a large spread. Is it just underinvestment and/or efficiency or something else?

### R&D intensity vs. product life cycle



## Operational innovation

- Supports your current product portfolio
- Is not optional
- Must succeed and be on time
- Can be incremental and transformational

### Metrics

- Efficiency
- Speed

## Expansive innovation

- Supports organic growth adjacent to your business
- Is optional (in the medium term)
- Will fail: Build a portfolio
- Can be incremental and transformational

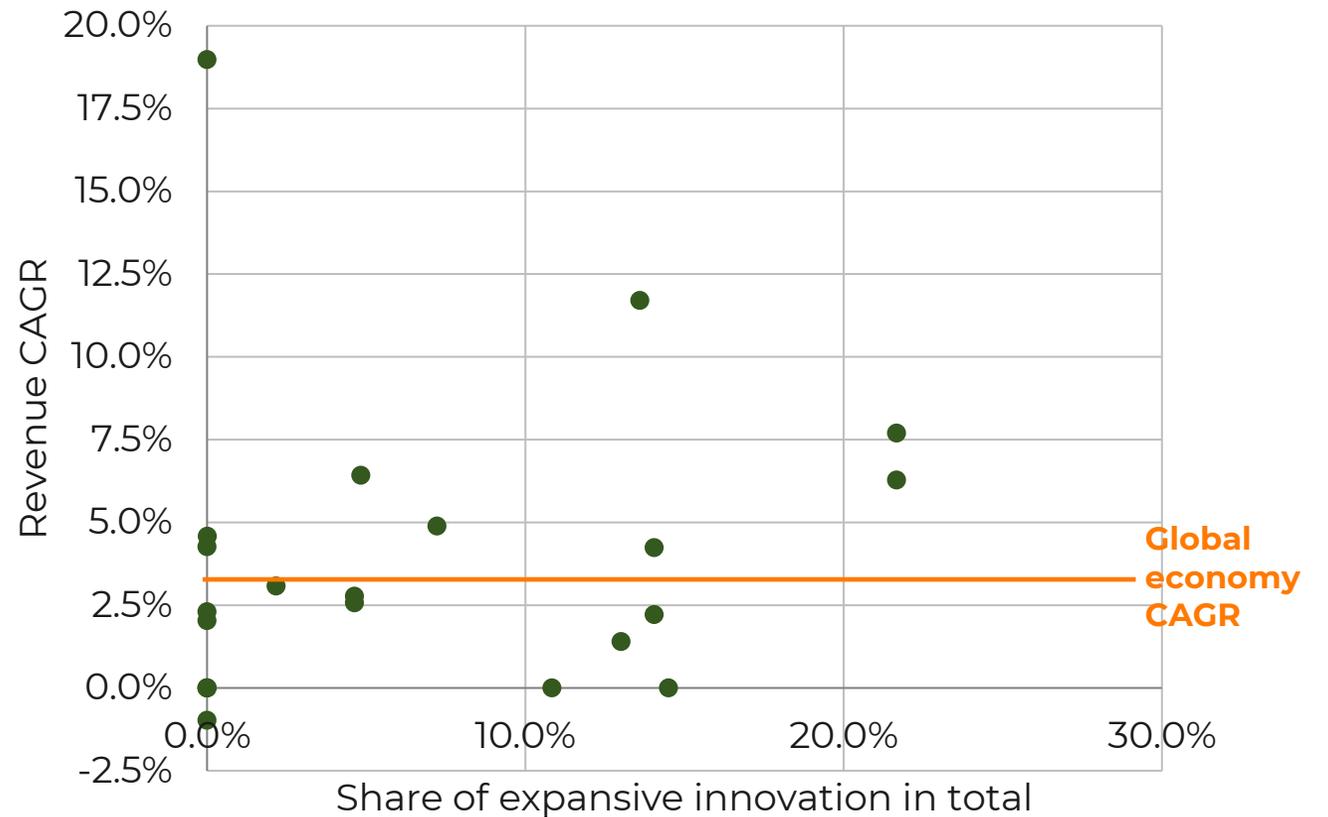
### Metrics

- ROI
- Strategic fit

# Expansive Innovation Effects Vary

Most companies have up to 30% of their innovation focused on expansion. The impact on revenue growth varies, although there is a slight positive effect of higher shares of expansive innovation.

## Expansive innovation and revenue growth



# Three Things You Must Do in 2026

1

---

**Align technology innovation to market drivers in your company and in your broader ecosystem.**

Marketing and innovation speak different languages. They can connect by aligning on the functionality new products should unlock.

2

---

**Make risk explicit qualitatively and quantitatively.**

Risk perception is a bigger inhibitor to innovation than articulating the business case. Innovation leaders must focus on making risk intuitive and manageable.

3

---

**Benchmark your innovation inputs against a realistic set of peers.**

Using product life cycle and your position in the value chain, you can compare your inputs to peers. Differentiate between operational and expansive innovation spending.



# Thank You



**VISIT**

[www.luxresearchinc.com](http://www.luxresearchinc.com)



**FOLLOW**

[@LuxResearch](https://twitter.com/LuxResearch)



**CONNECT**

[LuxResearch](https://www.luxresearchinc.com)



**READ**

<http://www.luxresearchinc.com/blog/>



**EMAIL**

[questions@luxresearchinc.com](mailto:questions@luxresearchinc.com)

# About Lux

Lux Research fuels innovators to not only imagine what's possible in the future but also operationalize innovation success in the near term. We deliver research and advisory services to inspire, illuminate, and ignite innovative thinking that reshapes and grows businesses. Using quality data derived from primary research, fact-based analysis, and opinions that challenge traditional thinking, our experts focus on finding truly disruptive innovations that are also realistic and make good business sense.

The “Lux Take” is trusted by innovation leaders around the world, many of whom seek our advice directly before placing a bet on a startup or partner — our clients rely on Lux insights to make decisions that generate fantastic business outcomes. We pride ourselves on taking a rigorous, scientific approach to avoid the hype and generate unique perspectives and insights that innovation leaders can't live without.

## VISIT

[www.luxresearchinc.com](http://www.luxresearchinc.com)

## FOLLOW

[@LuxResearch](https://twitter.com/LuxResearch)

## CONNECT

[LuxResearch](https://www.luxresearchinc.com)

## READ

<http://www.luxresearchinc.com/blog/>

## EMAIL

[questions@luxresearchinc.com](mailto:questions@luxresearchinc.com)