



# **THE IDEA FORMULA**

Generating Powerful Ideas

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# INTRODUCTION

The generation of powerful ideas has moved us forward as a civilization from the Stone Age to the Digital Age. If primitive man hadn't started carving his ideas on cave walls, there's little chance we would have accomplished anything we needed to accomplish in order to survive and thrive as a race.

Ideas like fire; cave drawings; the wheel; writing; broadcasting; the Internet.

With every idea we develop as a species, we drive the world forward in technology – and in business. Every new technology brings its own requirement for new solutions to manage it - just as every new idea drives new technological advances.

It's a self-fulfilling process.

Ideas make old things new, prevent or solve problems, and create products and services that make our lives easier and more fulfilling.

If we failed to think of new ideas we'd have difficulty building happy relationships, novel methods of entertainment and ways to create financial income. It becomes quite obvious that ideas aren't just limited to the "nice to have" department of our lives – they're an essential component at the heart of our lives.

People get passionate about their ideas. The really passionate ones dedicate themselves to making those ideas a reality. And those passionate people have been from all walks of life and encompass all aspects of idea generation – spiritual, emotional, physical and financial.

If you take the time to examine Gandhi, Richard Branson, Steve Jobs or Eddie Izzard, you'll see people with radically different approaches to life except for one thing – at their core, they had ideas that obsessed them. Ideas that drove their behavior to achieve great things in their lives that had far-reaching effects on everyone around them.

Ideas are like seeds that grow into different types of trees depending on how they are nourished. Weak ideas will fail. Good ideas without adequate nurturing will also wither and die over time. But a good idea nurtured properly can change the world!

We're going to take a look at ideas and how they relate specifically to business, but from time to time we'll touch on ideas that reach beyond business or that come from much farther afield because some ideas share similar concepts.

### **How important are ideas to business?**

Without innovation, business would die on its feet. And ideas don't necessarily have to be ground breaking to have a huge worldwide effect.

Just think about how the invention of Facebook has put distant friends and family members in touch. What started as a simple way to network with other college students grew into a 900 million user social interface that runs as the world's biggest advertising agency.

Phones went mobile and then digital and then became "smart". Smart phones have apps that users can use to track health and fitness activities and even how healthy their eating habits are. It's like having your own personal trainer in your pocket – along with your social secretary and administrative assistant.

App producers and those who support the app industry such as copywriters, web developers and sales & marketing personnel have been employed to promote those apps – creating employment where not only did none exist until recently – but none was even conceived as possible until recently.

Every day a new advance in technology – based on a new idea – drives invention, production and sales of new products.

Let's take a look at the power of ideas in business.

# THE POWER OF IDEAS

Ideas have proven to be a powerful driving force behind business innovation.

Probably one of the greatest known men for genius ideas was Einstein - whose ideas shaped how we think about the nature of not just our own planet but the very Universe itself. Einstein worked very hard at his job in a patent office in Switzerland for one reason only – to get the work done as fast as he could so that he could spend the rest of the day working on his own ideas.

In more recent times, with the dip in the world economy came the rise of entrepreneurial enterprise and the necessity to generate new ideas for business – both to create new businesses and regenerate those that were in danger of folding. Einstein's unique outlook on creativity was to become an integral part of idea generation as we understand it today.

The work environment has changed over the years as the power of Big Ideas has become recognized and even encouraged. Now it's not unthought of to spend the day in thought or participating in other idea generating methods. Companies such as Google provide whole rooms for their staff that are dedicated to the pursuit of creativity.

Take for example, their offices in Zurich where staff can use fireman's poles or slides to get from place to place, and an aquarium to relax in front of. In London they have a room that's made to resemble an actual forest, with a stream on which is a boat that employees can sit in to work.

Sound just a bit bizarre? It may do if you haven't taken idea generation in business seriously before – but let's think about that for a moment. Ideas come to us at unexpected times – in the shower, out running, half asleep in bed. So it probably makes sense that by removing as much of the “work” atmosphere as possible the company are allowing their employees to free associate ideas outside of a typical work atmosphere.

James Patterson runs a multi-million publishing empire on ideas. The author admits that he works with ghost writers. In interviews he has stated that he creates an outline of up to 90 pages that he hands off to his chosen author, who fleshes out the story.

You might say that Patterson has the ideas and gives them to someone else to do the work. The result is a fiction business that has sold over 300 million books, and has a net worth of over \$430 *million*.

Tim Ferriss, author of New York Times' #1 bestseller the 4 Hour Work Week is another ideas man. In fact, Tim Ferriss's ideas have generated him a net worth of \$15-20 million.

How? By analyzing ideas we take for granted, figuring out what might be construed to be wrong about those ideas, and formulating new ones with proven positive effects. His ideas spread like wildfire – garnering him a reputation for innovation and viral marketing for his books.

The publishing industry itself is an example of how ideas alone can be powerful enough to create a business. At one point there were 6 big book publishing houses - then Amazon, another company that started as a simple idea, threw its hat in the ring with its own imprints and provided the opportunity to most of the world to self-publish through their site.

This idea revolutionized publishing as it was known and has created a business for millions of people around the world who not only write, but create businesses to support self-publishing: proofreaders & editors, text formatters, cover designers, book promoters & publicists. Amazon's decision to take action on their idea just blew up and consumed the public's imagination.

Richard Branson is another individual who chose publishing as his first entrepreneurial venture. At the age of 16 he created a magazine called Student. He later created the Virgin brand to develop a series of successful ventures which included record stores, a record label, Virgin airline and now he's venturing into space with Virgin Galactic.

Idea, upon idea, upon idea: Branson has put taken action on all his ideas and accumulated a net worth of \$5.1 billion dollars.

What we can learn from these entrepreneurial types whose ideas make their fortunes, is that they often recognize a need of their own and take appropriate action to solve that problem. Rarely does a successful businessman's ideas come from a place of financial desire – but rather from a burning desire to solve problems. When they have ideas that solve problems, they recognize that the solution might be valuable o others who suffer the same issues.

Of course while we can look at individuals whose ideas have turned them into top business people and recognize their business acumen, but what happens when we bring together two or more partners' ideas in enterprise?

Building on others' ideas can build new ventures. And the speed in which they can be built increases exponentially when they share and build on each other's ideas.

Partnerships between innovative thinkers have produced businesses worth millions.

Airbnb, Innocenti smoothies, Hewlett Packard, Apple, Twitter and eBay were all founded by a group of two or more people who had productive relationships in which they were able to bounce ideas off each other within a safe and creative environment.

## **Key Takeaways**

Here's what you should learn from this:

- Ideas can create businesses purely by solving problems that others haven't taken the time to solve

- Creative people can find and develop supporting products and services for new or established businesses by looking at new technology and asking how they can use it to solve those problems
- Establishing a profitable business as an “ideas” person is possible if you can delegate the work to other experts
- There has been a change in attitude towards the value creative people bring to business
- Business people now recognize that creativity is an important part of business, not just a “nice to have”
- Ideas can be so powerful they can change the way we think on a global scale
- Powerful ideas live on after us in books, influencing generations to come

## GENERATING IDEAS

Idea generation often causes a stirring of emotions in people. They become irate that an idea is nothing new and that the person responsible for this new iteration is a thief who has stolen the hard work of others before them.

While directly plagiarizing others' work is highly disreputable and should play no part in your idea generation process, we have to recognize that most ideas are arrived at from, as Newton put it, "standing on the shoulders of giants."

Or as your parents probably put it, "there's nothing new under the Sun."

Idea generation can be tricky. That's why legislation now surrounds the idea of public domain. Some time ago, governments recognized the fact that creators of books and art should have some control over how their work was distributed, and so the idea and practice of copyright and copyright enforcement was created to ensure that artists were paid if others distributed their creations.

Luckily, those legalities didn't impact the ideas behind those creations. Another aspect of creation from ideas was the recognition that ideas themselves are universal. Several different people can – and do – have the same idea at more or less the same time. It's the interpretation of the idea and how it is manifested that copyright law applies to.

That's also why copyright law doesn't protect a work forever – because it recognizes that good ideas draw from other ideas that have gone before.

This idea – that good ideas come from those that went before – is a core tenet of idea generation.

If you're uncertain about this and still feel that it's just "stealing" other people's ideas, consider the following:

Most lengthy non-fiction books – hardbacks and paperbacks in particular – have a bibliography where they quote other books from which they have quoted ideas or facts. This alone shows that ideas can be discussed and drawn upon even if they are not your own.

Consider also; Walt Disney. Disney movies are not the original versions of Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White or Goldilocks. Nor of many other of their movie releases.

Those stories were written many years before Disney was even born – yet he was able to adapt them and make them more relevant to his contemporaries. He gave them a different look, and altered them to reflect more modern thinking. In the process, Walt Disney created movies that were huge successes - thanks to the ideas that others had before him.

Disney created an entire business based on the works of others before him – and by using those works to generate new ideas.

### **How to generate ideas**

Idea generation can seem difficult – particularly when under pressure. But there are many different methods of idea generation and at least one – or a combination of different methods – will work for you. Here's how you too can generate powerful ideas for your business, no matter what the business you are in.

### **Promote a creative atmosphere**

Encourage an atmosphere where creativity is not just tolerated, but encouraged. You may feel that this opens the door to possible abuse, but any negative reaction to your new house rules will die away when the results start speaking for themselves.

Get people of varied experience to work together. A larger pool of experiences means a much greater output of ideas. In terms that internet marketers might

understand, this is the equivalent of a keyword multiplier - where brainstormed keywords are multiplied with each other to create a larger database of queries.

Never hold on to an idea too tightly. All ideas should be fit for purpose. While you should never completely get rid of an idea, be Machiavellian in how you treat your ideas - the ends must justify the means. If the idea ceases to help move you towards the desired outcome, it's time to start generating new ideas.

Ideas don't happen in a vacuum - they multiply like bacteria when they come in contact with each other - so engage groups of people in your idea generation strategy. That same vacuum is symbolic of the desk you sit at every day, the same boardroom you meet in with your colleagues, the same canteen table you take lunch at every day.

Routine is a huge enemy of ideas.

Get outside for lunch if the weather allows. Meet in a different office. Change something about how you normally do business as often as you can. Don't expect to create ideas at the same time or in the same context every day or week. Understand that it's just as likely those ideas are likely to hit while you walk through the park as it is when you are in a creative meeting. What's important is that they don't die on the vine. Write them down. Record them on your phone. Tell someone else about them.

### **Don't dismiss fiction**

Many entrepreneurially spirited people consume books in large quantities - they read like their lives depend on it. But while that helps in a purely business way, fiction shouldn't be ignored. Fiction helps people think differently as they read different characters' viewpoints, it changes how their brains react to situations and simulates broader experience than they already possess.

### **Write**

No - you don't need to write fiction! Just the process of writing down your ideas will stimulate them further. Having the chance to analyze your thoughts on paper will also allow you draw associations between ideas you may otherwise have missed.

### **Embrace you hippy side**

Meditate. Just a few minutes of purposeful silence each day will give your mind the break it needs. On a similar vein - get the sleep you need. It's been shown that the channels making up the surface of the brain fill with toxins during the day and are cleared when we sleep. How much sleep you need varies but it's a good idea to experiment and find the right amount that leaves you feeling refreshed and receptive to new ideas.

### **Mix and match existing ideas**

By combining ideas and asking how they might affect each other you can generate significant new ideas. This works particularly well for brainstorming groups.

### **List your assumptions**

Often when we have assumptions about something we don't realize how much they are holding us back and preventing genuine innovation. By writing down a list of what your assumptions are on a topic - you can attack each one in turn and ask "what if..." Turn the assumption on its head. Challenge every assumption on your list and you will be left with a list of new ideas that lead in a different direction than even those closest to the situation.

In a similar method to this - reword any problems that the current situation in your business present. By rewording issues you can see them as possible solutions just by changing their frame of reference.

### **Draw Pictures**

Written words and images stimulate the brain in different ways - often we conceptualize ideas in much different ways when we interpret them from visual

representations. Have you ever played one of those family board games during the holidays when you are required to act out a movie or TV program - or where you need to draw images that represent a word. Some people grasp these ideas really quickly, while others struggle. We all see and interpret ideas better through different media.

### **Dealing with Creative Block**

Sometimes idea generation seems like an impossible chore. It's what writers call the dreaded "writer's block" - but it can apply to anyone in any type of creative work.

In more traditional brick and mortar businesses, you may have a boss who expects new ideas on a regular basis. Many multinationals include the generation of ideas such as those for area improvement as part of their performance review programs. They believe that employees should take part in the overall innovation that drives the company forward, and be rewarded appropriately.

But if you think that's a lot of pressure - consider the freelancer who needs to think up new and interesting ways to create articles, blog posts and various social media to demonstrate their abilities to potential clients. That's the kind of pressure that makes creative blocks not just uncomfortable, but downright scary!

The terrible thing about a block in creativity is that it can be so easy to overcome that it's frustrating for the sufferer when they realize how much it has affected them. This is what often leads to feelings of self-loathing in creative people.

Don't let that happen to you. Follow these straightforward tips to take control of your muse, rather than wait until it appears.

**Come up with a lot of crappy ideas.** Seriously - don't even worry if they have nothing to do with your main objective, just get them flowing. Remember -

ideas don't happen in a vacuum, they springboard off other ideas. There is no apple that falls on your head to give you the idea that gravity exists. Eureka moments don't really happen (not out of the blue, anyway).

**Figure out what is it in your own job or business that bothers you.** What needs to change to make you more effective, your product more useful, or your service more valuable. Often when we think about what we need versus what someone else needs, we can see issues more clearly. This works amazingly well if you are part of your own target market. This is how new ideas like couch surfing services were born.

Realize that ideas are "born"! They don't appear fully formed. They appear as the result of a long labour which is followed up with nurturing and feeding to grow. So **forget about the ideas you are trying to generate today and go back to your list of "someday" ideas** to find something to jumpstart some creative ideas that may not have occurred to you at the time you made the original list.

Spend some time at regular intervals sifting through your ideas - weekly or monthly. Choose actionable ideas that you can do this week. Go talk to someone in the next office or find someone in a social media support group for creatives in your industry - talk about those previous ideas if you are struggling to give them legs - often someone else can see something from a different angle that you may have missed.

### **Create the right atmosphere**

Creative people can be incredibly sensitive to atmosphere. Maybe you don't feel as if you are, but you may simply be unaware of the fact. Here are some ideas that will help you create the right kind of mood to help you come up with genius ideas.

Think of yourself as a creative person - simply recognizing the fact that you are creative can build enough confidence that you stop worrying about generating new ideas long enough for them to start flowing. In metaphysics, there is a theory that something only exists when we observe it directly. By focusing on

creative block we tend to make it manifest itself. Simply looking away from it can be enough to make it disappear.

### **Declutter**

That old adage that a messy desk is a sign of a productive person is completely untrue. If your desk is hidden beneath a pile of clutter, declutter it now. Your mind will mirror your workspace and clutter equals overwhelm. Create a blank sheet now. That means turning off the internet on your phone, closing your door, letting some more light in, putting scraps of paper into the waste paper basket. If you find yourself distracted by unproductive time on social media, block it out using an app such as Google Chrome's Strict Workflow extension.

### **Ditch work if you need to.**

Not always possible in a work environment, but if you work from home or for yourself, it's sometimes a good idea to not try to come up with ideas, but to go see a movie, take a nap, read a book or take a bath. Anything, in fact, that has absolutely nothing to do with the ideas you are trying to generate. Coming back to your brainstorming with a clean sheet will attract something to mess up the empty page.

Jerry Seinfeld, star of the long running TV show, Seinfeld, is one of the world's hardest working comedians. Seinfeld ran for 9 years and was basically "a show about nothing". Seinfeld himself has created a reputation for being an idea generator on a massive scale - yet he insists the process is a simple one.

*He writes every day.*

Ideas never stop flowing when there's nothing to block them. So write every day. There's no need to write a novel or even work as a writer - just make a few notes of ideas that relate to your business. Even if they are not your own ideas, the simple act of writing down ideas that others have inspired you with is enough.

## **Meditate**

Seinfeld is also one of the many celebrity advocates for meditation. And yes, Oprah Winfrey is among those advocates. Meditation is the simple act of being mindful of where you are and focusing your entire attention on doing nothing but following your breathing.

Over time, such meditation has been shown to alter people's brainwaves in how they function, to help make them more attentive to their surroundings.

## **Pair unlikely ideas**

Pick two ideas you have previously had and bring them together. What comes from that union? A coffee mug made of pineapple? What thought does that inspire? A cocktail glass made of pineapple. Closer. A cocktail umbrella made of pineapple. Bingo!

## **Reassess the objective**

If you're having an unusually tough time generating ideas, take another look at the objective for the ideas. What purpose are the ideas intended to fulfil? Maybe that purpose doesn't make sense. Is there a way to alter the purpose so that the goal can still be met, and allow for a different way to reach that goal?

An example might be that your goal is to encourage 50 new subscribers to buy a product when they subscribe to your website. You might be finding it difficult to come up with ideas. The end goal is that they buy the product, but it's the subscription process that has you stumped. Maybe you could reassess the purpose of getting site visitors and instead offer them a discount voucher – getting to the same goal without the previous complication.

In other words - make sure you are asking the right questions if you expect to arrive at the right answer.

## **Brainstorming**

Brainstorming deserves a more in-depth examination because it can work so brilliantly - yet it can go so disastrously wrong!

Brainstorming is not the only way to involve a group of people in the idea generation process, but it is the one that most people know and hate.

The logistics of a brainstorming session are that a group of people appoint a note taker who is responsible for capturing ideas and writing them down on a whiteboard or typing them onto a document that everyone can see via overhead projector. Another meeting leader that is chosen is a "rat holer" whose job it is to recognize when people are going off topic or are wasting time analyzing an idea rather than coming up with new ideas.

Ideas should not be analysed as they are thought of in a brainstorming process. They should be used to form a list – allowing people let their minds run loose without having to justify or reality check anything. Stopping to consider whether an idea is valid only slows down the process and involves the wrong parts of the brain – the analytical parts rather than the creative parts. There will be plenty of time for analysis after the creative part has been completed.

## **Team Dynamic**

The team dynamic in a brainstorming session will dictate its success or failure.

Unfortunately, if there is an imbalance of personality types - where there is a mix of extroverts and introverts, the extroverts tend to fall into a natural leadership role. Should they disagree with an idea or have a particular idea they champion above others, they can take over the meeting and ignore the rat holer's attempts to bring them back on track. The introverts don't speak up to prevent the meeting going down a rat hole.

Another unfortunate consequence is that introverts may have excellent ideas but are wary of putting themselves in what they perceive to be the limelight by

suggesting them. They are also reticent to challenge ideas that shouldn't make it into the final bucket list.

Think of introverts as being similar to those customers who are favourable towards you but never speak up and say so, and court them accordingly.

One method of making sure a brainstorming session works is to ask all attendees to generate their own list of ideas ahead of time and send them to the organizer via email. The meeting leader can then make a master list to display on the whiteboard or overhead and these are the ideas that start off the session. In this way, introverts who have emailed their list of ideas get them seen and the extroverts can use them as a springboard for new ideas that may not have otherwise been thought of.

Never shoot down someone else's ideas in a brainstorming session and be very wary of colluding with someone else who does. This is a sure way to signal to some team members that it's not worth their while contributing ideas if they are likely to garner unwanted attention.

When assimilating the bucket list from your brainstorming session - which is the list of actions required (or ARs in corporate speak) be like Arthur Quiller-Couch and "murder your darlings". Be ruthless with the ideas that you favor. If they don't fit, ditch them (save them in a dusty file somewhere but don't permanently delete them).

This process may require repetition to finalize the most worthy ideas.

### **Attend conventions**

Conventions aren't just for sci-fi geeks who like to dress up as Captain Kirk - they're a legitimate way of meeting others in your industry who network and share their news and ideas. Networking with different people who have different attitudes to similar issues can open up a smorgasbord of new ideas.

## **Embrace your endorphins**

In a report by [frontiers in Neuroscience](#) researchers have found that exercise which releases endorphins is associated with improved creativity.

## **Copy your heroes**

Who do you admire for their achievements? Do they have a podcast, book, documentary about them? Surround yourself with positive and inspirational material, such as these to draw on their ideas and create your own.

## **Mind Mapping**

Mind maps are tools that create a visualization of ideas. Using a mind map involves creating a combination of words, statements, images, and arranging them in relation to each other. They can be created by hand - drawn with pen and paper - or using a piece of software.

Begin by placing the central idea or goal in the center of the page or software (we'll just call it a page from now on, because essentially even the software is using a page in the same way as MS Word is software that uses pages).

The central topic should trigger related ideas in the participants of the mind mapping session. It's not necessary to have more than one person doing the idea generation when using mind maps - so don't get caught up in details, just start writing down what comes to mind.

Next, add nodes (branches) to your map. Large, thicker branches represent the more prominent ideas, while numerous smaller branches can be used to display smaller ideas or subtasks. Feel free to add as many or as few branches as make sense until you can't think of anything new to add. You may also move ideas from one branch to another if you feel it makes sense to do so - there are no rules.

As you add and move ideas and branches, you will begin to free associate and that's when real idea generation starts to happen. Label each branch and don't

use more than one word if possible. Adding more words only narrows the topic and cuts off idea flow.

For example, if you were to write the words "cocktail party", your ideas would be limited to a party, while just the word "cocktail" on its own could have any number of free associations such as a dress, a shaker, ice cube containers, or a recipe. While it may seem irrelevant without context, when seen as the mind mapping of advertising executives for a particular alcoholic drink or cocktail dress it shows clearly how it makes sense to map out different ideas.

Mind maps are also great for chunking information together so that you can avoid overwhelm when trying to concentrate on a number of ideas simultaneously.

Whether we are aware of it or not, we tend to associate images and colors with ideas. It makes sense that you should experiment with your mind map to figure out how this might work for you. They are also processed at a much faster rate by the brain than words are, so you can train your brain to start seeing ideas rather than words.

### **There are a number of mind mapping applications available.**

- Pen & paper
- [iMindMap](#) by Tony Buzan's corporation. Buzan is credited as the person to popularize mind mapping in the '70s although the original idea goes back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century when a noted thinker of the time began graphically representing Aristotle's concept categories.
- [MindMaple](#)
- [Freeplane](#)
- [XMind](#)
- [Mindjet](#)
- [MindNode](#)

Mind maps work because they are not linear – they allow users to jump around from place to place in their thoughts. This is ideal for those who increasingly feel that they suffer from ADHD, which is most of us these days.

If you imagine a bestselling author writing their book – they don't sit down and write it by starting at page one and writing every page in order until they reach the end. New ideas occur as they write, which demand changes and the addition of new ideas at different parts of the book to keep the story intact. Mind mapping allows creative people jump from one idea to another in their idea capture, without having to worry about maintaining a linear approach.

### **Involve Your Customers**

Here's an idea for idea generation that not every business considers: involve your customers in the process. Remember the days of suggestion boxes (pre-Internet, if you dare remember those days)?

One of the silent killers of business ideas is that those who are in the best position to offer ideas (customers) mostly don't. They're the quiet person in a meeting who doesn't open their mouths when they have a ground breaking idea.

With the advent of digital marketing and social media, businesses are in a far better position to get feedback from their customers. Technology has made it simple to run competitions and use surveys to find out what ideas the customer might have. Walkers potato chips in the UK do this frequently when they ask their customers to come up with an idea for a crisp flavor that combines two flavors they might not otherwise have thought of combining.

If they like a particular suggestion, they run a production of the flavor to try it out on the public.

The results are often bizarre, but there have been some intriguing results such as Crispy Duck & Hoisin and Chili & Chocolate.

Who are the employees in your organization who spend the most time with customers? The sales people, admins who field phone calls, service desk staff... they all spend much more of their time talking to customers than anyone else in the organization - make sure to mine them for their insights into your customer's questions and suggestions.

### **Forums & Social Media**

Where people gather to chat, there are a multitude of questions and suggestions. This is how you can find out what your customers won't ask or tell you. They may ignore your request to complete a survey form, but if they are unhappy, they often won't hesitate to discuss what bothers them in an online forum.

By trawling through forums for your brand name you can find out what your customers like and dislike - giving you plenty of ideas for change. There's no need to feel overwhelmed by the idea of searching out ideas this way; use [FAQFOX](#) and [SocialMention](#) and you can start generating ideas within minutes.

Don't get too fixed in your vision of who your customers are. By considering who else might become your customer, you automatically expand the idea generation possibilities. Think outside of where your product or service is normally associated with. If it's an indoor product, is there an application for it outdoors? Is there a customer who would want to use it outdoors?

### **Idea Capture**

What do you do with all your ideas? Start acting on them immediately? While it might seem the most productive idea, it's far from it.

An effective idea generation process requires an effective idea capture tool. There's a host of them out there that will suit every taste.

The idea behind a capture tool is that all your ideas are captured and kept in one place so that they can be assessed after the idea generation has been

completed. Usually some cool down time is allowed so that ideas can be looked at objectively before decisions are made to either act on the idea or shelve it.

Should the idea be one that has immediate benefits, it gets acted upon by creating tasks and then subtasks that support the goal of the idea.

Not all ideas fall so easily into a black-and-white good or bad category and so it's worth having a folder to keep "someday" ideas.

### Idea capture tools

These tools range from the very simple Word or Excel document to all sorts of software apps like [Evernote](#), [Wunderlist](#), [Basecamp](#) and [Buckets](#).

Here's an overview of what your key takeaways should be from this section:

- Ideas can be generated using a lot of different methods – mix and match to get the best results
- Idea generation depends very much on allowing participants feel comfortable about the process and their role in it
- Think outside of just you and your organization – look for ideas from others such as forums and customers
- Understand the role of idea capture software and where it should be used in the idea generation process
- Understand the roles of brainstorming and mind mapping in idea generation and how to perform both

# WHAT NOW?

What will you do from now on when you need to generate an idea?

Here's a brief summary:

In your workplace: brainstorm ideas

Mind map and build on existing ideas

Leave the problem alone and go do something else

Keep an idea capture tool nearby – your phone is likely to have a Notes app that will suffice

Discuss ideas with your colleagues and others in the same industry as often as you can in an informal setting outside of the usual business offices, such as at conventions or even during a walk in the park

Get some exercise and don't focus on idea generation if you are struggling with it

Have fun with the process!

## CONCLUSION

There's no perfect solution to idea generation. For every positive aspect of an idea generation tool or process, there's a negative one. Some processes seem too vague for more practically minded people to find useful, and as we have seen in the case of brainstorming, sometimes others' personalities can affect how useful a process is.

One thing is clear – we need to cultivate new ideas in how we do business if we are to survive.

No single process or tool should form the entire basis of your idea generation. Instead, your idea generation should come about as a result of several processes that generate and collect ideas to be processed accordingly.

What you should understand from having read this report is that

- Business relies on new ideas to thrive
- As human beings, we need to create or we stagnate
- There are many different ways to create ideas and they should all be used – there is no universal solution
- How you generate ideas will usually depend on your position in the organization
- Thought leaders in our society have always been the ones who have acted on their ideas, not just created a list that ended up lying dormant on a laptop somewhere
- Creative block can make you feel stifled, but there are simple methods to overcome it – and they are easy to use