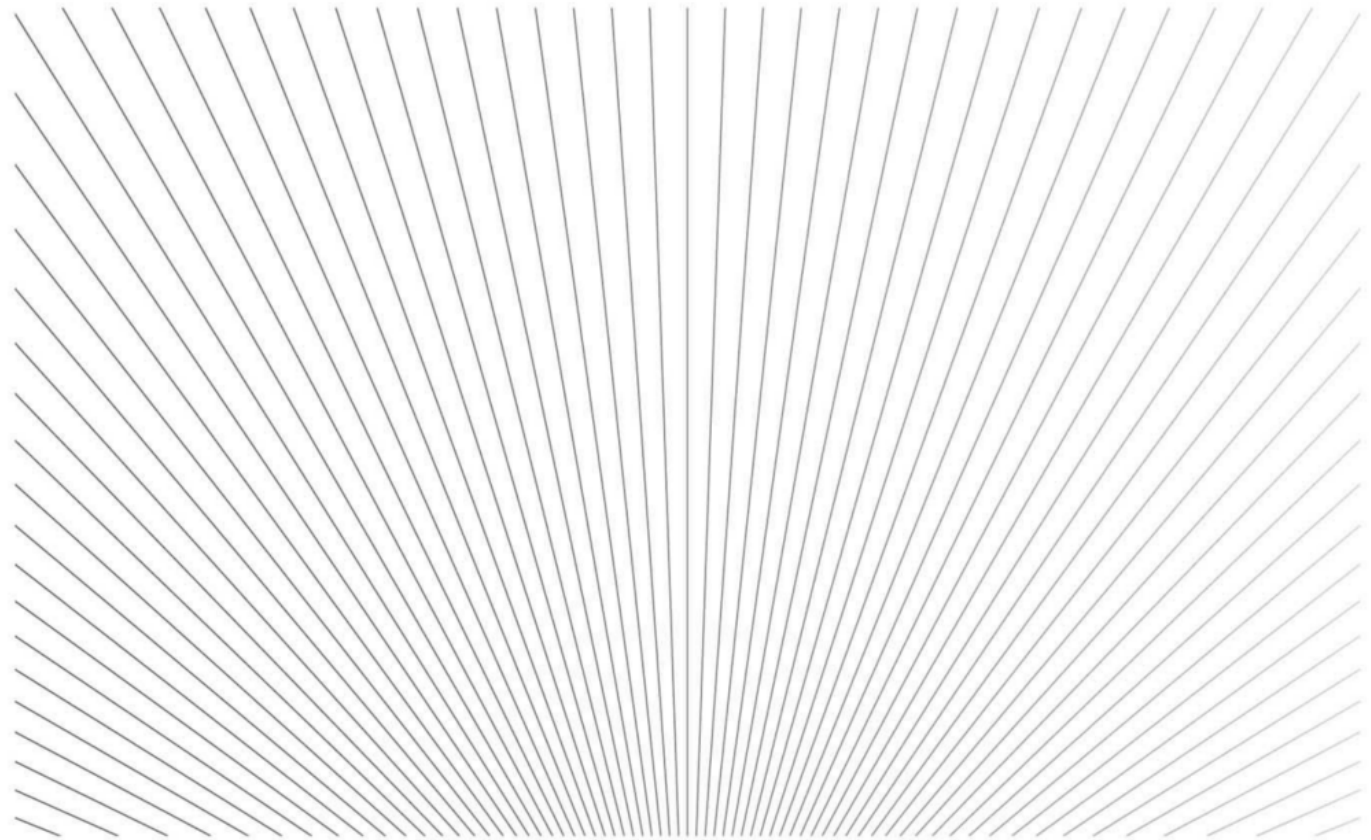


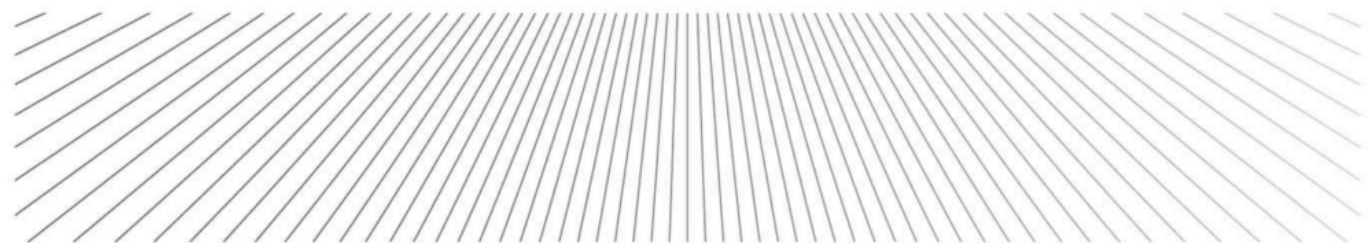
FOREWORD BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

---



C R E A T E T H E  
**F U T U R E**

TACTICS FOR **DISRUPTIVE THINKING**



NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR, **JEREMY GUTSCHE**

---

CEO OF TREND HUNTER

---

## CONTENTS

---

### **PART 1 → THE ABILITY TO CHANGE (SIDE 1)** 1

People miss out because we lead busy lives and get caught up in a predictable groove, repeating past decisions. This makes it difficult to spot opportunity, and more difficult to act. Even when we have a great idea, it can be a struggle to get buy-in, influence others, and make change happen. It doesn't have to be that way.

### **PART 2 → CULTURE OF INNOVATION (SIDE 2)** 1

Culture is more important than strategy. Culture underlies your organization's ability to adapt, and times of dramatic change magnify this importance. Your organization likely perceives the need to adapt, but uncertainty and resistance are paralyzing innovation. Winning the future begins with a culture of innovation.

### **PART 3 → OPPORTUNITY HUNTING** 103

Innovation and strategic advantage hinge on your ability to anticipate trends and identify the next big thing. By using the cutting-edge frameworks in this book, you can filter through chaos and identify clusters of opportunity to focus your innovation.

### **PART 4 → ADAPTIVE INNOVATION** 143

Engineers, designers, and scientists have invested billions of dollars to perfect human creativity. By applying the best of their proven practices to your own field, you can think big while acting small. You can rapidly create new opportunities.

### **PART 5 → INFECTIOUS MESSAGING** 159

Well-packaged stories travel faster than ever before. Unfortunately, most marketers are stuck in a world dominated by traditional advertising and clichés. By cultivating infection, your ideas will resonate, helping you to leap ahead of the competition.

# READ, SKIM THE TITLES...

---

Our reading habits have changed entirely in the past decade. Driven by media clutter and shrinking attention spans, our world has become headline obsessed. Because of this, this book is designed to be visual and action packed, offering two ways to learn the content:

Consume the content front-to-back.

Just read the headlines on each page. The pages flow together to spark big ideas. Ideally you can pick up this book from any section and be good to go.

**Let's do this!**



# ...OR JOIN 10,000,000 PEOPLE WATCHING THE KEYNOTE VIDEOS!

---

My specialty is bringing innovation to life through engaging keynotes and workshops that combine exciting stories with tactical takeaways. If you are a visual learner, check out my YouTube videos. So far, I have added roughly three hours of content related to this book. At the time of publication, more than 10 million people will have watched the videos.

Watch online at [JEREMYGUTSCHE.COM](http://JEREMYGUTSCHE.COM)

Join me on Twitter/Instagram [@JEREMYGUTSCHE](https://www.instagram.com/JEREMYGUTSCHE)





Over 20 years ago, not long after I joined the staff of *The New Yorker* magazine, I met a young woman named DeeDee Gordon. She lived in Los Angeles, in a sleek modernist house up in Beachwood Canyon. She drove an immaculate vintage Pontiac Trans Am. She was young and hilarious and brilliant, in a completely unexpected way, and she had a job I'd never heard of before: companies hired her to figure out what was going to happen next.

Like many people, I assumed that next was an unsolvable mystery—that anyone who claimed to be in the business of telling the future was deluded, or worse. But then I followed DeeDee around for a while. I listened to the way she thought, and I soon began to realize that there was a real discipline and art to next: there were principles that could guide the way we thought about the future. I ended up writing an article about DeeDee Gordon and her work, called “The Coolhunt.” It ran in *The New Yorker* on March 17, 1997, where—unbeknownst to me—it was read by an enterprising young man named Jeremy Gutsche. Gutsche decided to build an entire infrastructure around next, a network of correspondents around the world feeding their observations and predictions into a massive consumer-insight database. Jeremy is kind enough to say that I inspired him—which is, I'm quite sure, a gross exaggeration. But even gross exaggerations are enormously flattering, so here I am, two decades later, returning the favor by introducing you to one of Jeremy's most ambitious projects to date.

You have in your hands a book about how to “Create the Future.” Before you start, I'd like to offer a few thoughts about how to think about that question. Let me begin with the question of time. A lot of thinking about the future necessarily revolves around the chronology of future events. We can be pretty certain, for example, that one day science will cure dementia, or the internal combustion engine will be no more, or—in our fanciful moments—that human beings will be able to travel instantaneously

through space, like they did in old episodes of *Star Trek*. The unknown is when those things will happen. 10 years? 30 years? Or has it already been figured out, and we just don't know about it?

I think that question is best answered in parts. The first part is the technological part. As a general rule, I think, we tend to underestimate how quickly and easily innovations happen. If you polled the top military officers and strategists in the world in the mid-1930s and asked them if they could imagine a weapon capable of destroying entire cities, they would have looked at you uncomprehendingly. A bomb, to them, was something that—at best—could destroy a single building. Yet within a decade they had a weapon of that magnitude at their disposal, and less than a decade later they had a weapon capable of destroying the entire planet. The nuclear bomb—which has shaped the modern world perhaps more than any other invention—came about in a frenetic, dizzying, awe-inspiring rush. But then again, so did most of the defining innovations of the modern age. Alexander Graham Bell started tinkering with the idea of a telephone in the 1860s. By 1876, he'd figured it out, summoning his assistant in the most famous telephone call ever made: “Mr. Watson. Come here. I want to see you.” That's one man, over a decade and a half, working out of a farm in southern Ontario, inventing one of the signature devices of the modern age. By the way, as I'm writing this, Google just turned 20 and Facebook just turned 15. The unicorns of Silicon Valley are teenagers.

The technological side of the future comes in like a hurricane. But technologies have to be socialized—adopted, understood, accepted, embraced—and what's striking about the social part of the future is how long and winding that part of the process is. The first atomic bomb is dropped on Japan in 1945. When do we figure out how to contain that terrifying technology? You could argue that we still haven't. But it took at least another 40 years to get to the point where the world could breathe easily. Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone in the 1870s. The first international telephone call is made in 1881. When does the telephone take off, in terms of public acceptance? The 1920s. It took 40 years for the public to embrace the telephone. And why? Because it took 40 years for the world to figure out what the telephone

was. For the longest time, for example, telephone companies were convinced that it was primarily a business instrument—it was B to B, they thought, not C to C. They actively discouraged what they referred to as trivial uses of the instrument, meaning one person calling another person to say hello. They didn't want women using it. It took them years to realize that it might be more useful for farmers—people socially isolated—than city-dwellers.

Are these isolated examples? Not at all. The first ATM was introduced in the late '60s. But in the '80s, I was still going to the bank to get my money, and I suspect you were too. Did you trust a machine to give you money? Not until you had thought about it, and experimented with it, and slowly changed your routines. One of the strange things about the way social media is discussed is that it is assumed that the patterns and practices around which consumers use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat today are predictive of the way in which we will all use those platforms tomorrow. But why do we think that? These are all technologies in their infancy, and the best evidence of our history with innovation is that the invention of the future and the adoption of the future move on very different timelines. The technological part comes into focus pretty quickly. The social part takes forever to evolve. I have a sense of what Twitter will look like in five years. But it is not nearly so straightforward to figure out what Twitter will mean to its users in five years.

*Create the Future* is a book about that second, hard, part. That's the part we need help with.

30 years ago, a young Canadian psychologist named Philip Tetlock was at a meeting on American-Soviet relations. It was a blue-ribbon panel, featuring some of the world's leading experts on the Cold War. The group's job was to make predictions about the superpower conflict, then in full swing, and what struck Tetlock was how many of the experts' predictions contradicted each other. Here they were, the world's foremost authorities on the subject. And yet they couldn't agree on anything—which meant, logically, that some significant number of them had to be wrong.

Tetlock decided to test this idea. For the next 20 years, he immersed himself in the largest prediction study ever conducted: he gathered together experts from a wide variety of fields, and had them answer questions within their area of expertise. So—of an energy specialist he might ask: Will the price of oil rise or fall in the next 12 months? Of an economist he might ask: Will interest rates be higher at the end of this year or lower? Is Quebec going to secede from the rest of Canada? Is the United Kingdom going to vote for or against Brexit? Tetlock ended up gathering an astonishing 82,000 predictions, and after tabulating his results, he came to a devastating conclusion. Experts were terrible at predictions. In most cases, anyone interested in any of those questions would have been just as well off flipping a coin.

This is a sobering fact, particularly for those who are interested in owning the future. That circuitous path that humans take—when they adapt and respond to innovation and change—is really, really hard to predict. But Tetlock wasn't finished! After sorting through his data, he discovered that not everyone was bad at the future. A small group of people actually were really good at making predictions. And who were they? They were people who were open-minded, who were willing to change course, when necessary, and admit their mistakes. They were generalists, not specialists. They were people with the ability to look at a problem from a number of different perspectives. The expertise of good predictors, in other words, did not result in a dogmatic commitment to a particular worldview. It lay in curiosity and an endless sense of wonder about what the future might bring.

You have in your hands a book written in that spirit. Enjoy.

—MALCOLM GLADWELL



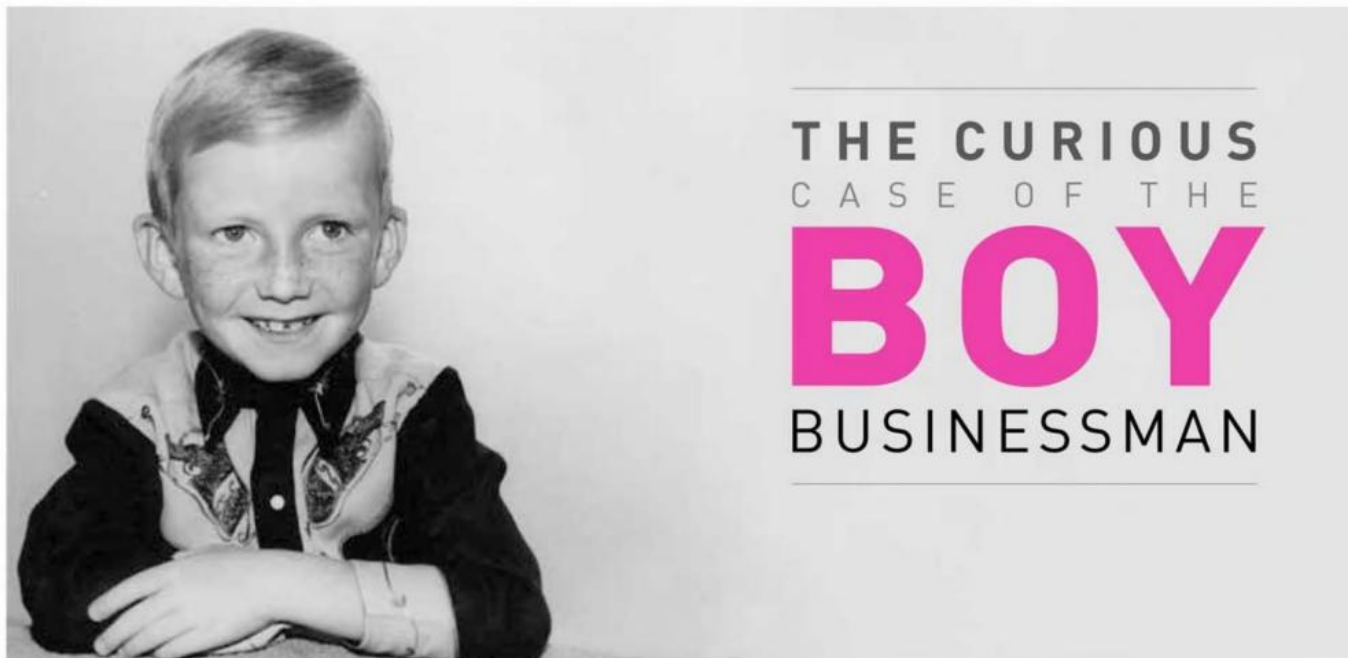
# ONCE THERE WAS A LITTLE BOY WHO SAW POTENTIAL OTHERS COULD NOT SEE

---

I am abnormally driven to help YOU find your big idea, and I think I know where it all began . . . To fully explain, I need to tell you about a boy businessman, a nerd, and some stolen cheese.

The original boy businessman was my father. He grew up in a poor immigrant family, living in a shoebox of a house that he shared with his parents and his two brothers. They didn't have much, but they always ate well because his mother was a cook.

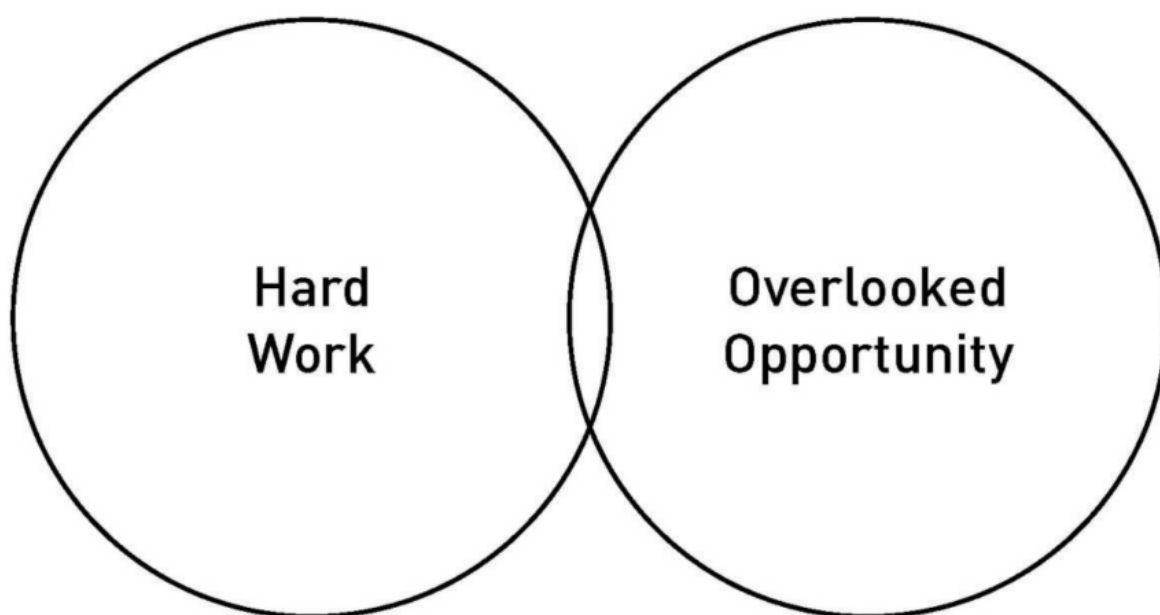
One day, at the innocent age of eight, the little guy was helping his mother stock up for supplies at the local grocer when some Kraft Philadelphia Cream Cheese caught his eye. When she looked away, he stuffed his mouth with the cheese. Shocked, she grabbed her son by the scruff of his neck and marched over to the storekeeper. Short for words, she exclaimed, "I caught this kid stealing!" (It was a good time to forget he was her own son.) As penance for his crime, the little boy was sentenced to a month of sweeping the floors of the grocery store. At the end of the first week, he noticed



an overlooked opportunity: the grocer would throw away food that was good enough to eat but allegedly not good-looking enough to sell. (This problem of food waste plagues stores to this day.)

Even though he was just a boy, my father's first business idea was upon him. He agreed to continue sweeping the floors in exchange for the leftover food. He would then cart that food around to his poor neighbors, offering them deep discounts, much to their delight. Pretty soon he was the first kid on the block with a leather jacket and a BB gun.

### The Secret to Remarkable Success



He expanded his door-to-door delivery to all sorts of leftover items. This led to an entrepreneurial career full of ups and downs, where his key move was always to look for the potential in people and businesses that others overlooked.

I told my dad's full-length story in my *New York Times* bestseller, *Better and Faster*, though I consistently reshare it to explain my mission. You see, in this example of the grocer, my dad imprinted one particular lesson on me forever:

**TO BE SUCCESSFUL, YOU NEED MORE THAN JUST WORK.**

**YOU NEED TO FIND AN OVERLOOKED OPPORTUNITY.**

# ...AND THEN THE SECOND BOY BUSINESSMAN WAS BORN

The picture below is of me. In case you're unsure, I'm on the right. While my awesome sweater and Coke-bottle glasses might suggest that I was a cool kid, I was actually a nerd. I know—you're probably thinking, "Jeremy, you couldn't possibly have been a nerd! That's exactly what Drake looks like!"

But alas, I was a "business idea" nerd. I was always looking for what could be my next venture, which will play to your advantage by the end of this book.



*In this comparison, you can also tell that I was years ahead of my time. Who's the Trend Hunter now, Drake?*

Following in my father's footsteps, I attempted to launch a dozen businesses and inventions, but nothing seemed like the right fit:

- Peanut Butter Company
- Carrot Steamer
- Humidifier-Fan Combo
- Lawn and Garden
- Photographer
- Web Design
- 12-Person Painting Company
- Book of Inventions
- "Jeremy's Junk"  
(Selling Random Overlooked Stuff)

The last little business probably had my parents alarmed. Imagine their son putting up posters that said, “Come check out Jeremy’s Junk.” My dad figured I needed a new business idea, and he had a plan to help me. Every month, he would buy different genres of magazines and we would flip to the sections that featured new inventions. “What do you think about this idea?” “What about this one?” “What parts would we need to build that?” “Can we go to garage sales to buy parts this weekend?” “How much will this cost us to make?”

The hunt for ideas inspired me, but it also began to engulf me. I started to see opportunity everywhere and didn’t know how to choose. Today, I think many of us are in the same boat: the act of getting inspired has become *overwhelming*.

After a decade of searching, I became a corporate innovator, which is the field you end up in if you can’t make a choice and just prefer hunting ideas. I figured I would learn how to hunt, research, test, and optimize using someone else’s budget. Along the way, I hoped to stumble upon my breakthrough.

I was so focused on learning to innovate to find my own idea that I inadvertently learned all the skills necessary to become very successful at a bank. By 28, I was one of Capital One’s youngest directors and put in charge of innovation and running the company’s struggling high-end business line.

My team had a goal to shrink new bookings by only 20%. How motivating. But with new innovation tactics and an obsession for new ideas, we launched a series of winning products. Instead of shrinking, we tripled monthly bookings and grew a \$1 billion portfolio. My career in banking was “set.” But to me, this was actually irritating. I had proven I could find great ideas for other people, but in 20 years of searching, I hadn’t found something to call my own. I was getting restless. I thought to myself: *Imagine if I could find my 12-year-old self and tell him, “YOU GROW UP TO BE A BANKER!”* There had to be another way.

**MOST PEOPLE EXPECT INNOVATIVE IDEAS TO JUST MAGICALLY HAPPEN.** —

— **THE TRUTH IS THAT YOU HAVE TO ACTIVELY PUT IN THE EFFORT.**

# LET'S CREATE THE FUTURE

---

In my desperate, two-decade search for an idea, I enrolled in an MBA program. I hoped the classroom would inspire my discovery, but then I sat through class after class, questioning my decision. What had I done? How would any of these courses help me be an entrepreneur? Then something happened that changed my world.

My marketing professor, Jay Handleman, said, “Today, we’re going to talk about the hunt for cool.” My mind sparked awake. What was he talking about? We read Malcolm Gladwell’s famous 1997 article, “The Coolhunt.” The article spoke about how cool works and the entire profession of studying trends and culture to figure out what’s next.<sup>5</sup> I was blown away. How did I not know about this? Had I been working at a bank too long?

I was inspired to turn my own relentless hunt into a hunt for cool. I realized I could teach myself to code and build a place online where people could share new ideas, trends, and innovations. I called it Trend Hunter, and it was one of the first crowd-sharing communities.

Having said that, I didn’t think Trend Hunter would become what it is today—the world’s largest research platform, with billions of views. My dreams were more simple because I was coding this site in 2005, before Facebook and YouTube were really developed. The idea of making something that could go “viral” wasn’t as commonplace as it is today. Instead, I was inspired because I thought that someone, somewhere, might share an idea on Trend Hunter that would inspire my big idea. I didn’t realize that Trend Hunter was the idea.

I also failed to internalize that this new website was basically my childhood magazine-scouring activity made digital. That means I never connected any of this inspiration to my father until my publisher pointed it out. My publisher asked me to interview my dad to better realize how *his* relentless search for ideas turned into *mine*. So I spent a weekend asking my father all the questions I never asked as a kid.

One week after that interview, my dad had a heart attack and passed away. I was devastated, but when I look back, I realize that if I knew my dad was going to pass, I would have spent my last weekend interviewing him, which is exactly what I got to do.

My dad saw the very beginnings of Trend Hunter, but he didn't get to see it grow. He would have been very proud to see what happened with my little project. In just a few years, our view count went from thousands to millions to billions. We started getting more traffic than almost every newspaper on the planet.

As a research platform, there was nothing like it. Trend Hunter was 20 times faster at market research than anything I'd experienced running innovation at a bank. Using artificial intelligence, 150 million visitors, and a team of human researchers, we could do months of research in hours. We started crafting custom reports for brands, enabling them to innovate more efficiently and to find better ideas, faster.

In 2009, I wanted to write an innovation manual to capture everything I'd learned in my professional hunt for ideas. Titled *Exploiting Chaos*, the book was the right title at the right time. The world started becoming very chaotic, and I was suddenly the "chaos guru." I started getting invites from Fortune 500 CEOs who needed urgent help. A few big clients led to 50 more, then 100, then 200, and now around 700 brands.

Today, Trend Hunter has grown into the largest trend firm and has become an innovation accelerator. We've been very fortunate to work on more than 10,000 custom projects and innovation workshops. We even got to help NASA prototype the journey to Mars!

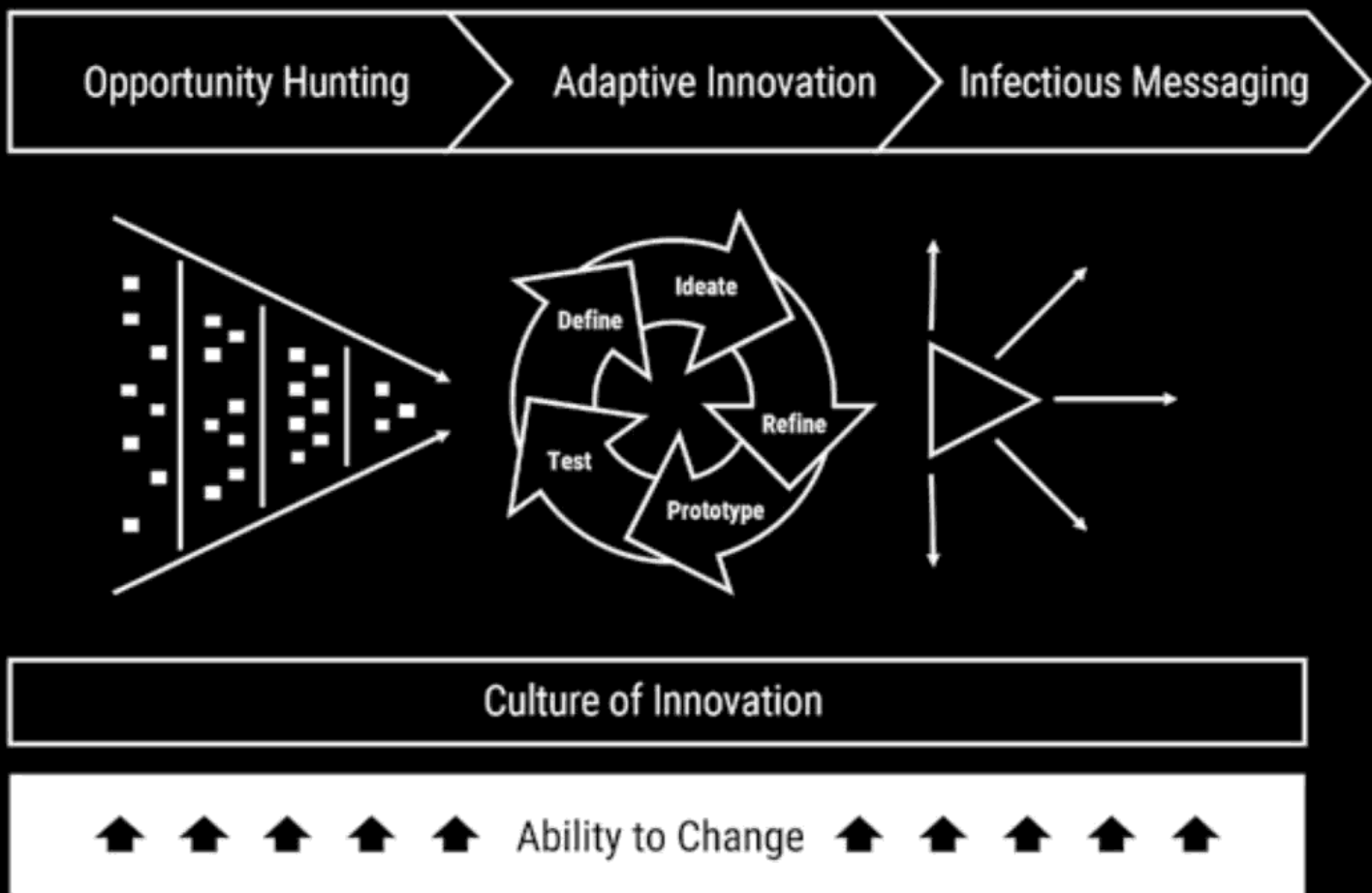
We have learned from each experience and this book is the complete collection of everything we have learned and tried. I truly believe these battle-tested methods will help you realize your full potential, faster. If you want more, sign up for our free weekly newsletter, visit [TrendHunter.com](http://TrendHunter.com), or visit me at one of our epic Future Festivals.

Enjoy the book!

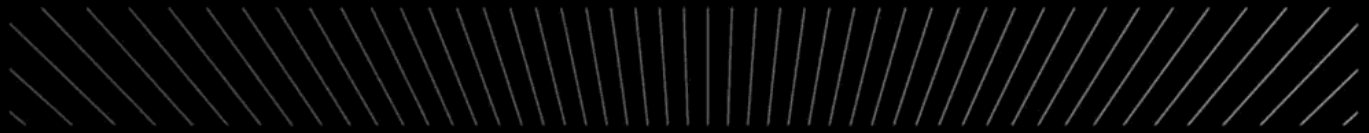
—JEREMY

[JeremyGutsche.com](http://JeremyGutsche.com)

# Create the Future Framework



# THE ABILITY TO CHANGE



Many people will tell you that culture is the most important thing you need for innovation to happen. I used to be one of them. However, after working with 700 leadership teams and brands, I have come to a deeper realization: whether you are an entrepreneur dreaming of your next idea, an ambitious hard-worker, or a billionaire CEO, the most important trait you need for our fast-moving future is the ability to change.

Master change and you will be in a position to better spot new ideas, act on opportunity, and know how to convince others about your wonderful new vision.

The key is to realize that your ability to change is hindered by seven traps that all relate to your expertise. In many ways these traps are like puzzles, because if you understand how they work, you can defeat them to your own advantage.



# WE ARE MORE DEPENDENT ON PAST DECISIONS THAN WE LIKE TO THINK

---

There are no horses in space, and yet you should expect that there are exactly two horses in space. And while we're on the topic, you should expect those horses to be 4 feet, 8½ inches wide. Why? Because NASA's Solid Rocket Boosters were designed using that exact width. Not coincidentally, but specifically because it's the exact width of two horses.

If you truly want to understand NASA's choice, you have to go back to the Roman Empire. The Romans controlled the most land because they were able to patrol it with their two-horse Roman war chariots. Those chariots would tear up the land, creating deep ruts. If you were a farmer driving your wagon, you might get caught in one of those ruts, resulting in a broken wheel.

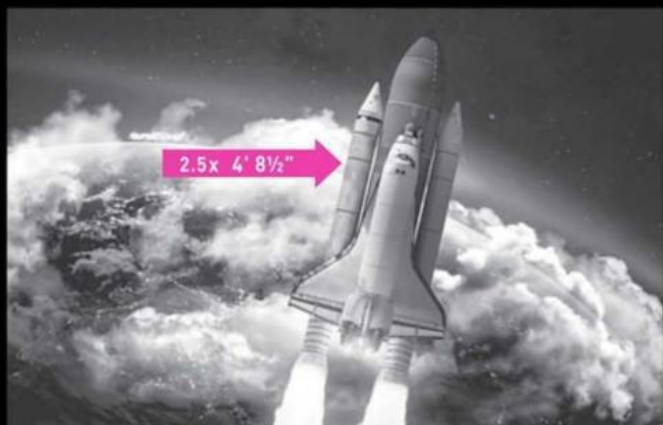
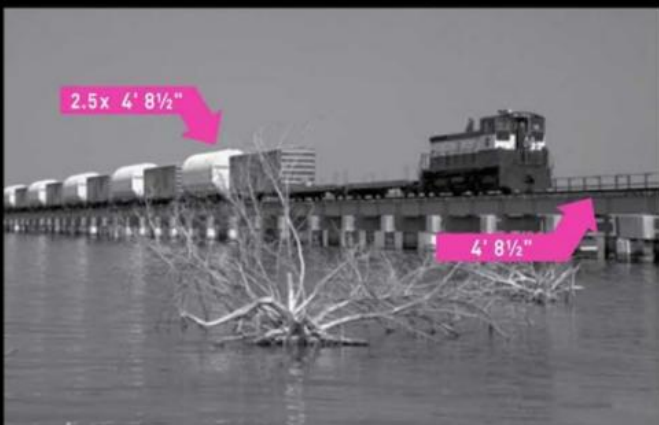
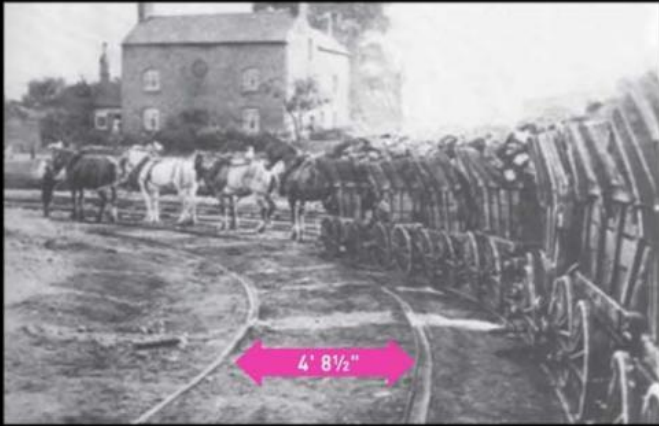
If you were a clever farmer, however, you would measure the width of the ruts and realize that they were 4 feet, 8½ inches wide—the width of the axles on the two-horse Roman war chariot. You would then design your own wagon to match.

Soon, all the wagons were made to be 4 feet, 8½ inches wide. When the first railways were built, they were created specifically for mining carts pulled by horses. So they made those railways 4 feet, 8½ inches wide.

Naturally, the first European trains extended those best practices with tracks that were 4 feet, 8½ inches wide. Americans built their own trains, but by then the ideal width had already been determined: 4 feet, 8½ inches wide.

4' 8 1/2"





Soon, smart people replaced all the train tracks for modern trains that were bigger, better, and faster. The new tracks remained the same size. Even when high-speed trains started going over 200 miles an hour, many of them continued on tracks that were 4 feet, 8½ inches wide.

Logically, when NASA began making and transporting the Solid Rocket Boosters from Utah to Florida, they took into account that they needed to fit on tracks that were—you guessed it—4 feet, 8½ inches wide.

The Solid Rocket Boosters are a bit wider, as they overlap the width of the track, and a few different widths of track have been tested over time. However, the astonishing reality is that we are using the same standard as the Romans and the Solid Rocket Booster widths were determined by the width of two horse butts.

Next time you see an image of the space shuttle, I want you to look closely. There are not two horses pulling it, yet we still rely on the width determined by the Roman war chariots, even in our pursuit of outer space exploration.

Today, this might seem ridiculous, but in each incremental decision, people probably weighed the alternatives and decided to simply stick with what was there before. They stayed caught in a groove.

The takeaway is that we are more dependent on our past decisions than we like to admit. Once a path is set, we often walk down it blindly, failing to question why it was put there to begin with and whether a better path might exist.

---

*EVERYONE WANTS TO MAKE INNOVATION HAPPEN, ———*  
*——— BUT NOT EVERYONE BREAKS FREE FROM THE PATH.*

# TO BREAK FROM THE PATH, YOU MUST ESCAPE SEVEN TRAPS

---

Over time, it seems that we find fixed paths to travel within, just like those grooved ruts carved by the chariot wagons of the Roman Empire. Long ago, it seemed easier to build a wagon to fit the grooves than to imagine a new vehicle that could chart its own path.

One decision leads to another, and eventually we end up in a place that makes no sense. There are several factors that cause us to stay in those grooved paths, which I call the 7 TRAPS OF PATH DEPENDENCY.

---

*ESCAPE THE TRAPS, AND YOU WILL FIND  
NEW PATHS OF OPPORTUNITY.*

---

I have been working on tactics for these traps with some of the brightest minds in the world, and by the end of this book, you will be better equipped to break from the path.

If you've ever dreamed about what great ideas might be within your grasp, this section will nurture those feelings and give you tactics and exercises to bring you closer to your full potential. It will give you the push you need to overcome path dependencies, break free from the traps, and move toward something new. You'll develop the tools to engage your next big idea and make change a reality.

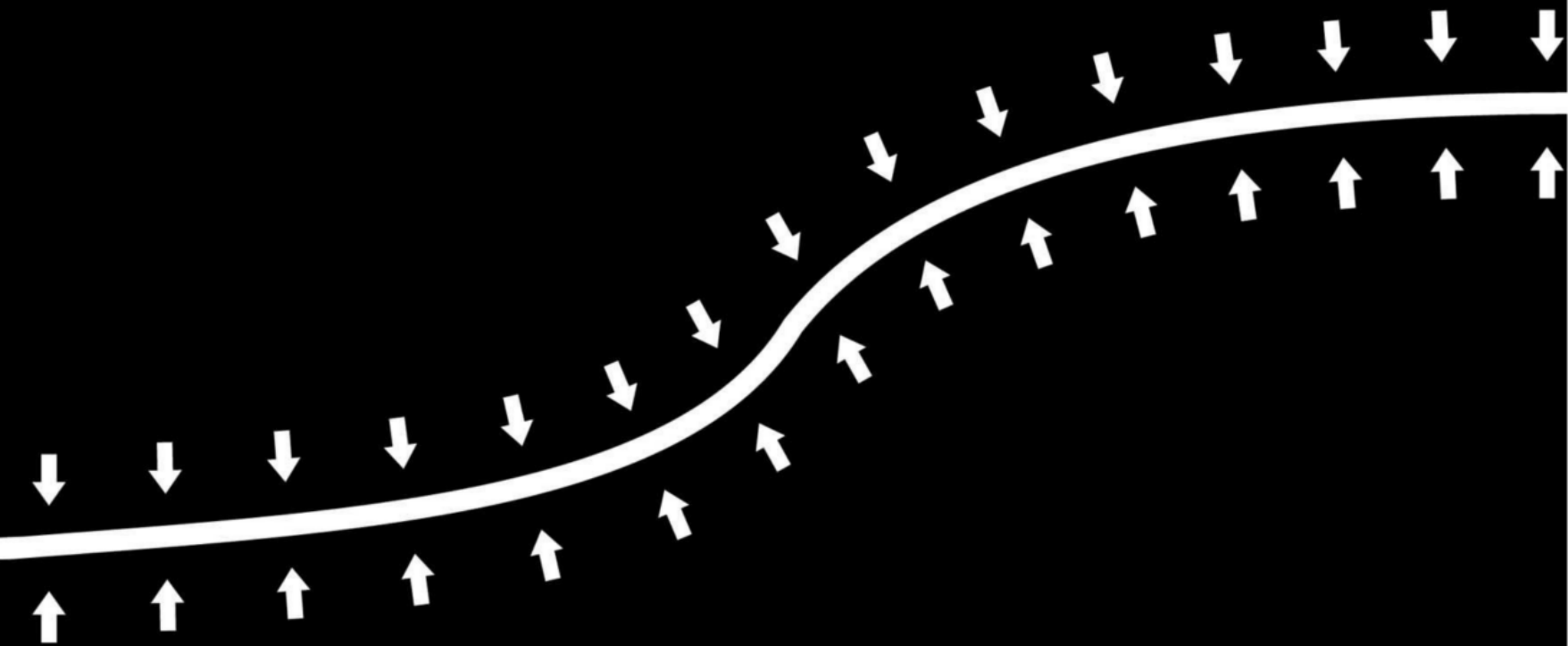
---

*IF YOU WANT TO CREATE THE FUTURE, YOU NEED TO DODGE THE  
TRAPS KEEPING YOU FIXATED ON THE PATH YOU ARE ALREADY ON.*

---

# The 7 Traps of Path Dependency

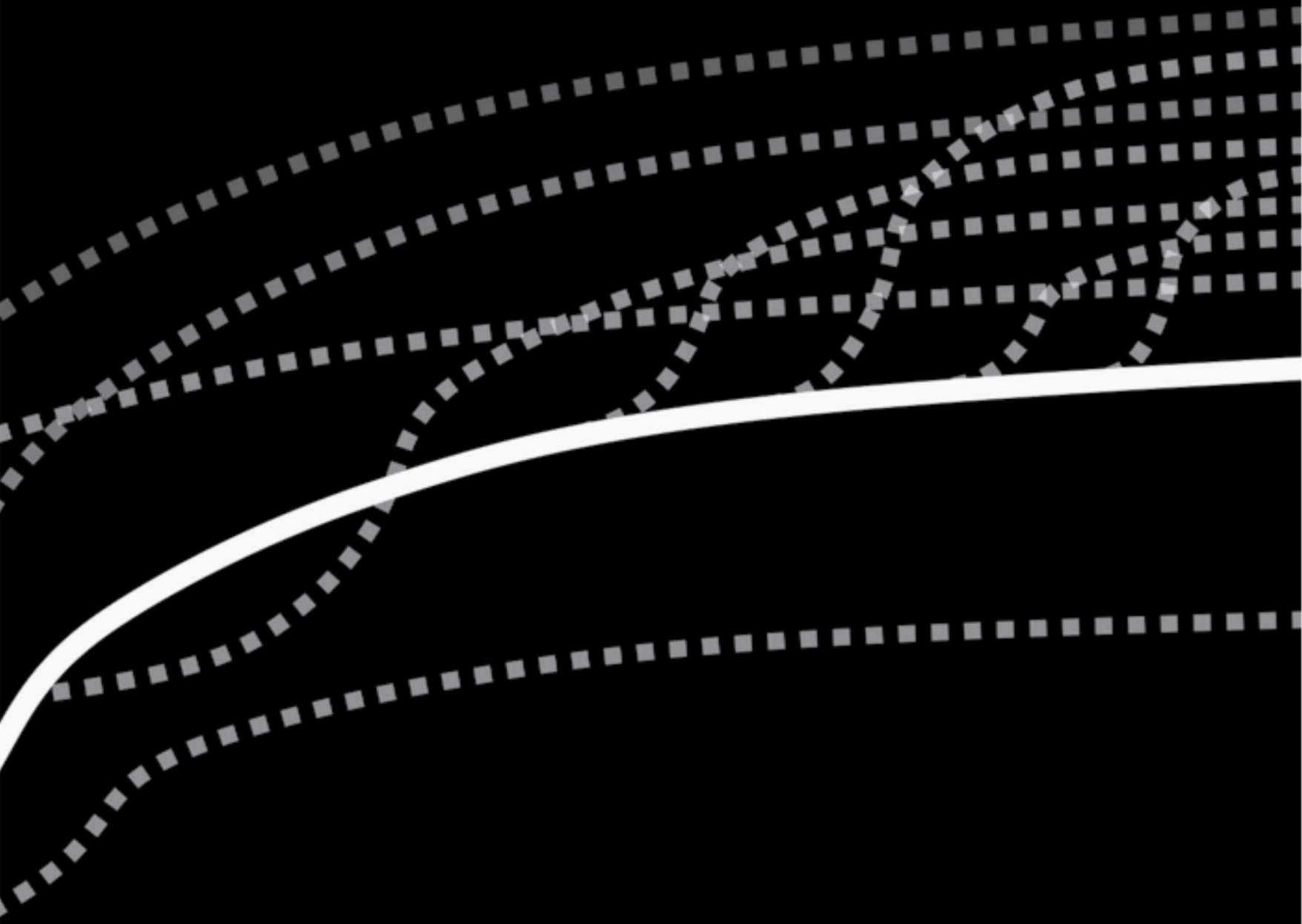
1. The Subtlety of Opportunity
2. Neurological Shortcuts
3. The Ease of Inaction
4. Optionality
5. The Traps of Success
6. Linear Thinking
7. Discomfort vs. Breakthrough



# THE 7 TRAPS OF PATH DEPENDENCY

---

1. **The Subtlety of Opportunity**
2. Neurological Shortcuts
3. The Ease of Inaction
4. Optionality
5. The Traps of Success
6. Linear Thinking
7. Discomfort vs. Breakthrough



## THE SUBTLETY OF OPPORTUNITY

---

When people miss an opportunity in their own industry, it's not because they were blind to new ideas. Typically, smart people miss out because new ideas seem awkward and different. To find your breakthrough, you need to better spot the subtle clues that hint toward great ideas.



# YOUR BREAKTHROUGH IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK, BUT IT IS EASY TO MISS OUT

---

Let me tell you the story of Tony the Inventor. Tony was a relentless entrepreneur at heart, but he struggled to figure out his big idea. He knew only one thing, which was that his idea would be a gadget. He grew his career at a gadget company called Phillips and ascended to the role of VP of strategy and new ventures.

Eventually he came up with a mysterious idea for a hard drive gadget. He pitched the product numerous times, but nobody at Phillips bought into his vision. However, he was dedicated to turning his idea into a reality, so he quit his job and began pursuing his own venture. The problem was that he couldn't raise the money to make a prototype, which would have cost millions of dollars. After two years of trying, he felt his dream was almost at an end.

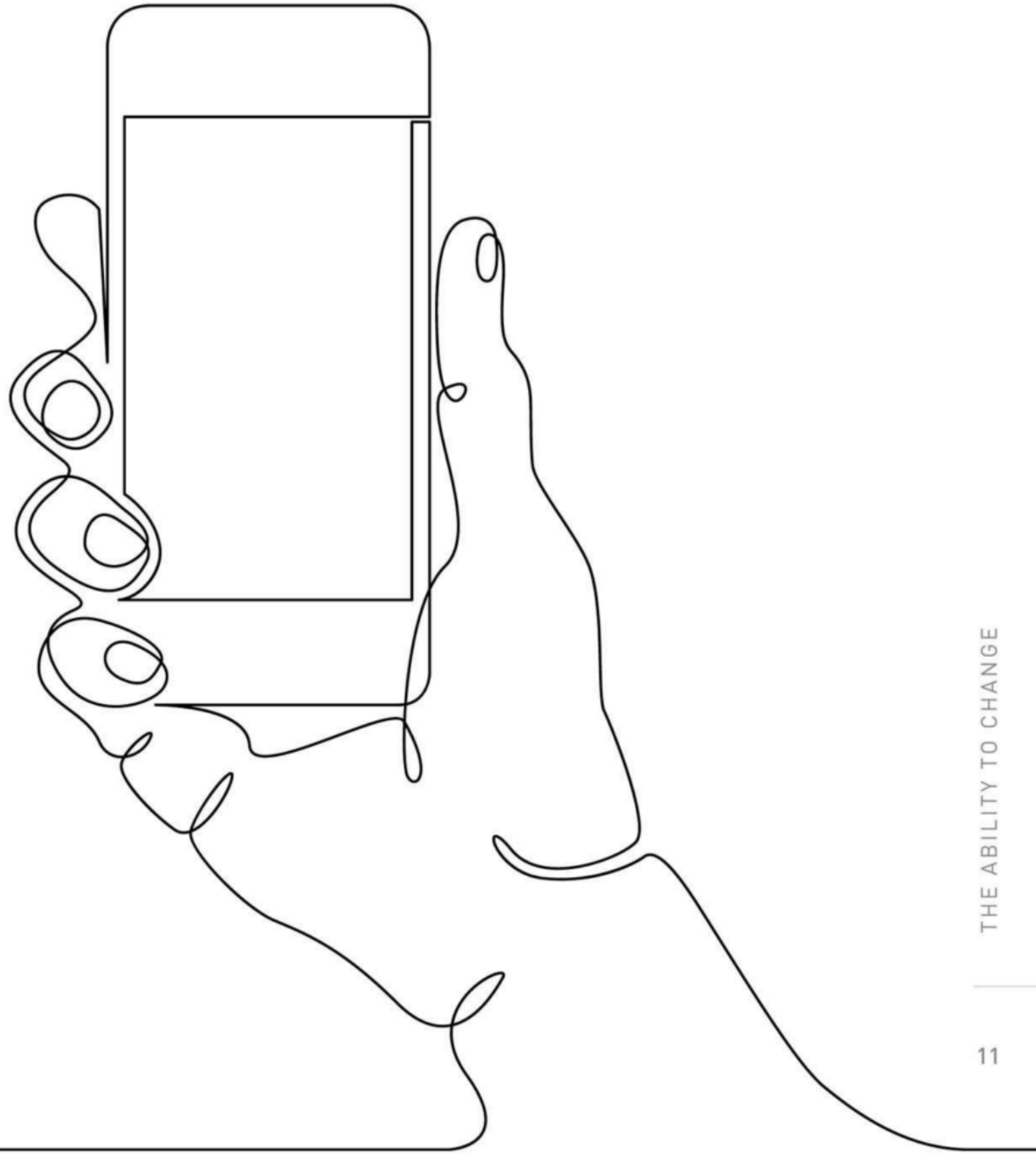
Before giving up entirely, he approached a CEO buddy and offered all of his intellectual property for his big idea. In exchange the CEO would give Tony the job of making the product. His CEO buddy accepted, despite the fact that the company was struggling. After a few months of innovation, the prototype was ready, and Tony hopped on a plane to take it to the eager CEO. Unfortunately, when he got off the plane, he realized the device had slipped out of his pocket! Luckily, the airline helped him form a search party, and two hours later they found the prototype, which had slipped between two seats. As it turned out, Tony's buddy was Steve Jobs, the company was Apple, and the prototype was the historic first iPod.<sup>6</sup>

Tony became head of Apple's new division, which later became the iPhone, and spearheaded a trajectory that changed the world.

---

*THE PATHWAY TO GREATNESS CAN BE FRAUGHT WITH DOUBT.*

---



*THERE IS A SUBTLETY TO GREAT IDEAS.*

*BE DETERMINED!*



# EVEN IDEAS THAT CHANGE THE WORLD CAN BE DISCOUNTED BY MARKET LEADERS

---

Most people immediately understood the potential of Tony's prototype, but the brightest people in the industry did not. Included in the list of notables who passed on the iPod are—

1. **PHILLIPS:** Gave up on Tony, their VP of strategy and new ventures.
2. **MICROSOFT:** Steve Ballmer, worth \$41 billion—“There's no chance!”<sup>7</sup>
3. **MOTOROLA:** Padmasree Warrior, CTO—“Nothing revolutionary about it . . .”<sup>8</sup>
4. **PALM:** Ed Colligan, CEO, worth \$3.4 billion—“[They] are not going to figure it out.”
5. **NOKIA:** (market leader with 1 billion customers), Anssi Vanjoki, Chief Strategist —“With Mac, Apple remained a niche [expect the same] in mobile phones”<sup>9</sup> and switching to Android would be like the Finnish boys who “pee in their pants” for warmth in the winter.<sup>10</sup>
6. **BLACKBERRY:** Mike Lazaridis (worth \$2 billion)—“[With Apple's ads] customers are now coming to the store [and leaving with a Blackberry], and so what it's actually done is increased our sales.”<sup>11</sup>

Why did the market leaders dismiss the potential of such a revolutionary product when you and EVERYBODY else immediately realized the smartphone would be awesome? They were too comfortable and confident in their familiar paths.

For the record, Tony would eventually leave Apple to start a new gadget company that was positioned to make a better thermostat. The company was Nest, which he sold to Google for \$3.2 billion.<sup>12</sup>

---

*THE PARADOX OF SUCCESS IS THAT NEW IDEAS OFTEN SEEM  
AWKWARD AT FIRST, CAUSING THEM TO BE OVERLOOKED.*

---

# SMART PEOPLE OVERESTIMATE THEIR LEVEL OF CONTROL

---

There was once a guy named Ferruccio who could fix anything. Following WWII, he could turn almost any deserted war machine into farming equipment. Eventually, he started his own tractor company.

When he first became successful, he bought a Ferrari and loved it, leading him to join the Ferrari racing club. It was there that Ferruccio met Enzo Ferrari and told him about an idea that would make the car's clutch better. Enzo got upset. "You stick to making tractors, and I'll make cars," he told Ferruccio.



Turns out, Ferruccio's last name was Lamborghini.<sup>13</sup> The takeaway is that successful people and companies overestimate their own control and command of their market.

---

*OFTEN, THE IDEA THAT'S DISMISSED BECOMES THE ONE THAT TOPPLES AN EMPIRE.*

---

# IRONICALLY, MARKET LEADERS ARE AT A GREATER RISK OF MISSING OUT

---

Enzo Ferrari wasn't the first market leader to dismiss an innovative idea presented to him. History is littered with instances where a market leader couldn't see the potential in a rivaling idea.

## Market Leaders Who Overlooked Great Ideas

- England rejected Thomas Edison's light bulb and said it was "unworthy of the attention of practical or scientific men."<sup>14</sup>
- Western Union rejected Alexander Graham Bell's telephone, saying it was "idiotic. Why would any person want to use this ungainly and impractical device?"<sup>15</sup>
- The *Kansas City Star* fired Walt Disney, saying he "lacked imagination and had no good ideas."<sup>16</sup>
- Kodak invented digital photography in 1975 but didn't adapt and went bankrupt.<sup>17</sup>
- HP rejected Steve Wozniak's computer ideas three times.<sup>18</sup>
- Atari could have owned 33% of Apple for \$50,000.
- EDS could have bought Microsoft (\$60 million).<sup>19</sup>
- Excite could have bought Google (\$1 million).<sup>20</sup>
- Myspace could have owned Facebook (\$75 million).<sup>21</sup>
- Yahoo could have owned Facebook (\$1 billion).<sup>22</sup>
- Britannica could have been Encarta, but they rejected Bill Gates.
- Encarta could have been Wikipedia.<sup>23</sup>
- Blockbuster had three chances to buy Netflix (\$50 million).<sup>24</sup>
- You and I could have been a lot wealthier if we put all our money into Amazon.

---

**MARKET LEADERS CONSISTENTLY MISS OUT ON GREAT NEW IDEAS**

**BECAUSE THEY OVERESTIMATE THEIR MARKET DOMINANCE.**

---

# ALMOST EVERY TALE OF DISRUPTION INVOLVES SMART PEOPLE DISMISSING A SUBTLE NEW IDEA

---

Let me paint you a picture of an iconic innovator. This is a game of **GUESS THE COMPANY**. Here are a few facts:

- Invented “the most successful single product of all time”
- Invented the mouse
- Invented the graphic user interface
- Invented the concept of email
- Invented networked computers
- Built the foundation for the internet

Did you guess Apple? Microsoft? Or did you know that the correct answer is Xerox? These days, it seems like a trick question, but in 1973, researchers at the Xerox Parc Research Lab launched the Xerox Altos and changed the course of history.

The Altos had a mouse, graphic user interface, email, and everything you needed to copy, paste, and print your documents. The Altos could remind you of upcoming appointments and even had image processing reminiscent of the animated GIFs you see today. This Xerox model was more than a decade ahead of its time. Xerox had more than 1,000 of the Altos stations built, but the product was never sold because the company was too busy harvesting the market for its profitable photocopiers.

---

*SUCCESSFUL COMPANIES OFTEN FAIL TO SEE THE POTENTIAL OF IDEAS OUTSIDE THEIR WHEELHOUSE.*

---

In 1979, about a decade after the Altos project began, Steve Jobs and Bill Gates took tours of the facility. Those on the project, including Larry Tesler, were more than delighted to see someone take an interest in the project. Tesler explained, "During that demo, Steve again got very excited. He was pacing around the room and occasionally looking at the screen. . . . Jobs was there going, 'What is going on here? You're sitting on a gold mine. Why aren't you doing anything with this?'"<sup>25</sup>



*The Xerox Alto, 1973*

Ironically, Tesler notes that they only showed Jobs 1% of what Xerox was up to. Five years later, Apple and Microsoft would launch their own Altos-inspired devices.

In the words of Steve Jobs, "Within 10 minutes, it was obvious to me that all computers would work like this someday. Basically, they were copier-heads that just had no clue about what a computer could do. . . . Xerox could have owned the entire computer industry today."<sup>26</sup>

---

**BEING OUTSIDE OF AN INDUSTRY MAKES IT EASIER  
TO SEE THE POTENTIAL IN NEW IDEAS.**

---



# IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO SEE POTENTIAL IN SOMETHING NEW

---

A friend of mine, Todd Henry, introduced me to the tale of a struggling musician named James. James had talent, but there are millions of talented musicians who never get their music out there. What they need is a big break.

One day, James was approached with the opportunity of a lifetime. One of the biggest bands in the world heard his tracks and invited him to be their opening act. The offer was to be part of a 27-city world tour. It was any musician's dream.

Eager and excited, he walked into his first stadium and faced a crowd of people who were going to hear his songs. He was about to be famous, and he could feel it. He began strumming his guitar and rocking out to his first songs. But the audience was silent. They didn't cheer when he expected them to cheer. No worries—he moved on to the second song. Still more silence. Then he started to play his third song, and the audience started to react—with booing.

It was a terrible beginning, but he persisted. At the second concert, things were different. They started to boo on the first song. By the sixth concert, they booed before he even strummed his guitar. He gave the audience the middle finger, threw his guitar, and quit the tour.

It would be easy to give up when experiencing such rejection. But he didn't. And that's the tale of James Marshall "Jimi" Hendrix opening for the Monkees. Hendrix was playing new, innovative music, and the Monkees' fans weren't ready for it.

---

*EVEN YOUR BIGGEST FUTURE FANS MIGHT NEED TIME TO  
UNDERSTAND YOUR NEW WAY OF DOING THINGS.*

---

# MOST BILLION DOLLAR START-UPS EXPERIENCED AT LEAST SOME LEVEL OF REJECTION

---

The internet dates back to 1952, but it didn't experience full traction for almost 40 years. The internet's "big break," if you will, happened when the concept of email was haphazardly introduced in the 1970s. By the 1980s, the majority of all internet traffic was email communication.

With that context in mind, Jack Smith and Sabeer Bhatia set out to pitch investors on the concept of Hotmail. Imagine: a service where anyone in the world could get their own email address, absolutely free! It was a relatively simple business model, which could be funded by advertising.

This didn't seem as complicated as you might think, but investors hated it. Smith and Bhatia's idea was rejected 100 times. Eventually, the private equity firm Draper Fisher Jurvetson cut them a check for \$300,000. A year and a half after their launch, Hotmail was sold to Microsoft for \$400 million. Not a bad return.

## Other iconic companies that struggled with having funding rejected:

1. Google
2. Apple
3. Cisco
4. LinkedIn
5. Amazon
6. Salesforce
7. Airbnb

---

*IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO SEE THE  
POTENTIAL IN SOMETHING NEW.<sup>27</sup>*

PROPERTY  
MEMORANDUM  
SUBJECT

## WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

---

- How might you change your weekly routines to ensure you are open to disruptive thinking and subtle ideas?
- What are the most recent ideas that have been suggested and dismissed?
- If you involved 10 people unrelated to your market, what ideas would they suggest for your industry?

## TACTICS

---

1. Assume you are incorrect.
2. Be more open to new ideas.
3. Reward and encourage dissent.
4. Designate a Devil's Advocate.
5. Discuss the competing alternative to your decisions.
6. Perform case studies about emerging trends.
7. Embrace diversity.
8. Actively hunt trends.
9. Study other markets.
10. Push yourself to see potential in awkward ideas.
11. Learn about similar companies that missed key opportunities.
12. Get outsiders to suggest ideas you might be missing.
13. Hire leaders from different markets.
14. Host idea competitions.
15. Invite junior hires, outsiders, and customers to a workshop.

---

---

---

---

# NEXT STEP

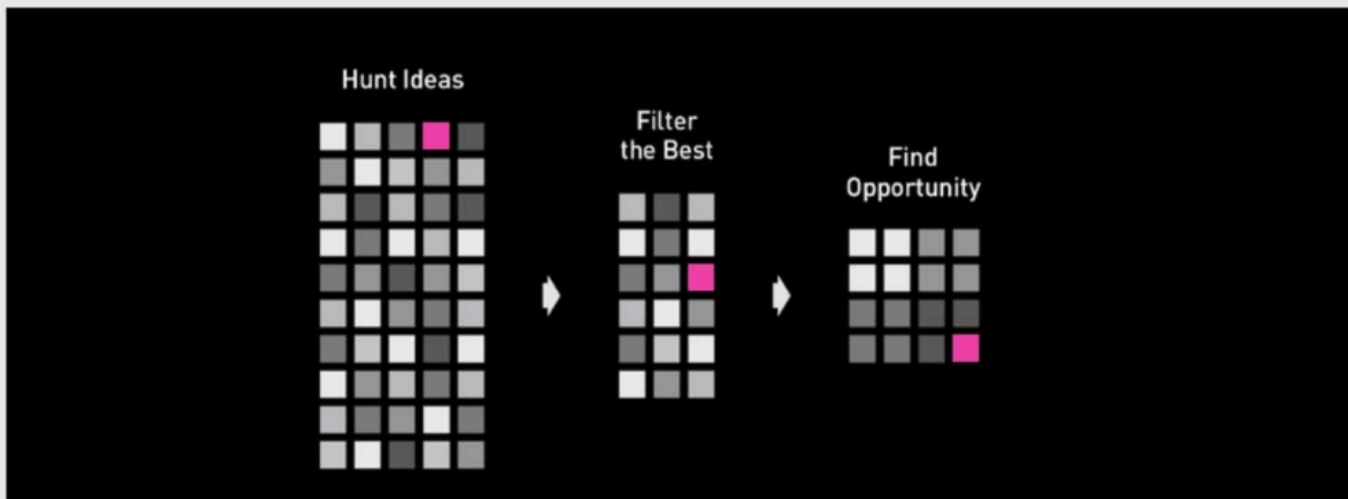
---

To stay on top of opportunity, you have to put in the work.

We often miss out on ideas within our own industries because:

1. We are busy.
2. We feel in control.
3. We get caught in a groove (for the seven reasons discussed in each section of this book).
4. There's too much to track.\*

\* In fact, I'd argue that the act of getting inspired has become overwhelming and distracting at times, but it's a necessity. You have to make time to scan for ideas, filter down to the best ones, and look for patterns:



The many ways to get better at hunting opportunity will be discussed in an entire section of the flip side of this book. For now, the key takeaway is that you need to force yourself to explore new ideas if you don't want to miss out.

---

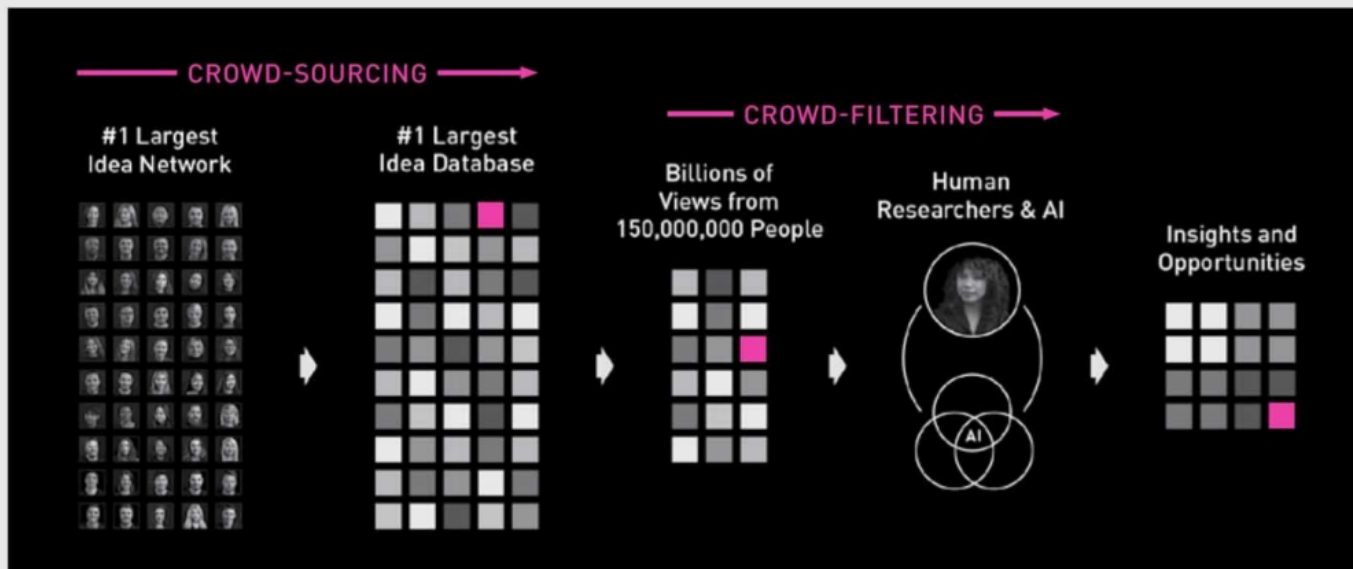
**TRACK INNOVATION RELATED TO YOUR MARKET  
AND SET ASIDE TIME TO REFLECT ON WHAT HAS CHANGED.**

---

# LOOKING FOR MORE?

If you would like to dive deeper into trends or opportunities, join millions of people who get free inspiration at Trend Hunter, the world's largest collection of new ideas.

When I started Trend Hunter, I was effectively trying to automate a process to collect insights from around the world in the hope that I'd discover an idea that could become my own. Today, it has become a tremendous resource that could simplify your own efforts to track trends in the consumer markets you care about most.



We enable anyone in the world to contribute ideas, and more than 200,000 people have signed up so far. We publish the best ideas and use our audience of 150 million people to filter out the most popular concepts; to date, we have analyzed several billion onsite choices. Finally, we use a combination of human research and artificial intelligence to identify core patterns and insights.

The next step, of course, is yours. Uncover the trends and insights that are meaningful to you, and channel them into action!

TRACK THE TOPICS OF YOUR CHOOSING FOR FREE WITH  
A CUSTOMIZABLE DASHBOARD: [TRENDHUNTER.COM/DASHBOARD](https://www.trendhunter.com/dashboard)

# THE 7 TRAPS OF PATH DEPENDENCY

---

1. The Subtlety of Opportunity
2. **Neurological Shortcuts**
3. The Ease of Inaction
4. Optionality
5. The Traps of Success
6. Linear Thinking
7. Discomfort vs. Breakthrough



## NEUROLOGICAL SHORTCUTS

---

Our brain becomes fast and efficient by creating shortcuts. These shortcuts enable us to process familiar situations quickly. However, they also cause us to skip steps and miss out. In addition, we become so familiar with how we do something that we become resistant to change, particularly in areas where we have expertise.



# TRAGICALLY, WE LEARN TO LIMIT OUR CREATIVITY

---

This is my niece, Alee. She's extremely creative, which you'll discover in a page or two. One of the best things to know about Alee is that she loves dinosaurs—a lot.

I wanted to test the depth of her love, so I offered to buy her a brand-new princess doll in exchange for her dinosaur. She quickly explained to me that "T-REXES EAT PRINCESSES FOR BREAKFAST!" Shocking, but probably true.

Knowing this, let me tell you about the worst day in Alee's little history. One day, she was watching a documentary about her beloved extinct creatures, and she burst into tears.



We could barely get any words out of her, until finally, she explained the source of her deep sorrow. She explained that she was sad “‘cause there’s no more dinosaurs.” I thought she meant it was sad because dinosaurs were extinct, but it gets cuter. She clarified that she was depressed “‘cause the paleontologists already found the bones.” Tragic!

Here’s the takeaway: you need to explain that dinosaurs don’t exist, or middle school is going to be really difficult. However, every time you tell a little girl dinosaurs don’t exist, you limit her imagination.

As you progress through life, you continue to see your imagination limited. By the time you reach the working world, you’ll have learned about rules, policies, procedures, structures, compliance, past investment, and brand standards.

You’ll still want to be creative and identify as a creative person, but you’ll also get busy with a personal life, a significant other, kids, projects, meetings, and deadlines. Before we even dive into neurological shortcuts, these realities of life will start to reduce your willingness to push harder for creative ideas.

When you finally get a bright new idea, you’ll present it up the ladder, and in many cases, you’ll encounter doubt and concerns. One of my favorite clients, Bill Hayden, is the chief strategy officer for Universal Parks. He explained this dilemma to my company’s Future Festival audience by stating: “Boardrooms are full of people who built their careers challenging ideas and showing you what’s wrong.”

Over the course of your life, these realities will slowly dissolve the intensity of your creative thinking.

---

*OUR CREATIVITY GETS LIMITED BY LEARNED BEHAVIOR AND ALL  
OF THE THINGS WE DO TO FUNCTION AS PRODUCTIVE ADULTS.*

---

# YOUR ABILITY TO GET FAST AND EFFICIENT CREATES BLIND SPOTS

---

Your brain creates shortcuts to ensure you are a high-performing, quick-thinking human being. These shortcuts have a lot of upsides, but they also have incredible implications when it comes to innovation and change. Much of this can be understood by contemplating just one feature of your brain: **myelin**.

The first time Serena Williams picked up a racket, the first time Oprah picked up a microphone, and the first time J. K. Rowling picked up a pen, they had to fumble around and think about what they were doing. It wasn't as natural as it is for them today. Similarly, you have to put a lot of effort into each action when you try something new, like driving a car. You had to think about merging, accelerating, and where to look. Today, you're an expert, and driving is probably easy for you.

When you perform a task for the first time, your brain needs to figure out what you are trying to do. This results in your brain shooting a spark along a new neural pathway. Once you start practicing something over and over again, your brain decides to make it easier for you by paving a little pathway of myelin. Myelin is a white fatty tissue, and it guides your synapses, making you better and faster. As you master a skill, you start building a LOT of myelin. In fact, 40% of your brain is made up of myelin tissue. By the time you reach your 10,000 hours at a given skill (the estimated time required to achieve mastery), your top myelin pathways for that skill can be 100 times faster. The catch is that you now have one preferred pathway, and you perform this task the same way every time.

---

*PRACTICE CREATES MYELIN, WHICH MAKES YOU SMARTER AND FASTER, BUT IT ALSO MAKES YOU REPETITIVE, CONSISTENT, AND DISMISSIVE.*

---

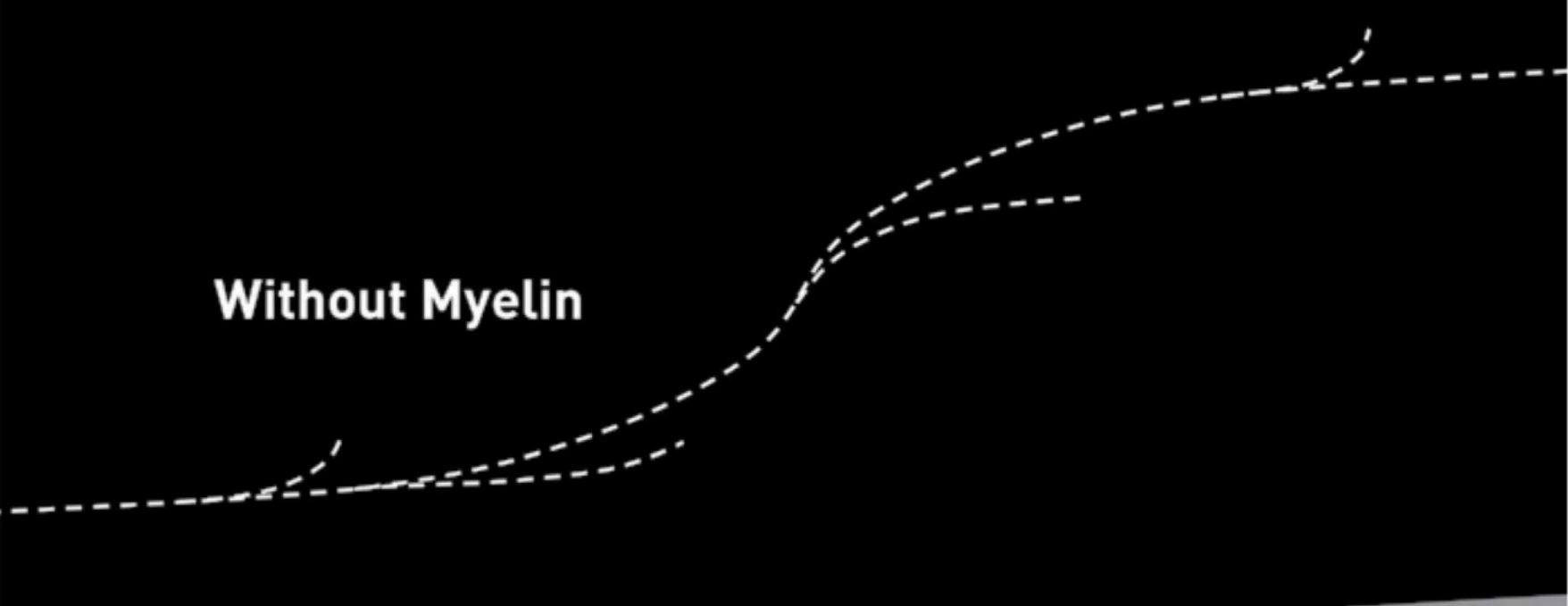
WHEN YOU PRACTICE SOMETHING NEW,  
YOUR BRAIN PAVES PATHWAYS OF MYELIN

---

## Figuring Something Out

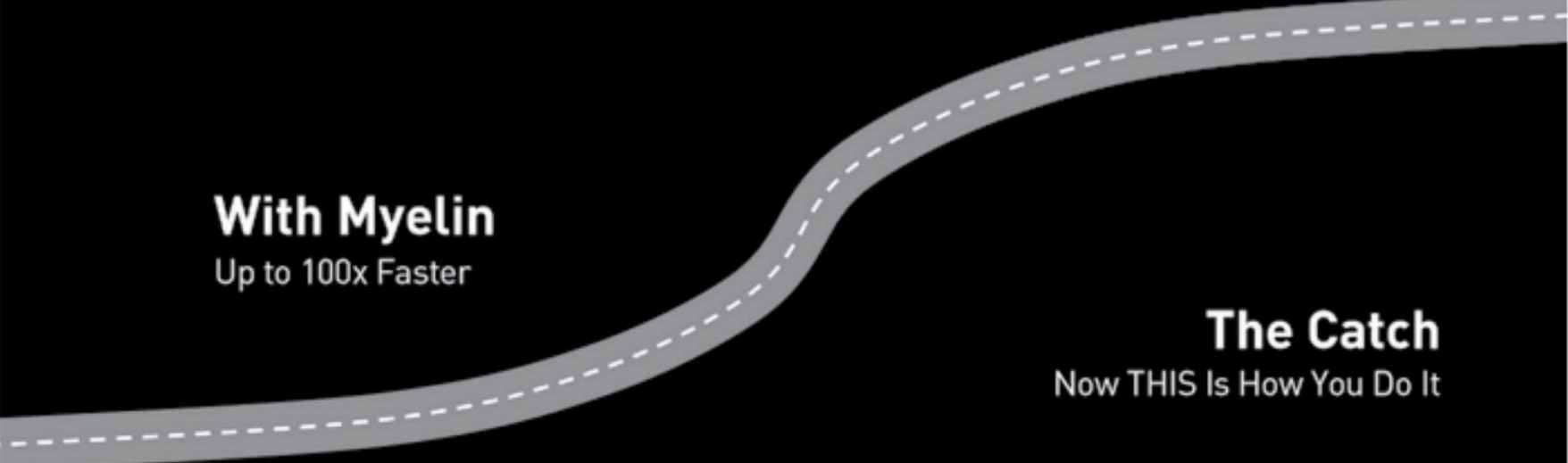
New Neural Pathway / Action Potential

**Without Myelin**



**With Myelin**

Up to 100x Faster



**The Catch**

Now THIS Is How You Do It

# YOUR NEW PARTY TRICK: PROVING HOW MENTAL SHORTCUTS WORK

---

I won't make you do a million physical activities during the course of this book, but please take a moment to try these two activities before reading ahead. Personally, I'm the type of person who dismisses such a task and ends up reading ahead, but I promise that you will enjoy this section more (AND have a new party trick) if you try the activities on this page.

## TASK 1.

**First, cross your arms, QUICKLY . . .**

Great, you did it! Easy.

## TASK 2.

**Now, uncross your arms and cross them again, QUICKLY, the opposite way.**

Task 1 was simple because it is automatic; but it feels awkward to do the same exercise differently the next time, because we are so set in our familiar path—thanks to myelin. You have crossed your arms thousands of times, and myelin has built up in your motor pathways to make this happen simply. When I change the directions slightly, however, you have to briefly think about what you're doing.

Now imagine what happens with a more complex task!

## TASK 3.

**What can you do with a paper clip?**

This time, I want you to actually work through it. Close this book and think about all of the things you can do with a paper clip. Sure, you can clip paper, but make a quick list of other options . . .

Don't flip the page until you complete Task 3.

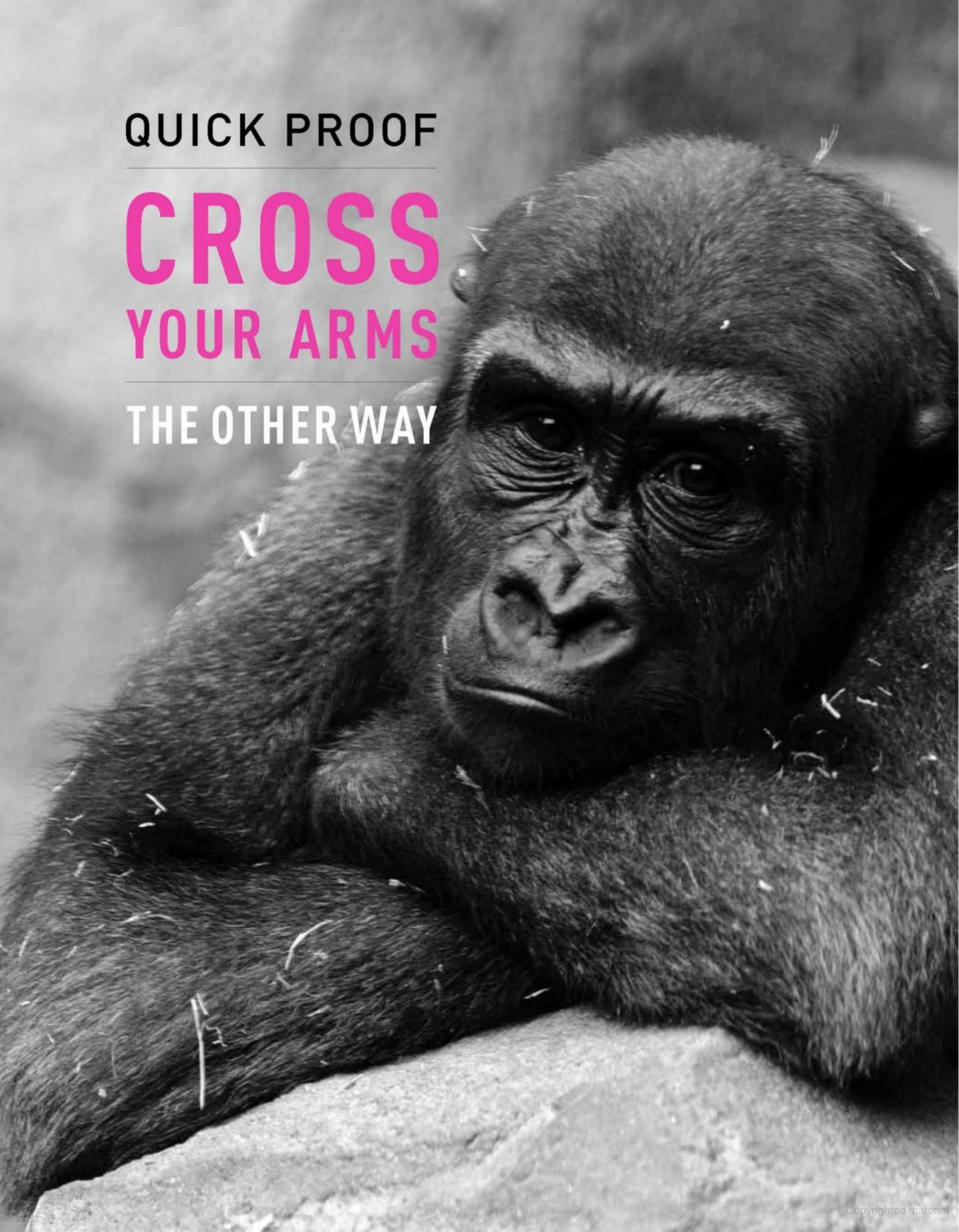
QUICK PROOF

---

**CROSS**  
**YOUR ARMS**

---

THE OTHER WAY



# HOW MANY WAYS CAN YOU USE A PAPER CLIP?

---

If you close your eyes and give it a try, or bring this exercise to a group of your fellow adults, you will probably reach 10 to 15 solid ideas.

## There are two interesting catches to this exercise:

1. Most kindergarten kids can actually give you 200 ideas or more.
2. I can usually guess which ideas a group of adults will say.

The reason this activity is so predictable is that our brains (and myelin) narrow our thinking to the things we have done or decided before. Myelin might be great for making fast decisions in situations where speed is critical, but it is a terrible trap if you care about innovation and change. This activity was just about a paper clip, but imagine how this blind spot impacts more complex decision-making.

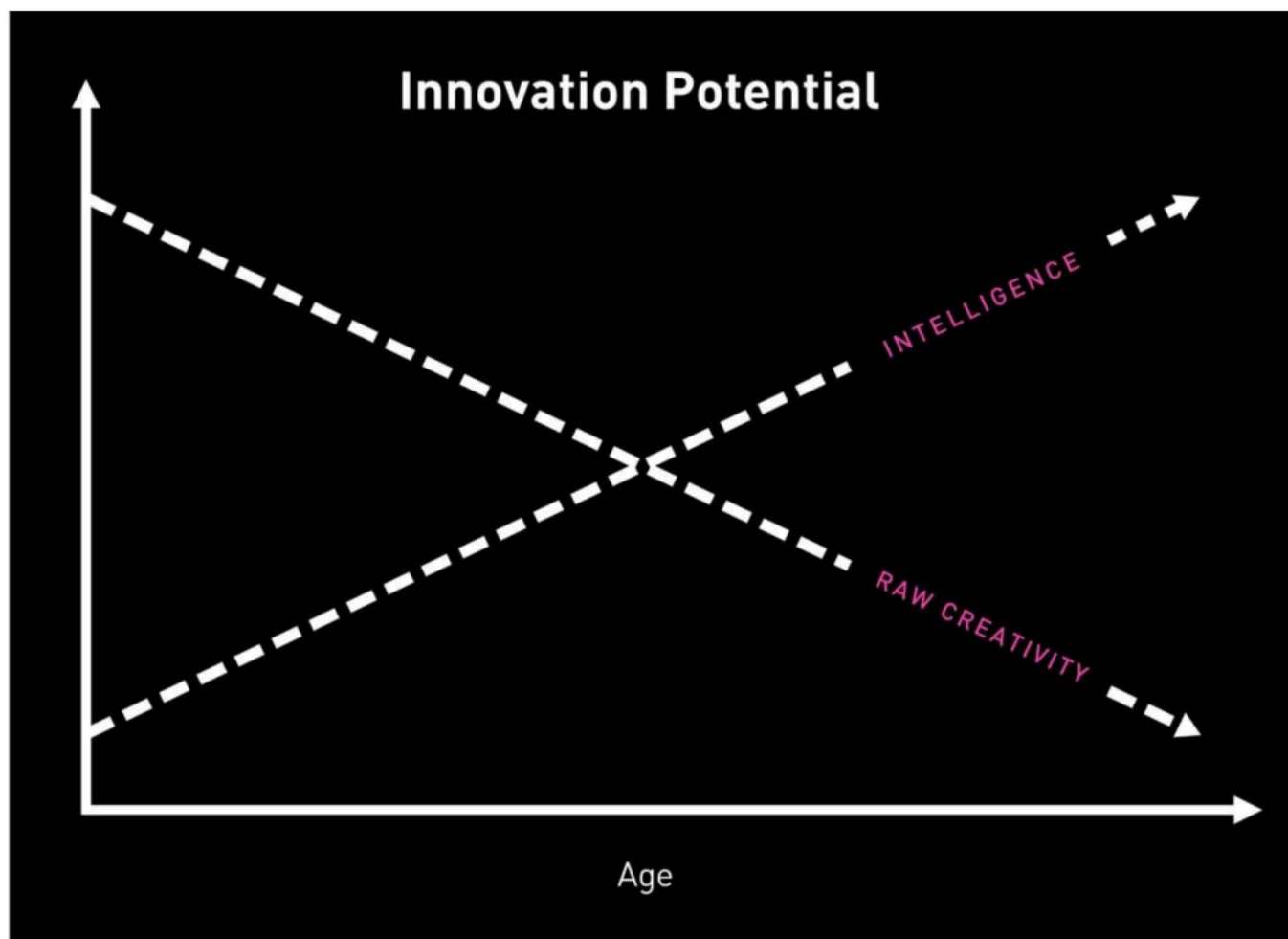
## 🔄 My Guess of What You'll Say

---

- |                      |                  |                      |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Pick a Lock       | 6. Chain         | 11. Money Clip       |
| 2. Projectile Weapon | 7. Earring       | 12. Tie Clip         |
| 3. Reset a Device    | 8. Clip Paper    | 13. Tooth Pick / Ear |
| 4. Necklace          | 9. Hang Ornament | 14. Trade It > House |
| 5. Bracelet          | 10. Collar Stay  | 15. Art              |

If you did this exercise properly, you are probably a bit shocked. If you faked it and flipped the page too early, try this on a group of colleagues or friends. You'll find that the results are replicated consistently.

The dilemma is that we are arguably becoming more intelligent over time, but we lose 95% of our raw creativity.



This loss is related to myelin and our brain's desire to create shortcuts. This paper clip experiment, known as The Alternative Uses Test (J.P. Guilford), dates back to 1967, and you can repeat it with all sorts of basic objects. Myelin makes us faster, but it also creates ruts—literal pathways—that keep us in a cycle of repeating past decisions.

*THE IMPORTANT TAKEAWAY HERE IS NOT THAT WE HAVE FEWER IDEAS THAN CHILDREN,*

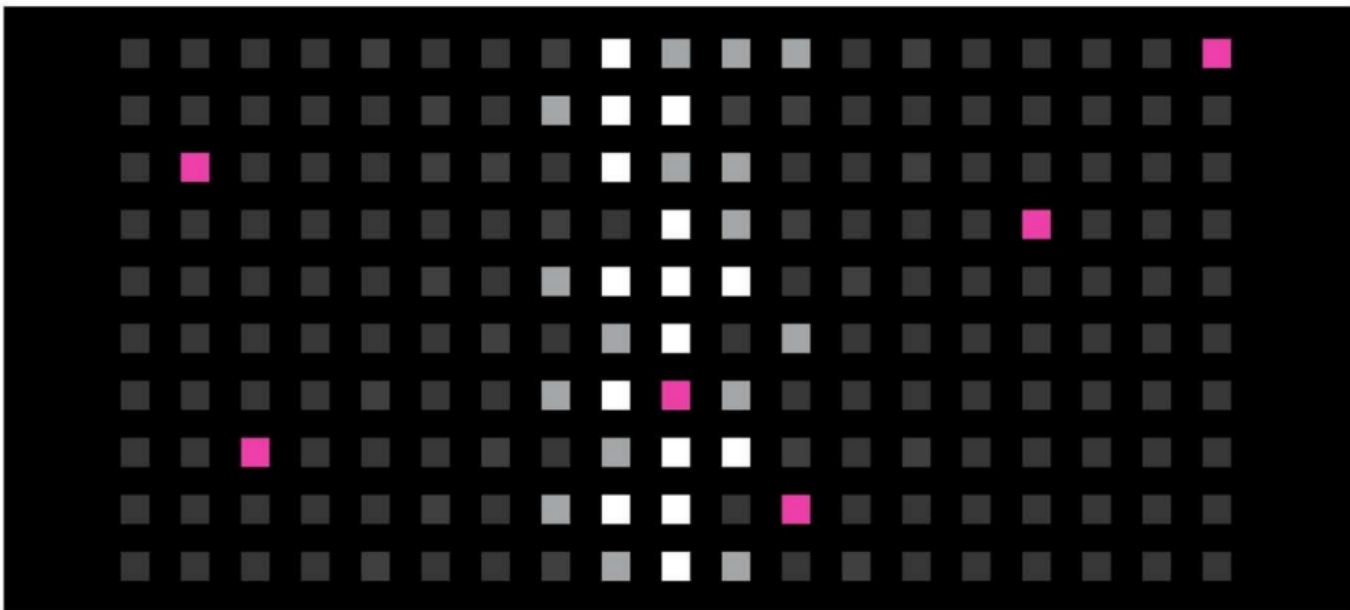
*BUT THAT WE NARROW OUR THINKING BY REVERTING TO THINGS WE'VE SEEN AND DONE BEFORE.*



# YOU HAVE MANY CREATIVE IDEAS WELL WITHIN YOUR REACH

---

The implication of this exercise is that you have more great ideas than you realize, but to access those ideas, you need to do some things differently. You need to recognize your blind spots and do specific activities to extract better thinking from your brain, because otherwise, your brain will narrow your thinking and you will miss out.



To access these wonderful gems, you need to look at your problem from multiple perspectives, which can be accomplished in workshops where you—

- include people with diverse perspectives;
- simulate how other companies would approach the same problem; or
- force yourself to solve a known problem in a different way.

---

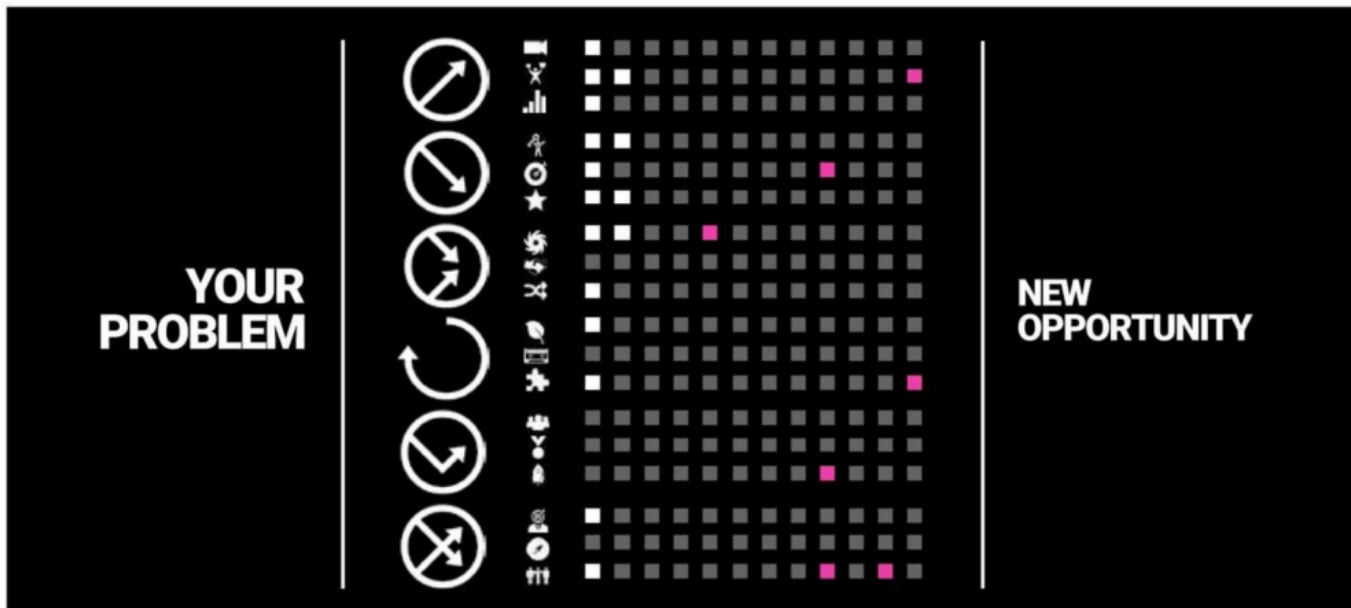
*THE OBVIOUS BENEFIT OF A WORKSHOP IS THAT IT BREAKS YOU OUT  
OF YOUR ROUTINE, POTENTIALLY GETTING YOU TO A NEW IDEA.*

---

The more exciting benefit, however, is that you are also training your brain and thus building new myelin pathways that enable you to look at your problem from different perspectives.

Practicing creativity will make you smarter, faster, and better at innovation and change.

This idea of expansive thinking is a typical concept I am asked to help with when running workshops for high-performance teams like Google or Coca-Cola. These teams are full of bright people who have thought exhaustively about solutions in many different categories, but there's always something new, something overlooked, or something that is suddenly a good fit due to evolving technology or cultural shifts.



When you look at your problem from different angles, you are more likely to extract hidden potential. Meanwhile, you will build new myelin to make your brain better at creative problem-solving. The next pages present an overview of sample workshops that I would encourage you to test and practice.

*IF YOU WANT TO REALIZE YOUR FULL POTENTIAL, YOU NEED TO PRACTICE*

*CREATIVE THINKING AND USING WORKSHOPS TO BUILD NEW MYELIN.*

# EFFECTIVE WORKSHOPS LEAD TO NEW IDEAS, WHILE TRAINING YOUR BRAIN TO BE MORE CREATIVE

---

As someone who has conducted more than a thousand workshops, these are my favorites:

## Trend Hunter Menu of Workshops

1. **RAPID PROTOTYPING**—What if you worked very quickly to develop a new product or service? (Examples of how to do this are in Part 2 of this book.)
2. **SIMULATION EXERCISES**—Imagine a specific disruption or opportunity has occurred. Enact how you would work through it.
3. **DYSTOPIA VS. UTOPIA**—Imagine if five years from now, your company became irrelevant or—better yet—newly inspiring. What do you think could lead to such a scenario?
4. **BLANK SLATE REINVENTION**—If you started your business today, from scratch, what specifically would be different? Go department by department.
5. **PATTERN WORKSHOPS**—Using Trend Hunter’s Six Patterns of Opportunity, look at your world from other perspectives. Could that uncover new opportunities?
6. **CASE STUDIES**—Looking at other markets, what grand ideas could you incorporate into your own?
7. **RECONNECT THE DOTS**—If you looked at all of the trends in your industry, what opportunities could you see if you pushed yourself to keep reconnecting the dots?
8. **SIMILAR INDUSTRIES**—Pick five unrelated but similar industries. What could you learn from their new strategies and innovations?
9. **ROLE-PLAY THE FUTURE**—If you split your team into multiple groups, what would each team envision as the key factors that would shape your future?

10. **BRAINSTORM WITH OUTSIDERS**—What would happen if you held a brainstorm with your team and 10 successfully eclectic individuals?
11. **HACKATHONS**—What would happen if you gave your top teams unlimited freedom in a specific amount of time, such as 6 hours, 24 hours, or 5 days?
12. **TREND SAFARIS**—What could you learn from experiencing the most creative start-ups in the city you are based in or visiting?
13. **DISRUPTING OTHERS**—If you were to disrupt other industries, such as beverages, retail, or e-commerce, how would you do it?
14. **DISRUPTION WORKSHOPS**—How would other people disrupt your company? Let's deep-dive this one:

**How might Uber approach your market? Amazon? Google? Facebook? Patagonia?**

In a workshop setting, I typically get CEOs and their leadership teams to work through scenarios of how certain unrelated companies might disrupt them. If, for example, you learned that Google AI had allocated \$1 billion to disrupting your industry, what do you think would be their strategy?

Work through how other companies might think about your business. This workshop illuminates opportunity and helps you see where your strengths and weaknesses lie.

	Value Proposition	Disruptive Features	Key Offering
Google	AI > Speed, Insight		
Uber	Simplicity		
Amazon	Heavily Customized & Lean		
Patagonia	Save the World		

# WORKSHOPS SOLVE PROBLEMS WHILE STRENGTHENING TEAMS

---

Like many companies, our Trend Hunter office has a monthly “fun day.” In our case, we rotate between discovering something new in the city and having a team workshop. The workshops are always more exciting, more engaging, and lower cost. Yet, we are getting work done while having fun. Imagine that.

**In short, these are the key benefits and goals:**

1. **TEAM BONDING**—Get people from different departments to connect.
2. **FUN DAY**—Replace awkward bonding with something inclusive (and a beer or two).
3. **TRAINING**—The team learns more about the business and how to run a workshop.
4. **SOLVE BUSINESS PROBLEMS**—This outcome may pay the bar tab, but I intentionally put it last to remind myself that the other benefits are enough in themselves.

Here’s an example of a workshop we recently ran for our 70-person team. Our director of client success, Gil Haddi, approached me with an idea. She wanted to create a referral program for our Future Festival events, and she had research, details, and suggestions. We could have worked through it together, but it was an inclusive problem and one where diverse minds would likely create a better solution. We booked the team for 2 p.m. on a Friday, and the afternoon went as follows.

**STEP 1—INSPIRATION, CONTEXT, & FOCUS (30 minutes)** Set the stage for the problem being solved. In our case, that meant exploring different types of referral programs. Each team got a cheat sheet of key points to help stimulate ideas.

**STEP 2—SPLIT INTO ASSIGNED GROUPS OF SIX TO EIGHT (15 minutes)** Mix up different levels of seniority and departments. This enhances team building, diversifies thinking, and keeps people diligent (especially with leadership team members).

**STEP 3—THREE FOCUSED BRAINSTORMS** (60 minutes) Keep your problems very focused to ensure you get usable ideas. I use the following template to extract as many ideas as possible. I also change the rules to keep it creative.

	Rules	Quick & Easy Ideas	Difficult Ideas	Dream List
Referrals BEFORE Future Festival 20 minutes	Headlines Only (be brief)			
Referrals AT Future Festival 20 minutes	Round Robin (go in order and no advancing until you say an idea)			
Referrals for Advisory Product 20 minutes	Silent Brainstorm			

**STEP 4—SILENTLY CAPTURE THE TOP 10 IDEAS** (10 minutes) Including silent individual time prevents groupthink and ensures diverse thinking from introverts and extroverts alike. Everyone emails in their favorite three ideas, resulting in a giant list.

**STEP 5—DETERMINE YOUR BEST IDEA AND PRESENT IT AS A SKIT** (30 minutes of prep, 30 minutes of presenting) This has always been a highlight of the day, with every group in every industry I’ve worked in. People love to see business ideas come to life.

**The Result:** In our case, there were several ideas that were much better than what we had initially imagined. For example, Trend Hunter recently announced that we are donating the funds to plant 2 million trees. One workshop team suggested we plant the trees in people’s names—for example, “Bring a friend to Future Festival, and we will plant a tree and name it after you!” It’s a simple but fun idea, and met our criteria of doing something that was not monetary.

*IF YOU ARE NOT DOING REGULAR WORKSHOPS WITH YOUR TEAM, ———  
 ——— YOU ARE DOING A DISSERVICE TO THEIR TALENT.*

# DESPITE THE MANY TRAPS, YOU CAN BECOME MORE INNOVATIVE

---

I immediately get jealous of my six-year-old niece when looking at this list of ages at which people peak. It seems she's better than me at creative imagination, which I cherish. The only redeeming thing about this chart is that it shows I can run faster, I can lift more, and I'm better at basic math. In addition, as I age, I will get better at all the other tasks related to being an innovative, creative leader.

We do lose certain aspects of raw creativity as we age. Having said that, we also become a lot better at many other tasks related to innovation and creativity.

Over time, we become better at understanding multiple points of view, anticipating change, considering other possible outcomes, acknowledging uncertainty, and searching for compromise.

The key to unlocking our new skillsets is also acknowledging the ways we are becoming more limited in our thinking. We need to internalize the way myelin (and other shortcuts) works in our brain. These shortcuts create neurological blind spots, meaning that we have a natural tendency to completely dismiss our new shortcomings.

---

**YOUR BRAIN EVOLVES AS YOU AGE, CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND NEW CHALLENGES.  
BEING AWARE OF HOW YOU EVOLVE PREPARES YOU TO BE A BETTER CREATOR.**

---

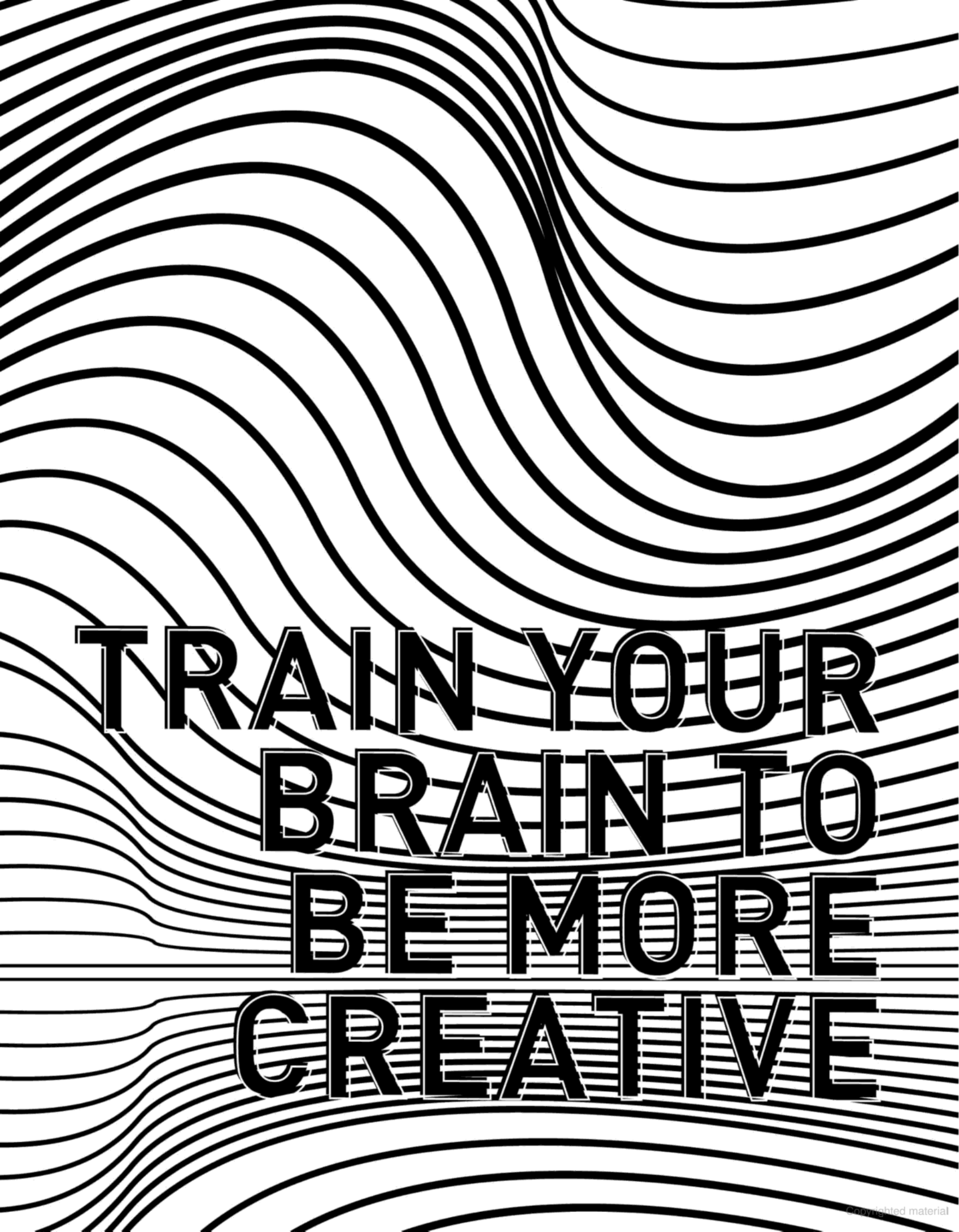
# THE AGES AT WHICH YOU PEAK

---

- 5** Creative Imagination
- 7** Learning a Language
- 18** Brain Processing Power
- 22** Memory for Names
- 25** Weight Lifting
- 28** Marathon Running
- 40** Nobel-Prize Discoveries
- 50** Arithmetic & Basic Math
- 51** Understanding Emotion
- 60+** Seeing Other Points of View
- 60+** Anticipating Change
- 60+** Considering Multiple Possible Outcomes
- 60+** Acknowledging Uncertainty
- 60+** Searching for Compromise
- 71** Vocabulary

Source: Business Insider<sup>28</sup>





**TRAIN YOUR  
BRAIN TO  
BE MORE  
CREATIVE**

*image*

*not*

*available*

*image*

*not*

*available*

*image*

*not*

*available*

*image*

*not*

*available*

*image*

*not*

*available*

## Step 2: Choose the top three priorities

The next step is to let each table choose the three priorities they want to focus on. At this point, I make sure every table, even in a large room, shares their priorities. This acts as a barometer for the organization. If every group imagines dystopia and chooses their three most important areas for innovation, you get a very strong sense of what needs to be fixed. In this case, let's imagine your own team at the *Tribune* chose shrink the paper, sell more ads, and motivate the team.

## Step 3: Rapid prototyping

With your top three priorities figured out, your next step would be to have three separate brainstorming exercises, working through short-term, long-term, and dream-list ideas for each of your top priorities. An obvious outcome is that you will get many ideas, but you will also get more buy-in and alignment because you are involving the team in the steps involved to make big change.

	Short-Term Tactics	Long-Term Strategy	Dream List
Priority 1: Shrink the Paper			
Priority 2: Sell More Ads			
Priority 3: Motivate the Team			

The act of including teams in workshops has a dramatic impact on people's motivation. It demonstrates a willingness to hear ideas and provides a forum to elicit creative thinking. In addition, since teams pick their favorite three priorities, they are also having the three conversations they already wanted to have.

## Optional Step 4: Dive deeper with Six Patterns of Opportunity

Once the preliminary ideas are exhausted, you can dive deeper, using Trend Hunter's Six Patterns of Opportunity. These patterns are like unique lenses to help you think

# A MOTIVATED TEAM CAN ACHIEVE THE IMPOSSIBLE

---

When the situation at the *Chicago Tribune* turned dire, Tony was able to rally the troops. It was not an easy task, but when the self-perception of performance turned from a feeling of “doing well” to “troubled,” people knew they needed to embrace change, align, and act.

In Tony’s example, instead of shrinking the paper, the *Tribune* decided to make a larger paper. This caused them to become the default source of news in Chicago, because if you wanted your local news, you *needed* that giant paper. This is the pattern of Divergence.

When thinking about how to sell more ads, they zeroed in on their customers’ needs. Local papers are supported by local advertisers, which tend to be businesses with a terrible marketing strategy.

The insight was that the *Tribune* already had all of the relationships and, in many cases, was the most significant area of advertising spend for those companies. By transforming into a business services company, the *Tribune* could create more comprehensive marketing strategies, playing a much bigger role for those companies. This is the pattern of Reduction.

Most importantly, the team urgently felt the need to act on these bold new strategies.

The result? Tony Hunter led his team at the *Tribune* from bankruptcy to becoming the #1 most profitable news organization in America.



*image  
not  
available*