

GIJS VAN WULFEN

CUSTOMERS ARE SCARY CLIFFS



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A VISUAL TOOLKIT TO START INNOVATION

BUSY BUSY BUSY
ESCAPE HARBOUR

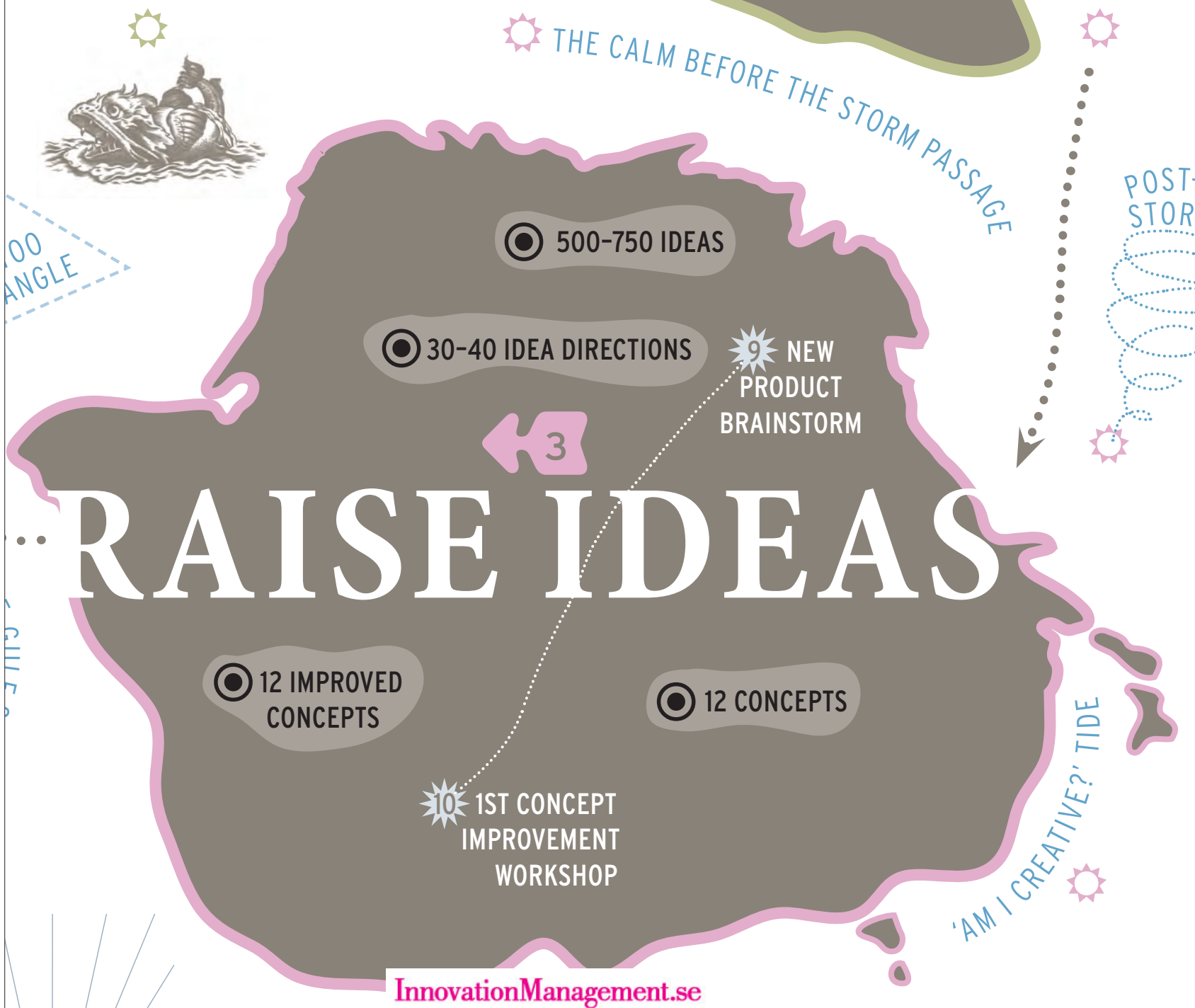
OUR OWN BLIND SPOTS

V.

A string of glowing red Chinese lanterns hangs against a dark blue night sky. The lanterns are illuminated from within, casting a warm orange glow. They are arranged in a slightly diagonal line, with some in the foreground and others further back. The background shows the silhouettes of buildings and structures, suggesting an outdoor setting like a festival or market.

Raise Ideas

InnovationManagement.se



STEP 3: RAISE IDEAS

This step is the pièce de résistance. It consists of a two-day new product brainstorming session and a concept improvement workshop. The brainstorming session is where the new ideas are actually prepared and developed into a concept. These concepts for new products, services or business models are further developed during the concept improvement workshop. The innovation opportunities, the discovered customer frictions, the involvement of outsiders and an effective creative process are all part of the third step. It is the creative peak of the expedition. Raise Ideas takes just two weeks and is the third step of the ideation phase.

FORTH Activity 9:

New Product Brainstorming

New concepts are developed with a structured creative process in nine steps during a two-day high-energy brainstorming session. After a creative warming-up exercise of the mind, idea-generating gets into full swing. Participants finally have the opportunity, after six weeks, to unleash their ideas in a spontaneous 'brain dump'. The outsiders will bring new ideas and will inspire the innovation team members and vice versa. In the divergence phase, which follows, the participants are led outside the box with the help of different brainstorming techniques. This will generate many new and original ideas: on average 500 to 750 ideas. Subsequently, the convergence phase starts. All new ideas are condensed into 30 to 40 different direc-

tions. The participants choose the twelve idea directions with the most potential and develop these into idea mind maps. On the second day, small groups develop the idea mind maps into concrete new business concepts. At the end of three one-hour sessions, twelve concepts will be ready. The participants now present their concepts during a short presentation where input from the group improves the concepts. Each participant then evaluates the concepts individually. Their evaluation is based on the criteria established in the innovation assignment at the beginning of the expedition. During the completion of the process all developed concepts are discussed in order of attractiveness and it is not uncommon that, at some point, a spontaneous feeling of WOW develops.

FORTH Activity 10:

1st Concept Improvement Workshop

At the brainstorming session the concepts were evaluated. In addition to their strong points, points for improvements were also identified. In a dedicated workshop, the core team members improve all concepts before they are tested on potential customers.

At the end of Raise Ideas, the ideation team has developed twelve new concepts for innovative products, services or business models.



**GO TO THE FORTH WEBSITE
AND DOWNLOAD THE FOUR
PRACTICAL CHECKLISTS OF
THE STEP RAISE IDEAS**

(www.forth-innovation.com/forth-steps/raise-ideas/)

FACTSHEET STEP 3

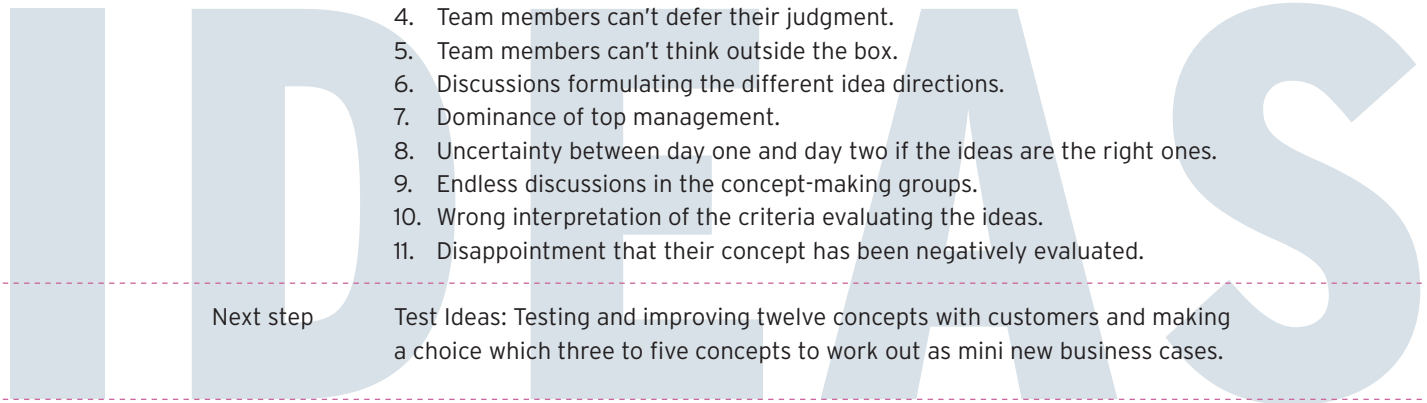
Duration 2 weeks

Activities
9. New Product Brainstorming Session
10. 1st Concept Improvement Workshop

Deliverables
1. 500-750 ideas
2. 30 to 40 different idea directions
3. 12 concepts
4. 12 improved concepts

Outcome
Twelve new concepts for innovative products, services or business models;
all ready for concept testing.

Crucial moments
1. The right brainstorming venue and an informal atmosphere.
2. Outsiders joining the brainstorming session integrate well in the group.
3. Defer judgment during the idea-generating process.
4. A lot of new ideas are generated before lunchtime.
5. Ideas get outside the box.
6. Finding the rights descriptions for the idea directions.
7. Choosing the top 12 idea directions.
8. The 'right click' in the concept-making groups.
9. Team members show ownership of their concepts.
10. First responses on the overall ranking of concepts.



Risks

1. The brainstorming venue sucks.
2. Crucial team members are late.
3. Smartphones and iPads interrupt the process.
4. Team members can't defer their judgment.
5. Team members can't think outside the box.
6. Discussions formulating the different idea directions.
7. Dominance of top management.
8. Uncertainty between day one and day two if the ideas are the right ones.
9. Endless discussions in the concept-making groups.
10. Wrong interpretation of the criteria evaluating the ideas.
11. Disappointment that their concept has been negatively evaluated.

Next step


Test Ideas: Testing and improving twelve concepts with customers and making a choice which three to five concepts to work out as mini new business cases.

Linus Pauling,
chemist: *The best
a good idea*

*way to have
is to have lots
of ideas.*

**THINK
LIKE
STEVE J  BS**





THE ESSENCE OF
JOBS' UNIQUE GENIUS:
UNDERSTANDING THAT ABSENCE DEFINES
PRESENCE; THAT THE ONLY PATH TO THE GREAT
NEW THINGS OF THE FUTURE WAS THE MERCILESS
ELIMINATION OF THE GOOD OLD THINGS
OF THE PAST.

Source: Jeff Yang,
The Wall Street Journal,
October 6, 2011.

Shut Up in a Brainstorm for Better Results

The spiritual father of the brainstorming technique is the American Alex Osborn. He is also one of the founders (and the 'O') of advertising agency BBDO, still renowned worldwide. In 1948 he published a book called *Your Creative Power*. In the chapter "How to Organize a Squad to Create Ideas" he describes when a group works together, the members should engage in a "brainstorm," that is; "using the brain to storm a creative problem – and doing so in commando fashion, with each stormer attacking the same objective." Two essential rules are: 1. 'Defer your judgment' and 2. 'Go for quantity'. The underlying assumption of brainstorming is that people are scared of saying something wrong. In a period where employees still were scared to speak up, brainstorming was experienced as revolutionary.

Since the fifties a lot of people have challenged the effectiveness of brainstorming. Keith Sawyer, a psychologist at Washington University, once summed up the science to conclude: "Decades of research have consistently shown that brainstorming groups think of far fewer ideas than the same number of people who work alone and later pool their ideas." Recent research of Bernard Nijstad and Wolfgang Stroebe confirmed that brainstorming in a group has two major shortcomings.

1. Individuals often produce fewer ideas and ideas of lower quality in group settings as compared when they work alone.
2. When people have to wait for others to complete their turn before presenting their idea, ideas are often lost.

Nijstad elaborated to say that being part of a group only gives you the illusion of group productivity. His findings show that group members are more satisfied with their performance than individuals, despite having generated fewer ideas.

The group setting makes you feel more productive. This feeling is attributed to the group experiencing fewer instances in which someone is unable to generate ideas.

Why then do I recommend a two-day new product brainstorming session with fourteen participants? Luckily, brainstorming has evolved since the fifties. Back then, it was common practice that all participants could spontaneously shout out their ideas. This led to chaotic situations whereby the individual





thought process was constantly interrupted. Furthermore, in large brainstorming groups most participants had to wait too long before they could unleash their ideas, which caused some ideas to vanish before anyone even had a chance to hear them.

Being aware of the pitfalls of generating fewer ideas and lower quality ideas, I fine-tuned the brainstorming method. The brainstorming approach on a FORTH innovation expedition is done differently. Team members first get the

opportunity to start generating new ideas in complete silence. They each write their ideas on separate post-it notes. Afterwards, everybody quickly reads their ideas out loud to the group. This has a very stimulating effect on the participants as they are encouraged to continue listening and to elaborate on their own ideas. How the participants are positioned in the room also has a stimulating effect as they are seated in a horseshoe formation (without tables) and can see each other clearly. This way, the idea of one participant is a source of inspiration for the other. Brainstorming this way for four rounds using different techniques usually leads to 500 – 750 ideas on the idea wall. The experience of sharing, selecting and drafting concrete concepts from the best ideas has a great impact on group dynamics. At the end, the whole group feels ownership of the concepts. That is essential. New concepts need a lot of parents to survive a corporate culture.

Sources:

1. Wikipedia
2. The New Yorker, "GROUPTHINK: the brainstorming myth, by Jonah Lehrer, 30 January 2012.
3. Bernard Nijstad, How the Group Affects the Mind: Effects of Communication in Idea Generating Groups, 2000.
4. The illusion of Group Productivity: a Reduction of Failures Explanation, Bernard Nijstad, Wolfgang Stroebe, Hein Lodewijkx, European Journal of Social Psychology, Volume 36, Issue 1, pages 31–48, January/February 2006.

IDEA KILLERS

Our customers
won't like that!

Yes, but...

It already exists!

NO!

It's not possible...

We need to
do more
research...

That's not
logical...

Let's be
realistic...

It's too
expensive!

We don't have
time...

I'm not creative...

The management
won't agree...

THERE'S NO
BUDGET...

IT IS NOT
SUITABLE FOR
OUR CLIENTS...

It's too difficult
to master...

We don't want to
make mistakes...

THAT'S TOO BIG
A CHANGE...

SINCE WHEN ARE
YOU THE
EXPERT?...

It is just like...

The market is not
ready yet...

Let's keep it
under
consideration...

GET REAL...

It's not my
responsibility...

The older
generation will
not use it...

WE ARE TOO
SMALL FOR
THAT...

Source:
Creativity Today,
Igor Bytnebier
R Ramon Vullings,
BIS Publishers, 2007, p 29.
Download a poster at:
www.ideakillers.net.

There are no staff
members
available...

It might work in
other places but
not here...

That's for the
future...

Robin Williams'
character in
Dead Poets Society

*No matter
tells you,
can change*

*what anybody
words and ideas
the world.*

Great Ideas Have the X Factor

Everybody knows the television show where a jury looks for talent with the X factor, that “certain something” that makes for star quality. As innovators, we are also in search of ideas with the X factor. But when do our ideas have it? Which criteria must an idea meet to give it star quality?



Generally in this early phase, an idea is little more than a fleeting thought, a word or image whereby we experience a mild ‘we-have-to-do-something-with-this’ sensation. It is only a rough diamond, like most candidates in the first round of the X factor. And there is still a long way to go. An important question is, is it enough to survive the corporate innovation jury?

An idea with the X factor is very appealing to (new) customers, very appealing to your company and can be brought to life quickly. In my own innovation practice, these three core qualities lead to seven characteristics for great ideas for innovative products, services or business models:

1. Very appealing to customers.
2. It stands out in the market.
3. It has great potential for extra turn-over.
4. It has adequate profit potential.
5. It fits management’s business goals.
6. It is (somehow) considered quickly feasible.
7. It creates its own internal support.

It is pretty evident that potential customers have to see the new product idea as something really attractive. During the innovation process, customers can serve as a fanbase, similar to the viewers of the X-factor shows while the idea is still being developed.

However, there is more to it than that. The new product or service idea must really stand out in the market and supply concrete advantages relevant to the current situation of customers (a camera tablet for the inspection of the small intestine). It must give potential customers a concrete reason to change. A really innovative product or service idea will solve relevant problems of customers (long lasting flowers), or will make something totally new possible (Virgin Galactic space flights). This not only applies to the consumer market, but also to B2B markets where services or products often play a huge role in the business processes of customers. When it comes to the decision to buy, many people and departments are involved. There will have to be a definite reason to consider changing to something new (Tarmac that can be rolled up like a carpet saves a lot of time to apply).

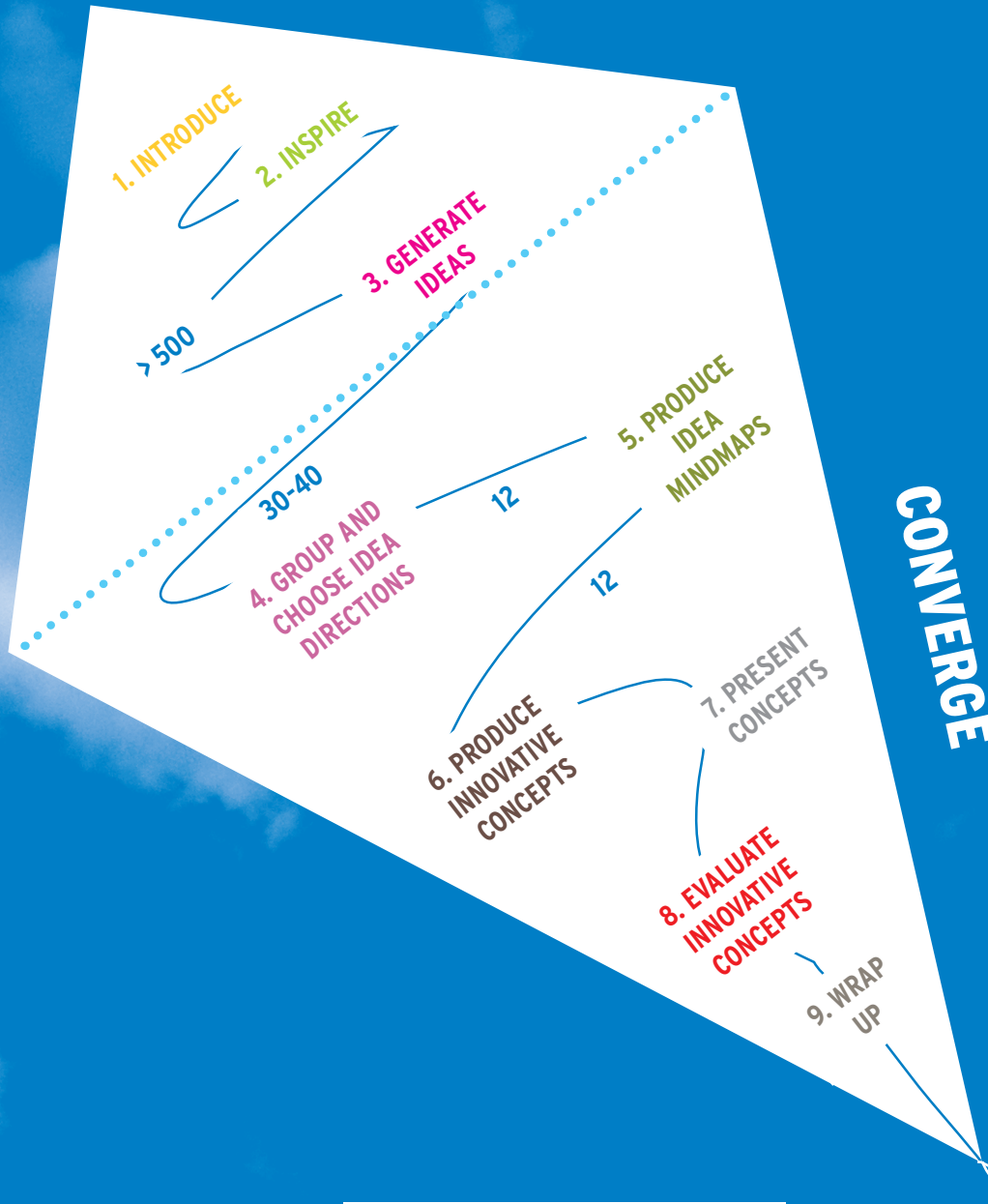
An attractive and distinctive new product idea might cause a stir internally. It is therefore important that you are fully aware of possible resistance from the start. There's often more than one X factor jury member who has a different opinion. Manfred Kets de Vries, professor in management and leadership at INSEAD, once said: "The only person waiting for a change is a baby with a wet diaper." He is spot on with this. An idea must fit your personal goal as a manager for it to get your support. Companies look for fast growth. It's an idea with the X factor if it will bring higher turnover and more profits and, above all, if it is somehow considered to be feasible in the short term.

So, to reach the X factor finals, an innovative idea must successfully pass through a lot of stations in the innovation process. Ideally, a good new product idea is not only supported by the creators, but must eventually have gained the full support of the development team, senior management as well as line management, even if there was some opposition at the beginning.

A good idea may not be obvious to everyone right away. It may look and sound like Susan Boyle, the Scottish singer discovered on *Britain's got Talent*, April 2009. Global interest was sparked by the huge contrast between her powerful voice and her plain appearance on stage. Within nine days of her audition, videos of Boyle had been viewed over 100 million times.¹

1. Source: Wikipedia.

DIVERGE



STRUCTURED BRAINSTORMING

25 RULES

FOR PERFECT BRAINSTORMING

Every one of us has experienced failed brainstorming sessions. It could have been because one of your vice presidents disapproved of every idea until after a short while everybody kept his mouth shut. Or because 250 ideas were posted on a wall and nobody knew what move to take next. Or because at the end of a long day at the office you could only recycle old ideas and nothing new was unveiled. But do not get discouraged. The perfect brainstorm does exist - just like the perfect storm.

So, what finally gives that feeling of WOW? I've discovered that this simple question cannot be answered easily. I do not think there is one dominant success factor. It is much more the right interplay of many small factors. It's all in the details. Perhaps the metaphor of a puzzle is most fitting. There are many small pieces needed, and if you lose one, the puzzle is worthless. In my innovation practice, I have found 25 pieces needed to create perfect brainstorming:

HIGHLY RELEVANT

1. Define a relevant subject, which is a challenge for the organization and the people you invite.
2. Create with the sponsor a concrete and s.m.a.r.t. brainstorming or innovation assignment.
3. Create momentum for brainstorming. Something important must happen now!

DIVERSE GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS

4. Invite people for whom the assignment is personally relevant.
5. Invite people for both content as well as decision-making capabilities.
6. Include outsiders and outside-the-box thinkers.
7. Include an even mix of men and women, young & old, et cetera.
8. Invite the internal senior problem-owner (CEO or vice president) to participate.

SPECIAL SETTING

- 10. Create an (emotionally) safe environment where you can be yourself.
- 11. Don't allow iPhones and iPads to ring or flash.
- 12. Never – and I really mean never do any brainstorming at the office.

FACILITATED BY A PROFESSIONAL

- 21. Appoint an (internal) expert facilitator, who stays in the background and exercises light control.
- 22. The facilitator should reflect the opposite energy of the group. If the group is too active: exert calmness.
- 23. The facilitator mustn't lose sight of subgroups; closely monitor their progress.

EFFECTIVELY STRUCTURED PROCESS

- 13. Allow at least two days for effective brainstorming to reach concrete new concepts.
- 14. Spend twice as much time on the convergence process as on the divergence process.
- 15. Plan and prepare an effective combination of idea-generating techniques.
- 16. Be open to suggestions from the group to adapt the process.
- 17. Make sure it is enjoyable. Fun promotes good results.
- 18. Time box. Make sure everybody is aware of the time limits- and sticks to them.
- 19. Hire a storyboard artist or cartoonist to visualize the results
- 20. Keep up the pace; otherwise it becomes long-winded and boring.

CONCRETE OUTPUT

- 24. Make the output very concrete and clear to anybody.
- 25. Creating concepts together with your colleagues generates maximum internal support.



THE ORIGIN OF

Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield grew up in Merrick, Long Island, U.S.A. They became friends in junior high school. Jerry finished college, but wasn't accepted into any med schools. Ben got into several colleges, but ended up dropping out of all of them. They soon realized that doing what they were doing wasn't getting them anywhere. That is when they decided to start their own business.



However, neither of them had any experience starting a business. But they did know what they liked and that was food- especially ice cream. So it seemed like a logical step to open an ice cream shop. To get started, they followed a \$5 correspondence course on ice cream-making from Penn State University. They then combined their \$8000 life savings with a \$4000 bank loan and took out a lease on an old gas station building in Burlington, Vermont. They opened for business on May 5, 1978. Using an old-fashioned ice cream freezer, they began churning out all the 'rich & creamy', 'fun & chunky' ice cream flavors they'd always dreamed about. Flavors loaded with all their favorite chunks of fruits, nuts, candies, and cookies. They started with 12 flavors. Soon there were long lines of customers outside the old gas station. Their ice cream was a hit. In the summer of 1978, Ben & Jerry launched their first creative initiative that would help expand their company by holding a free summer film festival. They projected films onto a bare wall of their building. By 1980, Ben & Jerry had begun selling their ice cream to numerous restaurants in the Burlington area. Ben drove an old VW bus delivering their ice cream products to customers. On his delivery route, he passed many small grocery and convenience stores. He decided that they would be a perfect outlet for their ice cream. In 1980, they rented space in an old spool and bobbin factory in Burlington and began packaging their ice cream in pint-size cartons with pictures of themselves on the package. Ben & Jerry's first gained national

BEN & JERRY'S

attention in the U.S.A. in 1981 when *Time* magazine named their products as 'the best ice cream in the world' in a cover story. In the following year, Ben & Jerry's began to expand its distribution beyond the state of Vermont. First, an out-of-state store selling Ben & Jerry's products opened in Portland, Maine. Then, the company began to sell its pints in the Boston area, distributing their goods to stores through independent channels.

With its continuing expansion, Ben & Jerry's developed a need for tighter financial controls. They brought in a local nightclub owner, Fred 'Chico' Lager, with business experience to be chief operating officer. As sales grew sharply, Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield slowly came to the realization that their small-scale business had far-exceeded their expectations. This unexpected success didn't entirely please them. 'When Jerry and I realized we were no longer ice cream men, but businessmen, our first reaction was to sell.'

Together with their employees, Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield drafted a three-part mission statement summing up the company's unique corporate philosophy. It declared that Ben & Jerry's had a product mission, a social mission, and an economic mission. In their pursuit of developing innovative ways to improve the quality of life for a broad community, they launched flavors such as 'Chocolate Fudge Brownie', containing brownies made by

homeless and unemployed workers in Yonkers, New York; 'Wild Maine Blueberry', made with blueberries harvested by Passamaquoddy Indians; and 'Rainforest Crunch', containing Brazil nuts collected in the Amazon rainforest by indigenous natives. In addition, 60 percent of the profits from that flavor were invested in environmental groups dedicated to preserving the Amazon rainforest. Initiatives such as these provide an economically viable alternative to deforestation.

When confronted with a declining market for super premium ice cream, Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield turned increasingly to professional managers. Finally in April 2000, Unilever acquired Ben & Jerry's, its only super premium ice cream, for \$326 million in cash. Unilever, pledging to uphold Ben & Jerry's traditional values and commitment to social causes, offered the power to distribute Ben & Jerry's to millions of new consumers; expanding the Ben & Jerry's brand to new heights.

Source: www.benjerry.com. www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/ben-jerry-s-homemade-inc-history/ www.wikipedia.org. www.entrepreneur.com/article/197626.