

Pioneering A Model of Innovation: The Total Innovation Enterprise

By **Katrina Faust** - March 4, 2019



Bryan W. Mattimore is Co-Founder and “Chief Idea Guy” of the Growth Engine Company, a nineteen-year old innovation agency based in Norwalk, Connecticut. In his innovation consulting career, Mattimore has facilitated over a thousand ideation sessions, moderated over five hundred creative focus groups, and managed two hundred successful innovation projects, leading to over \$3 billion in new sales for a wide variety of Fortune 500 clients, including Kraft, Sony, Ford, AT&T, IBM, Oreo, Gillette, Merck, Dove, Trident and Pepsi. His three books on the ideation and innovation process include: *Idea Stormers*, *How to Lead and Inspire Creative Breakthroughs*, and *21 Days to a Big Idea*.

In an exclusive webinar for LEADx subscribers, Mattimore showed how leaders can use state-of-the-art, idea-generation techniques to inspire their teams to invent new models of innovation, demonstrated through real-world examples how different ideation and innovation processes can be tailored to address a wide variety of business challenges, and shared three new innovation methodologies invented by *Growth Engine*. The following transcript has been lightly edited for length and clarity.

Bryan Mattimore: “Our processes are not specific to an industry. No matter what industry you're in, hopefully what I'm going to share today will be valuable for you.

I want to mention two of my books:

21 Days to a Big Idea: I wrote this in response to a request by Bob Dorf, who is famous in the world of startups with Steve Blank. He created *The Startup Owner's Manual*. He teaches at Columbia Entrepreneurs School there, and he asked me if I could create a program that would help aspiring entrepreneurs at Columbia Business School to get more and better ideas. Think about it as almost like a diet program. You do something every day, and if you do that every day, you'll get a bunch of ideas, and from which, there will be a big idea. And so that's for entrepreneurs.

Idea Stormers: This is what I really want to focus on today. *How to Lead and Inspire Creative Breakthroughs*. It's really for innovation teams. And that's the one I want to focus on today.

The new model of innovation I want to talk about is what we call a Total Innovation Enterprise. The idea here is that *innovation is not just for the marketers*, or even the sales people. It should be for the entire organization.

And so we have eight guiding principles, which I'll go through pretty quickly because I really want to get to some specific examples. My bias is that if I share concrete examples with you

guys, you're going to grasp this thing, you're going to understand this thing, and be able to use this thing through those specific examples.

Let me start with principles, so we have Eight Guiding Innovation Principles.

All these processes can be used to generate 'the first big idea, the eureka moment,' but they can also be used, and should be used in the process of innovating an idea. So what does that mean?

Well, if you're trying to bring a product to market, there are all kinds of challenges, hundreds and hundreds of challenges, and creative problems that have to be solved to do that successfully. "Can you find the money internally, or the resources internally to make this thing happen? Did you talk to consumers or customers to refine the idea, and develop the idea? If it's a new product, is the positioning right? Is the packaging right? Is the promotion right?" Et cetera, et cetera.

So these are all critical in bringing an idea to market successfully, and the point here is that these ideation techniques can be used, both for coming up with a big idea, and even more importantly in some ways, bringing that idea to market successfully, which we define as innovation.

1. All facets of a business can be enhanced through innovation. Sounds obvious, I think, but a lot of companies don't follow that. Ideas clearly create growth, you need ideas for growth. I guess acquisition would be an idea, as well. It should be thought of as a continuous process. It should not be one-and-done, "We did our one brainstorming or ideation session for the year, and we're done." No, it's really an ongoing process, especially if you talk about innovating ideas. And I'll make that distinction between ideation or idea generation, which is coming up with an idea, and the process of bring that idea to market, or innovation, or implementing that idea.

2. Ideas drive attitudinal and cultural change. We have an expression we created that we love and that's, "You don't innovate by changing the culture. You change the culture by innovating." So what does that mean? A lot of consulting firms will come, and they'll say, "Okay, we've got to reinvent your process." Not to say that our approach is better, but it is different. We feel whatever process you have, fine. We'll work with that. The key is developing successful innovations, and in the process, that can redefine and change your process.

So by working on real world challenges, it doesn't matter what it is, we will discover what processes work for your particular business, your particular culture, and your particular industry. And so our approach is to really start with projects versus a process. And so that's why we say, "You don't innovate by changing the culture. Yeah, that's our new initiative. You change the culture by actually innovating."

3. Innovation approaches can be taught. This is important because I'm going to recommend at the end of this webinar podcast here, that you use internal facilitators, if you will train them to be able to facilitate some of these techniques I'm going to share with you, and processes.

4. Innovation takes courageous leadership. Yeah, I mean, it's all about when you're innovating, you're going to fail, and probably a lot, and that's expected. And so it's not for the faint of heart, those that are overly-controlling, those that cannot deal with ambiguity. And so if you're leader, it's important that you protect these people that are taking that shot at innovating.

And of course, communication is critical, and honesty, and authenticity. When something is not working, to pivot quickly to make it work. And then go with your gut is important, too, in this work because as we had one client who was sitting in focus groups, he said, "It sharpened his gut and it gave him the courage to then go to the board and say, we need the money to go fund this thing."

5. Innovation begins and ends with a consumer/customer. We were big believers in doing a lot of qualitative work before going to quantitative testing, if we're talking about new products in the world of packaged goods. And we feel that way because the consumer, you've got to meet an important consumer need, and it's not wishful thinking. The consumers have to tell you, "This is something unique, that they really want," same with the customer. And so our innovation work, our 19-year old innovation agency here in Norwalk, Connecticut, we begin and end with the customer/consumer.

6. Innovation requires hard work and dealing with uncertainty. It's a numbers game, you've got to experiment, and be comfortable with ambiguity.

7. Employees at every level of an organization have the potential to make creative contributions to the enterprise. And particularly, multidisciplinary teams have a unique power to create and innovate. We feel very, very strongly about this. We don't recommend our clients create a culture of innovation. We say, "Find and form multidisciplinary teams, and have them go do the work." That's the way you succeed with innovation.

8. Innovation is all about passion. When things start to happen, the whole organization gets energized and wants to be part of that process.

Okay, so those are the basic Eight Guiding Principles of a Total Innovation Enterprise. I'd like to focus on the first one today.

All facets of a business can be enhanced through innovation.

Implicit in this, is the ability to what? Generate ideas. You're not going to go too far if you can't generate ideas. So how do you do that? Well, that's what I'm going to share with you.

You probably have heard of the term ideation. It's not brainstorming. You may know, brainstorming was invented in the late 1930s by Alex Osborn, the O of BBDO Ad Agency, and the two rules of brainstorming are (1), withhold judgment. Some people say there are no bad ideas, which of course, is ridiculous. Most ideas are bad, or not good. Probably only 10 or 15% of the ideas generated in a session are really worthy of further development, that's the first rule.

And (2), quantity will equal quality, so the idea is you get a lot of ideas, and there are bound to be some good ideas there. So that was the basic insight that Alex Osborn had 70 years ago about brainstorming. There's been a lot of research done in the 70 years since then that says that brainstorming really doesn't work, and it's a fair comment.

The shortcoming of brainstorming, if you think about it, and I'm sure many in the audience have been in a brainstorming session that didn't go well because the facilitator might start off by saying, "Hey, who's got some ideas?" And then say, "Who's got some more ideas?" Well, that's okay, but you're not triggering people in any unique way to get new ideas. **That is the key to ideation.**

If there is one thing you take away today, is that you need to move off of *brainstorming* and go to *ideation*. Ideation is all about triggering the brain with unique techniques and unique stimuli to make creative connections. And how you do that is what I'm going to share with you today.

So we practice at *Growth Engine*, my company, something we call **Focused Ideation**, which if you're saying, "That's an oxymoronic term," you're absolutely correct. The idea is that we want to resolve an essential paradox. The paradox is that we want to make sure ideas generated in an ideation session are strategically aligned with what the company is trying to do. We do have guardrails. We know where we want to ideate.

It's white space, we have some parameters that we know going in will or won't work. There may be constraints about what can be manufactured, who you can joint venture with, et cetera, et cetera. So we know all that going in, and we take that into account when we design our ideation sessions. That's why we call it a focused ideation session.

The creative paradox that we're always trying to reconcile is that we want strategically aligned and on target, but we also want new and unique.

This is a sampling of different ideation techniques.

These are all ones that we use, some of which we have invented. Again, these ideation techniques are not just for new products, right, or advertising, or even generating social media ideas. They can be used for, I don't know if infinite is the right word, but a huge, huge, huge, huge variety of challenges that you might face in your particular department or job. So these are 15 or 16 right here. If you're doing vision, mission, values, creation work, you want to inform those with ideas, strategic planning.

I feel strongly that strategic planning. An essential component is, obviously, doing the swats and looking at the history and all that kind of stuff, but if you're going to inform a really great strategic plan, you want to inform that with new ideas. So we've done a lot of sessions for our clients, where we're helping them invent new ideas, new business models, new approaches, that can inform the strategic 3-5 year plan that we might be working on.

Of the 1500 ideation sessions that my company has done, we've discovered, not surprisingly, that some techniques work a lot better than others against specific kinds of challenges. So if you're doing cost cutting, you might have people sort of chart out their daily life, where they're being efficient. Sometimes you can do that with a mind map, but you would never use that in a new product development session.

So a key part of the work that I shared in my book *Idea Stormers*, is which techniques to use for different kinds of challenges.

But let me get into specifics now so you can see how you might apply these things. We were asked by BNY Mellon, they were working to invent new ways to service their clients. And so we had 100 people in this two-day session, the top 100 leaders of the organization. And the reason we had so many is that we wanted everybody who was involved in implementing this to be part of the process so they have ownership.

Joint Venture. One of the more powerful exercises we did, in terms of inventing a new business model, was a strategic thought experiment we called a Joint Venture. We used to call it Company Takeover, but people freaked out when we called it that. So now it's a Joint Venture thing, where if BNY Mellon joint ventured with Amazon, Microsoft, or Apple, Nordstrom, or McDonald's, how would they do business differently?

Worst Idea Technique. Another technique we use when we're trying to do a new business model is the Worst Idea technique. It sounds pretty stupid and ridiculous, but it's not. It helps you question assumptions. We were working with a large information services company, and we had, "What's the worst idea?" They sell information, so the worst idea is give it away. Long story short, we got them to think about, "Could they give away part of the information?"

And that led to a multimillion dollar division, where they were profiling smaller companies, it made their database more robust, and they were able to get those smaller companies to give them free listing, but also paid-for listing to upsell paid-for listing, and so the combination of all that created this multimillion dollar division, based on thinking of the worst idea.

The Problem or Opportunity Redefinition Technique. This is a fun sales strategy. We were asked by a company called Catholic Knights Insurance, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, they since renamed the company, they had read my first book, *99% Inspiration*. And they came to me and said, "How do we sell more life insurance to Catholics?"

And of course, I said, "Well, can't you sell to Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists?" They said, "No, no. By our charter, we only sell to the Catholics." Okay, so we did a bunch of techniques, but this was the one that worked. The way it works, is you find a subject, verb, and an object in your problem statement or challenge. So how do we, *we* is the subject, *sell* is the verb, an object is *Catholics*. So how do we sell more life insurance to Catholics? Then you come up with different alternatives.

We is typically the sales force, but maybe it's churchgoers. Maybe it's policyholders. Maybe it's Catholic family members, et cetera.

Sell. License, give away, advertise, telemarket.

Catholic. You can segment Catholics. Catholic summer camps, Catholic students, Catholic evangelists, et cetera, the Pope. That's step one, you might put 10 in each column.

Then you start combining these some things, and you'll end up with statements like, "How do we get friends of Catholics to be incentivized to sell life insurance to Catholic grandparents?" or "How do we get the Catholic Knight Board members to license the selling of life insurance to Catholic schools?" And then you use the statements as stimulus for coming up with ideas. If you have 10 in each column, you have 1,000 different ways you could redefine this challenge.

They came up with many, many ideas. This one, this particular idea was that for those Catholic schools that had a certain percentage of parents that signed up for Catholic Knights Life Insurance, they would get free gym equipment and computers. And this one technique led to a 52% increase in sales for them, which is a traumatic result.

Semantic Analysis Technique. We got a call from an automobile company and they said, "Can you help us invent a new sales forecasting and logistics system?" Well, this is not easy, right. The technique we used was a sort of semantic analysis technique, where you take the problem statement, and you take each word in that statement, and sort of come up with other options or new ways to think about it.

"We invent a new sale forecasting system." One of those words in that sentence led to the breakthrough idea. Was it system? No. Was it forecasting? No. Was it invent? No. Sales? No. New? No.

It was actually A. The assumption in that problem statement was that there should be one sales forecasting system. When we questioned that assumption and looked at that, we thought, "why don't we have manufacturing create theirs, marketing create theirs, sales create theirs, et cetera, and have them work through these for several months, and then begin to compare and contrast how those systems were working?" And as a result, over time, get a more dynamic, accurate, and useful sales forecasting system.

Trigger Brain Walking. One company, I can mention, is Pfizer, their financial services company. Eight divisions at a national sales meeting. We had about a 150 people there.

The idea was, "Are there cross-selling opportunities they sold to the largest banks in the nation? Are there cross-selling opportunities between divisions." So we built a day-long bunch of exercises to try to identify those ideas, and then exploit them.

At the end of the day, and we used trigger brain walking, like idea volleyball, all these different techniques. And it was hugely successful, even with a 150 people. At the end of the day, we asked, "What's the value of these ideas?"

And people said, "We value them at \$150 million of new opportunity." And we pushed them and said, "The president may make you deliver on these. Do you really want to say 150

million?" So we checked back a year later, and they had realized 72 million of that. Talk about an ROI for a sales meeting. That's pretty darn good.

The point I want to make is that everybody in an organization can contribute, in all departments, and in all ways.

Your company's greatest asset is the creativity of your people. It's often a wasted or under-exploited asset.

Remember, Brainstorming doesn't work, ideation and the stimuli it brings does.

Don't think of idea generation too narrowly, primarily for new products or advertising. But what about for strategy, or sales, or talent attraction? It could be for anything. I mean, I did a session last month for a company about attracting and retaining talent. With the low employment rate, that's become a huge issue.

I would encourage you to find, to assign somebody in your organization. Maybe it's you, but somebody who is trained in these processes. We've done some training in these ideation methodologies and we're happy to do that and that's actually fun for us to do. And then those internal facilitators can then run sessions internally in all departments.

And again, my two books:

Idea Stormers is the one that if you're interested in all that I've been sharing today would be the one that would have all the specifics of what I just shared.

21 Days to a Big Idea is really more for current and aspiring entrepreneurs, a process to help them do well with that big idea.

If you're interested in some of the resources, I'm happy to email you some resources. These are some articles I've written. I did give a Ted Talk last year on Creative Techniques to Solve Impossible Challenges, and so I'm happy to send you all these links if you want. My email is [bmattimore at growth-engine dot com](mailto:bmattimore@growth-engine.com).

I hope you enjoyed this. I hope I didn't go too fast. I hope you got something of value. And I want to thank LEADx for having me do this webinar."

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