

# MUNDO<sup>1</sup>NOVUS

Methods for finding  
game changing ideas



At MundoNovus we are focussed on finding the way to great solutions and game changing ideas. We have seen the exponential speed of change coming to organisations big and small and are responding with techniques to convert problems into solutions and create opportunity from change.



**There  
is one thing stronger  
than all the armies in the  
world, And that is an idea  
whose time has come.**

**Victor Hugo**

We are often asked where ideas come from, but the honest answer is we don't really know. Neuroscientists can measure the alpha waves within the brain and see which parts of the brain light up during the processes of idea generation. The book *The Neuroscience of Creative Idea Generation* by Mathias Benedek models these processes as RISE (retrieval, integration/simulation and evaluation).

This, however, does not tell us how to use these systems. Like any system we need to provide nourishment and the variety of that nourishment will aid the health of the system. For example a healthier well nourished plant will produce more flowers.

**A healthy ideas producing system will produce better ideas.**

**This mini-book is our guide to having more ideas with diversity built in, the more diversity we have in our thinking the more likely we are to find a game changing idea, an idea that can change the world or at least your organisation.**

**Look on this as a recipe book where the following methods can be combined in a variety of ways to aid in the diversity of ideas.**

**Bear in mind that if you attempt to use too many at one time you may find it harder to get to the ideas.**

**Don't let this become about the methods as the idea is what counts.**

**The difficulty lies not  
so much in developing  
new ideas as in  
escaping from old  
ones.**

**John Maynard Keynes**





# Train your brain

James Webb Young published the book “A Technique for Producing Ideas” in 1965. The book details the principles and method of producing ideas and is well worth a read. Within the book the author provides the details and rationale for training the mind in finding ideas. So the important thing is to practice as many of these methods below as often as possible. I don’t put much stock in the 10,000 hours rule that Malcolm Gladwell talks about in his book Outliers (it doesn’t hold up to scrutiny) but practicing these methods will help you to reach for them when you need them.



## Reframe the question

Ideas are most often sought when a solution to a problem is required. A problem is usually put to us in the format of a question and that question will usually contain the answer. For example the question “Where are we going to go on our summer holiday this year?” presupposes that our holiday this year would be taken in the summer or that we should be going on holiday at all. Suppose we reframe the question to “How can we refresh ourselves and recharge during the year, in order to be at our best for work?” or “What way can we treat ourselves this year for all of the hard work we have been doing?”

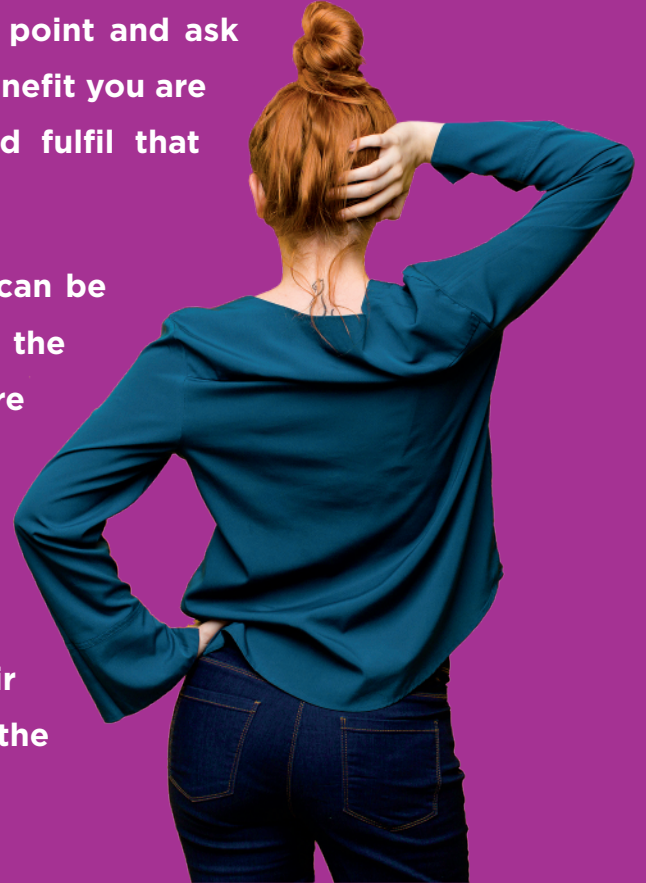
By doing this we are able to gain more diverse ideas. See how many ways you can frame your question and how many different answers this helps to provoke.



# Work backwards

I once saw the UK comedian Bill Bailey and he was asked how he created a joke. His answer was to start with a laugh and ask yourself what would you need to say in order to provoke that level of mirth. Now this is a joke but illustrates a good way of achieving ideas, start at the end point and ask yourself “how do I get to there”. Start with the benefit you are looking for and then figure out how you could fulfil that benefit.

A key thing to bear in mind is that this method can be used to create further diverse ideas by changing the benefit subtly. For example, the benefit we require is a customer satisfied with their delivery. This will bring up a certain number of possible solutions but what if we were to add a subtle change? For example, the benefit we require is a customer satisfied and surprised with their delivery. This will add a different dimension to the possible solutions.



## Steal and borrow

This quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson illustrates the way that ideas can build on other peoples work and yet still add in the attribute of originality and genius we are looking for.

This can be done by borrowing methods of working from other fields. I often look into the advertising industry to find inspiration for ideas as, for me, that is the most creative industry of all as it takes art and adds purpose.

“

### GENIUS BORROWS NOBLY

When Shakespeare is charged with debts to his authors, Landor replies: ‘Yet he was more original than his originals. He breathed upon dead bodies and brought them into life’

”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

# Find the mess/Fix the mess

Being able to spot problems and opportunities before others, especially your competitors, can propel you to the forefront of your industry. One of the clear ways of doing this is to be on the lookout for both problems and opportunities. This might be done by tasking a team with being the lookouts for opportunities or threats on the horizon. They can do this by networking and making connections between people and ideas and reporting on them regularly. Possibility and opportunity is often best exploited by widening your focus and acting on the elements you see that don't exist within your organisations concerns yet.



## Please yourself

What would make you so happy at this moment. Look at every opportunity as a moment to find amusement. This technique at the very least should make you happy and that can be used as a springboard for making others happy. Little things that make you happy can easily be the difference for your business.



An example of this is Broadhurst Books in Southport, UK. Broadhurst books is an independent bookshop started in 1906. When the UK chain Waterstones Bookshop attempted to move into the town and win the market share from other bookshops their usual 2 for 1 offers and ability to bulk buy didn't seem to be working. It turns out that Broadhurst's practice of wrapping all purposes with brown paper and string was the unique pleasing thing that the book buying public appreciated.



# Collaborate with new people

Diverse thinking is accelerated by having diverse teams. Diversity comes in many forms including ethnic background, culture, age, gender and so on, but it also includes the experience of the members of the team. Collaborating with new people will bring about a greater chance of diverse ideas and knowledge to spot threats and opportunities. Swap team members regularly so that your teams don't get too comfortable and end up with a mind meld where all their ideas are too similar. Having team members from different teams is useful in gaining the cross-pollination of ideas, where ideas from one area can help build an idea in another area.



# Apply an idea from another industry

Take a look at how other industries have changed their offering to find solutions or novel offerings. Model how they achieved this. For example, Netflix started as a company offering the ability to rent DVDs over the web. The company struggled and even offered itself for sale to Blockbuster Video in 2000 for \$50Mn, Now 20 years later after shifting to a streaming service and even becoming a production studio Netflix is valued at around \$140Bn (as of March 17, 2020 -



<https://www.macrotrends.net/stocks/charts/NFLX/netflix/net-worth>

Could you use the ideas of taking your business fully online like Netflix did? How could you offer that? Could you become a producer as well as a supplier like Netflix did? How could you offer that?

# Make play your superpower

At MundoNovus we are committed to using play to find new ideas and solutions. Play is able to bring out diverse ideas very easily by using experiential play to use different parts of the brain that do not light up when we attempt to just think our way to solutions. Ideas are much more likely to emerge rather than be forced through which can help to equalise the power within the room and circumnavigate the power structures we have in place.

Make it fun by adding games or turning your project into a game.

One of our methods of using play in the workplace is the Lego® Serious Play® method which allows teams to hear from every member and also allows us all to break out of our habitual thought patterns.

Shout out to  
Margaret Heffernan  
and her Super  
Chickens (look  
on YouTube)



## Get outside

Having ideas in an office environment is very artificial and does not play into the way the brain works. The brain works well at percolating ideas and that takes the hippocampus, the area of the brain that governs learning and storing of information, which is often sidelined by our frontal lobe when we are trying to focus on the idea. We can let ideas form without focus and this can be a powerful way of finding originality. So after loading up the brain on the question and the facts and data take some time out, get outside and go for a walk, see some nature and let your mind wander.

Be sure to note down any of the ideas you have when they bubble up to the surface.





# Build a bank of experience and influence

An idea is the result of our combined experience. In order to have a game changing idea we need to employ the new and novel. As with any system our brain will pour out better results if our combined input is more diverse in nature. Combinations of diverse influences will provide a wider diversity of ideas including those that offer originality. Try absorbing art and musical influences outside of your usual sphere of interest. Go to museums, virtually if circumstances are difficult. Go to the theatre. Read genres of literature you haven't tried previously. Absorb the arts from different cultures; I really grew to love HipHop when I heard it in French as I was able to view the art form without first judging the lyrical content. Approach everything new with the mindset of experiencing it and let your mind absorb it.



## What is the best \_\_\_\_ you ever had?



Model your idea or solution on something outstanding that you have experienced. What is the best meal you've ever had? What was the best song you have ever heard? What was the best film you ever saw?

Go for the emotional connections you have with things whether they are objects, relationships, experiences or even people you idolise.

Find as many exceptional moments as you can and model your ideas on why it made you respond in such a way.

This will help you assess the idea in a framework of exceptionality, allowing the strongest and most original ideas to be embraced. Would your idol be happy with this solution?

# Embrace the impossible

The impossible should be our aim as by aiming that high we can find original and incredible ideas. By always playing around with what is possible we limit ourselves to solutions that are generally easy. If anyone told me that they could sell me a Philly Cheese Steak Sandwich for \$100 the next time I was in Philadelphia I would laugh at their proposition as it is an impossibility. But Barclay Prime are selling one for \$120 and they are making a success of it. The steak is actually kind of worth it as it involves truffles and lobster but the story that the customer can tell is the real product.

How can you embrace the impossible to make your product or service a success.



## Take a risk

Failure is a burden we too often fear leading us to settle for solutions that are safe. Safe options are never likely to be ground breaking or game changing. Taking risks is something we need to get more comfortable with and the inevitable increase in failing also needs to be embraced rather than punished.

Kodak filed for bankruptcy in January 2012 after almost a century of being the market leader in photography. Ironically they had already invented the digital camera and figured out ways of putting that technology into mobile phones in the 90s but didn't commit to the new technology for fear of killing it's film business. The film side of Kodak's business was going to diminish and disappear no matter what Kodak did but still Kodak did not commit due to the perceived risk.

Sometimes it is riskier not to take the risk.





# Ask your customers & clients



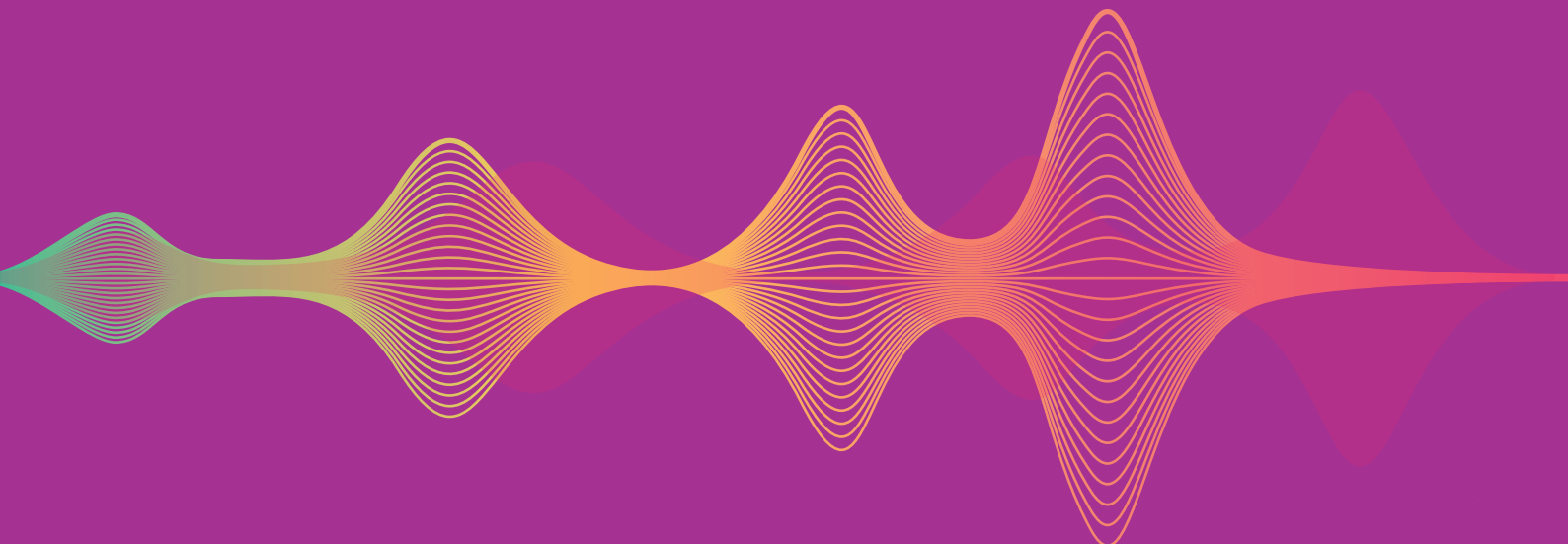
**Keep asking your customers and clients what they need and to test your offerings. They may not know what they need until you show it to them, but it is better to show them and ask them at an early stage before you spend too much. Build a feedback system into your innovation cycle allowing quick prototyping and testing.**

**Look to the fringes of often overlooked demographics, usually the young and the old, to see what needs they may have and how they can be addressed in your service or products.**

## Things go in cycles

The Soviet economist Nikolai Kondratiev proposed the theory of the Long Economic Cycle, also known as Kondratiev waves or K-waves. The idea is that the economic system goes through a cycle of expansion, stagnation and recession although in modern times the cycle is labelled as 4 sectors of expansion, collapse, stagnation and recession. Moments of low inequality and great opportunity often bring about moments of the greatest technological industrial advance.

Where are we in the cycle, what is coming next?



# Get silly, make it a ridiculous solution

We have already seen how the impossible can yield great results but what about the ridiculous, the absurd, the preposterous and the idiotic. This might not yield a workable result directly but by starting here everything else will seem like a workable solution and be given time to grow.

In any ideas generation session we will have a number of people within the room who will tell you on first hearing why something will not work. Think of John Heard's character in Big.

What we are wanting to do here is get to the level of ideas that Salvador Dali might have had and use that as a new benchmark that reframes everything else we see. This technique allows us to keep the naysayers at bay before an idea has been allowed to breathe and find it's purpose.



## Put your team into a flow state

The work of the psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi identified the concept of 'Flow'. The advantages of this highly focussed mental state is that it is conducive to productivity. When we are looking to produce many ideas in a session then achieving a flow state is optimal. Flow states can be achieved by using experiential discovery via elements like Lego Serious Play and Improv.

Channeling that flow state is the key to this and working with a facilitator can greatly help.

Get in touch with MundoNovus to discuss our facilitated workshops.





# Describe your idea without words



Let's think visually. Describing your idea visually without words means we will all focus on the idea differently. It is a show don't tell technique that avoids the summary of the person bringing the idea to life. This allows us as an audience to discover the idea ourselves without relying on the exposition of the idea author.

Use of mime or acting out the scenario is also useful and words can be used as part of the scene being acted as long as they are not narrating what is happening but are part of the scene as it would play out.

Techniques such as drawing, model-making and photo-collage could be used too. Turn your next meeting into a game of Pictionary and see if you can turn quick sketches into numerous ideas.

## Kill your business

OK, this can be scary but also fun and could mean you're reinventing your business for the next phase of it's life. We love to facilitate a "Kill the company" exercise. To view your company from the outside as a competitor and attempt to put it out of business is an eye-opener but can also be a lot of fun and allow your team's frustrations to emerge alongside the unseen problems and the radical solutions. This can be a rewarding exercise but needs the time and focus invested in order to produce results.

MundoNovus can facilitate a radically transformational workshop to redesign your company using this format. It is worthwhile as it can allow threats that you were unaware of to come to the fore and can help you to not become the next Kodak (See the Take a Risk section in this ebook).



# Escalate everything.

We don't mean taking this to the management or trying to find resolution at a higher level of the company structure.

Escalation is a technique often used in improvised comedy and is seen in the films of Judd Apatow. This technique can be funny but also can produce ideas on the extremities that might not be brought to meetings usually. Escalation allows us to not self edit our ideas and throws everything onto the table as a talking point.

The insights found from escalating ideas, problems, solutions, identities and so on can be unique and allow other greater ideas to come to the fore.

Play on the extremities of emotion, funny, sincere or even the sanctimonious could provide golden ideas.



**Have fun with these methods and play with them, mix them up and combine different ones. Even if you limited yourself to 3 methods there are 1330 combinations you can use and different combinations will lead to different ideas.**

**Contact us at [m@mundonovus.com](mailto:m@mundonovus.com) to book a facilitated workshop to find powerful emergent strategies and ideas for your business and teams.**

**Be sure to join our newsletter for a weekly dose of idea filled inspiration.**

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