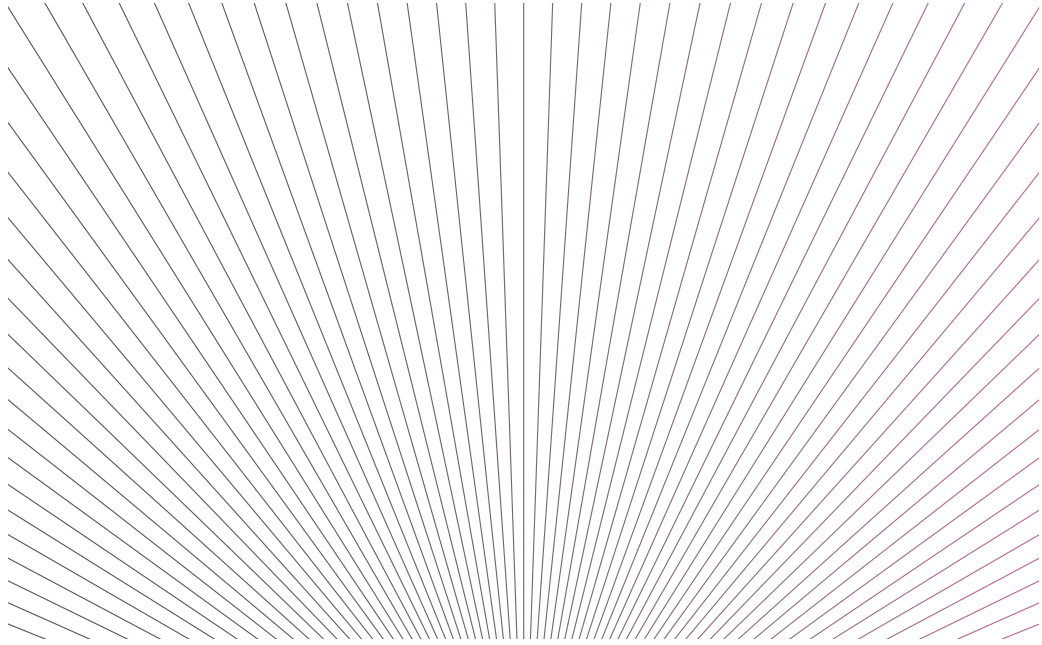
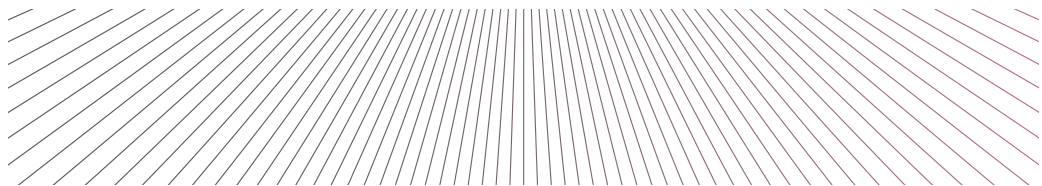


FOREWORD BY MALCOLM GLADWELL



C R E A T E T H E
FUTURE

TACTICS FOR **DISRUPTIVE THINKING**



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

CEO OF TREND HUNTER



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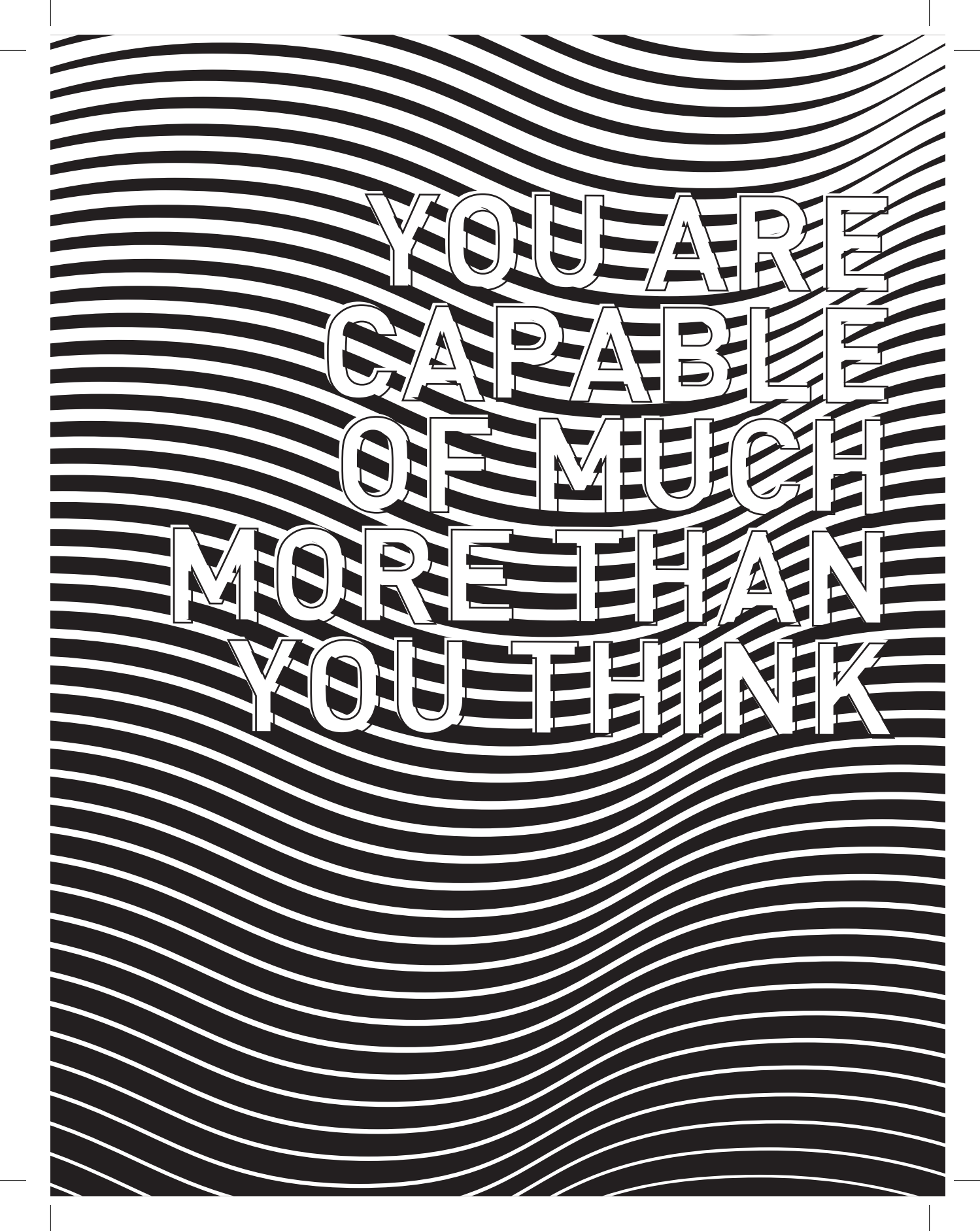
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First Edition



YOU ARE
CAPABLE
OF MUCH
MORE THAN
YOU THINK

YOU ARE ABOUT TO EXPERIENCE HISTORY'S HIGHEST RATE OF CHANGE, DISRUPTION, & OPPORTUNITY...

This means you are closer than ever to achieving something *more*. Your breakthrough might be a new product, service, role, idea, or just a different way of doing something.

THE PROBLEM IS that your ability to change will keep getting limited by seven specific traps. Collectively, these traps reduce your innovation potential by 93%—a number I will prove with a simple game. These traps blind you from seeing opportunity and compel you to stick to the path you are already on. This explains why most people miss out on realizing their full potential. It doesn't have to be that way.

THERE ARE PROVEN METHODS you can use to break free, to identify opportunity faster, and to make change happen. In this double-sided book, you will learn the same techniques my team has used to advance the world's highest-performing innovators at Disney, Starbucks, American Express, IBM, adidas, Google, and NASA.

THIS BOOK IS MORE THAN JUST MY LIFE'S WORK; it is the collective wisdom of my team and several hundred clients who contributed their battle-tested techniques. Instead of writing my third book on a focused, narrow topic, I wanted to make the most useful, comprehensive guidebook I could, combining all of the best tactics I've learned from working with so many innovators.

AFTER MORE THAN 10,000 INNOVATION PROJECTS, which helped leading brands predict and create the future, my team at Trend Hunter has collected a war chest of tactics that will help you win your future. And these skills matter more than ever before, because the next 5 to 10 years are about to redefine humanity.

CONSIDER THIS: We already have the technology to read the inner voice in your mind, so imagine controlling your phone with your inner thoughts, writing a report without

a keyboard, playing video games without a controller, or walking into stores that already know what you want to buy. Imagine seeing the world in augmented reality and commuting a bit safer, working a bit faster, or exercising in a way that is actually fun. What if we could restore someone's ability to walk, give someone the sense of touch, enhance eyesight, fight disease, or modify DNA? What happens when robots start building our homes, delivering our news, and driving us home?

THESE ARE NOT EXAMPLES OF THE FAR FUTURE. These are examples of what is possible right now. And with hybridization, instant entrepreneurship, and artificial intelligence, the pace of human progress is about to become not so human at all. Life as we know it is about to change dramatically, and this will create countless new opportunities.

Are you willing to make small changes to your daily routine, to increase your future potential—to create the future?

Let's do this! But first, a few pages of context . . .



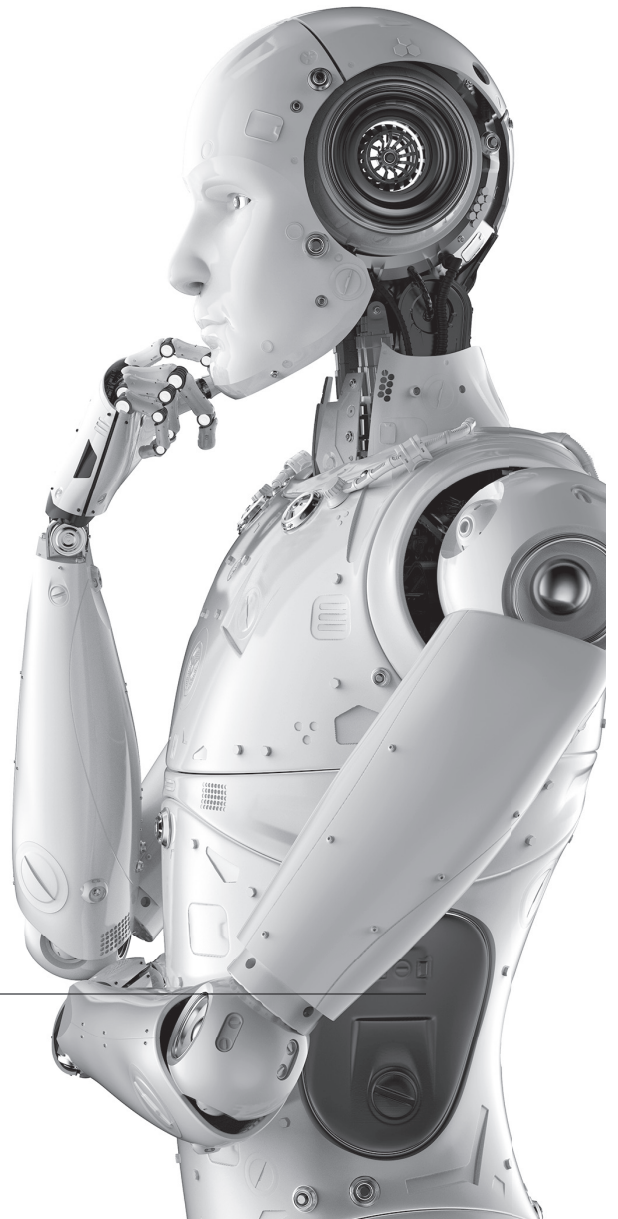
JEREMY GUTSCHE is a *New York Times* bestselling author, award-winning innovation expert, “one of the most sought-after keynote speakers on the planet” (*The Sun* newspaper), and the CEO of Trend Hunter—the world’s #1 trend website and innovation consultancy with over 3 billion views and more than 10,000 innovation projects completed. His team of Futurists is relied on by 700 brands, billionaires, and CEOs to predict and create the future. He’s even helped NASA prototype the journey to Mars!

THERE ARE MANY GREAT IDEAS WITHIN YOUR GRASP...

Our world is abundant with more opportunities than ever before. And the good news is you can predict many of those opportunities by learning to better decipher the trends in your world.

- Artificial Intelligence
- Globalization
- Genome Editing
- Big Data
- The Cloud
- China vs. US
- 3-D Printing
- Boomers vs. Millennials
- Sustainability
- Personalization
- Social Business
- Influencers
- Virtual Reality
- Augmented Reality
- Multi-Sensation
- Crowd-Funding
- Group Buying
- Female Empowerment
- The Pursuit of Equality
- Disruptive Innovation

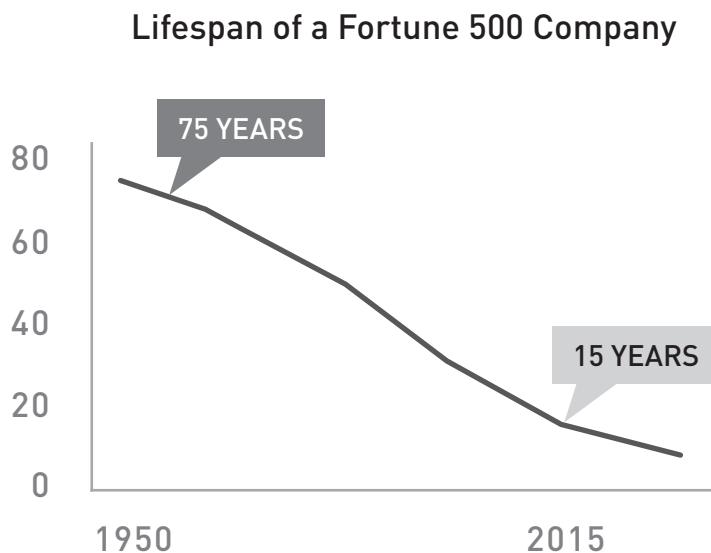
*YOU HAVE SO MUCH POTENTIAL
WELL WITHIN YOUR GRASP.*



HOWEVER, AS CLEVER AS YOU ARE, SMART PEOPLE MISS OUT

The average lifespan of a large company has fallen from 75 years in the 1950s to 15 years today.¹ If you look at the list of the Fortune 500 companies from the year 2000, more than 52% are now gone or displaced,² and that rate of disruption is accelerating.

Ironically, the companies that should be the best at innovation are the same companies that often fail.



Fortune 500 brands have all the resources and Harvard MBAs they need to innovate, but somehow that is not what's happening.

ALTHOUGH WE OBSESS ABOUT INNOVATION, WE MUST BE MINDFUL ———
————— *THAT MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN IS HALF THE BATTLE.*

EVERYONE WANTS INNOVATION AND CHANGE TO HAPPEN...

Almost every CEO of a major company will tell you that innovation is one of their core capabilities. An astounding 97%, in fact.³ This suggests that every major company has a strong commitment, support, and innovation capabilities, but our research has uncovered a different reality.



97%

of CEOs list innovation as
a top priority —PwC

BUT “NOT EVERYONE” PUTS IN THE EFFORT TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Roughly half of business leaders don't believe their company has a strong innovation plan. They don't believe they have enough time to work on new ideas, and they generally lack the capabilities to execute those ideas. This is an enormous disconnect, but it explains why so many companies become blindsided, disrupted, or less relevant than they were in the past.⁴

- ▷ **50%** don't believe their organization has a strong innovation plan
- ▷ **55%** don't believe their organization adapts quickly enough
- ▷ **48%** don't believe they have enough time to work on new ideas
- ▷ **56%** don't believe their organization knows how to turn ideas into reality

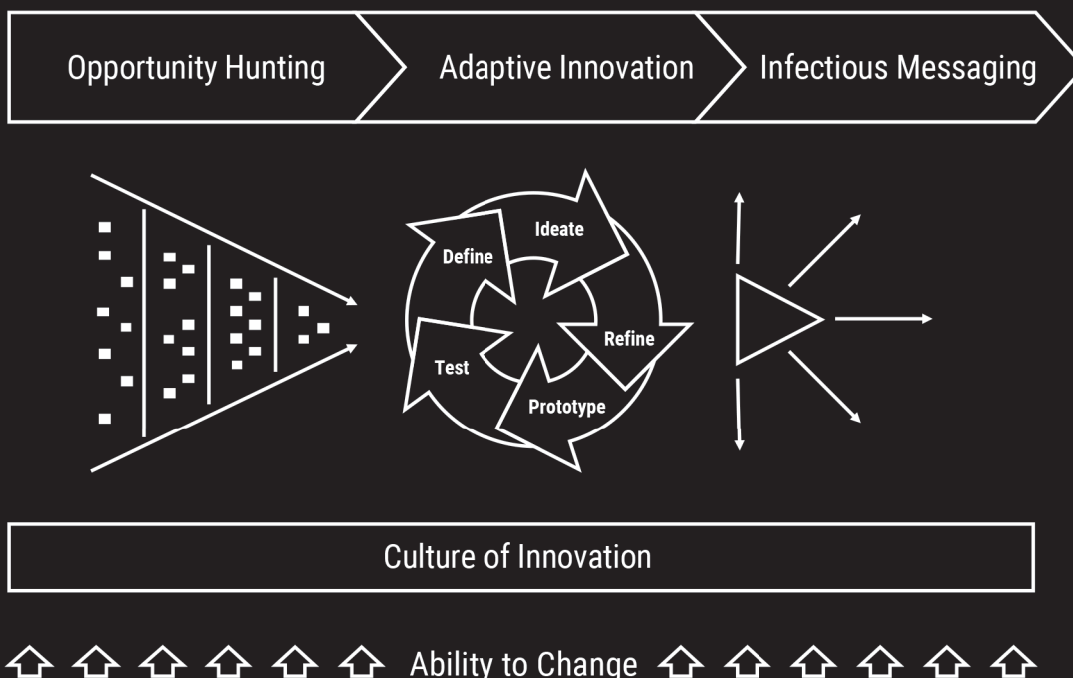
Source: Trend Hunter Assessment (n=30,000)

*THIS DISCONNECT EXPLAINS WHY YOU HAVE SO MUCH UNTAPPED
POTENTIAL. INNOVATION TACTICS ARE DESIRED, BUT MISSING.
LEARN TO INNOVATE AND EXPERIENCE A NEW LEVEL OF SUCCESS.*

THIS BOOK WILL EQUIP YOU WITH BATTLE-TESTED METHODS TO CREATE THE FUTURE

After conducting more than 10,000 innovation workshops and custom futurism projects, my team has encountered almost every type of innovation problem. We perfected this framework with our clients to create the ultimate guide, making innovation and change happen.

Create the Future Framework



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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.

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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.

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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

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



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.

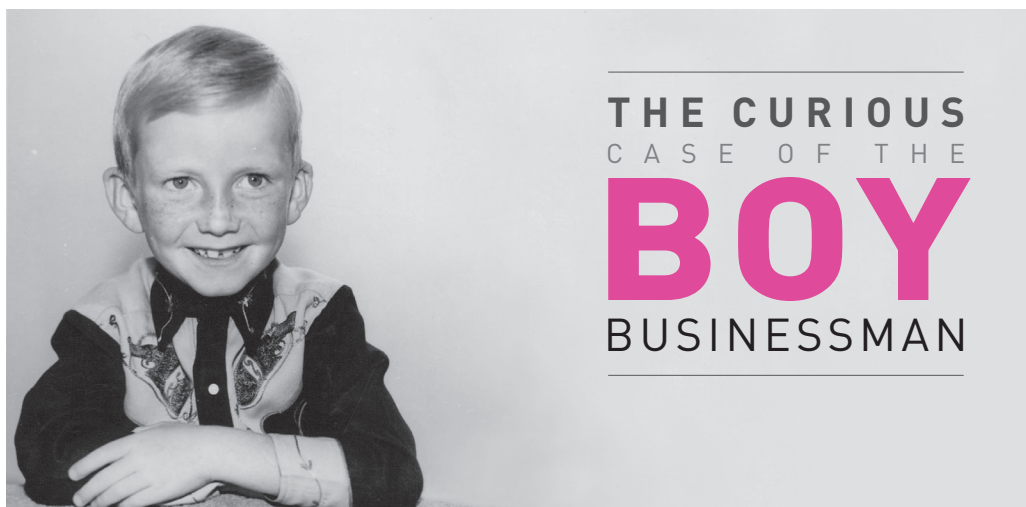
—MALCOLM GLADWELL

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.

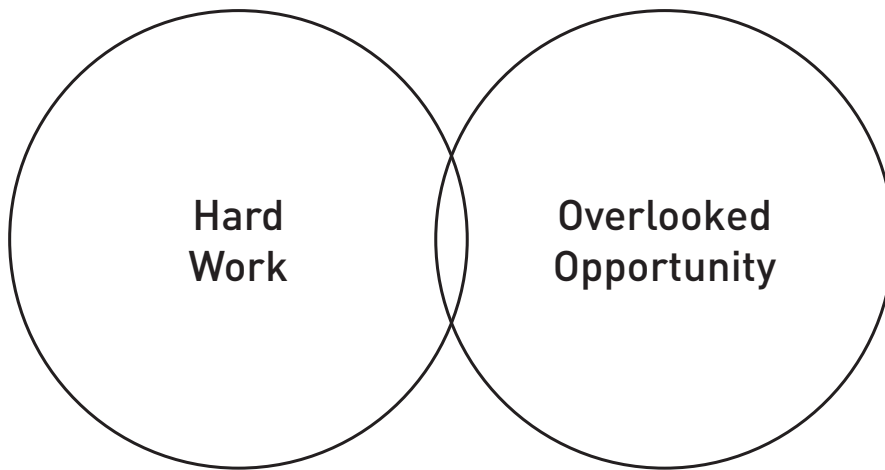
One day, at the innocent age of eight, the little guy was helping his mother stock up for supplies at the local grocer when some Kraft Philadelphia Cream Cheese caught his eye. When she looked away, he stuffed his mouth with the cheese. Shocked, she grabbed her son by the scruff of his neck and marched 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:

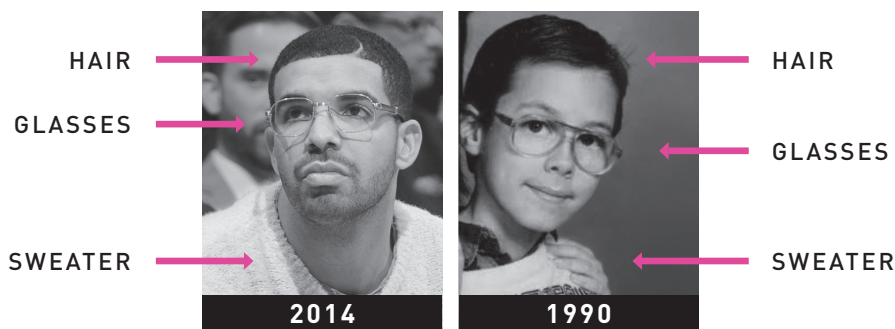
TO BE SUCCESSFUL, YOU NEED MORE THAN JUST WORK.

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.⁵ 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!

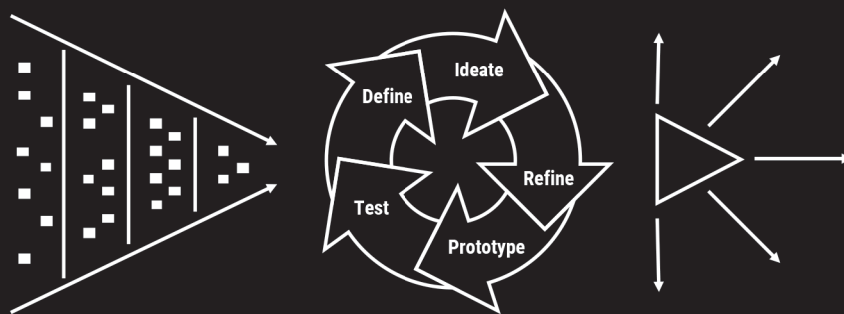
We have learned from each experience and this book is the complete collection of everything we have learned and tried. I truly believe these battle-tested methods will help you realize your full potential, faster. If you want more, sign up for our free weekly newsletter, visit TrendHunter.com, or visit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

Enjoy the book!

—JEREMY

JeremyGutsche.com

Create the Future Framework




Culture of Innovation

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ Ability to Change ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

PART 1

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.

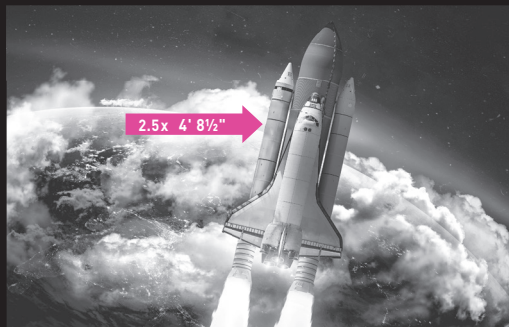
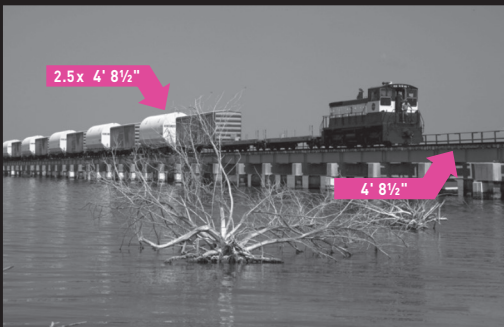
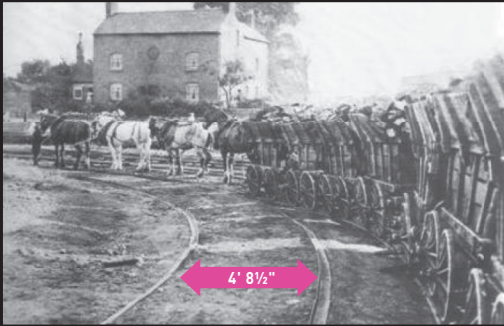
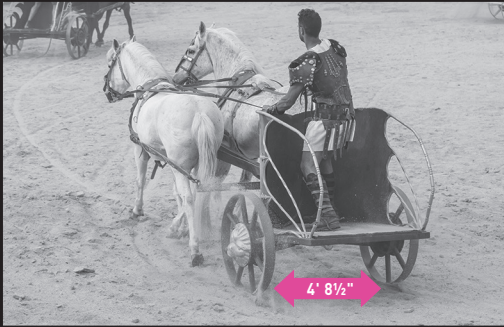
If you were a clever farmer, however, you would measure the width of the ruts and realize that they were 4 feet, 8½ inches wide—the width of the axles on the two-horse Roman war chariot. You would then design your own wagon to match.

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.

A black and white photograph of two horses running in space. The background is a starry galaxy. A pink double-headed arrow spans the height of the horses, with the text "4' 8 1/2\"" data-bbox="225 281 521 369"/>

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.* ———

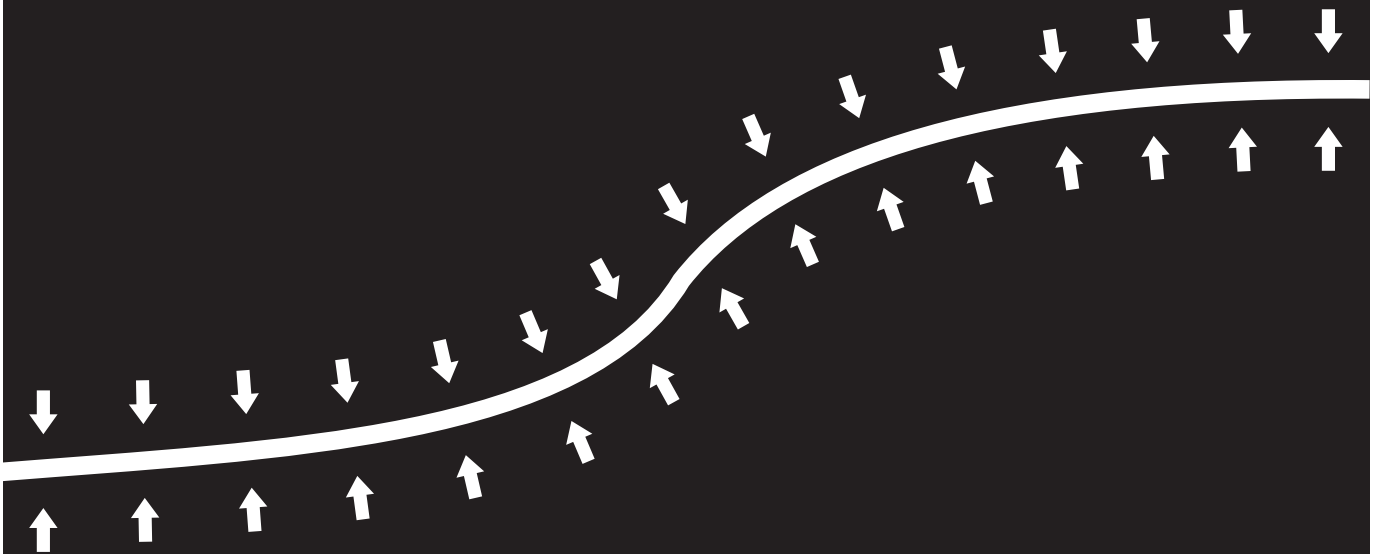
I have been working on tactics for these traps with some of the brightest minds in the world, and by the end of this book, you will be better equipped to break from the path.

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

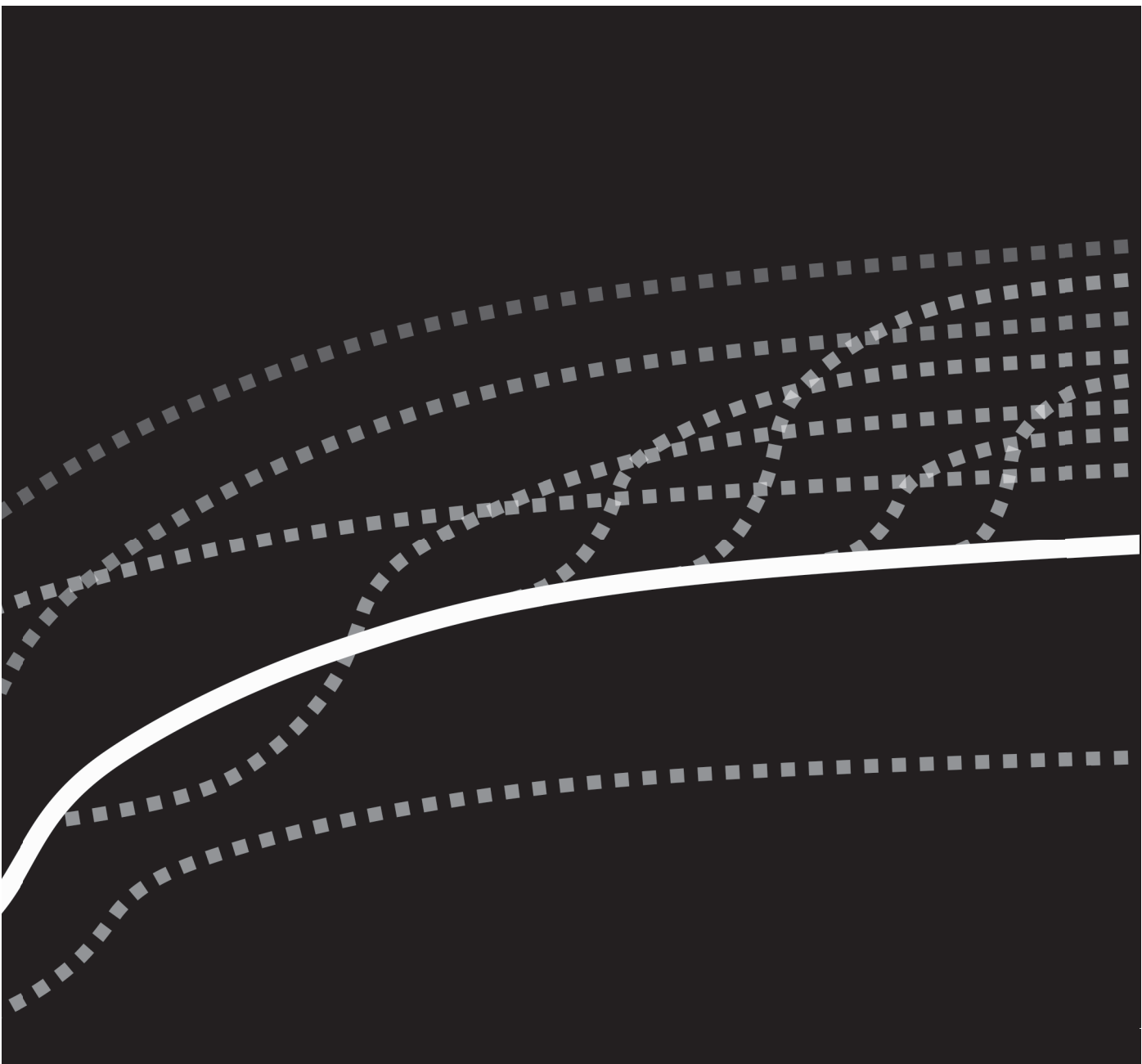
1. The Subtlety of Opportunity
2. Neurological Shortcuts
3. The Ease of Inaction
4. Optionality
5. The Traps of Success
6. Linear Thinking
7. Discomfort vs. Breakthrough



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

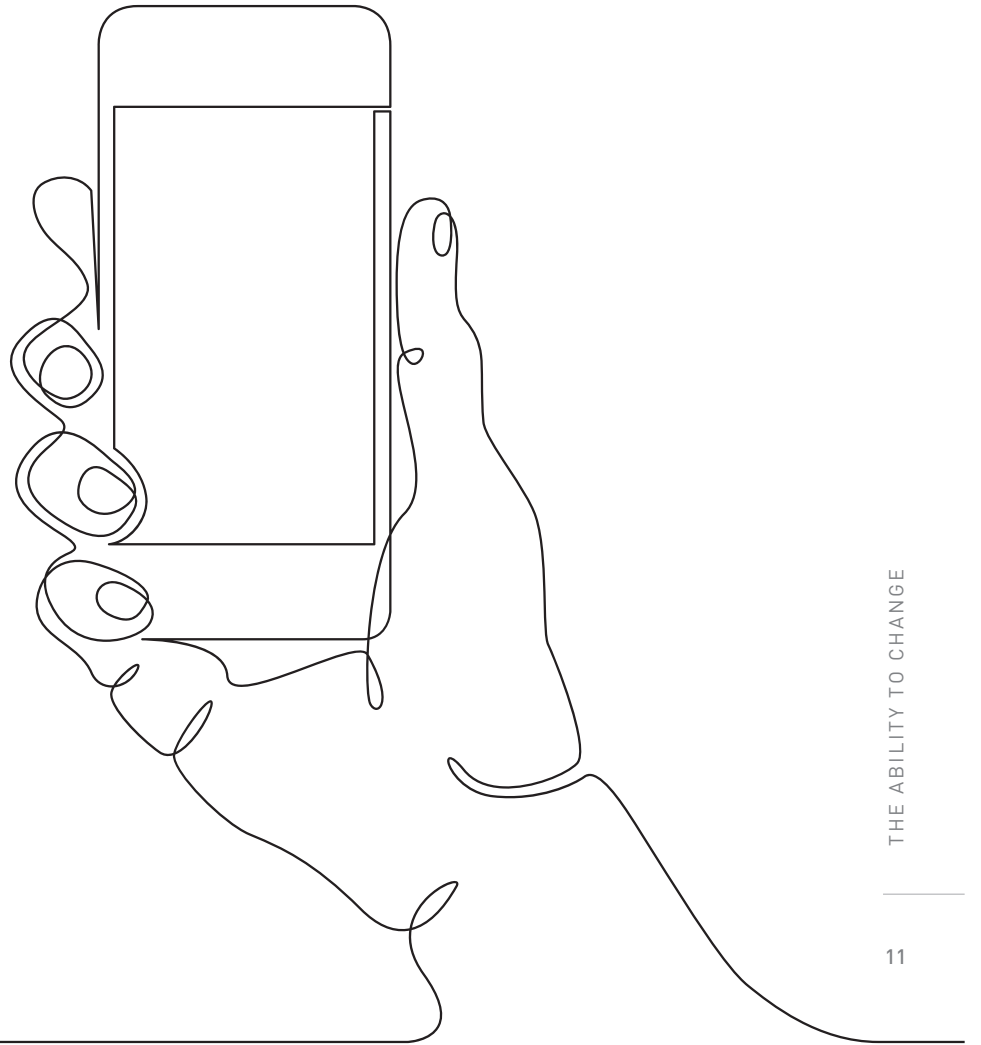
Let me tell you the story of Tony the Inventor. Tony was a relentless entrepreneur at heart, but he struggled to figure out his big idea. He knew only one thing, which was that his idea would be a gadget. He grew his career at a gadget company called Phillips and ascended to the role of VP of strategy 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.⁶

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!"⁷
3. **MOTOROLA:** Padmasree Warrior, CTO—"Nothing revolutionary about it . . ."⁸
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"⁹ and switching to Android would be like the Finnish boys who "pee in their pants" for warmth in the winter.¹⁰
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."¹¹

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.¹²

*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.¹³ 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."¹⁴
- Western Union rejected Alexander Graham Bell's telephone, saying it was "idiotic. Why would any person want to use this ungainly and impractical device?"¹⁵
- The *Kansas City Star* fired Walt Disney, saying he "lacked imagination and had no good ideas."¹⁶
- Kodak invented digital photography in 1975 but didn't adapt and went bankrupt.¹⁷
- HP rejected Steve Wozniak's computer ideas three times.¹⁸
- Atari could have owned 33% of Apple for \$50,000.
- EDS could have bought Microsoft (\$60 million).¹⁹
- Excite could have bought Google (\$1 million).²⁰
- Myspace could have owned Facebook (\$75 million).²¹
- Yahoo could have owned Facebook (\$1 billion).²²
- Britannica could have been Encarta, but they rejected Bill Gates.
- Encarta could have been Wikipedia.²³
- Blockbuster had three chances to buy Netflix (\$50 million).²⁴
- 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?'"²⁵



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."²⁶

**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.

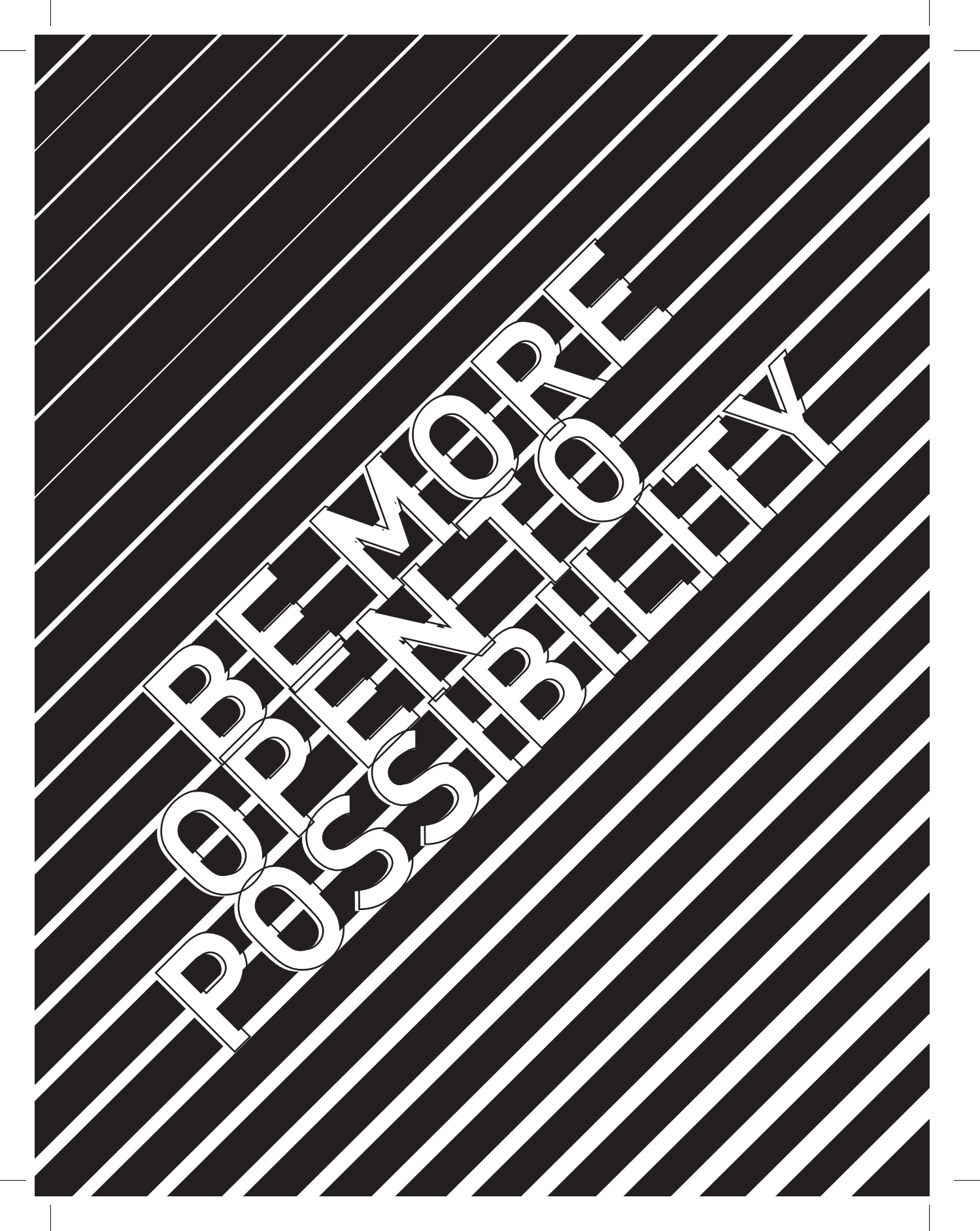
With that context in mind, Jack Smith and Sabeer Bhatia set out to pitch investors on the concept of Hotmail. Imagine: a service where anyone in the world could get their own email address, absolutely free! It was a relatively simple business model, which could be funded by advertising.

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.²⁷*



BENEFIT OF THE
POSSIBLE

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.

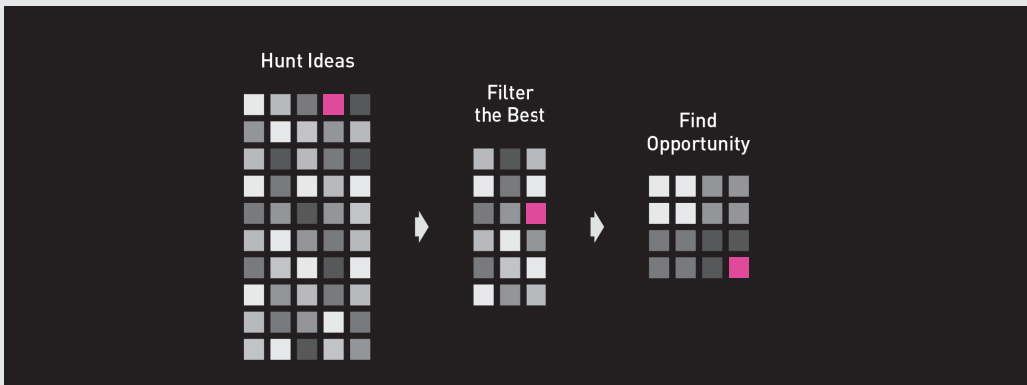
NEXT STEP

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:



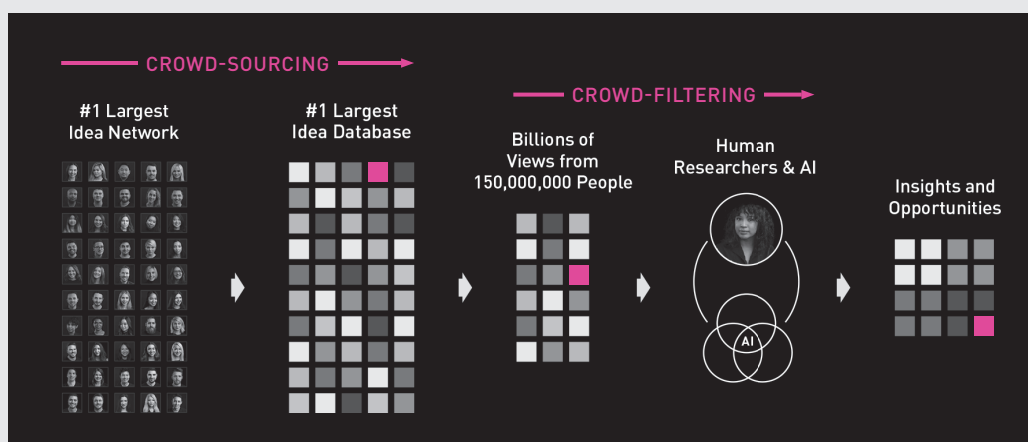
The many ways to get better at hunting opportunity will be discussed in an entire section of the flip side of this book. For now, the key takeaway is that you need to force yourself to explore new ideas if you don't want to miss out.

— *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**
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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?

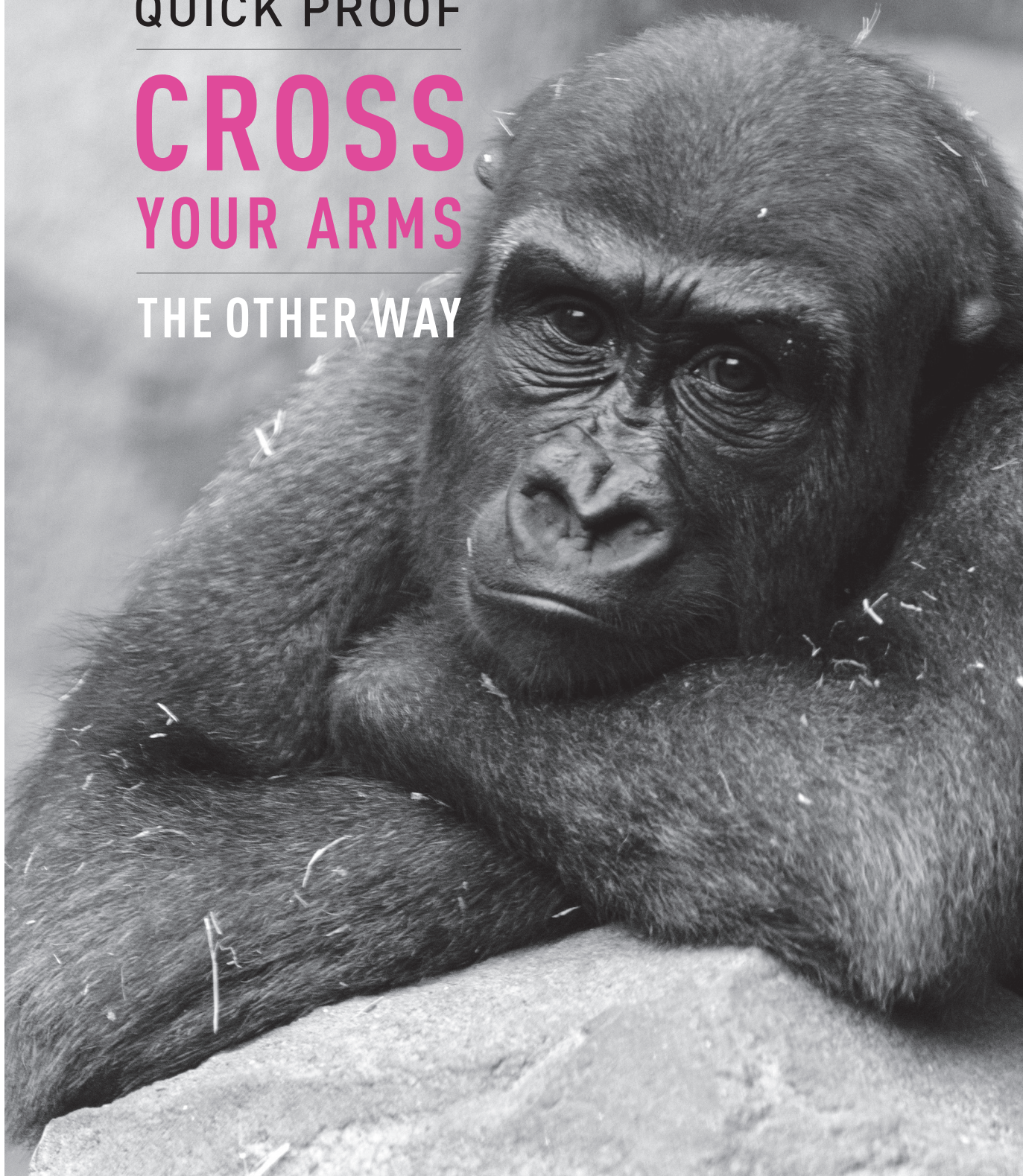
This time, I want you to actually work through it. Close this book and think about all of the things you can do with a paper clip. Sure, you can clip paper, but make a quick list of other options . . .

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.

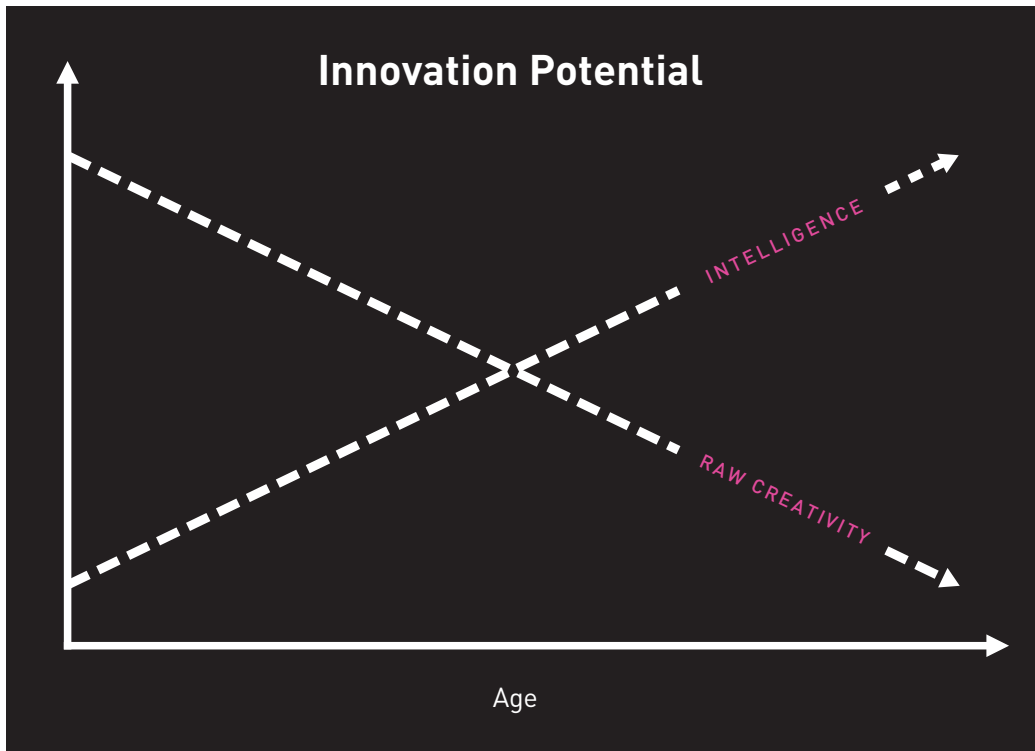
The reason this activity is so predictable is that our brains (and myelin) narrow our thinking to the things we have done or decided before. Myelin might be great for making fast decisions in situations where speed is critical, but it is a terrible trap if you care about innovation and change. This activity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

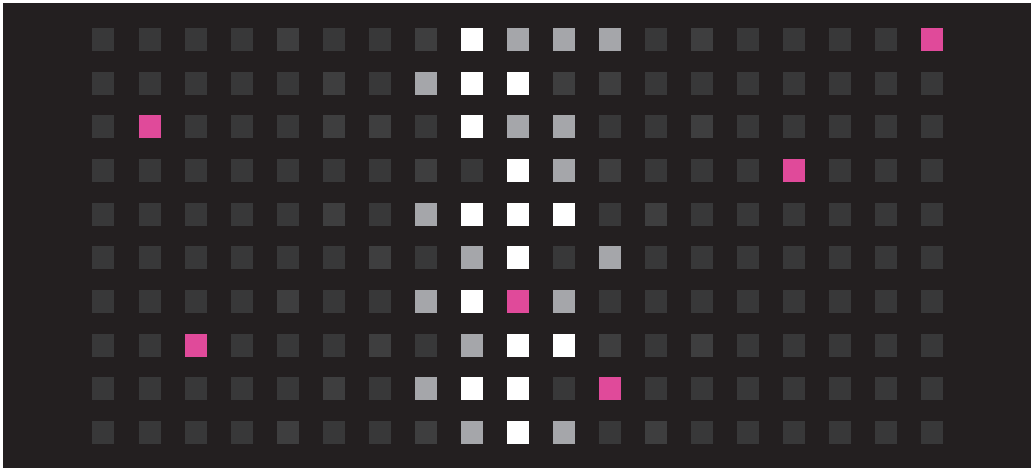


This loss is related to myelin and our brain's desire to create shortcuts. This paper clip experiment, known as The Alternative Uses Test (J.P. Guilford), dates back to 1967, and you can repeat it with all sorts of basic objects. Myelin makes us faster, but it also creates ruts—literal pathways—that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

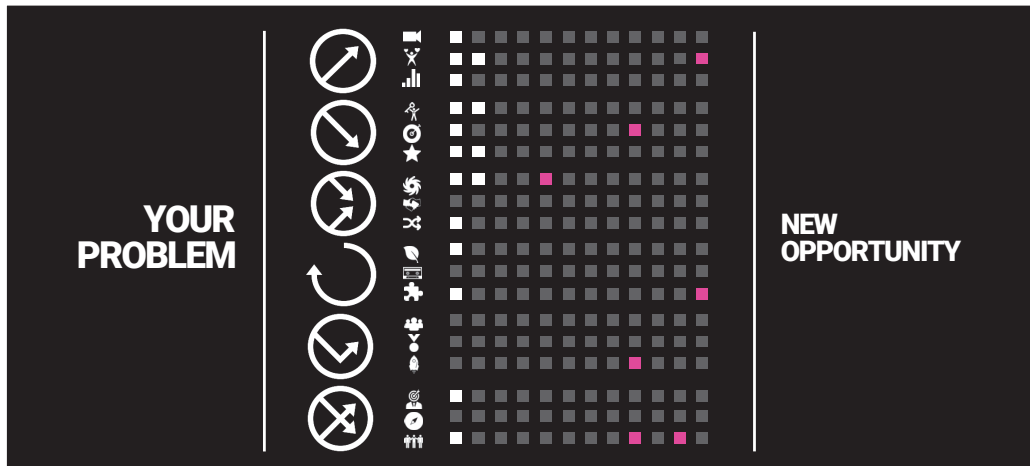
- include people with diverse perspectives;
- simulate how other companies would approach the same problem; or
- force yourself to solve a known problem in a different way.

*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.

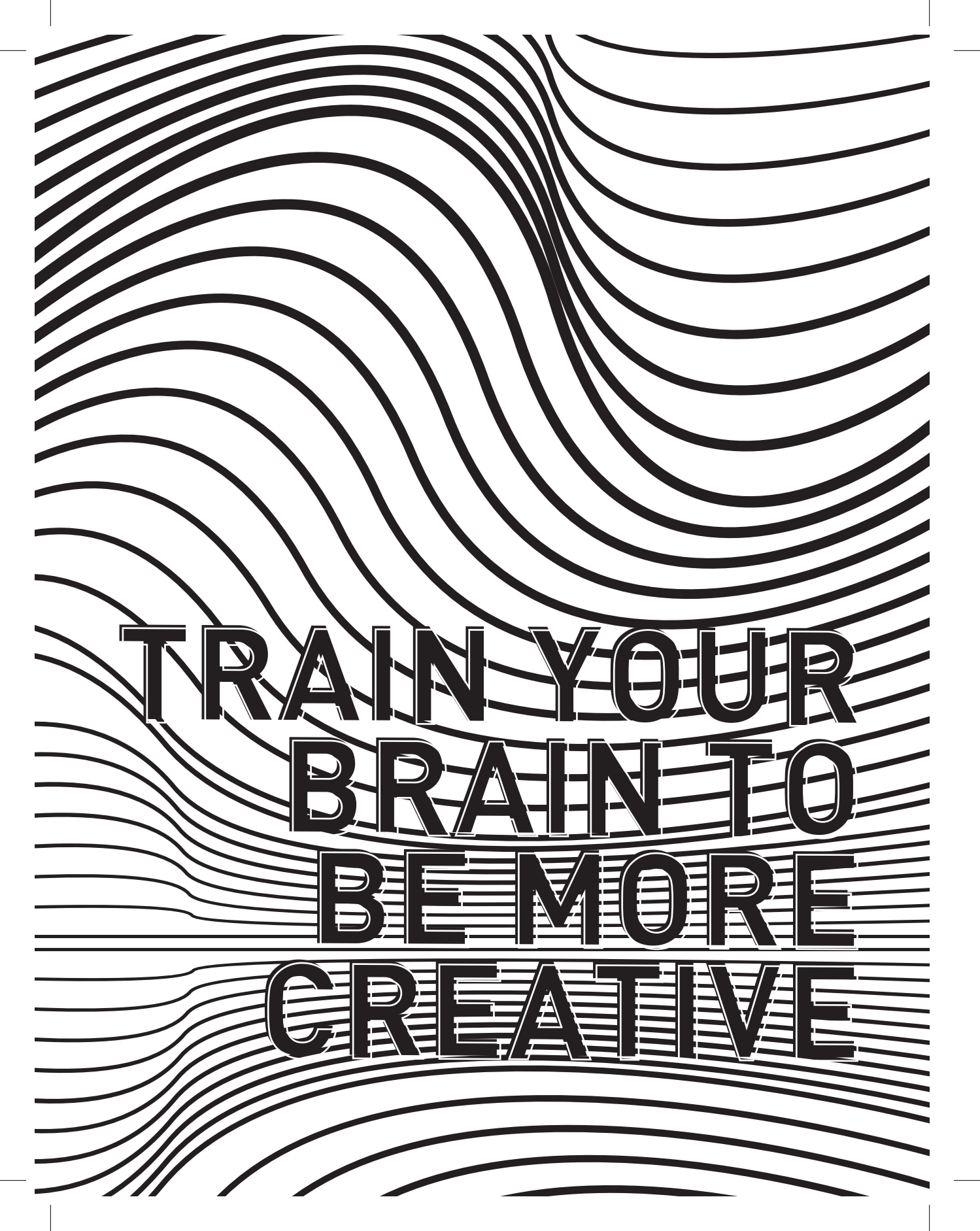
The key to unlocking our new skillsets is also acknowledging the ways we are becoming more limited in our thinking. We need to internalize the way myelin (and other shortcuts) works in our brain. These shortcuts create neurological blind spots, meaning that we have a natural tendency to completely dismiss 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 Insider²⁸



**TRAIN YOUR
BRAIN TO
BE MORE
CREATIVE**

WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

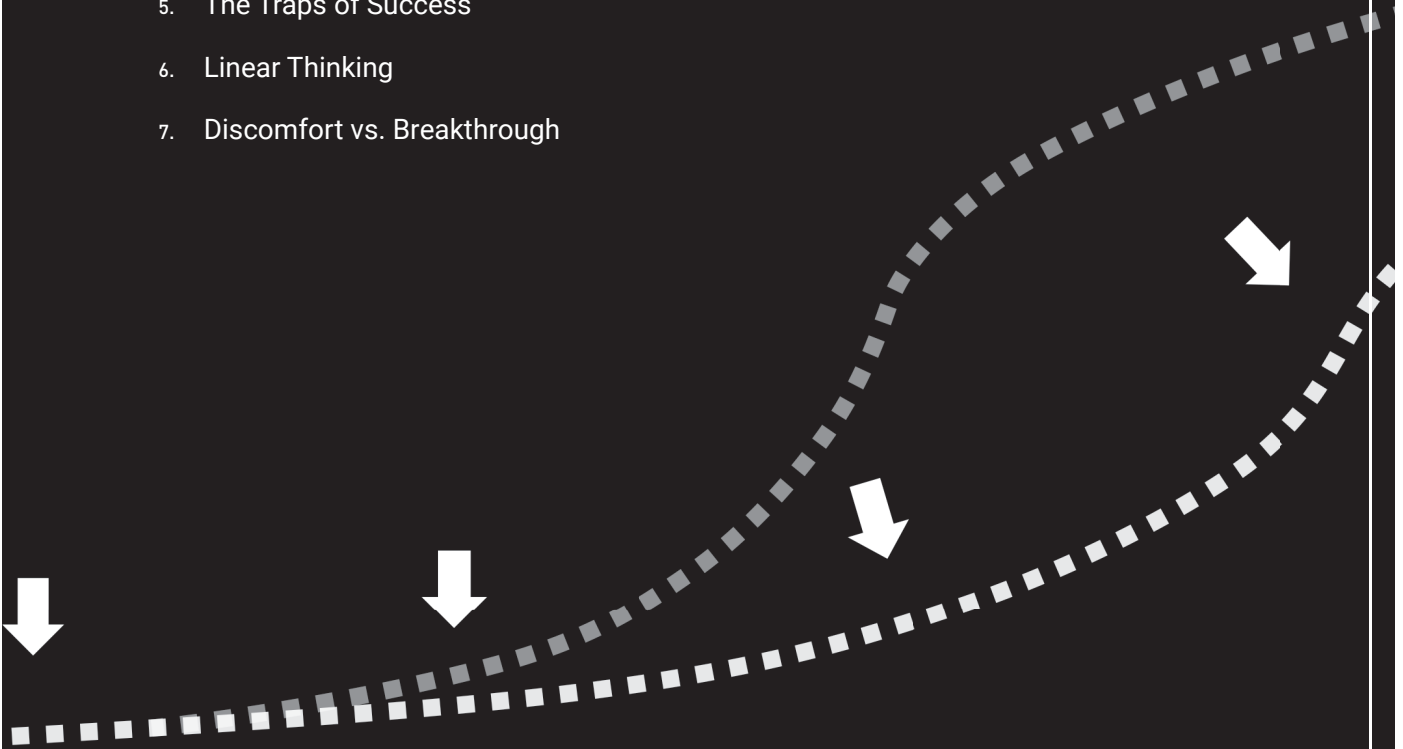
- What activities would you be willing to practice if it meant being much better at seeing opportunity?
- If you host a monthly workshop on rotating topics, what would the next four topics be? (There are loads of ideas for workshops on the previous pages!)
- Are you pushing your team's creativity? What else could you do?

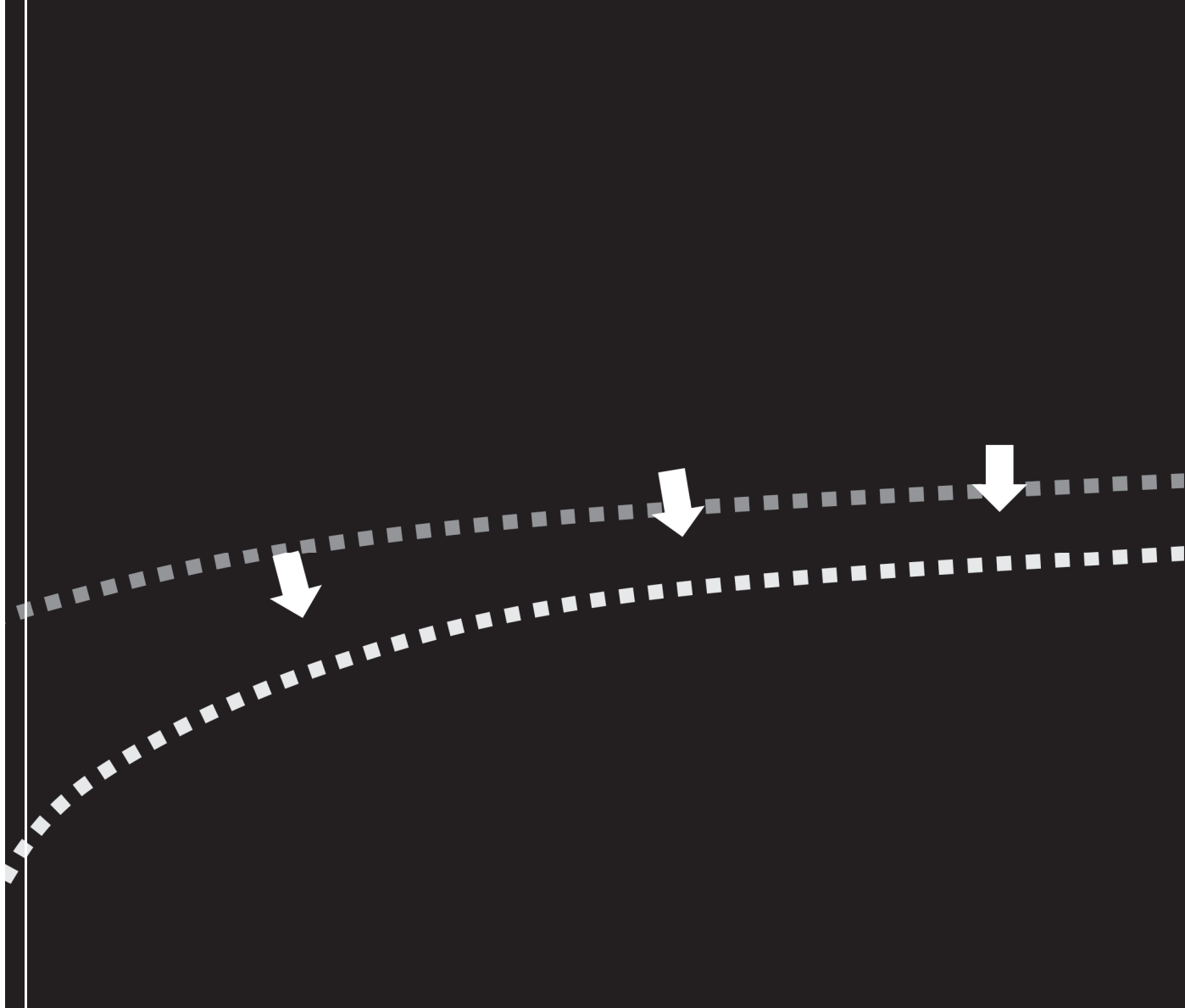
TACTICS

1. Encourage play.
2. Stop knowing the answer (and instead ask questions).
3. Break rules.
4. Diversify your team.
5. Bring teams together.
6. Proactively solicit ideas.
7. Fund creative hobbies.
8. Track trends in other markets.
9. Run ongoing workshops with your team.
10. Host weekly blue-sky meetings.
11. Have themed creative days.
12. Visit innovative businesses.
13. Attend conferences unrelated to your profession.
14. Embrace the mindset of "no bad ideas."

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 EASE OF INACTION

Smart people do not intentionally resist change or adaptation, but we get so caught up with everything that needs to be done that we become less proactive about ideas that are different, are not in our department, or are not our greatest concern. A multitude of factors make it easier for us to lack urgency, and if you can address those factors, you can spark the action you need to create the future.

WE ALL EXHIBIT SOME LEVEL OF RESISTANCE TO CHANGE . . .

Can you type? Of course you can, and like 99.9% of typists, you probably punch your keys on a keyboard with a QWERTY layout. That keyboard was developed for the first typewriters, and the layout was chosen to make sure the keys didn't mash together.

~	!	@	#	\$	%	^	&	*	()	-	+	←
Tab	Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P	{	}	
Caps Lock	A	S	D	F	G	H	J	K	L	:	"	Enter	↵
Shift	Z	X	C	V	B	N	M	<	>	?	/	Shift	↵
Ctrl	Win Key	Alt								Alt	Win Key	Menu	Ctrl

Today, however, you can open up your phone settings and switch to a Dvorak keyboard. Your keys will then be laid out in an entirely different way, optimized for modern typing. It will take you about six months to learn that typing layout, but at the end of the six months, you will type 30% faster because you will make fewer errors.

~	!	@	#	\$	%	^	&	*	()	{	}	←
Tab	"	<	>	P	Y	F	G	C	R	L	?	+	
Caps Lock	A	O	E	U	I	D	H	T	N	S	-	Enter	↵
Shift	:	Q	J	K	X	B	M	W	V	Z	/	Shift	↵
Ctrl	Win Key	Alt								Alt Gr	Win Key	Menu	Ctrl

Would you like to switch? Why not? I just offered you a chance to increase your efficiency at something you do every day. Are you not willing to change?

— *THE BUSIER YOU BECOME, THE EASIER IT IS TO STAY ON YOUR PATH, DO NOTHING, AND MISS OPPORTUNITY.* —

... AND THERE ARE MANY FACTORS THAT FUEL OUR RESISTANCE

It's no secret that we have a desire to preserve the status quo. We like stability in our family life, our politics, and our jobs. Stability is not the enemy; it serves us well. The complication happens when we need innovation and change. Here's what you face when it comes to rolling out a different way of doing things:

- not enough time
- + preference for simplicity
- + cultural conformity
- + fear of failure
- + rigid structure
- + desire to optimize
- + busy life
- + neurology
- + constraints
- + groupthink
- + not my department
- + not my problem
- + diffusion of responsibility
- = **resistance to change**

Just reading this list is tedious, so it's no surprise that actually working past these obstacles can feel like an insurmountable task.

START BY AUDITING THE FACTORS IN YOUR LIFE THAT INHIBIT ACTION

You can't change everything about your innate resistance to change, and you certainly are not going to change everything about your life. However, if you want change to happen, you need to internalize the extent to which certain habits and elements of structure impact your decision-making.

By workshopping your way through these categories, you can learn where you might have a lack of flexibility or balance that you would like to change.

For example, let's take the category of Busyness. Did you realize that you get a little hit of dopamine every time you answer a simple email or clear your inbox? Because of this, you get more distracted joy from answering 30 innocuous emails than you would by spending some time in deep, reflective thought. Can you set new email rules that liberate time?

If you look at the table of distractors, how many currently have an adverse impact on your time for deep thought? If you were to brainstorm tactics based on this list, you would likely find new ways to free up your time and schedule. Consider the following solutions:

- No Meetings on Monday Mornings
- 20-Minute Meeting Caps
- Blue-Sky Innovation Sessions
- Brainstorm Starting Your Business from Scratch

*IF YOU WANT TO REDUCE YOUR RESISTANCE TO CHANGE,
YOU NEED TO CLEAR THE OBSTACLES THAT BLOCK DEEP THOUGHT.*

CATEGORIES OF ACTION LIMITERS

STRUCTURE

Procedures
Regulations
Compliance
Policies
Rules



OPTIMIZATION

Brand Standards
Best Practices
Methods
Formulas
Rollouts



LIFE

Life Events
Vacations
Kids
Family



NEUROLOGY

Complexity Shortcuts
Paradox of Choices
Loss Avoidance
Myelin



BUSYNESS

Phone Calls
Meeting
Deadlines
Emails
Feedback



CONSTRAINTS

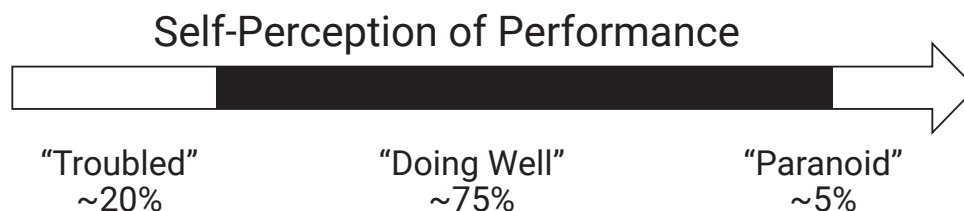
Past Investment
Legacy Systems
Sunk Costs
Budget



TO INSPIRE ACTION, YOU MUST CREATE URGENCY

Do you like disruptive innovation? People seem to love the term and toss it around excitedly, but there's another side to the story. People are losing jobs, beloved brands are failing, and we are creating a world fraught with uncertainty.

The catch is that most disrupted companies don't see it coming because they lack urgency. Did you know that in the next 5–10 years, 40% of the current Fortune 500 companies will no longer exist in a meaningful way? We should all feel a sense of urgency. But people don't. In my experience, you can predict which companies are most at risk of disruption based on their self-perception of performance.



After writing my book about chaos, about 20% of my clients have been in the first category, "Troubled." The next year for these clients feels scary, but actually, this fear helps them create alignment and momentum. They operate with a sense of urgency and are less likely to resist change and experimentation. Companies that feel troubled can be the most open to new ideas because they fear failure and feel like they have less to lose.

For example, in my prior career, I helped grow Capital One to a billion-dollar portfolio in a year when things were bleak. The goal on my dashboard was to SHRINK the high-end business by ONLY 20%. Imagine that as a goal. At the end of the year, success would have meant telling my girlfriend, "Honey, I shrank the business by only 20%. I'm *THAT* good!" But actually, we pushed harder, acted sooner, and rolled out new products that tripled monthly bookings. It happened because of the *urgency*.

In a different example, a decade ago, Domino's Pizza was having a difficult time. Their stock price had plummeted almost 85% to \$3. Things were gloomy, but that gave the teams the freedom to experiment and try all sorts of risky ideas. By the time we started working with them in 2012, we realized they had an enormous appetite for experimental ideas. In 2015, for example, they launched a new ordering system where you could order pizza by simply texting a pizza emoji. They also launched an app where you could order a pizza without any options for choice or customization. You just open the app and a pizza comes to you. No choice at all. Fast-forward to 2019, and the stock has been trading as high as \$299, up nearly a hundredfold, making it one of the fastest-growing stocks in America.

Their ideas worked because people were feeling a desperate urgency to act. Otherwise, imagine being at a pizza company where things were working well and suggesting, "I think people should have no choice about what pizza they get, and they should order with an emoji." You would likely be laughed out of the boardroom.

On the other end of the spectrum, there is a very small group of highly disruptive organizations that are "paranoid" about their performance and competitors. These companies include some of the highest-performing brands, like Google, Walmart, Universal, and NASA. They fear disruption so much that they have ongoing workshops, innovation programs, and cultural imperatives to support creativity. They tolerate failure and talk about what could disrupt them. They perpetually fuel urgency.

All this leads us to the giant middle group of companies where people believe things are going "well." Unfortunately, that's the worst category to be in, because it usually signals complacency and a blindness to the upcoming pace of change. And mathematically, it just isn't possible for 75% of companies to be doing well when we know almost half of the brands will be disrupted in the next decade.

For individuals, the conclusions are the same. If you are down on your luck and urgently looking for new ideas, you are in a terrific spot. Most great ideas come from similar times of urgency. If you aren't feeling urgency, there's probably an opportunity somewhere that you're missing out on.

IF YOU WANT CHANGE TO HAPPEN, YOU MUST BEGIN BY _____

_____ *IGNITING A SENSE OF URGENCY AND PURPOSE.*

YOU CAN TURN “TROUBLED” PERFORMANCE INTO ACTION

A decade ago, I received a call from a man named Tony Hunter, a passionate and engaging leader who was publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. Tony explained that he loved my first book, *Exploiting Chaos*, so much that he'd gifted it to his managers and turned his favorite quotes into posters on his office wall. I had to see who could possibly like my book so much, so I flew to Chicago, elated to imagine I had a fan.



Before meeting Tony, I thought of the *Tribune* as just another media brand, but after meeting Tony, I learned what it's like to work at an iconic institution. When he greeted me in the Tribune Tower, he toured me around its cathedral-like entryway, which is adorned with the quotes of journalists and authors of days past. It became very clear that to Tony, this was much more important than a “job.”

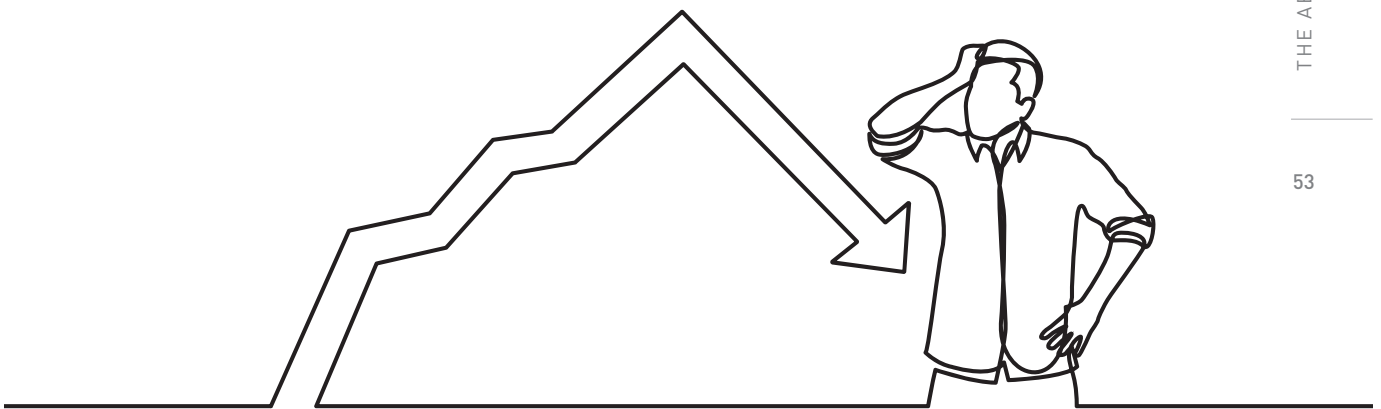
The catch is that Tony's life was about to get flipped upside down.

To set the stage, Tony had enjoyed a great career and was 15 years in with record growth and a strong trajectory. It was tough to imagine his world could be disrupted. However, markets turned and blogs started rivaling traditional newspapers for traffic. In my case, Trend Hunter was getting more page views than the *Tribune* with our tiny staff of seven. So Tony and I had a fair bit to talk about.

A few years later, something surprising happened. In the midst of market troubles, Tony's phone rang and he received the call of his dreams: he was offered the role of CEO. The catch was that they wanted him to accept the position and then file for bankruptcy, fire his friends, shrink the paper, motivate who was left, AND sell more ads.

It was like being asked to become the captain of the *Titanic* so that you could *intentionally* ram the beloved ship into an iceberg. If you accept such a role, you destroy your beloved company, ruin your relationships, and basically commit career suicide. Like . . . if you're going to do it, you have to just delete your LinkedIn profile. Just delete it. It's gone. Just tell people you're not on social media.

Despite the daunting size of the challenge, Tony accepted the role and the challenge to save the paper. But reality immediately began to sink in when he filed for bankruptcy. Though the plan was to reinvent, it must have felt like signing the death certificate for his beloved brand.



Tony's next duty was laying off a large part of the team—many of whom were friends. He explained to me, “The first more difficult day was the day that we recognized that we'd have to right-size the company and fire anywhere between 15% and 20% of the employee base. I think any time you are a leader and you have to make those kinds of tough decisions, that's a tough day, because of people.”

He elaborated, “I got through that day knowing I could lose all jobs or save quite a few. And one way to lose all jobs is to keep doing the same thing we are doing today.”

With two of the difficult but straightforward steps complete, Tony was now tasked with how to motivate who was left, shrink the paper, and sell more ads. It would be the most difficult professional task of his life.

In Tony's words, “I believe the role of the leader during disruptive times is to create a pathway and a reason for change. . . . We had to go from being a newspaper company to being a media and business services company that happens to publish a newspaper. And think about that in the Tribune Tower.”

To create these pathways for change, Tony began hosting regular town hall meetings, where he would solicit opinions, discuss competing alternatives, and run workshops intended to gain alignment between the teams. These workshops helped people feel involved in the co-creation of the *Tribune's* future, and they helped spark the sense of urgency needed to make change happen.

I will walk through an example of some of the workshops I've used with his team, but note my details will be a bit generalized to avoid revealing specifics about their team members. Instead, I will indicate how you might apply these workshops to your own company.

IMAGINE UTOPIA VS. DYSTOPIA TO CREATE URGENCY

My favorite workshop for creating urgency is called Utopia vs. Dystopia. The concept is that if you get people to imagine the path to a disastrous future, versus a wonderful future, they will realize the key risks and opportunities facing the company and feel the urgent need to change. Nobody wants a disastrous future! (I was first taught this tactic by Anik Karimjee, CEO of Rank Research Group, when I ran innovation at Capital One.)

Step 1: What five factors will shape your future?

Dystopia	Utopia
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Imagine a world five years from today where your company has become irrelevant. Your team was unsuccessful, your projects did not work out, and you have to move on to a different job. What do you realistically think would be the key factors leading to downfall? In the *Tribune* example, what could lead to total collapse? Not embracing digital? Not attracting a younger demographic? Not motivating the team members who remain?

Next, imagine the opposite. What factors would lead your company to a utopia where everything works out wonderfully? I often perform this exercise with groups ranging from 50 to 500, typically with people seated in teams of 6 to 10 people. After 5 to 10 minutes, teams will have worked through their lists, and I get them to share, table by table.

TWO KEY OUTCOMES OCCUR: FIRST, YOU START TO FEEL URGENCY BECAUSE YOU REALIZE DYSTOPIA HAPPENS WITH INACTION. SECOND, UTOPIA WILL SEEM LIKE A LOT OF WORK.

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

about your problems from different angles. If you want to learn more, these patterns are described further in the other side of this book, in the section on opportunity hunting.

Pattern	Sub-patterns	Questions
Divergence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalization • Customization • Status + Belonging • Style + Fashionizing • Generational Rebellion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do people hate about your INDUSTRY? • How could you be more CUSTOMIZED, unique, or different from the mainstream?
Convergence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combining + Layering • Adding Value • Co-branding + Aligning • Physical + Digital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other SERVICES could be combined with your offering? • What COMPANIES could you collaborate with?
Acceleration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perfecting One Thing • Aspirational Icon • Exaggerated Feature • Reimagined Solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifically, what is it that you are TRYING to achieve? • How might you REDEFINE your most important feature?
Reduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialization • Fewer Layers + Efficiency • Crowdsourcing • Subscription 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What parts of your business do consumers actually CARE about? • If you split your work into five companies, which one would be the most VALUABLE?
Cyclicity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retro • Generational • Economic + Seasonal • Repetitive Cycles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since your last reinvention, how much have styles, tech, and culture CHANGED? • What do your NEXT customers think about your relevance and how can you reposition?
Redirection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refocusing • Reversing • Surprising • Gamifying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What big trends or rituals could you RECHANNEL? • Where could you OVER DELIVER to delight?

— **TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PATTERNS, READ MY PREVIOUS BOOK, [BETTER AND FASTER](#), OR EXPLORE OUR WEBSITE AT: [TRENDHUNTER.COM/PATTERNS](https://www.trendhunter.com/patterns).** —

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.

SIMULATIONS CREATE URGENCY AND ALIGNMENT

Tony Hunter was able to create urgency in part because his newspaper had declared bankruptcy. However, you can also create urgency through simulations. My case study involves space beer and the journey to Mars.

You might not realize this, but in 2003, the Shuttle program was canceled. That means that every time NASA needs to send an astronaut to space, they pay Russia \$80 million for a spot on Russia's Soyuz rocket.²⁹ That's an expensive airplane ticket. So, why would NASA agree to that? The reason is pretty simple: NASA is so committed to Mars they wanted to remove the day-to-day distractions of the Shuttle program. To fully commit to a big mission, you need to be focused.

The problem, however, is that it's still not easy to get to Mars. My neighbor, astronaut Chris Hadfield, described it to me by saying if you want to go to the moon, it is a three-day mission, and if you make a mistake, gravity will bring you back to Earth. If you go to Mars, on the other hand, you have about 12 minutes of launch and then you're on an 18-month mission. If you make a mistake, you're sent into a coffin in space and kids end up quitting science.

The other complication, Hadfield explained, is that we are at a point in time akin to when the Wright brothers finally got the world's first plane to cross a football field. Imagine going up to them then and saying, "Awesome, are you ready to cross the Atlantic Ocean?" We will get there, but there's still an enormous amount to figure out. We can talk about Mars all we want, but we still need to invent new technologies and convince someone to strap themselves to a giant rocket for over a year.

Wow. That's a bit higher risk than my own job. Having said that, though, the day-to-day challenges at NASA are much more similar to your own world than you might think. Sure, they're building rocket ships, but they're still a collection of people trying

to change and adapt. They struggle with all the same issues as my other clients, including navigating a rigid structure, competing for resources, working in silos, and dealing with bureaucracy. This is why I was brought in to help.

The easiest way to describe the problem is to imagine you have the world's best rocket scientist, the best biologist, and the best chemist. The rocket scientist would love to get to Mars as quickly as possible, to plant a flag and beat China in the race to deep space. That mission would take 8 to 10 years. The chemist wants to bring Martian rocks back to Earth. That would take 15 to 20 years. Meanwhile, the biologist wants to bring human life to the red planet, which would probably take 25 to 35 years.

The issue is that you cannot do one mission perfectly without totally compromising the others, so there should be a choice or compromise. However, because the time frames are so long, people avoid the urgency of working through compromise and instead focus on their own projects. How do you get alignment and urgency?

The answer is remarkably similar to the situation at the *Chicago Tribune*, even though the industries couldn't be more dissimilar. In this example, I ran a workshop where teams had to pick which of the three missions they wanted to prototype, and then we began with the same steps of Dystopia vs. Utopia and brainstorming.

When I asked the groups to share, a retired astronaut got up and said, "Our team wants to do the quickest mission where you race to plant a flag on Mars in just eight years. The reason is that we want to get this done before we all lose our jobs." At first the room laughed, but then he explained he was serious, noting, "I've had 17 missions canceled in my career, and you will one day learn that if you can't finish a mission within a presidential term, you, too, will experience a canceled mission." The room chilled, and people started realizing the importance of alignment and urgency.

Suddenly, instead of caring about all 10 of your own ideas, you start to realize you need to pick your battles. When it came to picking the top three priorities, most

teams had some version of needing public support, short-term wins, and collaboration between departments.

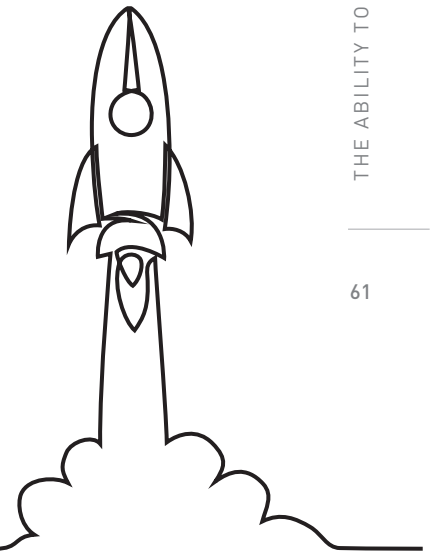
Then, when we got into prototyping, people had to work deeply on those three priorities. My favorite example came from a team where the team leader warned, "I'll tell you our table's idea, but first I have to give you a caveat, because you're all going to laugh at us. We mean it, and we want to do it."

He explained, "We all want to succeed, and we know the public doesn't get excited about breakthroughs like the water discovered on Mars. And of course, we know that new presidents can cancel our long missions. So, we need to find something that involves all teams while generating a lot of public support. The answer, space beer!"

He noted that at first, you might laugh, but everyone gets to experiment. We have to get to Mars, so the rocket person is happy. We need to harvest the water, so the chemist is happy. And we need to grow a plant, so the biologist is happy. And now, suddenly the public will care more about little breakthroughs like harvesting water, because . . . beer! Last, you try being the American president who cancels the American mission of brewed beer on Mars.

Space beer. Who knew?

*SIMULATIONS CREATE ALIGNMENT, OPTIONALITY,
AND URGENCY. EVERYONE WANTS INNOVATION TO HAPPEN,
BUT NOT EVERYONE BREAKS FROM THE PATH.*





THE TIME FOR
ACTION
IS NOW

WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

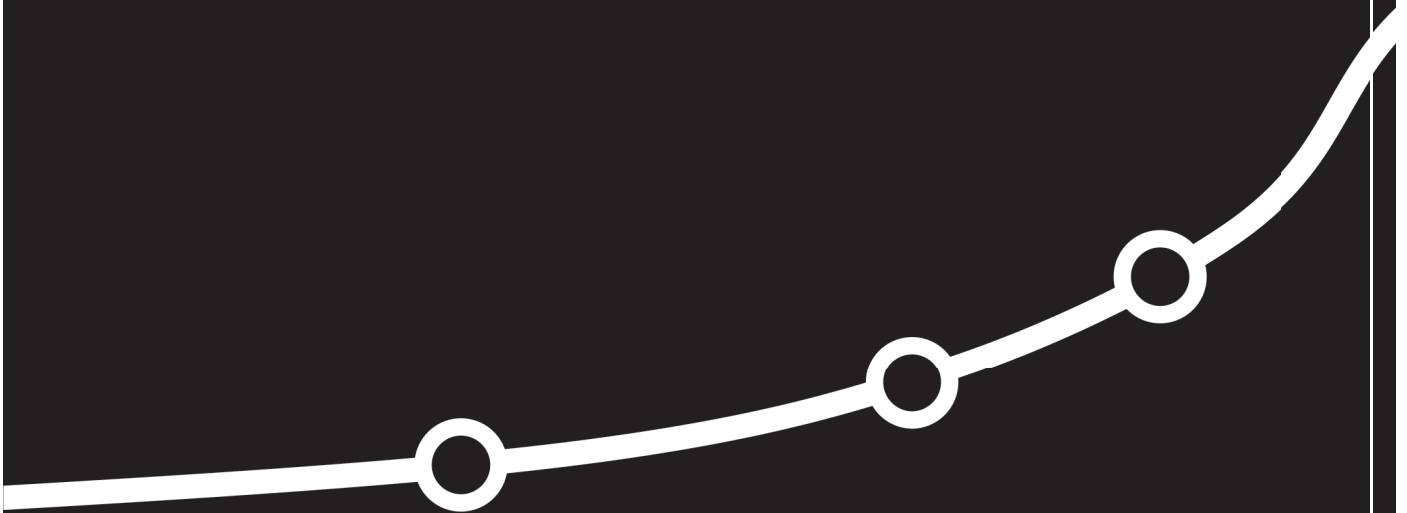
- What tactics, symbols, or workshops could you implement to make change happen?
- If you were to imagine five years from today, what five factors could realistically lead your company to become less relevant? What could lead to success? Based on that exercise, what are the three most important areas for you to focus on?
- If you created a gambling fund, what are five initiatives currently on hold that you would put in action?
- If your largest competitor acquired your company tomorrow, what would they immediately change?

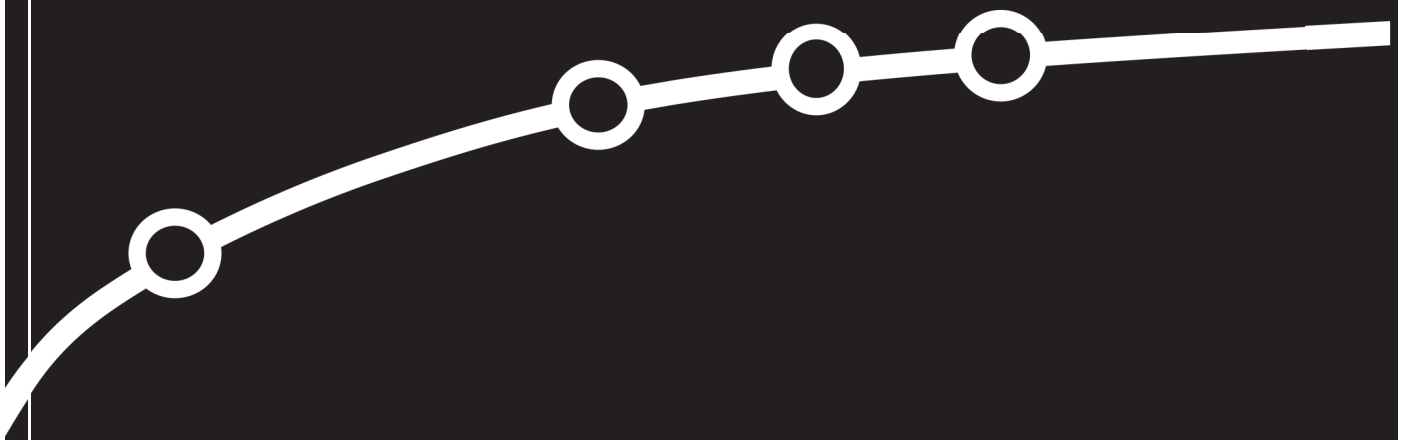
TACTICS, BY TONY HUNTER

1. Simplify the plan.
2. Engage your team.
3. Put the customers first.
4. Invest in new opportunity.
5. Force the discussion of competing alternatives.

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





OPTIONALITY

We tend to make decisions that get short-term results, not realizing that certain choices can fix us to the path we are on and reduce our future potential. Optionality is about making decisions that increase our future choices.

WE MAKE FEWER BIG DECISIONS THAN WE THINK . . .

A client of mine once told me, “You make 10,000 decisions in your career, but just three or four of those choices account for your entire success.” This wisdom came to me from Robert Davies III, a CEO who was fired from his job at Church and Dwight, the company that happens to make Arm & Hammer baking soda. Church and Dwight was losing its way, and its board felt Robert wasn’t helping them escape their struggles. However, a few years after Robert’s firing, nothing changed.

Their tough times continued, so the 150-year-old company rehired Robert out of desperation. Looking at his former role with fresh eyes, Robert started seeing new potential he hadn’t seen before. Arm & Hammer baking soda was once the go-to ingredient for baking cookies. But now, having stepped away for a spell, Robert identified fresh uses for a tried-and-true single-purpose product.

Arm & Hammer could just as often be found in home magazines showcased as the perfect food-safe deodorant for refrigerators as it was found listed as a recipe ingredient. So Robert rebranded baking soda as a fridge freshener. Its popularity also spoke to the fact that eco-friendly products were taking hold of the market, and baking soda was a natural fit.

He pivoted the brand to laundry detergent. As the world became more sustainable, he was able to market baking soda as an eco-friendly alternative to chemical detergents. It became a deodorant not just for the fridge but for your armpits. Their toothpaste took off too. Today, the company is nearly 10 times larger.

*BE PREPARED TO TAKE NEW PATHS, RECOGNIZING THAT ONLY
A FEW OPPORTUNITIES WILL TRULY REDEFINE YOUR JOURNEY.*

... AND EVEN OUR LITTLE DECISIONS SET US ON A LONG PATH

I've had a chance to work with a broad array of clients, ranging from adidas to the Plastic Injection Molding Society of America. Over time, I've realized that business leaders in different industries are more similar to one another than you might expect. This leads me to wonder, how did one person end up in plastic injection while another ended up at adidas?

The reality is that certain choices have a continuous impact. The guy who ended up in plastic injection picked a course in school. That course led to a major. That major led to a few interviews, and eventually he accepted the job that paid \$2,000 more than the other. At the time, these seemed like little choices. Then he got promoted, got married, got promoted again, had a kid, and started getting very good at the business of plastic injection. Switching fields now would cause a big financial setback. He's sort of stuck.

What are the key choices that led you to where you are now? How did you make those choices at the time?

So often, we make seemingly small decisions haphazardly, assuming the impact will be short term, while these decisions can have profound implications for our future.

What could you do to make those decisions in a better way?

YOUR LIFE IS DETERMINED BY A SURPRISINGLY SMALL NUMBER OF POWERFUL DECISIONS

—AND WE TEND TO MAKE THOSE DECISIONS IN A SIMPLIFIED MANNER.

THE GOAL OF OPTIONALITY IS TO MAKE DECISIONS THAT INCREASE YOUR FUTURE CHOICES

Optionality is a concept from the world of financial theory where instead of making decisions based on profitability, we consider how much they open up our set of options.

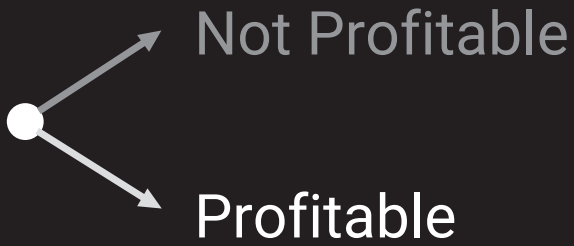
For example, when my company, Trend Hunter, hosted our first Future Festival, we created an epic event that was not profitable. It was also a lot of work. We had to create Trend Safaris, technology experiences, innovation workshops, big parties, and a full program of all-new content for the keynote sessions. However, the conference gave us the chance to interact with our clients and learn more about their needs. Long term, it enables us to build more meaningful solutions for them, so it creates high optionality.

Let's take the example of the guy who picked a course, got a job, and ended up with a full career in plastic injection. If he wants to shift to a different industry, there are still many choices he could make that would start to open up his future options:

- Going back to school
- Joining different trade organizations
- Choosing a role in consulting
- Working more deeply with customers in different industries
- Having a "side hustle" or hobby
- Looking for positions with similar skills versus a similar industry
- Staying informed about trends in other markets
- Attending conferences unrelated to plastic injection

***PUSH YOURSELF TO MAKE CHOICES
THAT CREATE HIGH OPTIONALITY.***

Old Way:



New Way:



TACTICS

1. **FORCE COLLISIONS**—At NASA, one of our clients is Debbie Amato, the deputy chief technologist. She is responsible for creating a culture of innovation, which she does by bringing together people who would not otherwise interact. Her most powerful tool is an ongoing series of poster sessions where every scientist brings forward their best blue-sky idea on a 4'x4' poster. The posters are scattered throughout the room, and people then wander around, meeting new people to talk to about their blue-sky ideas. She said a new form of science was actually birthed from two scientists—in very different fields—who found themselves colliding at one of her events.
2. **GIVE PERMISSION**—At Staples, our client Brian Coupland has been the director of innovation and VP of retail. To keep the brand evolving and discovering new options, he encourages people to take risks by giving them “permission slips” to fail. That permission tells everyone that you are doing the higher-risk project or the project with a much longer-term payoff. This enables you to think more freely about opening up the company’s future options instead of focusing on short-term results.
3. **FUEL AUDACITY**—At adidas, our client Mic Lussier is the head of future running. When a big project fails, Mic will host a project funeral. This enables the team to celebrate the idea, put it to rest, and encourage people so that they don’t feel alienated, cross the street, and start working for Nike. It also creates an environment where bigger options get opened up because people lose their fear of failure.
4. **ESCAPE YOUR ROUTINE**—Malcolm Gladwell believes that we learn our ideas and perspectives from our cultural upbringing, and sometimes our ideas are wrong. To keep his options opening up, he watches the news program that directly opposes his political belief. This shows him the other side of the story and sometimes convinces him that his idea was incorrect.

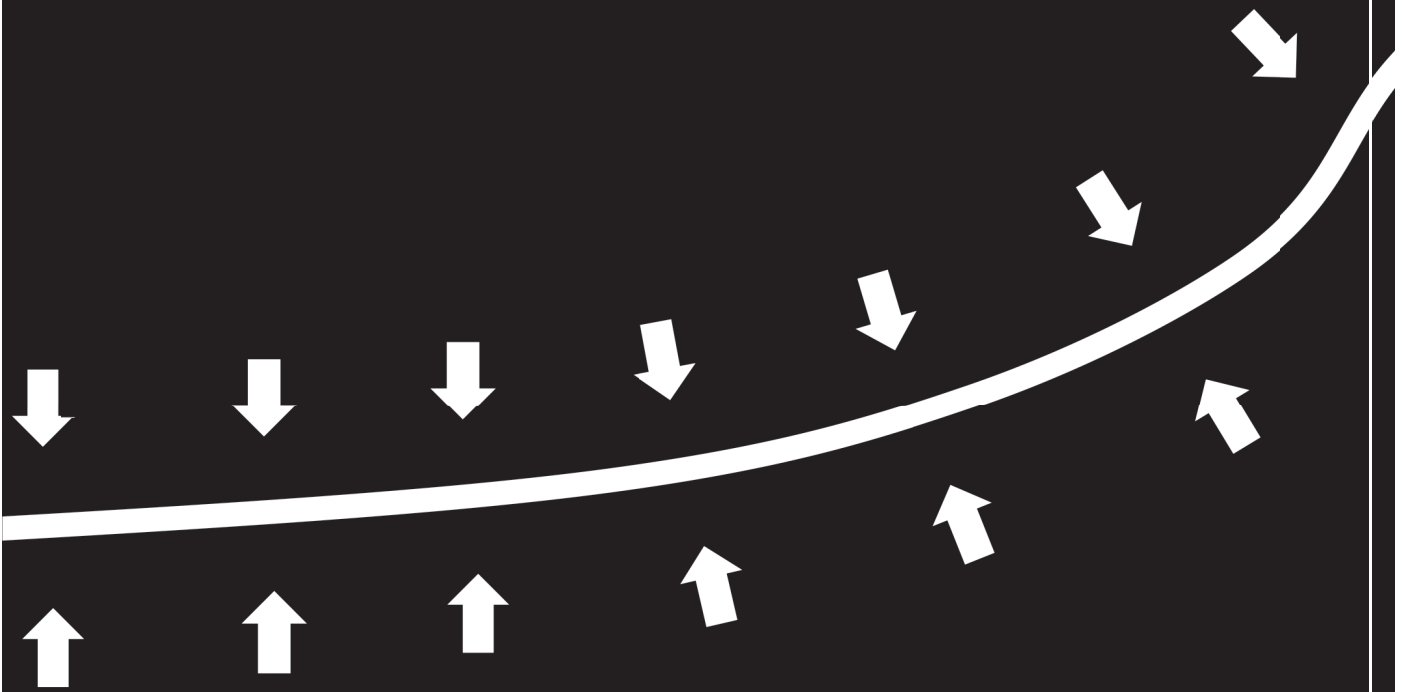
5. **IGNITE PASSION**—Richard Branson explained to me that his best way to create optionality is to get his team to be more passionate. He told me that more passionate people bring forth better ideas and a dedication that is more likely to lead you to a better future.
6. **BE DIFFERENT**—At Apple, Steve Wozniak, the inventor of the modern-day personal computer, would push his team to have discussions about things that were outside of their comfort zone and project scope. Though some of these ideas might not be feasible in the short term, thinking beyond these boundaries can set you on a path to knowing what your future options could be. He told me you need to “be bold, be brave, and deliberately try to think differently—try to think beyond others.”
7. **PUSH LIMITS**—At Starbucks, Rossann Williams is now the president of the US business, but we knew her back from her work running the Canadian office. In Canada, she pushed the limits of what the Starbucks brand would normally do, launching wine and beer in the coffee shops. By testing the limit in the Canadian market, she could better figure out what strategies might work in the larger US market. This innovation also happens to impact my personal life, because she brought all my favorite vices together. Big thanks to Rossann!
8. **EXCHANGE PERSPECTIVES**—At Hallmark, we get to work with Kristi Heeney-Janiak, who oversees Creative Resources and Talent Development for a 1,000-person creative team. To better understand their potential options, she set up a talent exchange where six senior leaders worked at Starbucks corporate for a week, and then six senior Starbucks leaders worked at Hallmark. To maximize the potential of the idea, legal paperwork and confidentiality agreements were signed to ensure both teams could be fully transparent and create intellectual property for the other.
9. **CONSCIOUSLY MAKE DECISIONS THAT OPEN UP OPTIONS**—At Trend Hunter, when we created our Future Festival, we designed an event that would not be profitable but was instead an entire experience that would enable us to really connect with our clients to better understand future potential.

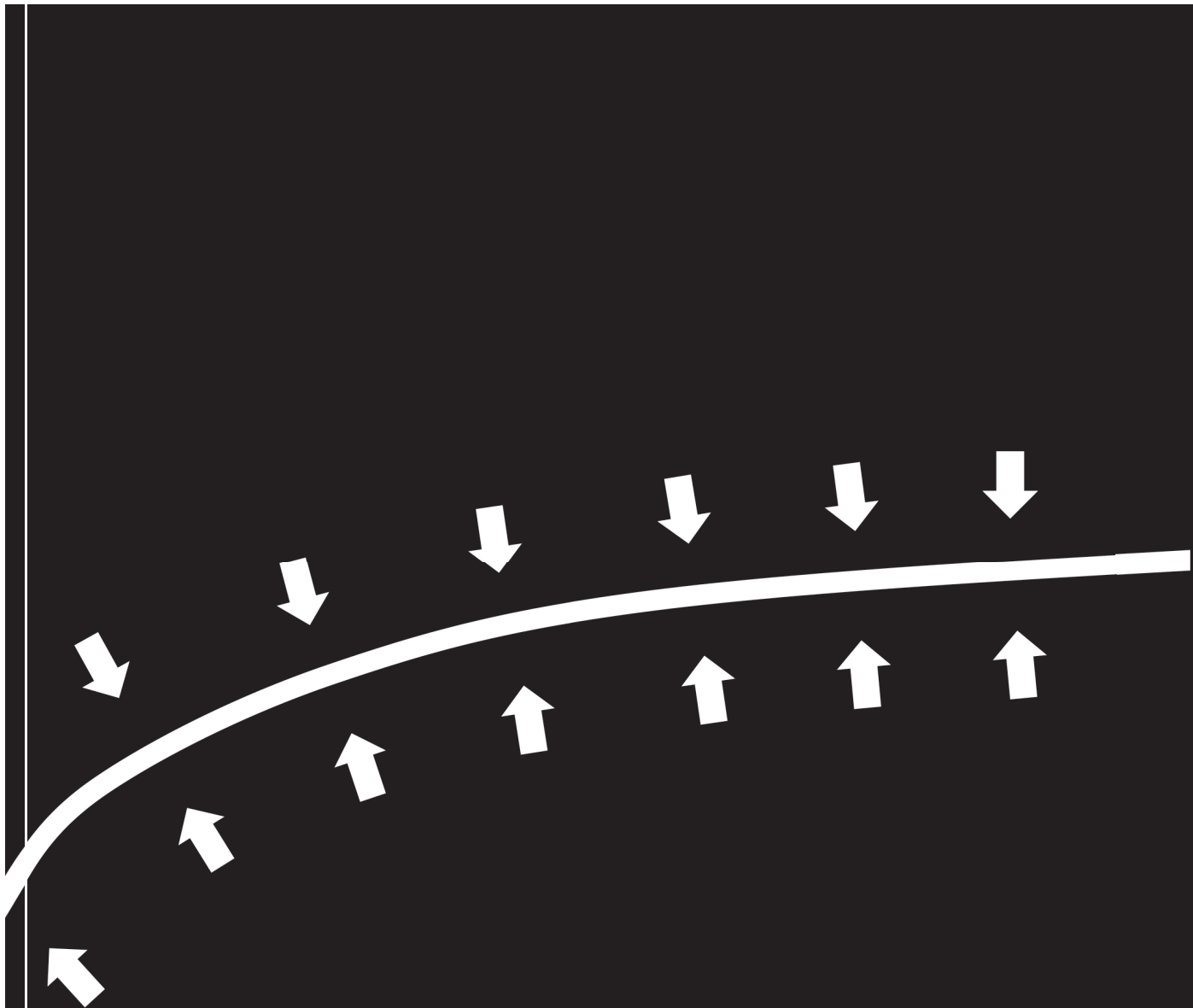
GIVE
PERMISSION

TO
THE
FAMILY

THE 7 TRAPS OF PATH DEPENDENCY

1. The Subtlety of Opportunity
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7. Discomfort vs. Breakthrough





THE TRAPS OF SUCCESS

For evolutionary reasons, we are prewired to be loyal, consistent, and disciplined about our craft. These traits serve us well, enabling us to provide for our families and thrive in organizations. However, these same traits also have a darker side, which is that success makes us complacent, repetitive, and protective.

AFTER 10,000 YEARS OF FARMING, WE REPEAT WHATEVER LED TO LAST YEAR'S HARVEST

A million years ago, we were hunters. We were nomadic, living in an eat-or-be-eaten world. Then everything changed. 10,000 years ago, people planted the first seeds. Thereafter, we could stay put. Statistically, this is when we started forming larger groups, putting in rules to protect whatever led to last year's harvest.

The implication today is that we are prewired to repeat and optimize whatever has led to our individual and organizational success. When we have something to protect, we farm. When we have nothing to lose, or when things are fresh and new, we hunt.

Farmers are loyal, consistent, and disciplined. The catch is that those traits lead to being protective, complacent, and repetitive—dangerous traps for an organization. Hunters are curious, insatiable, and willing to destroy, because they have nothing to lose. You need to hunt to find new opportunity.

Though some of this glamorizes the hunter, it is important to recognize that we need both hunting and farming in our lives. Hunting helps us adapt and find new opportunity. Farming helps us protect what we have, creating long-term value from our discoveries. The more important takeaway is that we need balance. And in our research, most organizations lean toward farming, becoming too repetitive, protective, and complacent.

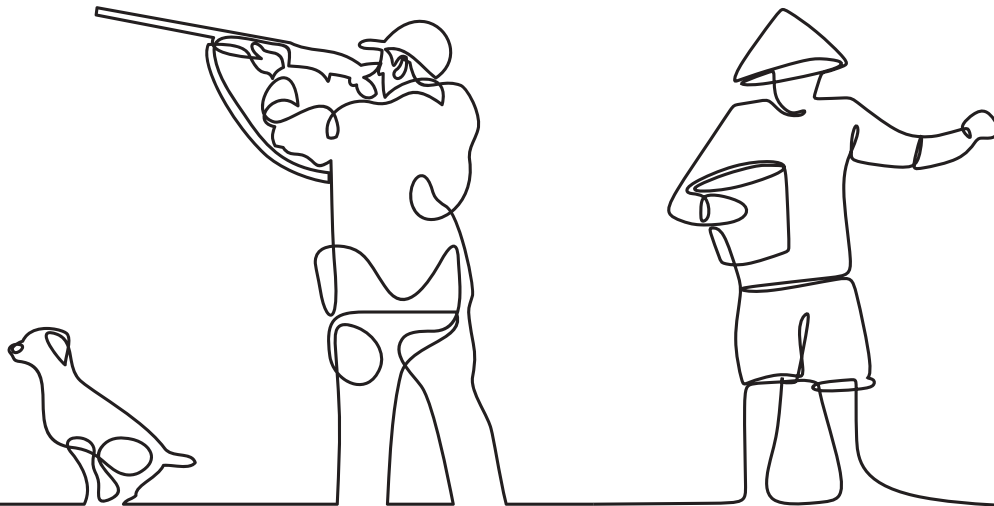
In my previous work *Better and Faster*, I introduced this concept as it relates to innovation. In that book, the topic only spanned about 30 pages, but it really connected with readers. As a half-hour keynote video, it ended up getting more than 10 million

views (you can watch it at JeremyGutsche.com). For my team, this was a seed planted. Something we needed to grow and farm!

The result of our harvest is that we developed an online Innovation Assessment, enabling us to study tens of thousands of business leaders. Based on this research, we built out the framework and identified a couple dozen types of innovators.

As part of this section, you will want to spend seven to eight minutes taking your own Innovation Assessment at TrendHunter.com/assessment. After answering a series of tradeoff questions, you will immediately get to download 10 pages of personalized insight about what makes you successful and what binds you to the path.

But first, let's take a look at the framework!



SUCCESS LEADS US TO FARM . . .

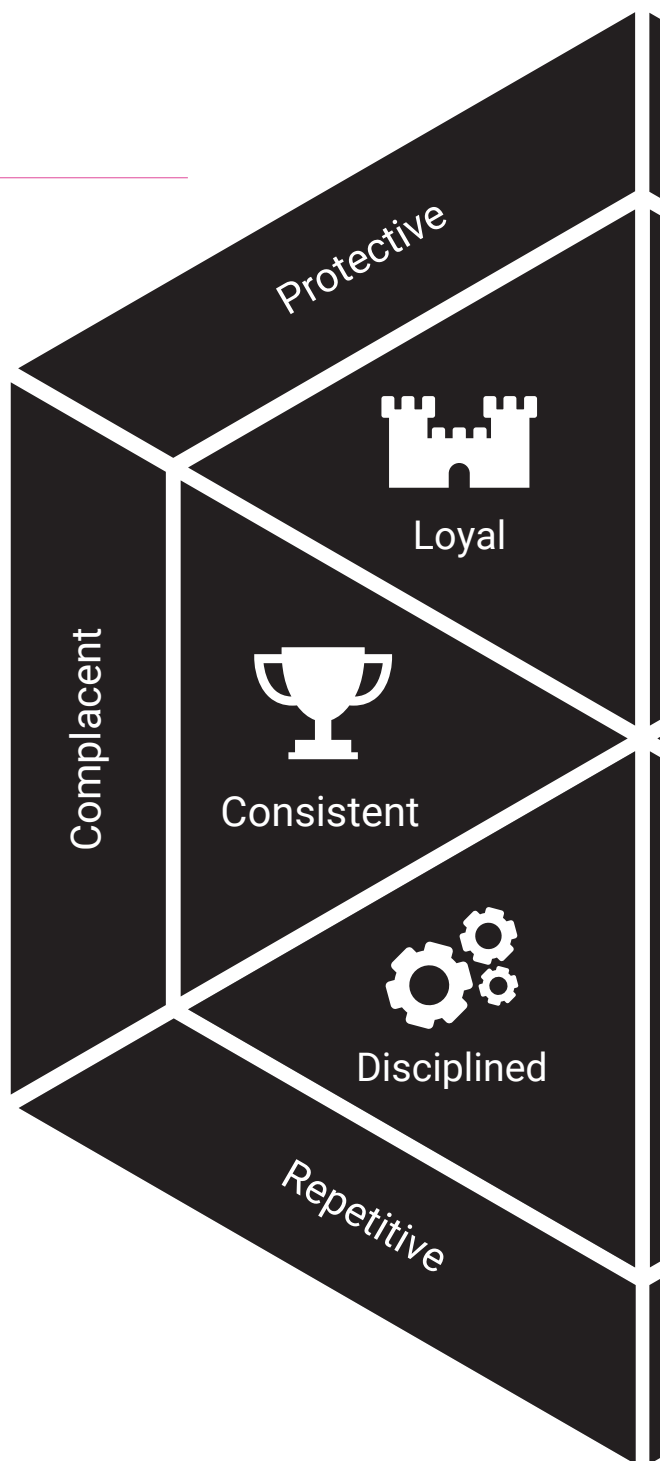
As we master any craft, we become—

LOYAL—We value and cherish loyalty to great ideas, great teams, and great people. However, we also become protective of our egos, which can lead us to overly defend past decisions and the status quo.

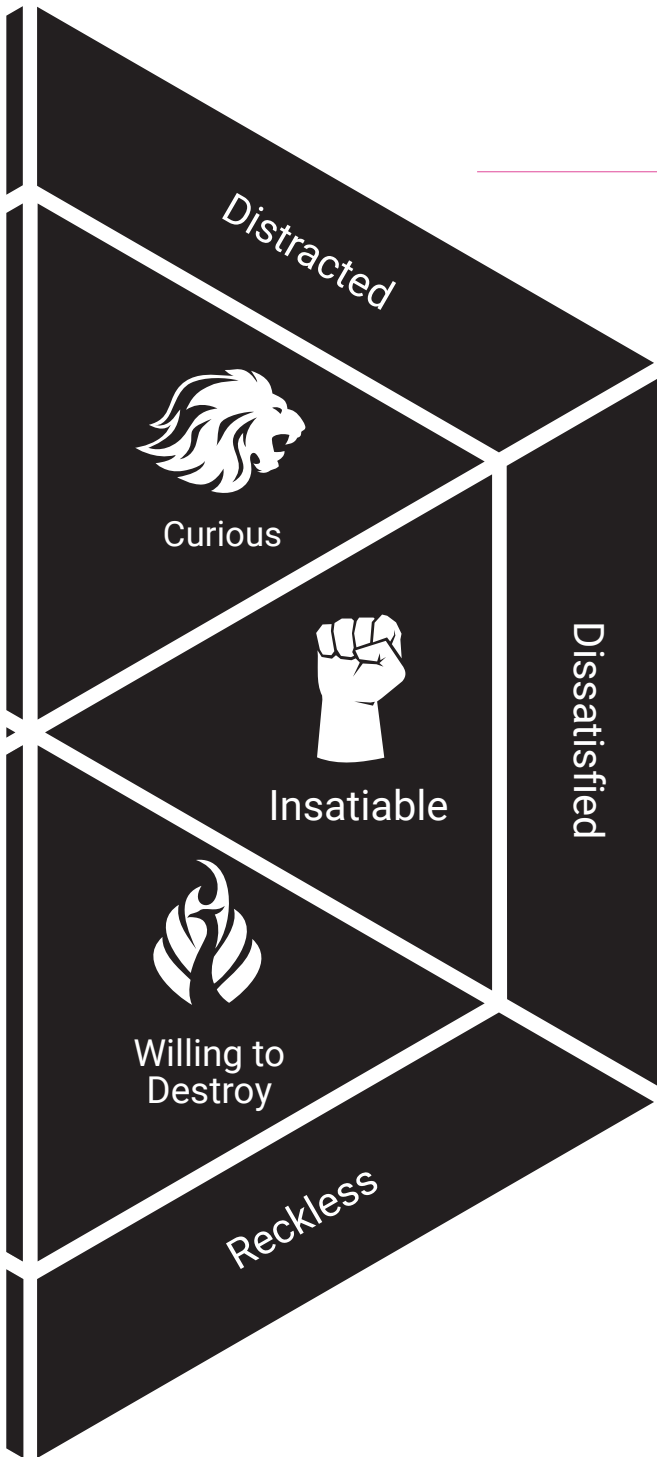
CONSISTENT—Understandably, we wish to repeat decisions that led to our past success. But this also causes complacency as we lose the hunger we had searching for something to harvest.

DISCIPLINED—As we become experts at anything, we become fine-tuned in our thinking, to the extreme of being repetitive. We might hate that word, but fundamentally, we rely on our proven methods of doing things.

The corporate world is structured in the farmer's favor, which can lead to disruption.



... BUT WE MUST HUNT TO ADAPT



When something is new, we are—

CURIOUS—The opposite of being disciplined and repetitive is being curious, which is a word we all value. At the extreme, a curious person would be perceived as distracted.

INSATIABLE—The opposite of being consistent and complacent is being insatiable. Insatiable means you approach any problem assuming you might be wrong, searching for new solutions to the point of becoming dissatisfied with the status quo.

WILLING TO DESTROY—The opposite of being loyal and protective is being willing to destroy, because you have nothing to lose. At the extreme, this leads to being reckless.

We need to hunt in order to adapt, but most organizations fear the hunter traps so much that they skew away from hunting to the point of inhibiting change.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED FROM STUDYING 30,000 PEOPLE

A deeper understanding of our Hunter-Farmer Framework can help you to harness your own potential both as an individual and as a leader. At a high level, here are three universal takeaways that apply to everyone:

1. **You need a balance of hunting and farming.** Hunting will help you find new opportunity, while farming helps you manifest what you have discovered. Too much hunting, and you will fail to succeed. Too much farming, and you will fail to adapt. Worded more simply, all of the traits (the middle of the hexagon framework) are good, and all of the traps (on the outside of the framework) are bad.
2. **Your primary trait (best strength) makes you more effective but also creates a GAP and a WEAKNESS.** It's not rocket science that one's strengths and weaknesses are inversely related. The takeaway here is a bit deeper. Your primary trait (let's say curiosity) causes two types of shortfall. First, your greatest strength creates a gap. For example, the opposite trait of curiosity is discipline. Second, there is a weakness from your trait taken to its extreme. For curiosity, that would be distraction.
3. **In almost any "new" task, we begin as hunters, but we become farmers once we feel proficient.** When we start something new, we are curious, insatiable, and willing to destroy, because we have nothing to lose. It is only once we have something we need that we seek to protect. Accordingly, many of the most iconic brands suffer from the traps of farming.

*IF CEOs DESIRE INNOVATION, AND ORGANIZATIONS LACK THE SKILLSET,
FIX THE GAP AND YOU'LL ENJOY REMARKABLE SUCCESS.*

We've also learned some surprising stats about innovation. On one hand, we know that 97% of CEOs state that innovation is a key priority, and yet—

1. Most people feel a lack of support for innovation:

- 50% do not believe their organization has a strong innovation strategy.
- 45% do not believe their organization is proactive.
- 55% do not believe their organization adapts quickly enough.
- 56% do not believe their organization has a clear process to turn ideas into reality.

2. Most organizations do not prioritize ideas:

- 48% do not have enough time to pursue new ideas.
- 30% feel that innovative ideas are encouraged at their organization.
- 17% do not often share ideas with their colleagues.
- 21% do not often share ideas with their superiors.

3. Generational and gender gaps plague many organizations:

- Gen Z is much less likely to have faith in their organization's ability to adapt and remain competitive. They are also least likely to share their new ideas, despite the fact that they are the ones with the most future-forward thinking.
- Males are more likely to state that they would leave an organization because of its approach to innovation.
- Females are more likely to identify that their organizations do not take advantage of collaboration between departments.

It would be easy to feel discouraged by the above stats. Companies are failing to adapt, and although CEOs say innovation is important, nobody is given the time, capabilities, or support to make innovation actually happen. Depressing. However, this disconnect explains why you and I will continue to have so much upside in our careers.

ONLINE ACTIVITY

Take your free assessment and benchmark your team.

You can identify the extent to which each of these traps impacts YOU and YOUR TEAM by taking Trend Hunter's free Innovation Assessment.

I'd encourage you to take a break and to do the assessment right away because it will help you personalize your learnings.

After eight minutes of questions, you will immediately get 10 pages of personalized insight to make you a better innovator and leader.

There is also a feature that lets you invite your team, resulting in a team overview, benchmark, and comparison to the world's top innovators.

This empowers you to be more prescriptive and efficient when it comes to fine-tuning your company's culture.

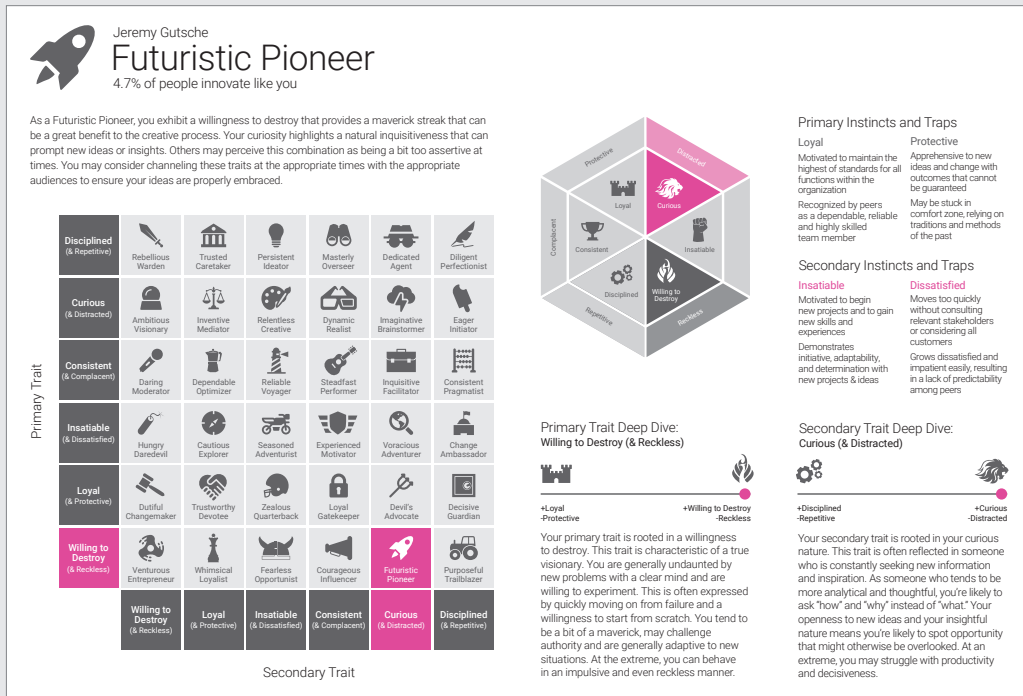
Here's a list of the most popular ways to apply your results, taken from our website:

1. Determine your unique strengths and learn how to accelerate them.
2. Identify your blind spots and where you might be hindering your creativity.
3. Optimize interactions with your team, boss, and significant other.
4. Compare your skillset to the world's top innovators.
5. Get specific advice for realizing your potential faster.

EXAMPLE

Learn about your innovation archetype, strengths, and gaps.

If you've already completed your assessment, you've probably learned a bit more about what makes you unique. Below is my assessment:





**BE AN
INSATIABLE
IDEA HUNTER**

WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

AFTER YOU DO THE INNOVATION ASSESSMENT—

- How have your strengths and blind spots made you the person you are today?
- Which of your traits do you want to accelerate?
- What actions will you take to accommodate your blind spots?
- How does your assessment compare to your significant other? To your team?

AFTER YOUR TEAM DOES THE INNOVATION ASSESSMENT—

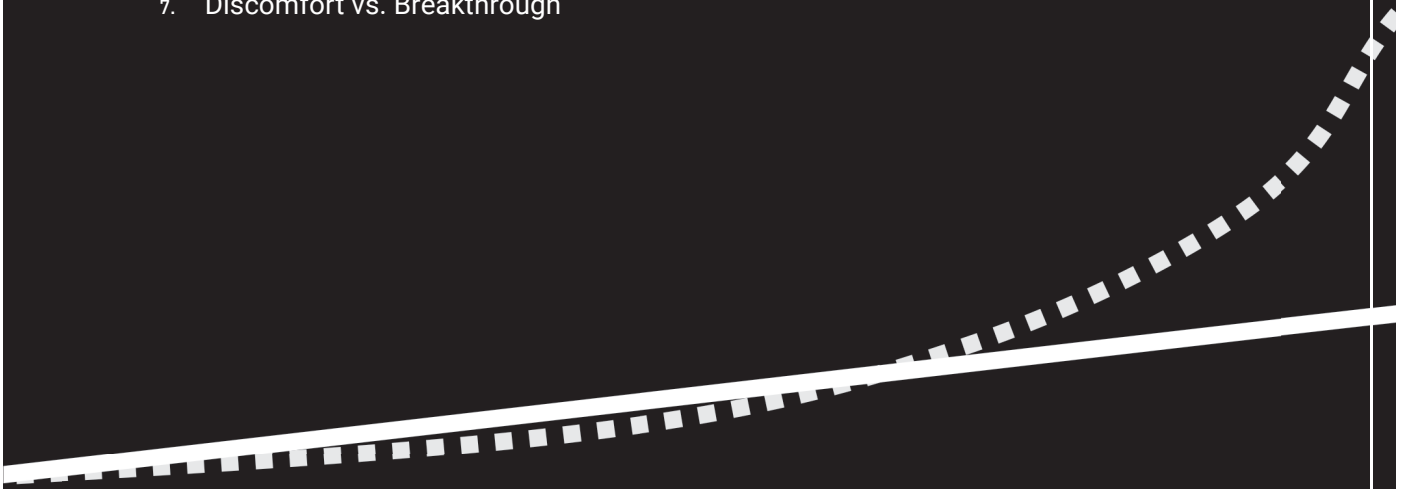
- What are the team's five largest gaps compared to the industry benchmark, and what causes them?
- Based on the findings, what small changes could be made to enhance your culture?
- Group people by archetype and get them to reflect on a large company project. How does each group differ in its conclusions and perceptions?

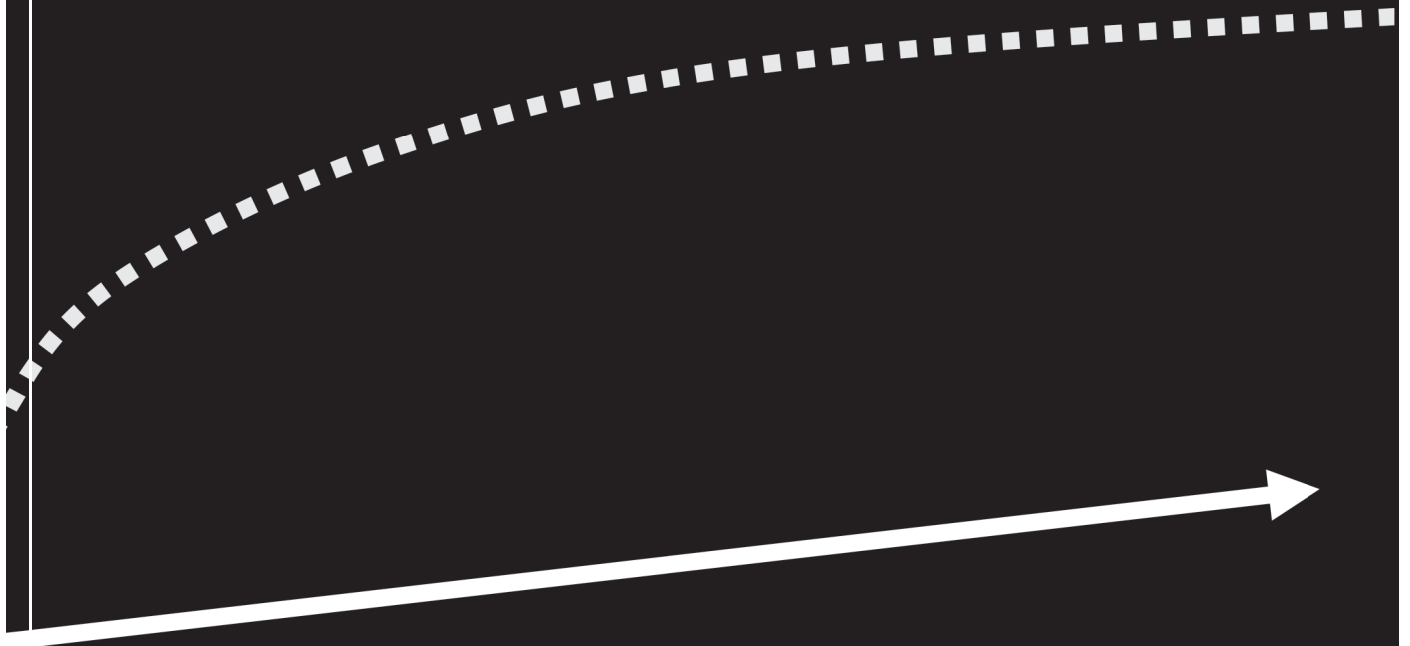
TACTICS

1. Be curious.
2. Be insatiable.
3. Be willing to destroy (old ways of doing things).
4. Recognize that your greatest strength creates your greatest weakness.
5. Ask outsiders for opinions.
6. Simulate starting from scratch.

THE 7 TRAPS OF PATH DEPENDENCY

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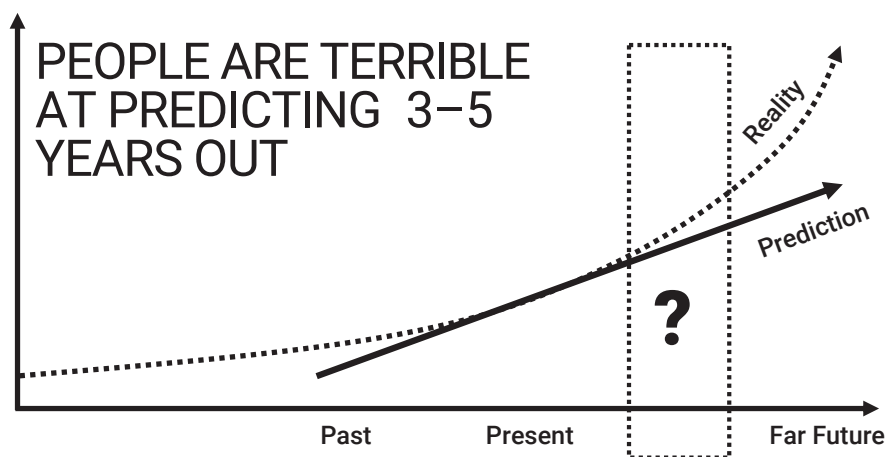


LINEAR THINKING

Unfortunately, our human brains are not designed for our exponentially evolving world. We understand that our world is changing, but we assume the next interval of change will be similar to the last. We have a very difficult time understanding the compounding impact of change.

OUR BRAIN SUFFERS FROM A TERRIBLE TRAP OF LINEAR THINKING

How much is your world going to change in the next few years? People are pretty good at predicting the next year and surprisingly accurate at imagining what might happen in their industry in the far future. However, smart people, in particular, are terrible at predicting three to five years out.



We overestimate our own ability to make progress, and we underestimate how much technology, competitors, and new entrants will change the game. We have business leaders and boards of directors who honed their skills during a different period of change. That leads us to move faster than we are used to, but not fast enough.

Given our exponentially changing planet, it's imperative to fix the human trap of linear thinking. Even if we are caught up on what's happening today, we fail to forecast tomorrow, because we forget that the pace of change is not simply faster—it's accelerating, and that's a completely different story.

The good news is that you are about to learn a few useful methods for predicting the *pace of change* and creating the urgency to do something about it.

To explain, I want to start with an example that explains my research on this topic. Back in 2008–10, Trend Hunter skyrocketed quickly, resulting in my first set of consulting clients: media brands. I was honored to be consulting for CEOs, boards, and even a few billionaires at the helm of iconic brands like Sony, Turner, NBC, Viacom (MTV), Tribune, and 21st Century Fox.

Surprisingly, I found that these sometimes famous leaders had a difficult time believing that social media would scale to what it is today.

They were overly resistant when I brought up trends like YouTubers acting as media brands, viral videos, blogging, digital streaming, the transition to video gaming, and the rise of shorter-form content.

The concepts of social media and Netflix streaming seem obvious now, but in their defense, Facebook and YouTube had just launched in 2005. These leaders KNEW about the new innovations and trends in their industry, because after all, they were the experts. However, they did not believe that these innovations would disrupt them, because they were the ones in control.

They were exhibiting all the traps of success: they were PROTECTIVE, repetitive, and complacent. So, how do you become more accurate, and how do you change a powerful leader's mind?

IF YOU WANT TO CREATE THE FUTURE, YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO
PREDICT THE PACE OF CHANGE AND CONVINCE THOSE AROUND YOU
THAT THE WORLD IS GOING TO BECOME VERY DIFFERENT, VERY FAST.

PREDICT BETTER BY INTERNALIZING THE PACE OF CHANGE

I spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to convince media leaders that their world was going to change. I wasn't making huge progress until I came up with a relatively simple workshop that I call The Pace of Change. It's fun to look back at this exercise today because the media world has obviously changed, making this example particularly enlightening.

Back in 2010, when I asked these executives how the far future might look, they predicted concepts like virtual reality and streaming as the norm. However, they expected these changes to happen in 2025 or later. The activity that fast-tracked their thinking was comparing the act of going to a movie 10 years earlier vs. then.

An example: The Pace of Change in the Movie Industry—Completed in 2012

10 Years Ago (2002)	Present (2012)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspapers for review • Called theater for show times • Used Yellow Pages to find theater number • Invited friends on answering machine • Ignored a big group (too complicated) • Paper map to a new theater • Lined up in front of a human • Found out it is sold out . . . mall instead? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotten Tomatoes • Booked ticket online • Don't know what Yellow Pages is • Text friends • Text more friends • GPS • Showed up with a ticket . . . Or stream it?
Close Future (3–5 Years)	Far Future (2025)
<p>?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual reality • Interactive movies • Video gaming & movies merge • You as a character • Beacon—who is in the theater? • 3-D? 4-D? Moving seats? • Shift in type of movies at theater

I first explained this movie example in *Better and Faster*, but we are going to take the Pace of Change exercise much further in the pages that follow.

In 2002, people still read newspaper reviews, called theaters for show times, used the Yellow Pages to find theater numbers, left messages for their friends on answering machines, and used paper maps to get to the theater. A half-dozen industries were disrupted along the way to where we are today.

To do this exercise, you and your team will first forecast what your industry will look like in 10+ years. You'll be great at identifying what could happen. Then, you'll compare what the industry looked like 10 years ago compared with today. You will likely be shocked at how much has happened in just 10 years. By internalizing the pace of change that has already happened, you'll realize that your far-future predictions are likely not that far off. Instead of happening in 10 years, those same things you predicted will probably actually happen in 3–5 years.

Try performing the exercise for your own market and company.

Your industry:

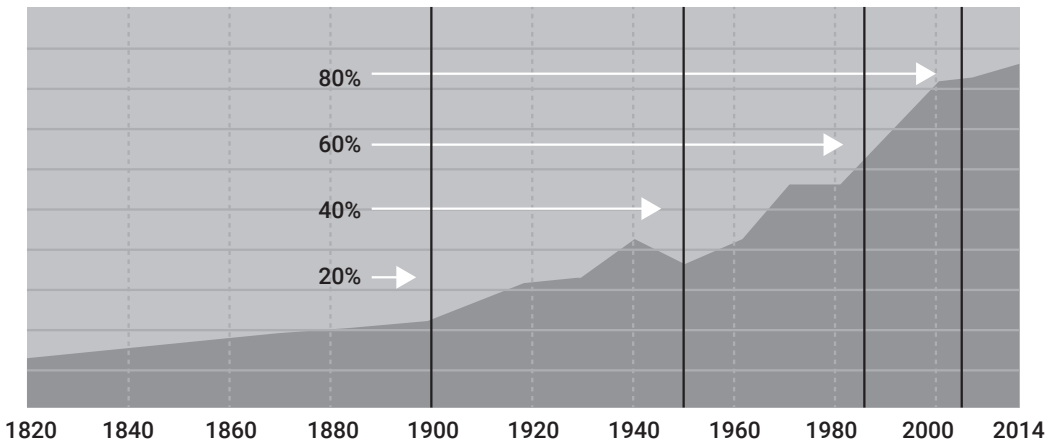
10 Years Ago	Your Industry, Today
Close Future (3–5 Years Out)	Far Future (10–15 Years Out)
?	

YOU CAN SHOCK YOURSELF INTO ACTION BY INTERNALIZING THE PAST.

USE HUMAN PROGRESS AS A PROXY FOR ACCELERATING CHANGE

If you look at any metric over time, you can measure its intervals of change. For example, with literacy, you can see that we reached 20% literacy in 1900. The next 20% interval took 50 years, meaning we reached 40% literacy by 1950. The next 20% took less than 40 years, and the next 20% took roughly 20 years.³⁰

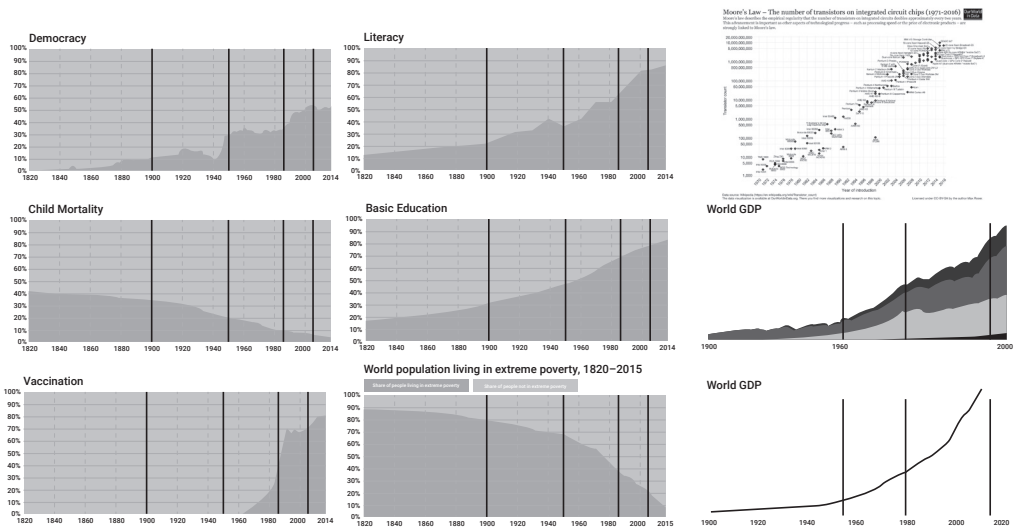
Literacy



Using the above technique, I gathered data on literacy, democracy, basic education, extreme poverty, child mortality, vaccination, GDP, computing power, population, and CO₂ emissions. By aggregating these, one can estimate what I call the Implied Pace of Change, which is the general amount of change being experienced by humanity.

— YOU CAN USE THE IMPLIED PACE OF CHANGE TO BE WISER AT PREDICTING CHANGE AND MORE LIKELY TO CONVINC OTHER PEOPLE THAT IT IS TIME FOR ACTION. —

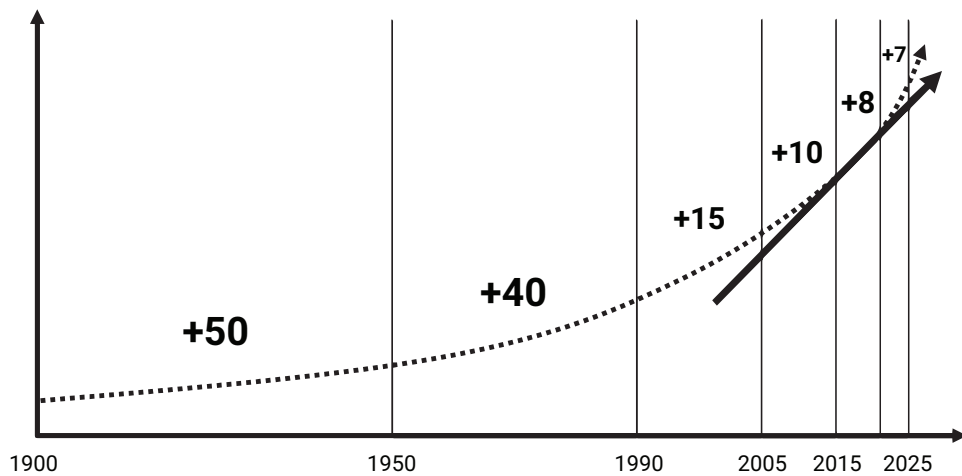
Human Progress in Selected Categories



Results in:

Trend Hunter's Implied Pace of Change

(Each Interval = One Unit of Similar Global Change)

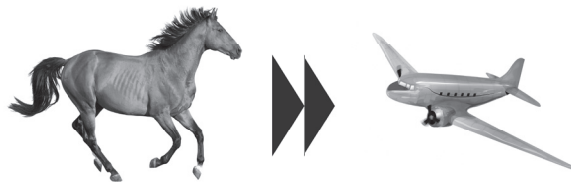
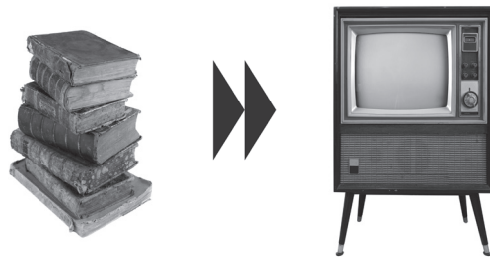


In the pages that follow, you will see these intervals personified with my grandpa, my mom, and her nerdy son.

INTERVAL 1: 1900–1950 (50 YEARS)

Let's begin in 1900. My grandfather, Joe Lehane, was an agricultural scientist, meaning that he no doubt loved adapting to things that were new. He grew up riding horses to school, reading books for fun, and living in a tent for several years.

For me, that describes 1900. It was like camping but without the electric inflatable mattress, solar-paneled phone charger, and Wi-Fi. And it's all in black and white. Like, it was terrible. But they didn't KNOW it was terrible, because it was just 1900.



During the course of Joe's career, humanity would go from horse, buggy, and books to magazines, television, automobiles, and commercial air travel. Even though he was an early adopter, he watched so much change that his family was the last on the block to get a color TV.

*LET'S CALL THAT ONE UNIT OF CHANGE.
IT TOOK ROUGHLY 50 YEARS.*

INTERVAL 2: 1950–1990 (40 YEARS)

My mother, Shelagh, experienced the same amount of change in just 40 years. From 1950 to 1990, she witnessed the world go from record player to boombox and Discman, from typewriter to computer, and from television to Nintendo.

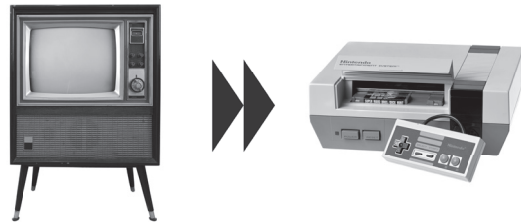
Most people don't realize it, but in 1990, there were more Nintendo consoles in the world than there were TVs in 1950. If that sounds impressive to you, it should . . . because I initially made it up. However, when I did some research, I learned it was actually true!

There were 102,000 TVs in 1950, compared to 62 million Nintendo consoles in 1990.

These were gaming consoles with the same power as the computer used to land Apollo on the moon. This was also one unit of change, but this time it took only 40 years.

My mother saw the transition from the classic boat-sized cars of the 1950s to the minivans of the 1980s and '90s. She listened

to her favorite tunes on the record player, then the 8-track, then the cassette tape and the CD. She learned to type on her mother's typewriter, and then became proficient on her computer.



*MY MOTHER ALSO EXPERIENCED A FULL UNIT OF CHANGE, ———
————— BUT INSTEAD OF 50 YEARS, IT TOOK JUST 40.*

INTERVAL 3: 1990–2005 (15 YEARS)

The next interval dramatically accelerated change. Between 1990 and 2005, the world saw the introduction of the internet, Motorola flip phones, the iPod (though not the iPhone yet), the Tesla Roadster, and basic online experiences. Yahoo was the best place for content, Amazon was a bookstore, and people used ICQ and MSN Messenger to flirt.

It sounds similar to modern day, except Facebook wasn't public and YouTube's website had barely begun. Simply setting back the dial to 2005 takes us to a seemingly ancient time.

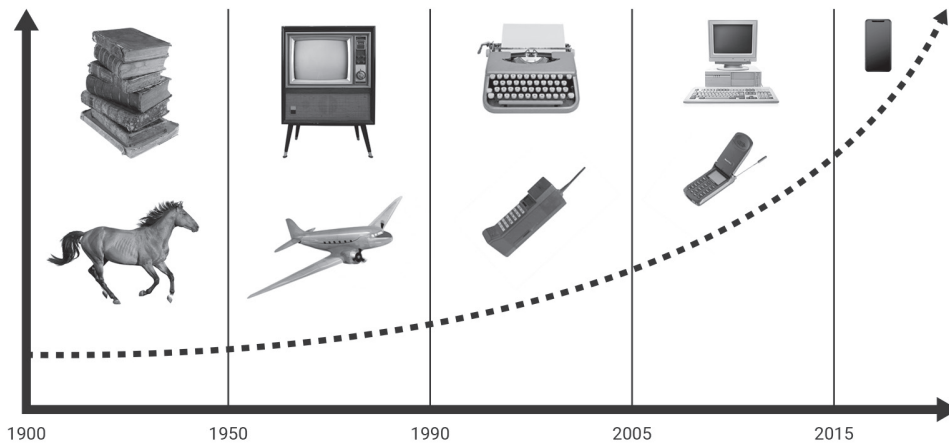
Back then, we had no Twitter, no Uber, no Airbnb, no Instagram, no Pinterest, no Snapchat, no Tinder, and basically no fun. Instead, we had to text message, learn to drive, stay in hotels, make friends, get hobbies, leave the house, and talk to people.



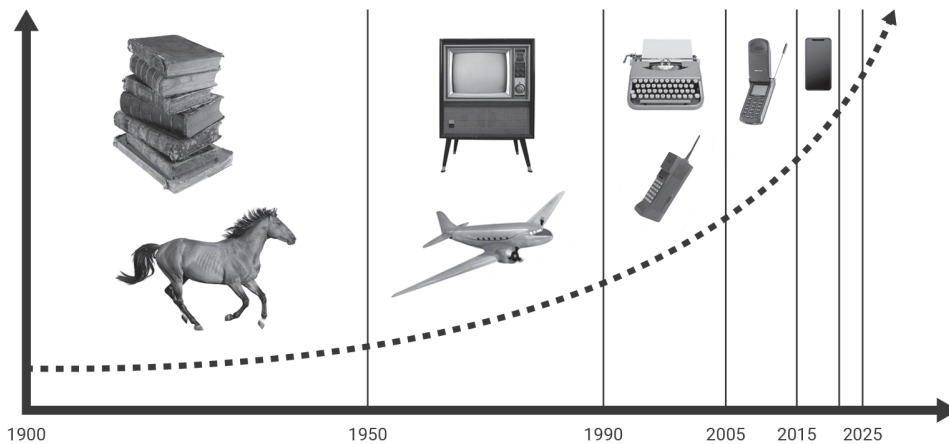
*THIS WAS ALSO A UNIT OF CHANGE,
BUT THIS TIME, IT TOOK ONLY 15 YEARS.*

DON'T PREPARE FOR CHANGE, PREPARE FOR ACCELERATION

When you look at all of the changes that occurred, you would expect that each interval encompassed a similar amount of time:



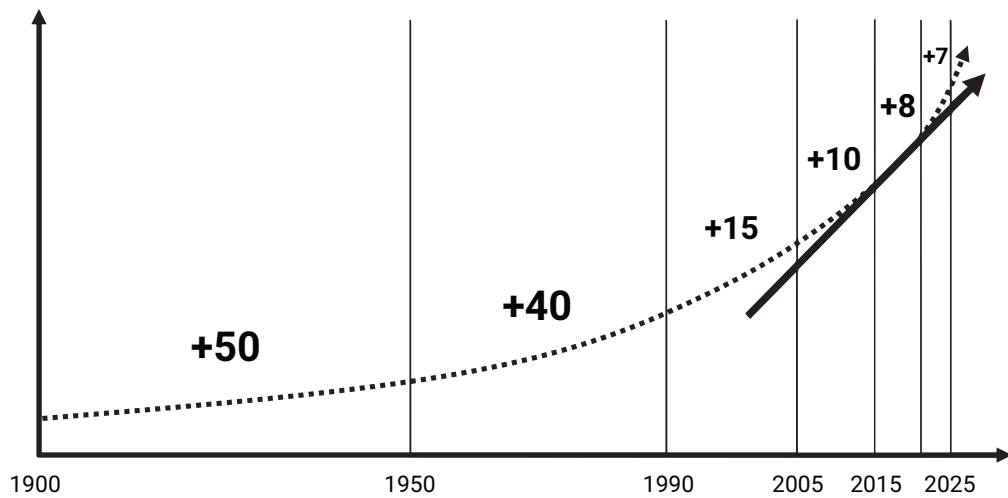
However, the rate of change is accelerating so much that when you plot out the intervals visually, it almost looks ridiculous. The pace is increasing exponentially.



You are about to experience the most exciting period of human history. Pause and really reflect on the pace chart:

Trend Hunter's Implied Pace of Change

(Each Interval = One Unit of Similar Global Change)



WANT MORE? If you want a deeper explanation of how and why this pace will CONTINUE to accelerate, read the Appendix about the three megatrends that will have the greatest impact on our long-term future.



THE
WORLD WILL
NEVER BE
THIS SLOW
AGAIN

WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

- Realizing how much has changed, in so many categories, how much has changed in your world?
- Create a list of a dozen far-future innovations in your industry and simulate how you would react if your competitor surprised you by releasing those innovations.
- What can you do now to set yourself up for success during the next interval of change?

TACTICS

1. Track the amount of change in your market.
2. Brainstorm your Super Future.
3. Shock yourself into action.
4. Prepare scenarios to disrupt or avoid being disrupted.
5. Assume that far-off predictions will happen sooner than you think.
6. Compare the present to the past to predict the future.

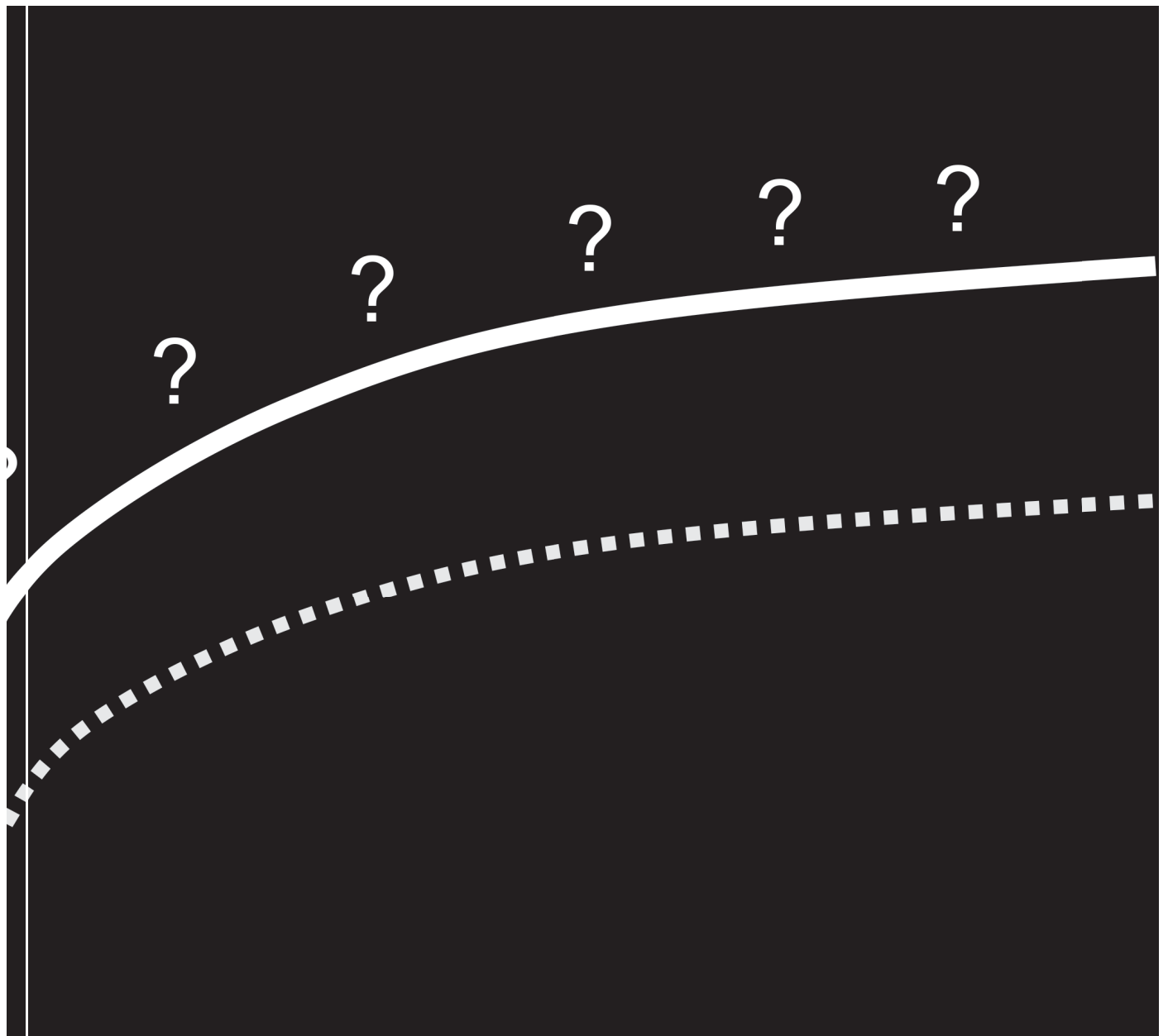
THE 7 TRAPS OF PATH DEPENDENCY

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



?





DISCOMFORT VS. BREAKTHROUGH

When you finally stumble upon a great idea, you must be prepared to deal with the awkwardness and discomfort of pursuing something that makes you uncomfortable. New ideas are awkward, they require us to change, and we have many traps that block us from seeing their potential. To achieve breakthrough, you must master discomfort.

BREAKTHROUGH ONLY OCCURS OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Breakthrough, by definition, is something that's out of your comfort zone. And people hate being outside their comfort zones. That's why so many smart people miss out on great ideas that were always close within their grasp.

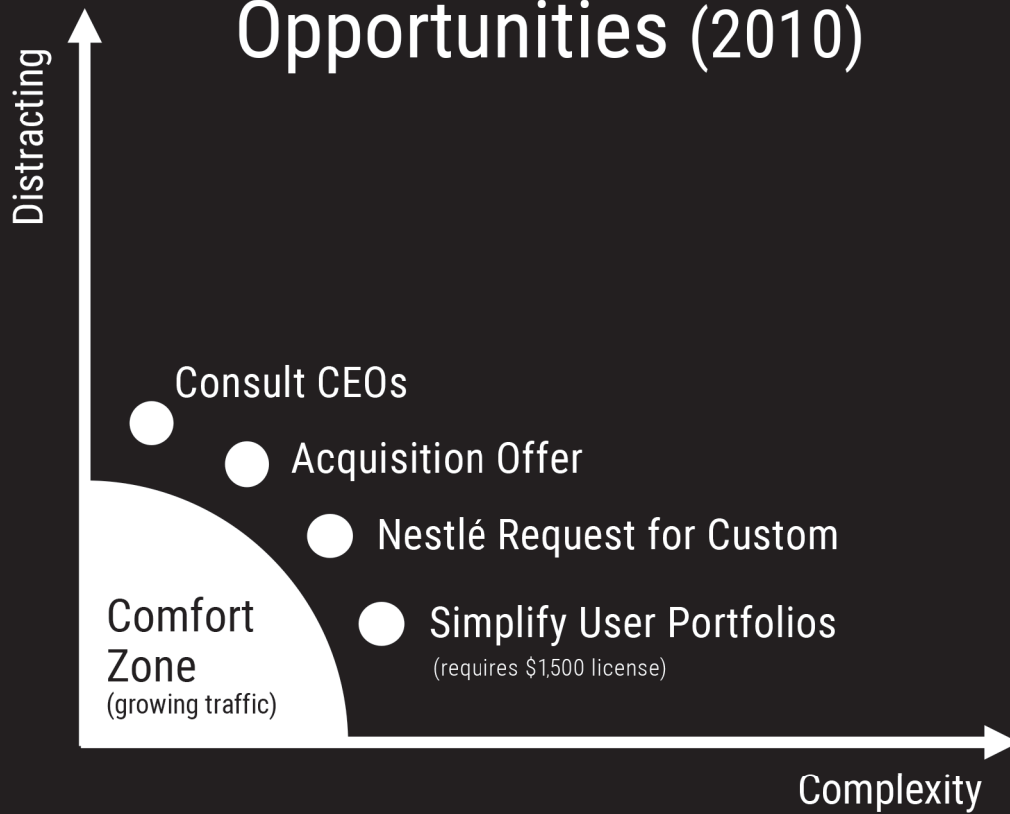
In this section, I will discuss the four different types of breakthrough, using my four biggest mistakes in business. I want to show you my overlooked opportunities to illustrate the characteristics that you will need to look for if you want to have your big breakthrough.

Also, at this point in the book, you've hopefully learned a thing or two from my experience with clients, but I want to use my own mistakes to illustrate that predicting and creating the future is tough, even for someone who does this professionally.

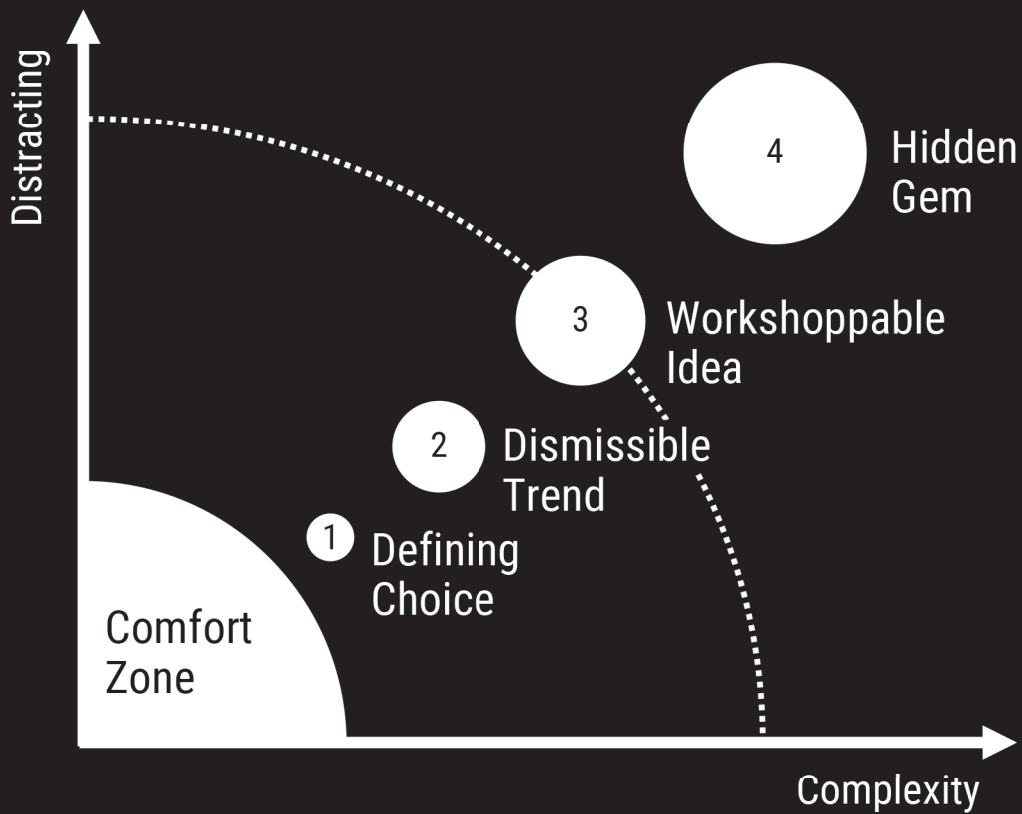
If you want to predict the future, you have to put in the effort, and you have to become comfortable with discomfort. You also would be well served to learn the characteristics of each type of breakthrough so that you can best identify your big idea when the clues are close within your grasp.

*IF YOU ASPIRE TO FIND A GAME-CHANGING OPPORTUNITY,
YOU MUST PUSH YOURSELF PAST THE POINT OF COMFORT.*

Our Out-of-Scope Opportunities (2010)



4 Levels of Breakthrough



TYPE 1: DEFINING CHOICES

Be careful what you say no to

I didn't expect that Trend Hunter would become a multibillion-view website, which is something to be proud of. I don't take for granted the terrific work of my talented team. I do, however, think about the great ideas that "got away." The overlooked opportunities that could have propelled us in different directions.

I taught myself to code and built Trend Hunter in 2005 because I wanted to make a place where people could share ideas. I was still working my day job running innovation and analytics at a bank. The website grew very quickly. Its view count went from thousands to millions to billions before I had properly figured out the right business model. At a certain point, Trend Hunter had more traffic than almost every newspaper on the planet and had a team of just a dozen people making it happen. We had some money from ads rolling in, but we needed to figure out how to pay the bills.

Over the course of a few years, there were a few course-changing opportunities that presented themselves: offers to consult CEOs, an acquisition offer, a request for a custom version of Trend Hunter, and an idea to simplify how our users share articles. I intentionally said no to each of these ideas, because growing the website was already distracting. And because it was working, my team and I had something to protect—something to farm. Arguably, our comfort zone had become figuring out how to get more and more page views, to a fault.

The first overlooked opportunity was simplifying how our users shared articles. In short, here's how Trend Hunter worked: anyone from around the world could sign up, find an innovation they liked, and write it up. Then the article would publish to their portfolio, a visual gallery of their discoveries. We had experimented with a simple feature to share with a click, skipping the step where you have to write something. But it would have required a \$1,500 license fee to make it perfect. So we skipped it.

TYPE 1: DEFINING CHOICES (CONT'D)

Six years later, Pinterest was launched, offering a similar user experience but with the feature of not having to write up an article. On Pinterest, you similarly find something you like, share it with a click, and then it appears in your Pinterest “portfolio”—a gallery of your discoveries. Even the layouts were strikingly similar.

The competitive side of me wondered if we should rekindle our functionality to share without writing the article. Should we just pay the \$1,500 license fee? But then we would also lower the quality of each post. Not worth it.

By the next year, Pinterest was valued at a billion dollars, then \$2 billion, then \$5 billion, then \$11 billion, and then \$30 billion . . . but I saved \$1,500. I guess that means my overlooked opportunity was “not being Pinterest,” or at least not taking their approach seriously.

My overlooked opportunity was an example of the first type of breakthrough, a “defining choice.” A defining choice is something that is specifically presented to you. Something you actively must say yes or no to. To see the value of this type of opportunity, you need to know your comfort zone. When you’re making decisions and evaluating yes versus no, you should look at which ones you are doing because they’re in your comfort zone. Then, push your limits and make the bold choice.

Tactics & Methods for Defining Choices

1. Identify your comfort zone.
2. Respect out-of-comfort-zone decisions.
3. Have a gambling fund.
4. Solicit outside opinions.
5. Make the bold choice.

TYPE 2: DISMISSIBLE TRENDS

Recognize the blinding power of your own expertise

When I published *Exploiting Chaos* in 2009, it became a bestseller right when the world became chaotic. I was in the right place at the right time. I started getting invited by media CEOs to help with their digital reinventions during chaos. I was flattered to be advising leadership teams and CEOs at NBC Universal, Turner Broadcasting, Sony, Tribune, Fox Entertainment, Viacom, CNBC, Rogers, and several others.

The problem with this privilege was that I started experiencing the traps of an expert. If I had more traffic than many of these large websites, then I was probably going to keep my lead forever, right? Wrong.

As the well-funded media titans made their pivots, my team of 12 could not compete. We were set to lose \$1 million a year, which is complicated when you'd like to pay the people on your team. I needed a solution, or I'd have to lay off half the team.

What's interesting about this type of mistake is that I saw all the trends in the market, but I assumed we would continue to hold our edge. I call this a dismissible trend, and it explains all the examples where a market leader like Nokia, Smith Corona, or Blackberry couldn't see the potential of a new entrant.

Tactics & Methods for Dismissible Trends

1. Be humble.
2. Ask questions.
3. Recognize the BLINDING power of your own expertise.
4. Take the advice you'd give to others.

TYPE 3: WORKSHOPPABLE IDEAS

Deep-dive your curiosities

In a desperate search to fill our \$1 million hole, I started combing through every email I had, looking for any little pocket of opportunity that might help us pay the bills.

An idea surfaced from a keynote client at Nestlé named Sarah Deeks, who asked, “If we commit to a \$50,000 research package, could that include . . . workshops . . . reports . . . a [custom] Trend Hunter tool?”

We made the call and created her a custom Nestlé service, complete with custom research, presentations, and a custom version of the Trend Hunter platform. A couple of years later, almost 100 clients had signed up. That’s terrific, but I can’t stop thinking about what would have happened if I had created her requested service two years earlier. She effectively gave me the business model that we employ today, so how much further ahead could we have been? What if I was three years faster at connecting the dots?

The mistake I was making was that I was failing to see the potential of a workshopable idea. I could have sat down with Sarah and mapped out what she wanted. She would have explained what she wanted to do, and we could have figured it out, years earlier.

Tactics & Methods for Workshopable Ideas

1. Challenge what seems possible.
2. Deep-dive curiosities.
3. Role-play “what if” (no “doubt” allowed).
4. Pursue your next customers, not only the ones you already have.

TYPE 4: HIDDEN GEMS

Relentlessly pursue your hidden gem

My fourth huge mistake is the one I am making right now. It's my hidden gem. It's the big idea that I am overlooking *right now*, and I don't know what it is. You have a hidden gem, too. To find our breakthroughs, you and I will have to apply the concepts in this book to see if we can reconnect the dots in front of us to find our next levels.

Along the way, you and I will encounter more experimental failure, resistance to change, and people who don't see the full potential of our new ideas.

To motivate, I'll share one last reflection on my own journey:

- If I didn't fail at finding that idea as a kid, I wouldn't have started a website.
- If I didn't fail at online ads, we wouldn't have pivoted into a research firm.
- And if I didn't fail at "being Pinterest," I would not have ended up with a fun career of writing this book and being a speaker. (But of course, I'd be at home playing with billions of Pinterest dollars, so, it's a toss-up, from my perspective . . .)

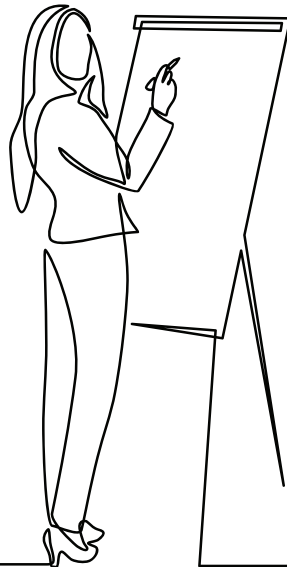
Tactics & Methods for Hidden Gems

1. Break rules.
2. Push harder.
3. Act sooner.
4. Fail faster.
5. Never give up.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The curious case of the missing gold

In my hometown of Toronto, there lives a man named Rob McEwen. Rob had been very successful in business, but what he *really* wanted was something with a little more glimmer—a little more shine. Rob wanted GOLD, and LOTS OF IT!



Like a 19th-century prospector, Rob wanted to grow a gold mine, and sure enough, he'd acquired enough money to buy one. He poured his fortune into a mine in a small town called Red Lake. It was a sleepy 50-year-old mine, ready to be shut down.

The problem was that Rob had missed the gold rush by 162 years. He looked in every corner. Every nook. Behind every rock. There was no gold to be found, and his millions were spent. After six years of searching, he was down on his luck. His little mine seemed as if it would be a mine no more.

Against all advice, he committed the most unforgivable gold-mine-owner act of all: he took his most precious data—his seismic maps—and gave them all away for free. He offered a \$500,000 fortune to any man, woman, or child who could tell him where all the lost gold might be.

Much to his surprise, he received more than 1,400 submissions. “We had applied math, advanced physics, intelligent systems, computer graphics, and organic solutions to inorganic problems,” he said. “Capabilities I had never seen before!”³¹

Half of the suggested targets were new, and 80% hit gold. Rob’s almost-abandoned mine unlocked more than \$39 billion worth of gold. Thirty. Nine. Billion. Now Rob and his team are using artificial intelligence, with IBM’s Watson, to see if there’s “more gold in them there hills.”

New to an industry, Rob was able to see that something wasn’t right. For decades, gold miners were caught in a groove, repeating past decisions and techniques.

By looking at the exact same data with a fresh perspective, creative people from all sorts of industries were able to help Rob find his hidden gold. Put differently, people who were not already caught in a groove were able to see the opportunities that were so close within Gold Corp’s grasp.

This tale is a metaphor for how your own future can unfold.

YOU HAVE SO MUCH OPPORTUNITY WITHIN YOUR GRASP, BUT YOU NEED TO BE

CAUTIOUS OF ALL THOSE TRAPS THAT CAN LOCK YOU INTO THE PATH ALREADY TRAVELED.

CONCLUSION

Be excited to be an innovator during the greatest period of change in human history. During this chaotic period in time, you will witness countless new inventions and ideas that reshape our future. You, your team, and your kids will watch our lives be enhanced, disrupted, and changed by technologies that reinvent humanity. What a time to be alive!

However, it's also important to note that the rules of the game have changed. Traditional innovation might have been about finding a single product and harvesting it for years, but that's not how things work in a world of perpetual change.

After 10,000 years of evolution as farmers, our success makes it difficult to grasp the potential of new ideas. Smart people, like you and me, can easily miss out on opportunities that were well within our grasp. We get hindered by neurological shortcuts, traps of success, linear thinking, and the ease of not doing anything at all.

The result is that we tend to stay in our lanes, driving toward our future on whatever path worked before. We get caught in a groove. But the safe, well-traversed lane is not as safe as it used to be. Sticking to the path has become dangerous and disruptive. In a fast-moving world, getting caught in a groove means we become blinded to all the potential paths that could be.

The good news is that you are close to new paths of opportunity.

To realize your potential, look past the awkwardness of new ideas, train your brain to be more creative, take action, open up your future options, and recognize the blinding power of your own expertise. Track trends in your market, internalize the pace of change, and push your comfort zone—because you are capable of more than you think.

Create the future.

APPENDIX

What's Next? A Glimpse into the Super Future

At Trend Hunter, when we help our clients glimpse into the future, we use a framework that includes 18 Megatrends and 6 Patterns of Opportunity. This framework is discussed in detail in the Opportunity Hunting section on the other side of this book. However, for now we will use this framework to discuss the three megatrends that will have the most impact on the Super Future, my term for the world 5 to 10 years out.

In the Super Future, these standout megatrends are the factors that will have the greatest impact in shaping our world:

1. **HYBRIDIZATION**—The lines that separate different industries are blurring. You can now compete in any market.
2. **INSTANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP**—It has never been easier to instantly become an entrepreneur, launching new products in almost any type of market.
3. **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**—The pace of human progress will dramatically accelerate with machines that think like humans but with near-infinite speed and data.

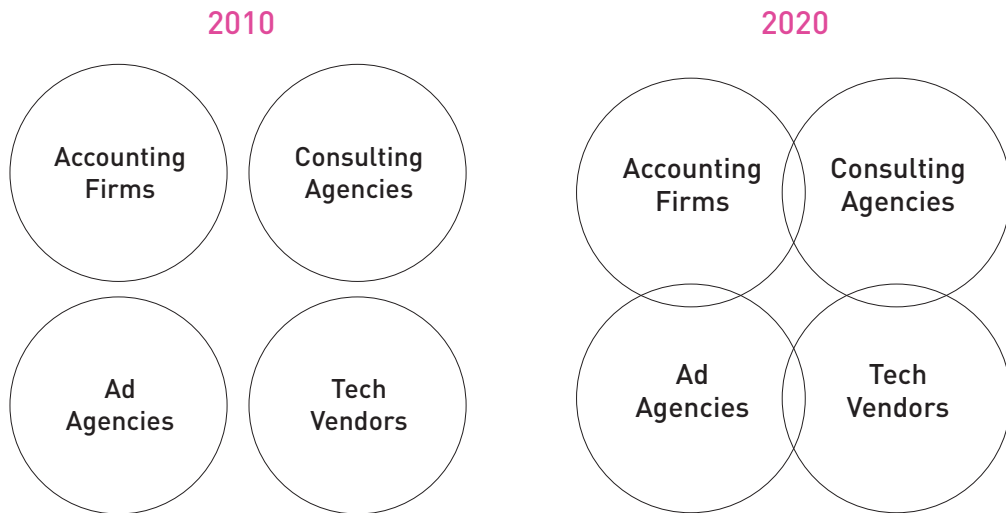
The 18 Megatrends & 6 Patterns of Opportunity



1. HYBRIDIZATION

Our worlds are converging

In almost every industry, seemingly unrelated companies are starting to compete. Separate worlds have now converged. In the world of B2B services, there used to be accounting firms—like EY, Deloitte, KPMG, and PwC—who just did accounting. Consulting firms like Monitor (my former employer), McKinsey, and BCG used to just do consulting. Ad agencies did ads. Tech vendors did tech. But now all of them have started competing for the same market of cloud, technology, and innovation. They've acquired additional companies to gain new skillsets, they've expanded their service offerings, and all four now offer the same services.



The same convergence is happening in dozens of markets. In media, the broadcaster, viewer, and advertiser used to be separate. Today, social media has enabled viewers to broadcast themselves, and influencer marketing has blurred the lines even further. In computing, biology, physics, software, and hardware are colliding.

To explore one example more deeply, consider Amazon. Not too long ago, they were just a bookstore, and you probably didn't think too much about them if you had a grocery or clothing brand. Now, they do all of the above, including design and web services.

When Amazon bought Whole Foods, their top six competitors lost \$12 billion in market value. The early retreat from these stocks was probably the right move, but most people only realized the primary impact of Amazon's purchase. Now, they could sell groceries, boost their Prime membership, and offer in-store pickup for online orders.

There was actually something more clever that occurred on the day of that acquisition. Amazon, an otherwise remote, Seattle-based web company, scooped up 400 local warehouses and 90,000 local employees. Consider the implications: Amazon could now stock their Whole Foods stores with the most popular products, enabling a whole new world of hourly delivery. Imagine what could happen if Amazon became your business's next competitor.

As we look toward the future, the lines that separate industries have been blurred, meaning you can easily enter new markets, or see your own market entered by unexpected competitors.

2. INSTANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP

It is easier than ever to compete on a global scale

Instant entrepreneurship is the concept that today, more so than ever before, anyone could become an entrepreneur, instantly. You can develop an idea, prototype it online, launch a website in an hour, get people from around the world competing to make your logo beautiful, and launch your product on Kickstarter before you even know how you are going to outsource its development. Anyone, from anywhere, could compete on a global scale.

Another way of internalizing the globalization of entrepreneurship is to look at the numbers of English-speaking, internet-connected people. In 1980, the world had 4 billion unconnected people, only 70% of whom were literate, running around with pencils trying to solve things. Now, we have 7.5 billion hyper-connected people, 85% literate, all running around with smartphones powerful enough to land a spaceship on the moon. Add up all of those factors and you have a 15-fold increase in internet-connected, English-speaking competitors, customers, and partners.

To think about this more deeply, take education as an example. It used to be that if you were a brilliant, wealthy American who wanted the very best business school education, you could go to Harvard (if you were accepted, of course). That would set you up for a lifetime of privilege, which you probably had to begin with. If you wanted to pursue electrical engineering, you could go to MIT, and if you wanted to work in Silicon Valley, you could go to Stanford.

In recent years, many of the professors from these schools have started making their curriculum available online for free in massive online open courses (MOOCs). These open courses are just one example of the online education available to a hungry student from a less-privileged background. But does it work? A Stanford professor of robotics, Andrew Ng, decided to put his curriculum online. Previously, he taught Stanford students 200 at a time, but online, over 160,000 people registered for his class. More interestingly, 248 of the students online were able to pass every exam without making a single mistake, and 400 students online were able to outperform every single Stanford student. You would expect the Stanford students to be bright, privileged, and better at the exams, but they were no match for the hungry, ambitious, brilliant minds pursuing their studies from all over the world.

You now have more global competitors, partners, and customers than ever before, and the impact of this is just beginning to be recognized.

3. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The pace of human progress is about to become not so human at all

AI is a term people often use without fully understanding its meaning. We tend to only use the word AI when a form of software is new, but in reality, it is already integrated into many aspects of our lives, including our newsfeeds, driving routes, romantic pursuits, online searches, and friend feeds.

An added level of sophistication is required because AI is the most significant and defining factor when it comes to our future. Accordingly, it's worth your time to "nerd it up" with me and more deeply explore the concept of AI. At the highest level, AI means that computers can program themselves to process massive amounts of data and learn on their own. On a more granular level, AI can be broken into three categories:

- **ANI:** Artificial NARROW Intelligence
(which applies to everything we know today)
- **AGI:** Artificial GENERAL Intelligence
(referring to human-level abilities in all categories)
- **ASI:** Artificial SUPER Intelligence
(an inevitability that we're unable to understand)

PART 1: ANI

Everything in the AI space today is considered artificial narrow intelligence. Worded differently, ANI is narrow intelligence because the AI systems we are making are generally only proficient in one "narrow" task. They lack the general knowledge that a human would have, across all categories.

Still, we are seeing some very impressive examples of ANI, including—

- **AI PERSONAL ASSISTANTS**—Apple Siri, Google Home, Amazon Alexa, and Samsung Bixby. These devices place the world’s largest tech firms in your home and will be a core battleground for much larger AI capabilities.
- **AI LAWYERS**—ROSS. At basic law, AI lawyers are 90% accurate (vs. 70% for humans).³²
- **AI DOCTORS**—IBM Watson. I helped IBM launch Watson, which is excelling in many fields. In medicine, Watson is four times more accurate at diagnosing complicated patients.³³
- **AI AUTONOMOUS DRIVERS**—Tesla. Elon Musk stated human drivers will one day seem unsafe.
- **AI INVESTORS**—Numerai. Like dozens of other heavily funded start-ups, Numerai is attempting to profit while changing how we approach wealth management.
- **AI FACIAL RECOGNITION & ANALYSIS**—Microsoft. The tech giant can identify your face and predict your gender, age, and mood with astonishing accuracy.

As an example, five years ago Google started training AI to categorize images. At first, AI was incorrect 26% of the time, compared to humans who were incorrect 6% of the time (which, by the way, seems ridiculous). Today, Google has improved to become twice as good as a human.³⁴ At first that doesn’t matter too much, but consider the field of ophthalmology. Suppose you visit an eye doctor to get an eye disease diagnosed. Worried about the implications, you might choose to get a second opinion. Studies show that there is a 60% chance that second ophthalmologist will disagree with the first, and it gets better: if you take your charts back to the original doctor just hours later, there is also a 60% chance they will disagree with *themselves*.³⁵ In this case, I want an AI doctor.

PART 2: AGI

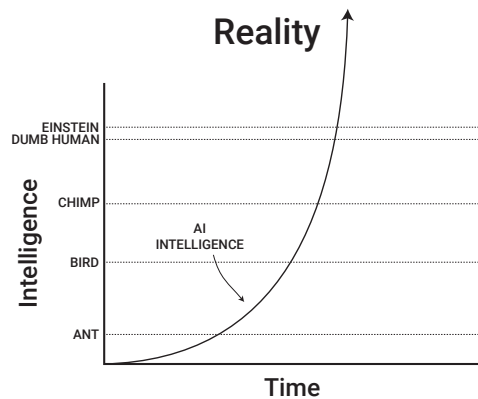
It is very difficult for humans to understand compound growth in any field, but computing stands out as an incredible case study. We already have computers with access to infinitely more information than we could ever attain and far more processing power. Once the coding of intelligence catches up, we will experience the following cartoon situation.

Currently, when we're confronted with AI, our reaction is something along the lines of "Haha, that's adorable! The funny robot can do monkey tricks!" We also tend to think of the least-intelligent humans as being far less intelligent than we are, and of someone like Einstein as far more intelligent. To an AI system, however, we're quite similar. In about 10 years, AI will catch up to the general intelligence (i.e., intelligence across all categories) of a below-average human.

Then, about half an hour later, it will surpass Einstein. By the next day, it will be 100 to 1,000 times smarter than us, with access to every fact in the known universe and a far stronger ability to process it.

As humans, it's difficult for us to even imagine a computer that could match our intelligence. Yet, if an AI system were only as fast as computers today but as smart as a typical Stanford researcher, it is estimated that it could do 11,000 years of research in a single week. We will reach that level of processing in 10 years. What does that mean for our world? How will we live, eat, work, cure disease, help the planet, consume energy, distribute information, and go about our lives in the presence of such power?

Five years ago, these questions were the source of science fiction, but AI is now advancing more than twice as quickly as expected. This has become the most important piece of information for innovators, futurists, and society as a whole to understand.



FACTORS LEADING US TO THE NEXT LEVEL OF AI

I boil AGI progress down to three required factors: data, computing power, and intelligence. Let's quickly overview each factor.

a. DATA

More data was created this year than in the last 5,000 years, but only 0.5% of it was analyzed.³⁶ This means that an AI system *already* has access to a seemingly infinite amount of data:

- Every language
- Every fact
- Every Wikipedia page
- Every math formula
- Every physics equation
- Every bioengineering feat
- Every piece of news & trending data
- Every marketing best practice
- Every neuropsychology insight
- Every hacked email (7 billion so far)
- Every stock market technical
- Every person

In this category, we have already met the requirements, by far, to reach AGI.

b. POWER

It is always complicated to compare the speed of a computer versus a human; however, given that we are trying to imagine when a machine will be as smart as a human, it's worth making a comparison. Let's consider IBM's Summit, currently the world's fastest supercomputer, which will probably be surpassed by the time this book is published. If every person on Earth completed one calculation per second, it

would take 305 days to do what Summit can do in 1 second.³⁷ Needless to say, we are not waiting on POWER to reach AGI.

c. INTELLIGENCE

The only remaining uncertainty is intelligence, and right now, AI still has a lot to learn. Most AI researchers estimate that it will take 10 more years, though AI is consistently progressing ahead of expectations. Some scientists are dissecting the human brain to see if an exact replica could be programmed. Others are teaching the computer to teach itself how to learn, which is (1) super meta and (2) super complicated. For example, Facebook set up two AI chat bots to process language and comments. However, they had to unplug the machines because the AI systems invented their own language so that humans could not track what they were talking about. *Wow.*

If we do it properly, AI will enable us to end all disease, extend life (perhaps infinitely), repair the planet, never have to work, and experience total bliss. Of course, if we get it wrong, things could end very badly.

Bill Gates, who laid the foundation for AI, is concerned it could lead to the end of the world. Stephen Hawking consistently issued similar warnings. Elon Musk has one of the world's most advanced AI programs, but he suggests that we might be summoning the demon. In short, there are still many questions to be answered, but one thing is certain: the next five years will motor along faster than the past decade.

PART 3: ASI

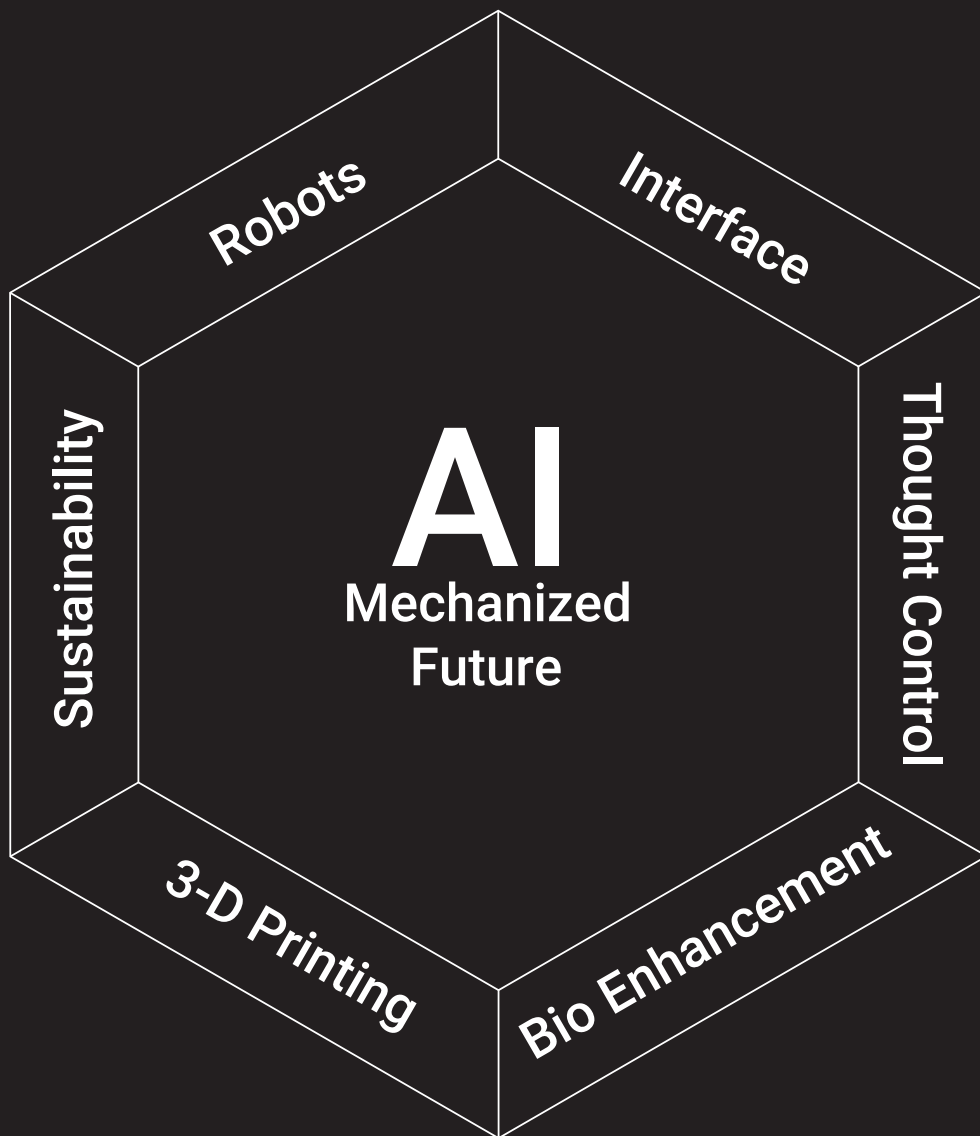
Within the next 40 years, AGI systems will rapidly advance and compete until one system reaches a point that will propel it 1,000 times further than competing systems. In other words, we will reach a point in time where there may be only one computer system. At this point, the implications start becoming that of science-fiction movies, so I am not even going to touch on this category any further.

With each step closer to AGI, we will accelerate the pace of human progress.

THE AI-MECHANIZED FUTURE

Our ability to use artificial intelligence starts to become more extraordinary when we start to combine AI with six other factors, creating what I call the AI-mechanized future.

1. **ROBOTS**—There is exponential growth in the number of robots helping us with our jobs and our daily lives. There are robots that can take your trash out, robot bartenders, robot receptionists, robot pizza delivery drones, robots that can take your order at a restaurant, and robots teaching our children how to behave. Farmers are using robots to identify what's happening in the crop, when to fertilize, and when to harvest, so that we can feed our ever-growing global population. What robot would you like to help you around the house or at your job?
2. **INTERFACE**—Though we currently interact with our phones, laptops, and smart home assistants, all that is about to change. For example, Google's new assistant can call restaurants to make reservations, book appointments, and navigate complex conversations as if it were human. Meanwhile, AI is getting better at visually re-creating the human form. The AI-empowered Deepfakes project teaches us that we can actually place any face on any body in video form. The persistent example online is that people are putting Nicolas Cage's face onto almost every actor in every major movie. It looks very convincing. So what happens when people use this technology to recreate the image of a US president giving orders he or she did not intend to give? By 2019, this concept was taken a step further when the Chinese app Zao introduced the ability to place your face onto the face of almost any celebrity in video form, whether that means you becoming Leonardo DiCaprio or Taylor Swift. Imagine watching your favorite movie with the key characters having the faces of your family members. That's already possible, though currently terribly illegal from a copyright perspective.



3. **THOUGHT CONTROL**—We have had thought-controlled video games for years, but now, AlterEgo from MIT Media Lab is a device that can read the inner voice in your head. The developers can currently use the interface to navigate television programming, perform basic search tasks, or keep a running tally of their grocery checklist as they navigate through the store. That's not an example of the far future; that technology is available today. So what happens when I can read the inner voice in your mind from five feet away? Will you be cool with police officers using that technology? Marketers? Las Vegas casinos? Retailers?
4. **BIO ENHANCEMENT**—We already have prosthetic arms that can help people regain control and the sensation of physical touch through robotic arms. We also have cochlear implants that can bring hearing to someone who has always been deaf, and eye implants to restore vision to people who are blind. Meanwhile, companies are working on eyeball technology that could enable you to save images, have super vision, and transmit imagery over Wi-Fi. What features do you want in your new eyes?
5. **3-D PRINTING**—There are 3-D printed chairs, bikes, cars, houses, buildings, bridges, shoes, casts, dresses, food, and prosthetic arms and other body parts. Will you be intimidated when robots can 3-D print new robots?
6. **SUSTAINABILITY**—We have become so quick at mobilizing venture capital and technology that our AI-mechanized future has an eco-concern, the likes of which we have never seen before. For example, you may be familiar with the shareable bikes that exist in most major cities. This business model was so appealing that dozens of venture capitalists and Chinese billionaires all jumped into the game, each hoping to flood the markets with shareable bikes in each city. But the problem was that so much capital and production ramped up that there are now fields in China littered with millions of bikes that will never be ridden. It was dramatic overproduction, enabled by our fast-moving world.

Meanwhile, there are eight swells in the ocean full of plastic waste that will never properly decompose. In fact, the largest swell of plastic garbage is two times the size of Texas. If we start thinking about our other obligations as people who are designing and creating products, cradle-to-grave sustainability—where you think about what happens after you make things that last—starts to become important.

The good thing is that the next generation cares about this a lot. When you align to the values of caring about this, you're absolutely aligning to the next demographic of customer.

For example, there's now clothing made out of ocean plastic, like the adidas Parlay shoes, which I am wearing as I type this book. There are ocean-plastic sunglasses, shirts, and collectibles. And there are even people trying to clean up the plastic garbage patches, like Boyan Slat, an 18-year-old kid who graced the stage of TED with a plan to cast giant nets that would start to retrieve the plastic for other purposes. By 2017, he raised \$31.5 million from concerned philanthropists, and in 2019 he announced that his second prototype had successfully begun collecting ocean plastic.³⁸

What will you do with your brand to advance sustainability? At Trend Hunter, we recently made a donation to plant 2 million trees with Trees for the Future, an organization that works in hunger- and poverty-stricken regions of the world, creating forest gardens. Forest gardens are tree-lined plots of land that restore and encase sustainable farms capable of feeding and empowering families. For us, that donation included pairing our custom trend reports and Future Festival tickets with 10 to 100 donated trees per purchase, to embed our contribution with our work.

At first, sustainability seems like a curveball in a section about AI, but I intentionally pair the two because our rapid advancement in technology makes it too easy for us to produce more at a lower cost, resulting in oversupply and waste. In an era of accelerating change, we have the ability to destroy or create our future.

THE SUPER FUTURE CONCLUSION

Our pace of change has not just increased—it is accelerating. That acceleration is being empowered by hybridization, instant entrepreneurship, and AI. Knowing this, the ability to adapt will be far more important than ever before.

TACTICS

1. What are the AI projects being taken on by your competitors or others in similar industries?
2. What can you do to prepare your brand for a faster-moving future and the sustainability questions that future raises?
3. If you had an AI team at your disposal, which parts of your business would you like to automate or disrupt? As a side note, at Trend Hunter, we did this a couple of years ago, establishing TrendHunter.AI to see if we could disrupt our human research team. At this point, we have a couple dozen features where AI is better, which we have now incorporated into our daily project flow to make our team better and faster.
4. If you want to know more about the Super Future, it's probably best to watch my latest Super Future keynote, which is updated more frequently than this book. You can search for the Super Future and my name on YouTube to learn more.



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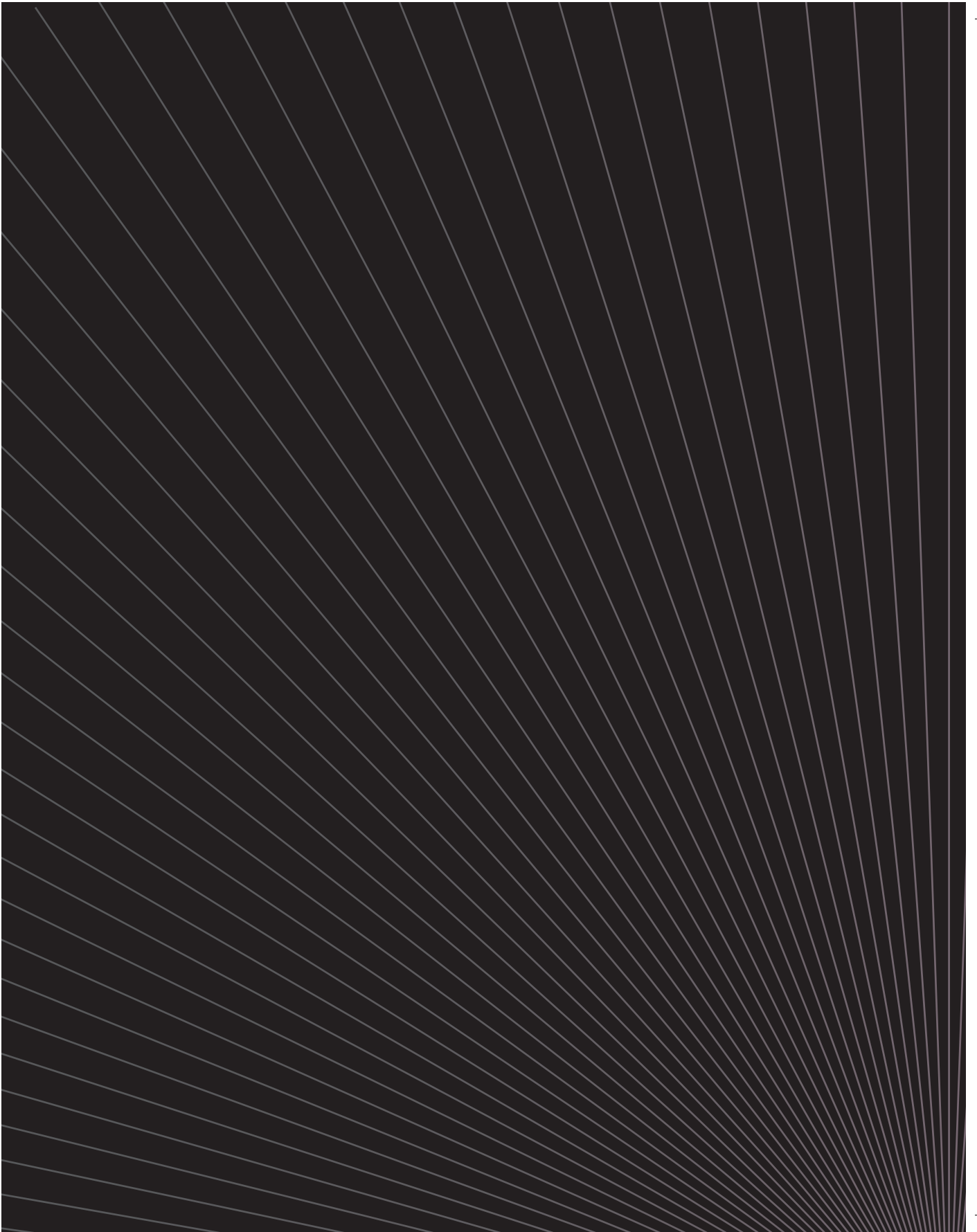
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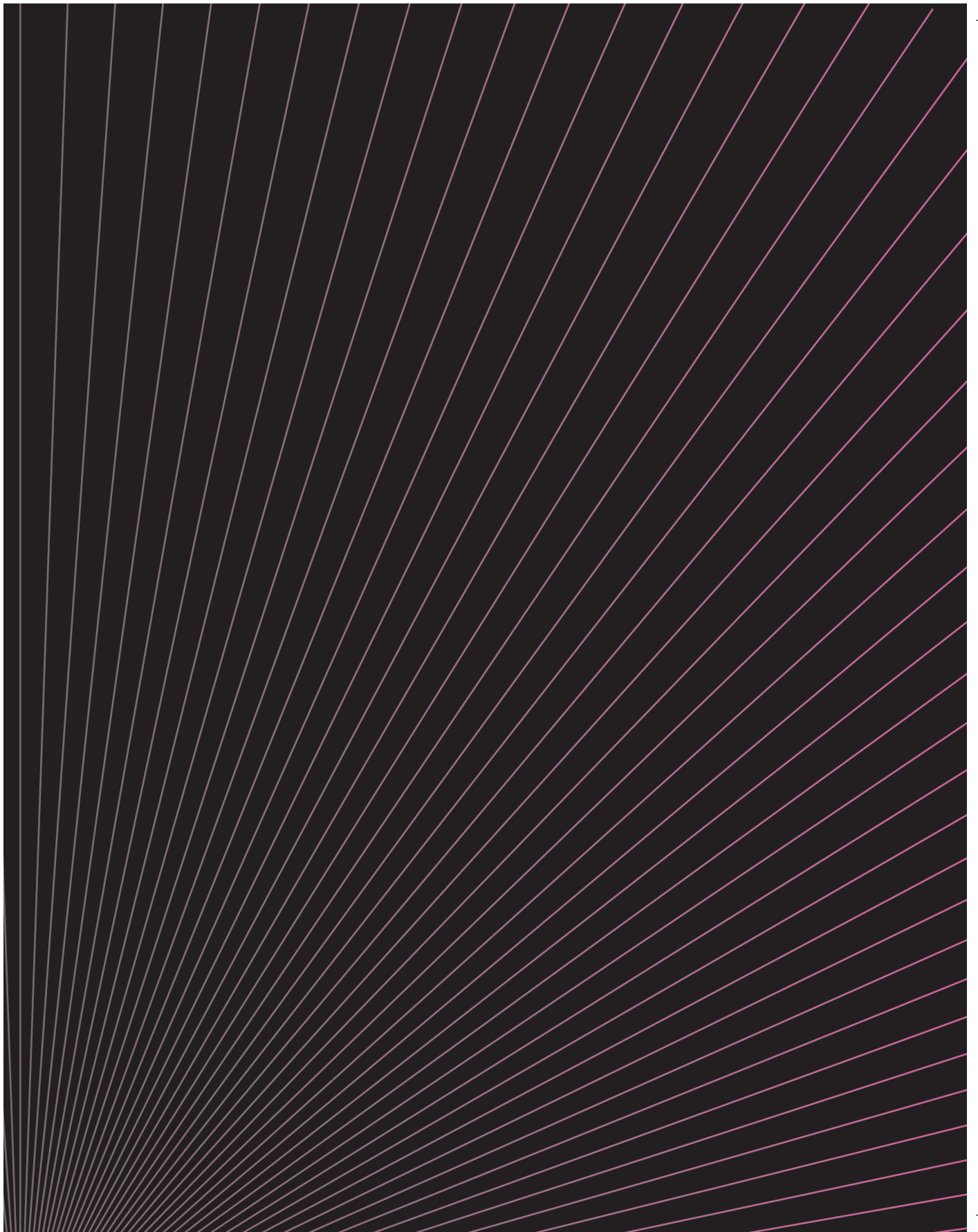
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READY TO DISCOVER
YOUR BIG IDEA?

FLIP THIS BOOK OVER FOR PART TWO:

HOW TO INNOVATE





CREATE THE FUTURE

FLIP THIS BOOK OVER FOR PART ONE:

DISRUPTIVELY?

READY TO THINK