

Look ma no powerpoint

In my hand I have a wonderful, complex self powered renewable piece of technology. It is so powerful that it carries both the data, design codes and initial energy source to replicate itself 2400 times. One of its more endearing features is as a purifier of air and water using the reverse osmosis filter it builds itself to completely remove pathogens and toxins from the water and sink carbon to convert CO<sub>2</sub> to oxygen. Moreover at a weight of less than one 20<sup>th</sup> of one gram excluding its custom built biodegradable packaging it is able with the addition of moisture, solar power and a minute mineral cocktail the device can produce over 200kg of product.

By now you may have guessed the technology is ancient and is in fact a pumpkin seed and you are beginning to wonder what an earth that old hippy from waiheke is doing here and weather he just got the wrong bus and thinks this is the cosmic association of crystal healing and organic planet saving conference but bear with me.

As awesome, and powerful as a seed is as brilliant its design and bountiful its potential a seed like an idea is pretty but useless if it isn't used.

For altogether too much of my life I have been seduced by ideas. Each a new lover, to obsess over, each the latest greatest and most important truth.

As age has cooled the ardour I have come to realize this world is awash with ideas. Knee deep in great ideas, a few of which are truly original.

Indeed I would argue that the most frequent reason my brilliant ideas don't get acted upon is a chronic oversupply of other brilliant ideas.

As my hair starts to thin and the sight starts to dim I am much more interested in how some ideas are transmitted and brought to life.

What I want to discuss this morning is some of my own experiences with turning ideas into action drawing

on examples from both product or process ideas as well as changing attitude ideas.

I am, despite my daughters assertions to the contrary, a human being. I do not need to rely on instinct, although I don't underrate it either. The very best of my work is always predicated by a period of deliberate deep thinking.

This is often very critical and radical thinking because I believe the very worst mistake is to decide on a solution before we understand the problem. This leads to wasted resources, unintended consequences and some truly awful products

Play facial clip

My good friend and colleague Vivian Hutchinson talks of initiatives which end up managing the problem when we need to be healing the problem.

When I took over the leadership of the problem gambling foundation I inherited a dispirited

organisation on a collision course with insolvency  
wracked with internal conflict.

But that was not the real problem, that was just fixing  
the business, it doesn't really require any social  
innovation.

No the real problem was that the organisation was  
managing the problem and presiding over  
unprecedented growth in gambling expansion. The  
foundation, along with most organisations of its type in  
the world was operating from an addictions paradigm.

The inevitable consequences of an addictions  
paradigm is that the locus of concern is the addict not  
the environment. In my deep thinking phase I found  
that almost half of the gamblers seeking treatment in  
2003 were women and that 12 years earlier there  
were no women seeking treatment.

So what happened to NZ women, how come they all  
of a sudden started to become gambling addicts.

Under an addictions paradigm we search the individual psychopathology of the gambler, trolling through their childhoods, examining their relationships searching for cause.

Under a public safety paradigm we are immediately focused on the gambling product and the gambling environment. What we found when we examined this was that at the time 85% of those appearing for treatment and up to 94% in vulnerable communities have a problem with a single product, pokie machines!

The addictions paradigm focuses on the harmed after the fact it is incapable of sensibly targeting supply or prevention. It manages the problem.

So how to convince a society in receipt of over 300 million \$ from pub pokies that these very machines are causing massive harm. How to change the way gambling machines are regarded and understood.

This is a changing attitudes story and the research shows something has changed attitudes with the

majority of people now believing the machines do more harm than good. I like to think we had something to do with that. How did we do it

By being very sure of our messaging

By being very innovative in our messaging

Play pokie drop clip

By polishing the soundbite

By being very brave and seizing the leadership opportunities

By making space for others to lead

By being relentless

In Bangladesh where I studied there is a saying that something becomes a truth when it is said 1 Lakh (100,000) times. In 2007/8 The foundation had a media presence which would have cost \$6million to buy

Key to the success is capturing the imagination of our team, play into it if time allows

The process of turning the idea into action is far more circular than in product development, it is opportunistic, it is highly responsive, non linear and is in constant adaptation as a result of action reflection. It requires very strong principles and values and very light planning.

By contrast product development is a much more planned and linear process not without its bumps and surprises but using more traditional project management and planning tools budgeting critical path milestones etc

Those of you from the PR industry may have spotted the difference already because if we were say the Ministry of Health conducting an attitude and behaviour change program we would approach the task in a much more planned way too. The difference is the Foundation approached attitude and behaviour change with no more resources than the ability to be windswept and interesting.

Product development also is affected by resource availability but once resources are secured tends to follow an engineered approach

Play ecb dvd

Comment on development process if there is time

So out of our experience what have we learned

There are both things which enable and things which frustrate turning ideas into action

Enablers include

- Fun
- Speed
- Space, physical, temporal and emotional
- Well polished stories
- Celebrated and recorded learning including mistakes
- Being positive and not too stressed
- Being focused
- Being opportunistic

Conversely our efforts are not helped by

- Noisy rushing
- Panic
- Messy messaging
- Distraction
- Slavish adherence to plans
- Too many creatives in one place

Brining ideas into action has roles for

- Vision
- Dreaming
- Testing conversations
- Repetition
- Planning
- And above all passion

Sometimes I think of three different countries involvd  
in the process

Creative Land

Where everything is possible abuzz with optimism and  
art rules

Business Land

Where everything is engineered, timed counted and in  
its place, accountants rule

And the third land

The land of broken dreams where good ideas come to  
die or maybe just rest a while, procrastinators rule

Business time if there is time