

The Art of Innovation

Tom Kelley—2001.

Chapter 1: innovation at the top.

Chapter 2: winging it in startup mode.

Chapter 3: innovation begins with an eye.

- All in all, a pretty unpleasant experience, and a product category that had not seen much innovation since Lewis and Clark. A fatalist would have just written off snowshoes as awkward, antiquated equipment, but Klebahn was a Stanford product design student at the time, learning how to sharpen his observation skills, keeping bug lists, and asking a lot of “why?/why not?” questions. Inspired by observing his own difficulties with the existing technology, Klebahn—while still a student—formed Atlas Snowshoe Company, which almost single-handedly created today’s snowshoe industry. Using a clever design and high-tech materials, he cut the weight of the snowshoes by 70 percent and made them easy to use on any terrain. That left the small task of creating an industry around his new product, but within a few years, Atlas had partnered with ski resorts from Vancouver to Sun Valley in creating snowshoeing areas. Resorts initially worried “if we build one, will they come?” but a single snowshoe area at Vail boasted more than 100,000 visitors by its second season. Perry Klebahn, starting with a single observation, then following up with a lot of creativity and hard work, grew Atlas Snowshoe Company to more than \$10 million in sales and then sold the company. Anecdotal? Yes, but hardly an isolated case. Ask around, and you’ll find that many entrepreneurs got started by observing humans struggling with tired routines and asking themselves what they could do about it.
- We don’t want to peek at the answers before we know the questions. Steelcase, the world’s leading manufacturer of office furnishings and an IDEO investor, asked Sean Corcorran’s team at IDEO to dream up some concepts for “active storage” as part of a new modular system of interior “architecture called “pathways” Sean was enthusiastic but wasn’t sure where the exploration would lead.
- Introducing complementary shelves for office corners or other unused spaces, bringing a deeper three-dimensional geometry to the workplace. Best of all, the Datum shelf celebrated human behavior. Instead of trying to change the primal need to file by piling, we channeled that urge into a more productive pattern.
- Instead, we usually track down several interesting people to observe and talk to. E-mail is often a good source for finding people. We’ll blast out a query to see if anyone knows friends who fit a certain profile or who might let us watch them using an existing product or service.
- The fact that it was easier to do as technology got smaller and more portable is only part of the story. What it really took was a change in mind-set. Rental companies had to recognize that they’d save money and build loyalty if they moved their services closer to their customers.
- **Pay attention** to how your customers might like to interact with your products or services, and a remarkable change takes place. You can do more than simply satisfy their immediate needs.

Chapter 4: the perfect brainstorm.

- So if you say you already do brainstorming in your organization, great, you're on your way. But I believe you can deliver more value, create more energy and foster more innovation through better brainstorming. For one thing, you could brainstorm more often, weaving it into the cultural fabric of your organization. In that same Arthur Andersen survey of people who said they brainstorm, 76 percent admitted they brainstorm less than once a month. Less than once a month. I consider myself a movie fan, usually seeing thirty to forty films a year on the big screen (plus again as many on video), but if I dropped below one a month, I'd have to say I was a former fan. If you want to keep in shape, you have to exercise your brainstorming muscles more than once a month. So find a suitable space, order some supplies (and some chocolate chip cookies), get a good group together, and brainstorm up several dozen possible solutions to a problem that's bugging you right now. Brainstorming is practically a religion at IDEO, one we practice nearly every day

- **SEVEN SECRETS FOR BETTER BRAINSTORMING**

- 1. SHARPEN THE FOCUS

- Good brainstormers start with a well-honed statement of the problem. This can be as simple as a question. Edgy is better than fuzzy. The session will get off to a better start
- For example, "spill-proof coffee cup fids" would be a bad brainstorming topic because it's too narrow and already presumes you know the answer. Another approach, "bicycle cup holders," is too dry and product-focused. Maybe bicyclists shouldn't use cups at all, in which case they certainly don't need cup holders. A better, more open-ended topic would be "helping bike commuters to drink coffee without spilling it or burning their tongues." Go for something tangible that participants can sink their teeth into, without limiting the possible solutions.

- 2. PLAYFUL RULES

- Don't start to critique or debate ideas. It can sap the energy of the session pretty quickly. You need a way to turn aside critiques without turning off the critiquers completely.

- 3. NUMBER YOUR IDEAS

- Numbering each idea is pretty obvious, right? So obvious that it took us almost ten years to figure it out. Numbering the ideas that bubble up in a brainstorm helps in two ways. First, it's a tool to motivate the participants before and during the session ("Let's try to get a hundred ideas before we leave the room") or to gauge the fluency of a completed brainstorm. Second, it's a great way to jump back and forth from idea to idea without losing track of where you are.

- 4. BUILD AND JUMP

- Watch for chances to "build" and "jump." High-energy brainstormers tend to follow a series of steep "power" curves, in which momentum builds slowly, then intensely, then starts to plateau. The best facilitators can nurture an emerging conversation with a light touch in the first phase and know enough to let ideas flow during the steep part of the ideation curve.

- 5. THE SPACE REMEMBERS

- Great brainstorm leaders understand the power of spatial memory. Write the flow of ideas down in a medium visible to the whole group.
 - 6. STRETCH YOUR MENTAL MUSCLES
 - People are busy Time is short. Is it worthwhile to “burn” some time at the beginning of a brainstorm doing some form of group warm-up?
 - 7. GET PHYSICAL
 - Good brainstorms are extremely visual. They include sketching. Mind mapping, diagrams, and stick figures. You don’t have to be an artist to get your point across with a sketch or diagram,
- SIX WAYS TO KILL A BRAINSTORMER
 - 1. THE BOSS GETS TO SPEAK FIRST
 - 2, EVERYBODY GETS A TURN
 - 3. EXPERTS ONLY PLEASE
 - 4. DO IT OFF-SITE
 - 5. NO SILLY STUFF
 - 6. WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING

Chapter 5: a cool company needs hot groups

- Too many of the inventors I have met suffer from a self limiting form of paranoia. They want help with their inventions but aren’t quite ready to reveal them. They aren’t quite sure they can trust us with their precious secret and are worried that any potential partners will take advantage of them. So they return to the safety of their garages and basements and nothing ever happens. The same is often true of the lone genius within a company We’ve found that loners are so caught up in their idea that they are reluctant to let it go, much less allow it to be experimented with and improved I upon. They think more like individuals than team members. And unfortunately their projects suffer.
- We believe the strongest teams take root when individuals are given the chance of picking what groups they work with and even occasionally what projects they work on. That way passion fuels the fire. For example, we were recently asked to develop a kid’s car seat. We asked for volunteers, and dozens of employees stepped forward. One of the dads who volunteered was so concerned about safety that he’d already bought ten different car seats for his three kids. He was picked, of course. To me, that’s the kind of enthusiasm you need to boost a project to the next level. Sports and recreation companies understand this kind of passion for the work. They live the lifestyle they’re selling. That’s why so many premier mountain climbers, kayakers, skiers, and windsurfers work for the Seattle-based sports retailer REI. For them, there’s little dividing work and play But your inspiration doesn’t have to be physical, or even a conscious passion. It can start with a single emotional or intellectual herd. IDEO’s car seat dad was helping to ensure the safety of his own children, as well as that of thousands of others. Not a bad reason to get out of bed in the morning.
- In the late summer of 1999 as the team’s intensive work on the Handspring Visor neared completion, they began itching for a new challenge. The Visor was an “open architecture” personal digital assistant, a Palm-like device designed to accept a wide variety of modules via it Springboard connector. By definition, its success, like the person computer’s success a generation before, would depend on the hard ware and software of third-party, independent developers.

- Dennis’s team aspired to be one of those independent developers— to come up with the killer add-on. A product that would both be a hit in its own right and contribute to the overall success of the Visor. The IDEO team brainstormed up a few dozen alternatives and settled on the idea of making a small add-on digital camera for the Visor dubbed the “Eyemodule.” This was a bold move, as the team would actually have to create and manufacture a highly technical product from scratch, something they’d never done. And to top it off, they’d never made a camera before.
- Do you care about me? Can I trust you? Are you committed to the success of our team?
- **How does Bass** keep his creativity machine running? As soon as he writes a script’s final lines— “Fade to black”—he pens the first scene of his next movie. It’s a wonderful strategy for any team—to end one project by beginning another. That way when you do take a break, you already have an opening, a beginning to work from, rather than starting from scratch.
- **On the first day of class**, he tells his first year students that they all get an A. There’s one condition. Their first assignment is to write a letter to him—dated on the last day of class— explaining why they deserved the grade.
- His fellow shop workers rewarded him with a big Superman doll holding a small cart. And an engineer who helped hurdle a competitor’s seemingly insurmountable sheath of patents was given a hatchet symbolically hacking through five hundred pages of printed patents. When an especially large joint team from two IDEO offices designed an information appliance for Italy-based Merloni, everyone gathered together for a team photo, holding up the dozens of early prototypes. The few members who missed the photo shoot were digitally added later.
- And just as Nightline chronicled our Deep Dive, an intensely compressed exercise in our practices and methods, IDEO U. has become an opportunity for outsiders to practice our methods firsthand. For us, it’s a two-way street. We get to continuously test and reformulate our methods, learning what works or doesn’t work—for different industries and teams.
- Another great way to make people feel special is to let them play hooky. Sometimes the best inspiration for a team can be the Zen-like act of not doing any work at all. Like taking the afternoon off with your team to see a baseball game or watch a hot new movie (we once had a self-appointed “B team” that watched bad science-fiction films and other B movies on a regular basis). Since we’ve played a role in the making of a number of films, from *The Abyss* to *Free Willy*, we’ve taken in a matinee more than once.
- He’d crank away all night, and you’d arrive in the morning to find all the amazing things he’d accomplished. But you couldn’t talk to him till the afternoon when he clambered down from his loft. If you think this sounds bizarre, sometimes that’s how innovation happens. Amazon’s first and most prolific reviewer was practically entombed in books. Every wall of his office was crammed with volumes stretching up to the ceiling. His sleeping bag was tucked under his makeshift desk. He rarely went home.

Chapter 6: prototyping is the shorthand of innovation.

- Bezos’s saga puts wings on the Silicon Valley cliché of starting your company in a garage. His e-commerce juggernaut began with one startling statistic. In the spring of 1994 he happened upon a prediction that annual Web growth would ramp up at an astounding 2,300 percent.
- Bezos was doing exactly what innovators do every day: breaking a problem down into its parts, making on-the-fly decisions in parallel. The ordinary thing to do would have been to stay put

until he had decided upon a city. How could a moving van begin its journey without knowing a state, let alone an address? But Bezos gained a day of Internet time by launching his ship before he'd charted his New World. As his moving van rolled westward from New York on the interstate, Bezos flew to Texas and picked up a beat up family car. While his wife, MacKenzie, drove, he sat in the passenger seat, pecking out a business plan on his laptop and punching out calls on his cellular. Think of it: nothing on paper, no place to land his imagined company, yet he was already hurtling toward his destiny. He took a detour through Northern California to interview potential vice presidents of development, and he retained a Seattle attorney by phone to incorporate his on-line venture with the unlikely name "Cadabra." He still had no idea where he was going to live or how he would fund his scheme, but he had no time to waste because "when its growing 2,300 percent a year, weeks are important.

- Bezos could make an early blunder—like the clunky Cadabra—because he was carving himself out so much extra time. Once he'd rented suburban Seattle digs to house his venture in the proverbial garage, he applied the same "time is precious" logic to Amazon.com. Get it up, get it out, was the order of the day. Function preceded style and editorial content. Low on graphics and animation, Amazon.com loaded fast and — excelled at the basics—making it easy to find and buy books.
- What's lesser known, however, is that the first prototype actually was a bullet. When you're creating something new to the world, you can't look over your shoulder to see what your competitors are doing; you have to find another source of inspiration.
- Oh, this is kind of cool," Brendan remembers thinking, seeing that if his wings traced the curves, it would look like a propeller. He quickly punted" on the idea of a self-teeing football. Once he started tossing balls around the office, it became clear that the curved wings had a more noble purpose—straightening wobbly throws into perfect spirals. And so the Aerobic football was born, one of Skyline's most successful toys.
- If you're working on a project that has a service or human component, sometimes it helps to have team members—and even clients—express the project through archetypal characters in a little improvisational skit. **Living, moving prototypes can help shape your ideas.**
- But it turned out that sticking a \$1.80 fish-eye mirror (the kind that truckers stick on their big side mirrors) above the ATM worked just fine. Sure, we could have pushed them toward more high-tech, expensive solutions. But prototyping can also remind you that sometimes the most obvious, simplest solution is the best.

Chapter 7: build your greenhouse

- **If that still** doesn't sway you, how about a little bottom-line argument? At most companies, office space is the second biggest expense category after salary and benefits. Every competitive company knows it has to pay well for top talent. Why shouldn't you pay the same attention to how you create the spaces in which this talent must perform? Athletes need proper facilities. Why not workers?
- Are you launching a new team? Maybe there's an artifact that might inspire it. Or something you might actually cobble together or adapt for your office. Turn creating your space into a team-building exercise. And you'll be surprised at how much fun and pride people take in their workplace.

- The space most companies might have doled out to executives is now an ideal place to greet or entertain clients, eat lunch, collaborate. Or read or research something from the library.

Chapter 8: expect the unexpected.

- For that reason, companies need to be in touch with what “quirky” uses consumers have thought up for their products, and be ready to restructure their marketing accordingly Kleenex, for example, was intended to be little more than a niche product, essentially a disposable cold cream remover. Only when the public started wiping their noses with the paper hankies did the Kimberly-Clark Corporation see the potential and begin to totally reposition its product as a disposable hand-kerchief.

Chapter 9: barrier jumping.

- Meanwhile, products with a long heritage like hand tools or furniture or kitchen utensils can be problematic. Cars and personal stereos have proved to be fairly international. But you can be surprised by what is not. Take vacuum cleaners, for instance. Our research discovered that Japanese consumers prefer their vacuum cleaners quieter and less powerful with smaller motors than the American vacuums. Japanese apartments and homes are much smaller than American ones and the walls are thinner. Some Japanese shoppers will pay for “fuzzy logic” features that actually turn down their vacuum cleaners power if they detect that a rug isn’t too dirty Japanese customers also are quite willing to pay extra for insulation to dampen the noise of their vacuums. Americans, on the other hand, want their vacuums loud. We may not ask for them that way but we associate the noise with a powerful motor and more suction. “If it ain’t loud, it ain’t working” seems to be the thinking. Our advertisements tout amperage the way hot rod magazines brag about horsepower. A feature that slows down the motor? Why would I want that? Once you know that the underlying desires of the two consumer groups are so different, it’s easy to recognize the difficulty in trying to make a “global” vacuum cleaner.
- Adoption curves vary tremendously from culture to culture and from product to product. Think of drink cup holders in cars. Who could argue with the benefits? By quickly integrating cup holders into their cars, Lexus and other automakers adeptly mastered one of those small but telling features that can make such a difference. Yet some European manufacturers were slow to embrace cup holders. Why: Perhaps because Europeans spend far less time commuting, drive shorter distances and seldom pick up beverages at the drive-through window. But the mind-set of some European sports car makers also played a part. Some assumed their cars were such a pleasure to drive that no one would possibly want to compromise their performance or spoil the experience by taking one hand off the wheel to hold a cup of coffee.
- **Many new products flop because** something critical is left out. Jake Burton Carpenter, founder and owner of Burton Snowboards, says innovation happens at his entrepreneurial company by looking for what isn’t there. “We ask,” He says, “what do people want? What’s missing?”
- Find something lacking in a product, and you’re likely staring at tremendous opportunity Ever notice how computerized registers at many retail businesses can actually slow down checkout? Couldn’t leaf blowers be quieter, or trash bags be made to decompose? Why did e-mail lack spell checkers for so many years?

- Several years ago, hoping to win an account to design some AT&T phones, David, Mike Nuttall, and I strapped on AT&T pagers. We set up an 800 number for AT&T executives to call, and modified one of their phones so that it had just one big button—a direct line to IDEO. We were willing to answer questions from them day or night. They got the message that we were serious, and appreciated our playful approach. We won the account.
- Rich Silverstein of the celebrated advertising firm of Goodby & Silverstein may take the cake for the most audacious effort to win over a potential client when he pitched Isuzu Motors. Silverstein printed up flyers and had them placed in the windshields of Isuzus all over San Francisco, offering to pay fifty dollars to anyone who parked his or her car within a two-block radius of the advertising office at the foot of Telegraph Hill. Who could resist? The visiting Isuzu executives were amazed to enter a neighborhood that looked like a giant Isuzu dealership, and Silverstein got the account.
- “You don’t think you’re going running with the vice president, do you?” a Secret Service agent told Blakely when he arrived at the San Jose Hilton shortly after dawn. No one was allowed within eighty feet of the vice president. But Blakely trotted after Gore and his entourage and a mile later was running and chatting with him. Gore had just been on the Letterman show, so Blakely pitched him ten reasons, a la Letterman, why he should visit IDEO. Gore, as it turned out, was too busy at the time to schedule IDEO. But to me that’s not the point. If your staff is regularly dreaming up creative ways to advance your company you’re sure to break through eventually.
- A simple idea could “transform the way you’re perceived. Like getting the American Dental Association to sanction your toothpaste or Leonardo DiCaprio to wear your sunglasses. You could have that idea.

Chapter 10 creating experiences for fun and profit.

- As he stepped through the innovation process, try thinking verbs, not nouns.
- The goal is not a more beautiful store. It’s a better shopping experience. And creating more value for your brand
- When we design an experience, we add up all those small incremental improvements into a better complete experience.
- Start by following your customer journey, breaking it down into its component elements, and asking yourself how you can deliver a better experience.
- A healthy portion of our work involves exploring new uses for existing technology or services.
- By adding a little spice to what you produce or sell, you may have people lining up as if they were tourists going whale watching. The Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle is a good example. How can one breathe new life into the traditional experience of buying fish? We Pike Place Market did it in spades. You point to the fish you want, and then, as the fishmongers start hollering back and forth, one of them winds up and pitches your shining ten-pound salmon twenty feet or so to another guy holding a makeshift catcher’s mitt fashioned out of wads of newspaper
- To me, this is a designed experience with a “small d,” the sort that anybody (with an open mind) can bring to their group, a division, or company.

- “Small d” designed experiences don’t have to be about your primary products or services. Take company security. Few would disagree that it’s notoriously bad and uninspired at most firms. You sign a book and on a badge

Chapter 11: 0 to 60.

Chapter 12: coloring outside the lines.

- **Coffee breaks at Skyline** can be brainstorms. Brendan has even taken his team to a nearby range to hit some golf balls before sitting down at a picnic table for a brainstorm. The person who toils endlessly at his desk is not likely the person who is going to latch a great innovation.
- Imagine if you had to turn out twenty new ideas a day. That’s the goal at Hallmark’s top-producing humor division. They do it by eschewing convention. No rules about dress or office décor. Writers are free to wander the halls and even brainstorm outside when the muse strikes them. Goofing off—flipping through magazines or watching videos—is encouraged, and often, writers will be handed afternoon movie passes. Writers and artists who need an extra charge can periodically slip off to company art studios and dabble in woodworking, ceramics, and other creative pursuits. This encouraging approach to creativity hasn’t just worked in the marketplace of ideas. Employee turnover at Shoebox is under 6 percent.

Chapter 13: in search of the “wet nap” interface.

- Here are some of the objectives we try to keep in mind when starting work on the next new thing.
 - 1. MAKE A GREAT ENTRANCE
 - Good buildings, Websites, and products make it easy to find your way about. They leave no doubt about which door to open or button to check. How do you welcome people to a service? When Wells Fargo asked us to help redesign its ATMs, we responded with curves. We introduced a subtle, curved cut-away Corian countertop that invites you to stand closer to the machine.
 - 2. MAKE METAPHORS
 - 3. THINK BRIEFCASE
 - Imagine that your ideal customer is on the commuter train, headed home after a long day. Make him or her want to bring your offering on that journey and you can’t help but succeed
 - 4. COLOR INSPIRES
 - Color works best when it’s a pivotal, early step in design. I’m not an expert in color, but I’ve sat in on dozens of meetings with Mike Nuttal and listened to him make color part of the initial design goal. He’ll ask a company what it wants to express with a product. If they say something along the lines of “powerful, for senior executives,” Mike will come back with descriptions like “black, sleek, and angular.” We made that machine for the Dynabook, and IBM has maintained that style— and color—to this day in its ThinkPad laptops.
 - 5. BACKSTAGE PASS
 - **Let your customers** know what’s going on behind the curtain, and they’ll reward you with business and perhaps even loyalty. Early on, Amazon wisely started sending confirmation e-mails, letting customers know the progress of their orders

through the shipping process. Netscape created animated shooting stars to let you know the browser was busily connecting; the hourglass icon on your screen lets you know that the computer hasn't forgotten about you. Philips introduced see-through kettles and toasters that let you see when the water is boiling and your toast has reached the right shade of brown. Clue people into what's going on behind the scenes, and they'll be happier, even if they're still waiting.

- 6. ONE CLICK IS BETTER THAN TWO
 - Make your product or service work faster and simpler, and it will probably succeed. The one-click ordering process pioneered by Amazon makes a huge difference in the time-sensitive world of the Web (though it seems such a universal idea that I'm not sure it should be patentable).
- 7. GOOF-PROOF
- 8. FIRST, DO NO HARM
- 9. CHECKLIST
 - It might seem like tail wagging the dog, but the right accessory can make the product. Automakers, genuine experts in the human psyche, understand this principle all too well. Think of what a difference little extras like comfortable seats make in your decision to buy a particular car. Or better drink holders. Or superior storage. Or even a better key. —people respond to the right small touches. It's up to you to come up with these surprises and fine details.

Chapter 14: live the future.

- TOY WITH THE FUTURE. No one gets ahead by copying the status quo. The one thing Burton snowboards, e-Schwab, Yahoo, and Swatch all have in common is that they didn't imitate competitors.
- The future is in giving that option to everybody. Think about how sweet spots in golf clubs and lightweight, oversize tennis rackets opened up the games to novices. I couldn't do ten pull-ups if my life depended upon it, but the Gravitron machine at my health club lets me do a hundred—if I dial in the right body weight. What's next? Electronically assisted golf clubs and balls? The PGA would never approve them, but weekend golfers might suddenly be able to play scratch golf. Sure, purists will no doubt call it cheating, as they once complained snowboarding wasn't skiing, but how many of us wouldn't like to actually live out the fantasy of playing like Tiger Woods?
- I also expect research and work for the disabled to start to spawn innovations for the general population. Just as curb ramps make it easier for everyone to carry rolling luggage, I believe work on eye- and voice-controlled interfaces for the disabled will soon reap more general benefits. You want to know what tomorrow holds. Seek out the early adopters and make camp at ground zero. Want to see the future of cellular telephony? Pack your long underwear and head for Finland, home to Nokia, perhaps the first place in the world where you can use a cell phone to buy a Pepsi from a vending machine.
- Interested in electronic gadgetry? Take a trip to Akihabara, the blinking electronics hub in Tokyo. Want to know the future of interactive entertainment? Lunch in South Park, the epicenter of San Francisco's Multimedia Gulch. Where's Internet use headed? Just watch kids at school and the library. Looking for the future of athletic apparel? Head to the beach. Venice Beach, that is. Concerned about what new technical threats might upset your company's computer security?

Hang out on Internet Relay Chat and listen to hackers brag about their latest exploits. Wondering what's next in venture capital? Breakfast at Buck's diner in Woodside, California, where the e-deals are struck.

- I can understand if this sounds a bit radical. In my first years at IDEO I didn't quite believe in concept projects. I thought they were something other firms did because they couldn't land enough paying work. Then an IDEO team literally flipped on the light switch. Our light switch concept project had no boundaries—and it showed. Ten IDEO designers dreamed up fanciful light switches fashioned out of black rubber, pink acrylic with tassels, ABS plastic, and upholstery foam. A golden, ribbed fish diving into a rippled acrylic pond made the cover of ID magazine. The switches won design awards and were prominently featured in a show at New York's Museum of Modern Art. Those vibrant switches changed my mind about concept projects. Not just because of the critical recognition Tim Brown and the rest of his San Francisco office received for their outlandish designs, but because the buzz that project sent through IDEO was immeasurable. The sense of possibilities and pride it gave our designers was astonishing
- **So sometimes concept** projects can lead directly to an innovation. But again, that shouldn't be your primary goal. They can also help you come up with novel metaphors or new architectures for product categories. Do a few concept projects and—like brainstormers—the exercise will become second nature. The next time you're struggling with a tricky project, close your eyes and pretend the barriers—size, materials, weight, or simple preconceptions—don't exist.
- Moviemaking supports our belief that products today are becoming more about experiences and that services are encouraging relationships
- At home we'll measure our vital signs daily with a Medical Mirror. Cameras and sensors will analyze everything from skin color to blood pressure and pulse. If some of these ideas sound a bit far-out, consider that during one IDEO brainstorm someone joked about programmable tattoos.

Chapter 15: getting in the swing

- **Tear up your "casual Friday"** policy and adopt an "anything goes" approach, reminding people to use their good judgment when they know clients will be around. Double your budget for printed T-shirts. Or sweatshirts. Or messenger bags. If it's currently zero, of course, you have to more than double it, but you know what I mean. And then don't look too hard at what gets printed on the team-identifying apparel. Try some homemade end-of-project awards, as a peer-oriented way to celebrate and recognize team contributions. Publicly acknowledge a risk taker, a rule breaker, even a failure, and explain why every successful organization needs them. Hold an open house—internal at first—for staff members and project leaders to show off their work in process, as a way to motivate teams and encourage cross-pollination.
- Many aspects of reenergizing the culture are more subtle and built into tacit work practices. Here's an example of what I mean: your boss (or your client) gives you a month to come up with an important "deliverable," a piece of software, a report, a presentation, a product, or an ad campaign. We believe there are two dramatically different approaches to such an assignment. The first is to spend your month making the "perfect" version of the deliverable, polishing until it shines. Then, at the end of the month, you have the meeting with the big Boss in which you—literally or figuratively—pull off the black velvet cloth and say Voila." Well, if your boss throws

up all over the thing. You're in trouble. Ego damage, for sure. Maybe even status and career damage, depending on your boss.

- The low-cost model. The pure-digital version. Then you squeeze in a ten-minute meeting at the end of the week with the Big Boss. Even in the unlikely possibility that she hates all five of your ideas, you're going to learn a lot as she tells you what's wrong with them, and you've now got three weeks to make the sixth one really sing. Chances are, she'll pick elements from two or more of the prototypes and you'll be able to combine the best of each in your final version. Even so, whatever criticism you get in week one doesn't sting much. After all, it's not your finished work, and you haven't put too much ego (or career risk) into any of the alternatives.
- If you take this message to heart, you'll have to start training your boss, getting him or her accustomed to the idea that you'll be back around, long before the deadline, to get solid feedback. Try an up-front deadline compromise like "May 30 is great, if you'll let me have ten minutes with you on May 7 to make sure I'm on course."
- Over the years we've come up with some valuable innovation practice tips. Try jotting these down in your own words and posting them around your workplace. Most of all, practice them whenever you can.
 - Watch customers—and noncustomers—especially enthusiasts.
 - Play with your physical workplace in a way that sends positive "body language" to employees and visitors.
 - Think "verbs," not "nouns," in your product and service offerings so that you create wonderful experiences for everyone who comes into contact with your company or brand.
 - Break rules and "fail forward" so that change is part of the culture, and setbacks are expected.
 - Stay human, scaling your organizational environment so that there's room for hot groups to emerge and thrive.
 - Build bridges from one department to another, from your company to your prospective customers, and ultimately from the present to the future.