

Innovation writing

May-ish of `22

30min - Research (find good examples) ✓

- <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-marketing-examples/> 👎
- <https://soworkshop.com/art-workshops/promoting-a-workshop/> 👍
 - Videos
 - Blog posts, news, and articles
 - Graphics and infographics
 - GIFs
 - Polls
- <https://coschedule.com/blog/social-media-post-ideas> 👍
 - [Tweet example](#)
 - [Social example](#)
 - [Linkedin checklist example](#)
- <https://influencermarketinghub.com/social-media-marketing-examples/> 😞
 - Would be good if the examples would all load 😞
 - Great example of a [humorous decision matrix](#)
- [Funny post](#) 👍

Thoughts

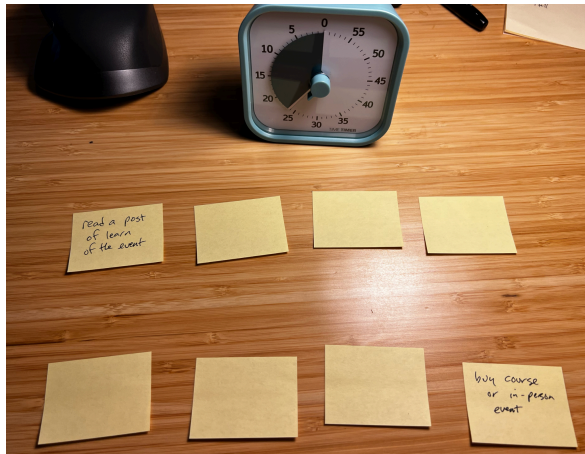
- I def need to use humor (it's part of personal branding)
- Give a resource away (worksheet?/app?)
- Use gifs
- Use existing videos to promote
- Write a song
- Make a *listicle* of ways to be innovative?
- Talk about their problem and the better tomorrow

- How many posts?
- Who is the audience?
- Choose your own adventure?

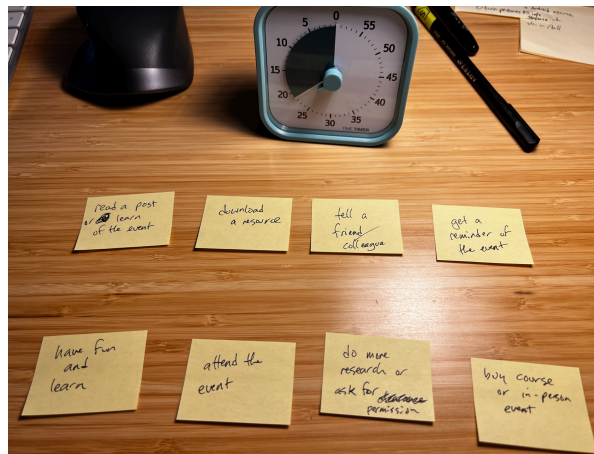
30min of storyboarding, and writing bullet points ✓

- 8 stickies

Start



finish



1. Read a post or learn of the event (email)
2. Download a resource
3. Tell a friend/colleague
4. Get a reminder of the event
5. Have fun and learn at the event
6. Fill out a questionnaire
7. Do more light research (or join the mailing list)
8. Buy the course or buy an in-person event

- Brainstorm ✓
- ~~Bullet points for the content ideas~~ ✓

Bullet points

- Innovation practices for a team of one
 - Start small, but **do something**
 - Try a “mashup” to spark ideas
 - Focus on what you learned
- What can Silicon Valley innovation teach my 20 person team?
 - Don't be afraid to fail (but fail small)
 - Use a framework
 - Find a way to experiment
- How can small experiments lead to big ideas with little to no risk?
 - Ask your team “what's holding us back?”
 - Pick a timeframe and budget
 - Establish what success looks like up front
- How can I impress my boss with innovative ideas?
 - Start with the customer

- Find a partner/collaborator
 - Focus on the bottom line
- Use the example of [Alice the Achiever](#) persona

30min of writing content

4 steps for being an Innovation team of one

“No one at my company wants to try new things.” If you haven’t thought this yourself, then you’ve certainly heard it from friends and colleagues.

If you find yourself in this situation, what should you do? You want to make a difference. You want to show drive. You want to inspire others to try new things too. But how do you start?

1. Start small, but **do something**

Our team (and clients) get tired of hearing us say it, but it’s still true. “It’s easier to edit than create.” So just go ahead and get the creating part over with.

Brainstorm on where you could innovate

If you already know an area of your company to focus your innovation efforts on, awesome 🙌!

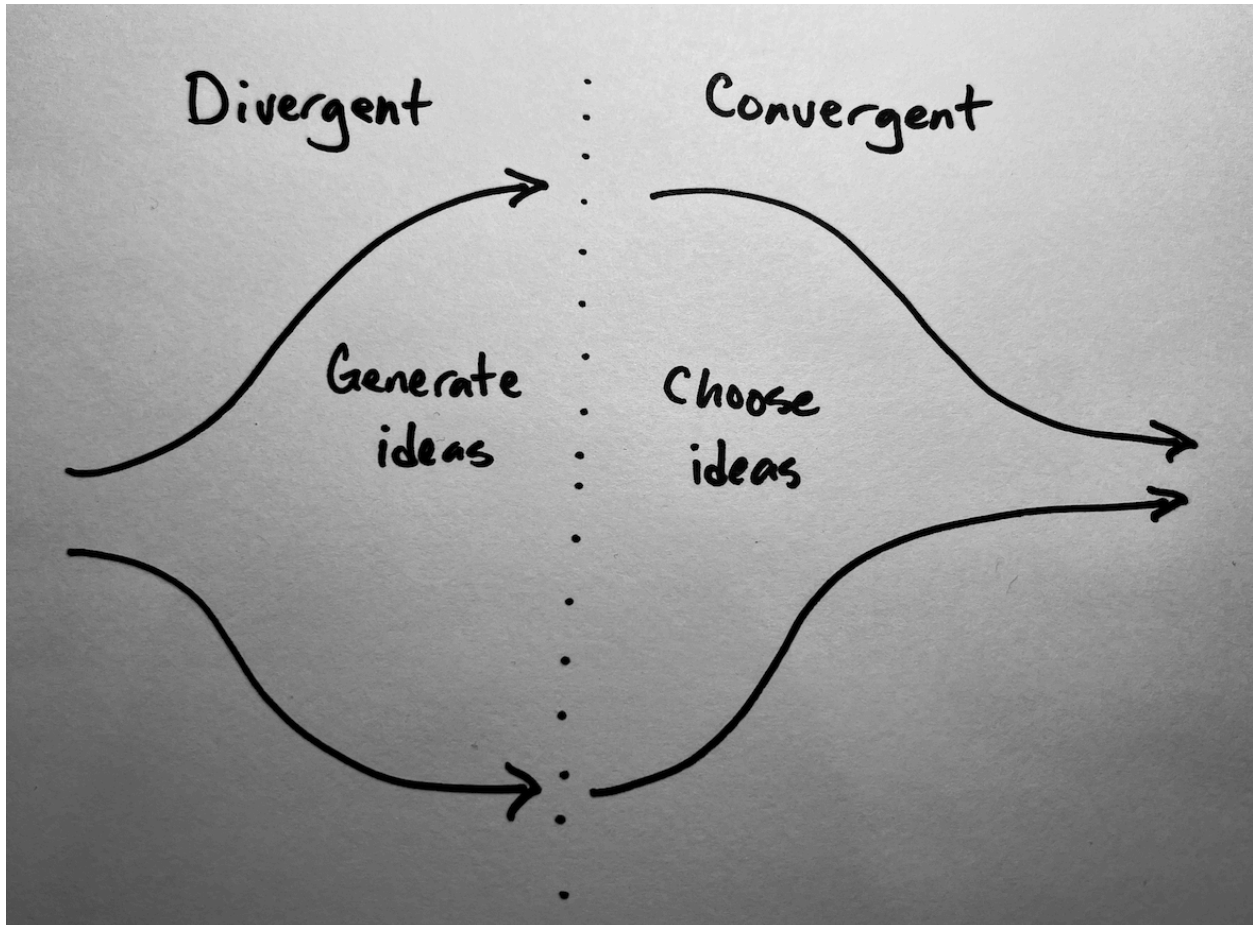
But if you are like most of us, brainstorming areas of focus is always a great first step. You can brainstorm with our app, or with our sticky note method, but try using the prompt “What areas of my job are frustrating or inefficient?” to get your ideas flowing.

Here are some examples of areas ripe for innovation:

<i>Role</i>	<i>Area of innovation</i>
• CFO -	Increase % of invoices paid on time
• HR -	Training new team members
• Sales -	Processing incoming leads
• Management	Improving team performance

Identify first

You’re not trying to figure out how to solve those problems yet, just identify them. The part of your brain where you create ideas is different from the part where you decide if an idea is “good” or not. Just be sure you start by simply writing down all ideas (good and bad). Don’t worry, you’ll get them sorted.



Divergent thinking is what you do when you brainstorm, convergent thinking is when you decide which ideas to run with.

Next, consider solutions

Ok, so you have identified where you want to innovate. It's time to start considering possible solutions. Don't let the "blank page" in front of you slow you down. Again, just start with *anything* and get to the "edit" phase ASAP.

2. Find inspiration from others

Following our motto of editing instead of creating, we'll next look for inspiration on how we might solve this problem.

Start listing

List a few products you love (apps like Google, devices like your coffee maker, or products like your favorite shoes). Then ask yourself "What's great about this?"

Then list a few experiences you've loved (locations like a recent vacation, destinations like Disney, or services like Chick-fil-A's customer service). Again, ask yourself "What was great about that experience?"

3. Now mash it up

How could you mash a few of those things together to solve your problem?

Example: Google+Disney

Google changed the search game by showing you things you might be searching for while you are still typing.

Disney took their cartoon characters and created a real-life place where you could interact with those characters on rides and in live shows.

How Might We take Google's "anticipating our needs" and mash that with Disney's "bringing imaginary things into real life"?

4. Apply that inspiration to your problem

Remember these examples of places to innovate?

- CFO - Increase % of invoices paid on time:
- HR - Training new team members:
- Sales - processing incoming leads
- Management - improving team performance

Potential innovative ideas

- CFO - Increase % of invoices paid on time

Your turn

Try this mash-up technique to find new ways to be innovative.

User story for this post

as: a team member who thinks like an owner, I want: to learn new ways to practice innovation so: I can make an impact on the culture and the bottom line of my company.

Find the friction, then innovate

Alt title ideas:

Don't know where to innovate? Find the friction.

Find the friction & find innovation opportunity

Friction points are innovation goldmines

Looking for a place to innovate at your company? Maybe you are the founder who is trying to streamline an internal process, or maybe you are a creative problem solver who wants to get noticed for your creativity. Either way, here's a shortcut to finding a place in your organization that's ripe for innovation.

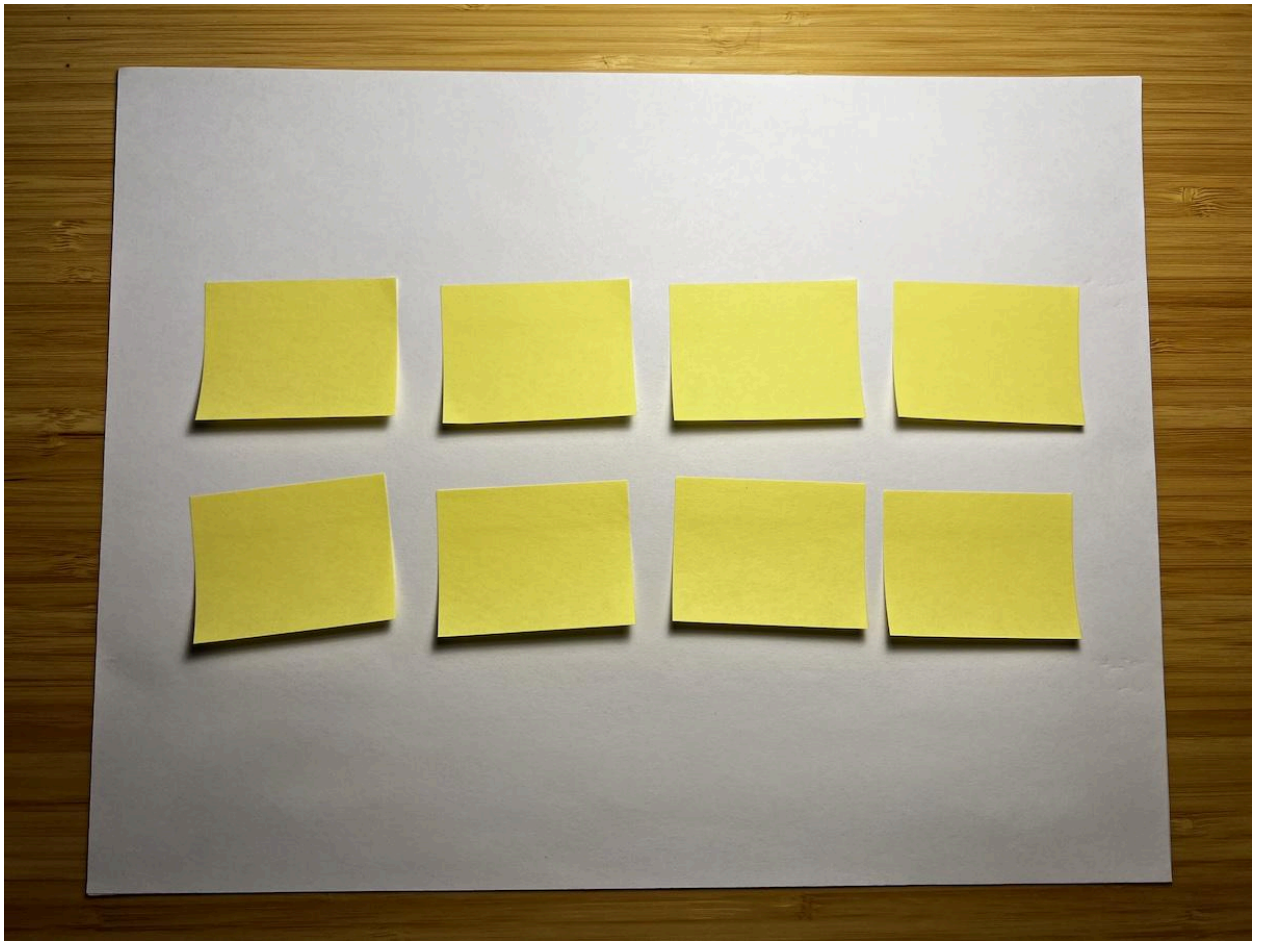
Map out the process

The best place to innovate is where there is friction in an existing process. You can start with an internal process (like training new team members) or a customer process (like when a customer is considering buying from you). Before you decide where to innovate, you'll want to start by mapping out the current process. We've got an innovation hack we love to use for this...with stickies of course.

Try the 8 stickies mapping method

We learned this process from the [Sprint book](#) by Jake Knapp – it's simple, quick, and powerful.

1. First, lay out 8 small stickies on a blank piece of paper (or full size stickies on your desk)



2. On the first sticky, write out the user's first step (ex: search for your product)
3. Next, skip to the last sticky and write the user's goal or final step (buy the product)



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4. Now set a timer for 3 minutes and fill in the six stickies in the middle with steps in between
 - Don't overthink this part, there might be 12 steps, but simplify them down to the six most important ones



****img****

5. That's it...you've now mapped out the process

Find the friction (together)

Now let's find the area of greatest friction.

1. Think through each sticky (picture it in your mind)
2. Identify which step you think has the most friction (or frustration), but don't let anyone know yet.
 - Hint: If you can't decide between two, pick the one closer to where money changes hands
3. Now it's time for the innovation power-up. Think about who in your organization could give you permission to improve this step? We'll call her "the decider".
4. Show your 8 steps to the decider and ask some questions.
 - Are there any major steps in the process that are missing?
 - If so, replace that sticky (or even add one).



****img****

- Next, ask where *she* sees the biggest friction.
- Ask her **why** she feels that way. Keep asking questions to get more insights.
- Now ask "if we reduced friction here, would that have a big impact?"
 - If she says "no", then ask which step *would* have a big impact.

- After she identifies the step that could have a big impact, ask for permission to “spend some time considering how we might innovate.”
5. Write an exclamation point in the top right of that sticky and save it for the next step



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Brainstorm “How Might We (HMW) innovate”

We’ve talked before about how we use different parts of the brain to create ideas versus deciding which ideas to pursue. (Divergent thinking vs Convergent thinking)

Divergent

1. Look at the sticky that has the biggest friction and potential impact. *Hint: the one with the exclamation point*
2. Take 3 minutes to [brainstorm](#) as many problems/frustrations as you can think of. (These should be frustrations the user would have, and you should write one idea per sticky)



img

Convergent

3. Now turn each problem/frustration into a HMW*



[**img**](#)

4. Go back to the decider and ask them to select a HMW for you to innovate on

You're now ready to innovate

Congratulations! With just a small investment of time, you have gone from not knowing where to start, to identifying where you should innovate, to getting buy-in from the decider. And because she helped determine *where* you could innovate, you have a much better chance of success since it's her idea too.

So what was the big difference between yesterday's frustration of now knowing where to start, and today's clear path forward? The difference was you had a proven framework to follow.

Innovation framework is coming soon

At Sodium Halogen, we get really excited about taking our day-to-day actions and turning them into a repeatable process anyone can follow. So you can imagine how excited we are about our soon-to-be-announced online course that's going to take the "ideas for innovation" you created, and give you a proven innovation framework to go from idea to launch.

Be on the lookout for more information soon.

** The HMW brain-hack we learned from AJ Smart is to turn problems into "How Might We" questions. We call them "HMW"s because we are ~~lazy~~ efficient and don't want to write that out over and over. 😊*

Cyber Security Writing

The do's and don't's when building cyber security apps

We agreed the jumping off point is interviewing cyber guys.

Big idea:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Email to cyber founder

Hey *JJ*,

TL;DR - We're starting a video podcast series on app design, and we want to focus on cybersecurity to start. Would you have 30 minutes to hop on a video call for an episode?

Some details

Target audience:

Other digital product founders (specifically cybersecurity startups for this episode, but we're sure you have the knowledge to share with other founders)

What do we want them to know:

There are several podcasts on other aspects of a startup biz, but we want to focus on design. We want to talk a little about how important UX/UI app design is, but we also want to hear the story of your journey and your current company.

Call to action

Would you be open to being a guest on the podcast?

We'd like to schedule the podcast with you sometime in the next two weeks. FYI - We can send a rough agenda and a list of questions ahead of time

Agenda

Start

- Who are we – SH?
- Who are we talking to, and what we are going to cover today?
- Lots of podcasts on aspects of a startup biz, but we want to focus on UX.

Guest

- Intro the guest
- Who are you?
- What is your company?
- What drew you to cybersecurity and what's your background?
- What have you done?
- Where are you now?

UX

- Is UX important? Why? What's the unique challenge of UX for cybersecurity apps?
- You have UX/UI in-house now but started by outsourcing. How did you decide when to bring it in-house?
- What should you look for when picking a UX partner?

Testing

- How important is testing early with customers?

- Should the UX team be the only ones to do this?

Challenges

- Biggest challenge getting started?
- What was your big turning point?
- Biggest challenge now?

Wrap up

- Most surprising thing you've learned
- As a startup founder, what advice do you wish someone had shared with you?

Importance of user testing

Reid Hoffman's podcast Masters of Scale mentions early AirBNB founder in Y-combinator being told to leave where he is and go talk to customers. What is their big problem? It was professional photos. So AirBNB solved that problem and it exploded.

Can a design system help me grow my cybersecurity product faster?

Big idea:

1. What is a design system and why do I need one for my cybersecurity product?

Other industries are discovering the power of a design system

"deliver products faster, more consistently, and more efficiently, they also free up designers and product teams to focus on more important work — like improving products and solving user problems."

"Should we build a design system?". Instead it's, "How do we build our design system?"

2. Steps

UI audit

Think big but start small — building the foundation

It's common for larger orgs to have a dedicated design system team

Specific tools don't matter

Make a plan

3. Real world example — Seveo

Started with sketches

Moved to Xd (but sketch works too)

Moved to storyboard

Before you write a line of code or design a pixel - create a process flow

Start with a process flow, and test it out.

What is a process flow? It's a name we kind of made up for a concept that has been around forever – prototyping first.

Flowchart the golden path, share with the team, adjust, then share with potential users.

Rinse and repeat until the team agrees on the golden path of the product.

How do you do it?

Lo-fi – write the steps on sticky notes and place them on the wall

Higher-fi – Use a tool like Xd or Figma

How important is good UX/UI when building a cybersecurity product?

It's no secret that good UX/UI design is critical to the success of any digital product, and cybersecurity products are no exception. You'll often have one opportunity to impress. If a cybersecurity product is difficult to use or navigate, users may be less likely to use it consistently or effectively, which can compromise the security of their systems.

On the other hand, a well-designed cybersecurity product with a user-friendly interface can make it easier for users to understand and use the product, which can help them to better protect their systems and data. Good UX/UI design can also make it more likely that users will continue to use the product over time, as they will find it more enjoyable and efficient to use.

Overall, good UX/UI design is an important factor in the success of any product, and it is especially important in cybersecurity products where the consequences of poor usability or user error can be significant.

Innovation writing

[Some expertise articles are here](#)

Photo

<https://sh-drop.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/wd/non-keep/wm-talk-play-1.gif>

Image links to <https://www.sodiumhalogen.com/innovation-workshop#idea-person-cta>

Sodium Halogen launched an online course??!

Yup. After +15 years of working with internet startups, we'd created and honed internal processes for creating and vetting product ideas.

I'm excited to announce that we've turned those processes into a step-by-step innovation framework that anyone can use.

This self-paced online course shows everyone how to generate new product ideas, see if they are any good, and then efficiently pitch them to a manager.

This is the first step in creating an innovative culture in a company.

If you're curious, you can start with our FREE mini-course – Zero to Product Idea in 30 Minutes

<https://bit.ly/TW-mini>

Or you can learn more about the full innovation course.

<https://www.sodiumhalogen.com/innovation-workshop>

Intro text

Weekly innovation emails starting up again 🚀🏁

10/10

If you've been on our mailing list for a little while, you've likely seen our "weekly experiments" video series. We created that video series in 2020, and it shared practical ways to bring more innovation to your workplace through lots of small experiments. Since then, we've been asked when we were going to start posting more thoughts and ideas. The short answer is "now."

Starting today, we'll send a new post on innovation to your inbox – each week. And we promise to make it worth your while with insights and encouragement on how to bring innovation to your workplace.

In fact, here is our first post below.

30min on 9/26/22

Does innovation have to be disruptive at your company? 🚀🏁

9/26

[Image idea](#)

Use Dalle 2: A person with a confused look covering their ears with colorful silhouettes making a lot of noise behind them, digital art

🧐 **Disruptive innovation**

[Clayton Christenson](#) was the Harvard Business School professor who coined the phrase “disruptive innovation”, and this phrase was considered by many to be the key business idea of our century.

💙 **A Kinder Steve Jobs**

You might think Christenson was a fiery personality like Steve Jobs, but he was known to be soft-spoken and kind instead. He asked lots of questions, encouraged others to challenge his ideas, and looked for inspiration everywhere.

In promoting “disruption”, he was able to also lead with kindness as he challenged preconceived notions of how things should be done.

🧠 **Don't Shout to be Heard**

So, when we all get excited about a new process that could “change the business”, I’m reminded (and trust me, I need plenty of reminders) that we don’t have to shout to be heard. Instead, we can find a place to make a difference, try something new, and simply share what we learned. Then we can ask others what they would have done differently to try to get a better result.

Our team members and managers might not even know they are being “innovative”.

PS - Are you wanting to bring more innovation to your workplace?

We did too, so we created a step-by-step framework that anyone on our team could use to change “possibly good ideas” into a solid product that has already been battle-tested and de-risked.

[Get our free mini-course](#)

Do small experiments help you be more innovative? 🚀🏁

9/29

📺 <https://sh-drop.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/wd/non-keep/IW-take-more-shots-on-goal.mp4>

I was recently at an entrepreneurship conference in Nashville when a panelist ([Eric of Hustle Fund](#)) talked about what he looks for in a founder to invest in. “Hustle” was at the top of his list, and he went on to describe *hustle* as someone who “takes more shots on goal.”

Shoot more, score more 📊

In soccer, if you don’t shoot, you can’t score. So generally, the team who makes more attempts to score...eventually ends up scoring more and winning more.

If you want to score, you have to shoot ⚽

So, can that be applied to innovation practices in a company? Absolutely. Your team will obviously never create a new product or service that transforms how you do business without trying.

Celebrate the attempt 🎉

But trying new things can be scary, risky, difficult, etc... right? Yes, sometimes “taking a shot on goal” can seem like it’s all those things. But if a soccer player takes a shot and misses, the team still celebrates the attempt. “Oooh, that was sooo close... next time we’ll score, keep shooting!”

Change how your team views taking a shot 👁️

The key to changing how your team sees taking a shot comes down to two things.

1. reducing the consequences for misses
2. taking more shots on goal

Low-risk experiments help you take more shots 🧑

Running small experiments in your organization accomplishes both of these things. If a big project with thousands of dollars on the line *misses*, then that could be a big deal. But if a small *experiment* fails, then it’s no big deal. A failing experiment is an expected possibility.

The difference is the amount of risk. What are the consequences if we miss? Running lots of low-risk experiments gets your team used to taking more shots and gets them comfortable with misses. “That was so close...keep shooting!” It also means there will be more scores.



Examples coming soon

I’ll talk more about examples of low-risk, small experiments you could run in future posts, but what examples of low-risk experiments have you seen? Drop me an email at wm@SodiumHalogen.com

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Ln Post

We weren't created to be alone. People thrive when they work alongside others on something they are passionate about.

Creating and building innovative products and services is difficult, but it doesn't have to be lonely.

Here are three reasons you should find at least one person to work with as you develop something new at your company.

1. The lone genius is a myth
2. Partners make each other better
3. A partner brings a different perspective

Read more about finding a partner to innovate with → [<link>](#)

We weren't created to be alone. People thrive when they work alongside others on something they are passionate about. Creating and building innovative products and services is difficult, but it doesn't have to be lonely.

Here are three reasons you should find at least one person to work with as you develop something new at your company.

1. The lone genius is a myth 🌿:

The "lone genius" who has a eureka moment with no outside influences – is a total myth. There might be one name that comes to mind when you think about products like the telephone, lightbulb, or iPhone, but when you actually study the history of those moments of true innovation, you'll see there were teams working together to make it happen. You're almost guaranteed to get better results with a partner than by yourself.

2. Partners make each other better 🥂

Proverbs 27:17 proclaims: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." This wisdom can be applied to non-spiritual matters as well. Having a partner in innovation means you are each challenging one another and learning from one another. At our office, we use the phrase "We are smarter than me", and I'm constantly reminded how true that phrase is.

3. A partner brings a different perspective 🧐

With an innovation partner to collaborate with, you are able to bounce ideas off one another. You have someone to not just double-check your thinking, but also to offer a different perspective and give you real insights you wouldn't have on your own. So when you choose a partner, make sure they complement your strengths and weaknesses. Maybe he has way more experience than you do, or maybe she thinks completely differently than you do. Different perspectives will always lead to better results.

4. It's just more fun 🎉

Not only will you get better results from collaborating with someone else, but this whole process will also be more enjoyable. You'll have someone to brainstorm crazy ideas, celebrate the wins, and also learn lessons when you miss—someone to say “[that was so close...let's keep shooting!](#)”

Find a partner now 🤝

No matter what your current role is in your organization, using innovation practices will allow you to have a bigger impact on the bottom line. Just don't go it alone - remember “we are smarter than me”.

PS - Are you wanting to bring more innovation to your workplace?

We did too, so we created a step-by-step framework that anyone on our team could use to change “possibly good ideas” into a solid product that has already been battle-tested and de-risked.

[Get our free mini-course](#)

All innovation teams face the same 10 problems:

1. [Where to start?](#)
2. [No clear innovation process](#)
3. [Sorting the good ideas from the bad](#)
4. [Self-confidence](#)
5. [Unclear on business impact](#)
6. [Gaining trust](#)
7. [Not sure what management cares about](#)
8. Lack of accountability
9. Lots of organizational roadblocks
10. New development is too risky

1. Where to start?



10/3

David's thought

- Not sure of a good starting point: Do you start with ideas? Do you start with a customer? Do you start before you have an idea?

All innovation teams face the same 10 problems, so I'm starting a series of short articles addressing each one.

Where to start? 🟢

Everyone *wants* to be on an innovative team. A team where you are encouraged to try different things: to learn, to grow professionally, and to prove you're ready for more responsibility. There are tons of books, articles, and posts (like this one huh? 😊) on the value of "being innovative". But where do you start? What is a good first step?

Don't overthink it 🤔

You're not alone. I've been there and have struggled, not just with *me* taking the first step, but also with helping our team know what *their* first step should be. The thing I learned sounds trite, but it's true. Pick something small (like something that would take you less than 30 minutes), and just experiment.

Experiment 🔬

Try "something". Starting seems like the hardest part, but it doesn't have to be. When you find one of those books, articles, or posts, find the simplest thing it recommends, and then do it.

Evaluate 🤖

After you have completed the recommended experiment, be sure and spend some time evaluating how it went.

- Ask yourself:
- What went well?
- What went wrong?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What did you learn?

BTW - I find it helpful to share those answers with someone else on your team.

Everything gets easier with repetition 🔄

As with most things, the more you practice something, the easier it gets. So be ready to repeat the process by using what you learned to try the same small experiment again, or find a different experiment to try.

PS - Not sure where to start?

[This experiment on How Might We's](#) is part of a video series we created to help our team, clients, and really anyone be more innovative. So give it a try and let us know how it goes.

Or you could check out our step-by-step framework for developing innovative product ideas.
[Get our free mini-course](#)

PPS - This is the 1st post in a series of the [10 problems all innovation teams face](#).

2. No clear innovation process



10/4

David's thought

- Not having a process means you're guessing, getting caught up in trivial things, overcomplicating, missing important tasks

I'm terrible at directions. If you don't believe me, just ask my wife. Or ask anyone who rode with me before circa 2007. That was the year the iPhone came out and changed everything for me with Google Maps.

Before Google Maps came into my life, there were missed turns, frustration, and sadness. Now I just follow the blue line, and it takes me to my destination. I'm way less stressed, and my wife (who has a great sense of direction) is happier too.

Turn-by-turn directions 🗺️

Even when I know exactly how to get to my destination, having turn-by-turn directions allows me to focus on what I am doing now and not what I need to do next.

Lack of process = frustration 😡

When I talk with team leaders at other companies, I often hear frustration. They want their team to be innovative. They want them to come up with good ideas that could be impactful, but they too frequently don't get those ideas. And one of the biggest reasons is there is *no clear process* for innovation. Providing a framework can change that.

Practicing what we preach 🧑🏻‍🚀

We had a similar problem at Sodium Halogen a few years back. Even though we are constantly experimenting and trying new things, we weren't really getting new product ideas. So we researched other processes and made the first version of our framework. Through experimentation and refinement, it slowly evolved into our step-by-step framework for innovation.

Which of these scenarios sounds like what you have experienced?

Open-ended approach 🧑🏻

A team member has an idea for a new product. They want to share it with a manager at the company, but:

- They aren't sure where to start or what the steps are.
- They're not sure how to know if the idea is any good.
- They're not sure how much time to spend on it before they present the idea.
- It's not clear *how* to present the idea.
- It might not even be clear if management even wants to hear new ideas.

The bottom line is team members aren't sure if they are "doing it right".

Framework approach 🧑🏻‍🚀

A team member has an idea for a new product. They want to share it with a manager at the company, so they follow the framework:

- Since management has provided a framework for developing ideas, members know ideas are wanted.
- They know exactly how to start.
- They have a step-by-step guide for developing the idea.
- They know how to vet the idea and see if it's any good.
- It's clear exactly *how* to present the idea.

Providing an innovation framework is like giving turn-by-turn directions.

PS - See the difference turn-by-turn directions make

You can try it yourself with our [free mini-course](#) on idea generation.

PPS - This is the 2nd post in a series of the 10 problems all innovation teams face.

3. Sorting the good ideas from the bad 🧐🚀 10/5

David's thought

- I hear that having ideas usually isn't the issue: Everyone has an idea or 2 dozen. But how to know which ones would be worth pursuing?

As my friendtor Janice Frasier has said "The best way to come up with a good idea is to come up with a lot of ideas." I've written several times our [technique for brainstorming](#), and we've even created a [free brainstorm app](#) to use whenever inspiration strikes. But there is a difference in using a simple dump and sort method to pick your best ideas and taking a product idea through specific steps to validate that this idea is worth pursuing.

Ask important questions ?

Your team will want to ask some tough questions that all boil down to "will it be worth it?" These questions are so important that we have two whole sessions in our Innovation Workshop course that help answer if it will "be worth it".

Here are a few of the questions you'll want to ask.

- How will this make or save money for the company?
- How much money could this make or save?
- How much would it cost to create?
- Do we have the expertise to create it ourselves?
- How else might our team benefit (besides financially)?

Obviously, there is an ideal order to ask these questions, and we've found the best results when we've collaborated with others to answer these questions.

Just enough research 📖

Lastly, it can be tempting to dive really deep and spend hours researching, but we recommend spending less than 30-45 minutes and keeping your answers vague to start. For example, don't try to figure out if the app might save \$130k/yr vs \$145k/yr.

Could it save \$100-250k? Great. That's enough fidelity to start, and it's a big enough number that it could justify doing further research later.

Here's the thing ⚠️

No one wants to spend time on an idea that will ultimately be a "no-go." So asking a few qualifying questions up front make sure your time is well spent. The last exercise in our [FREE mini-course](#) on product idea generation is called "Gut Check", and it asks three yes or no questions.

1. Could this solve your customer's problem?
2. Could this make financial sense?
3. Do you believe in the idea?

If the answer to any of these questions is “no”, then find a different product idea to spend time and energy on.

PS - Need help sorting the good ideas from the bad?

Are you wanting to bring more innovation to your workplace? We did too, so we created a step-by-step framework that anyone on our team could use to change “possibly good ideas” into a solid product that has already been battle-tested and de-risked.

[Get our free mini-course](#)

PPS - This is the 3rd post in a series of the 10 problems all innovation teams face.

4. Self-confidence 🧐 🚀

10/6

David's thought

- No process, no track record = feeling I don't know what I'm doing, really.

Ln post -----

🔑 **Why is self confidence a problem for innovation teams?**

I've recently gotten into pickleball. I'm by no means a crack athlete (I never played sports in high school), but I need the exercise, and it's a fun thing to do with my family.

Recently, I decided to get a better paddle. Would that help my game? Sure enough, I felt like I improved the very first time I played with it. While a better paddle *did* help...I think the bigger impact was the confidence it gave me.

👤 **Innovation team members can lack confidence**

Innovation teams also suffer from a lack of confidence, and it's a problem that holds them back.

Here are a few reasons for the lack of confidence.

🤔 It's not clear if the company values innovation

🤡 Imposter syndrome

🧑 Lack of experience

🧑 Uncertainty

! **It all comes down to this**

Having an approved process for developing ideas gives everyone on your team confidence that they are doing the right thing, in the right way, and that you value their effort as well as the results.

I give way more detail in our full article: <https://www.sodiumhalogen.com/insights/self-confidence#innovation#10problemsinnovationteamsface>

Email/Article -----

Why is self confidence a problem for innovation teams? 🔑

I've recently gotten into pickleball. I'm by no means a crack athlete (I never played sports in high school), but I need the exercise, and it's a fun thing to do with my family.

Recently, I decided to get a better paddle. Would that help my game? Sure enough, I felt like I improved the very first time I played with it. While a better paddle *did* help...I think the bigger impact was the confidence it gave me.

Innovation team members can lack confidence 👤

Innovation teams also suffer from a lack of confidence, and it's a problem that holds them back. Here are a few reasons for the lack of confidence.

It's not clear if the company values innovation 🙄

If leaders in the organization don't let the team know new ideas are welcome, then the chances of a team creating a breakthrough product are almost nil. But having a culture that encourages innovation means more than just lip service. Teams need encouragement and a clear path for developing and presenting a new product idea. Otherwise, they will wonder "What if no one wants to hear my ideas?"

Imposter syndrome 🐼

Even the most confident person you know suffers from imposter syndrome, and it can drain your self-confidence. Your brain asks you "What if my ideas are no good?" or even "What if people laugh?"

Giving clear direction of how to develop ideas, and how to work on them with a partner can help quiet the imposter voice and give confidence.

Lack of experience 🙄

When you have done something several times, you are way more confident you can do it again. So the best way to gain experience and confidence is to just get started. "Hmmm. I've never done this before." is then replaced with "Ok. Let's do it again."

They are not sure they are doing it right 🙄

The biggest factor in lack of confidence is when people are unsure what process to follow. You don't want them to worry. "What if I'm not doing this right?" Instead, they have the confidence to think "If I follow each of these steps, then I'll get a result I can be proud of."

It all comes down to this

Having an approved process for developing ideas gives everyone on your team confidence that they are doing the right thing, in the right way, and that you value their effort as well as the results.

PS - Feeling a little more confident now and looking to get started?

Our team members lacked confidence in creating new ideas, so we wanted to help. So we created a step-by-step framework that anyone on our team could use to change "possibly good ideas" into a solid product that has already been battle-tested and de-risked.

[Get started with our free mini-course](#)

PPS - This is the 4th post in a series of the 10 problems all innovation teams face.

5. Unclear on business impact 🙄

10/10

David's thought

- "I think this could really help the business" isn't enough. Impact should move from assumptions to validated quantified expectations

You are creative, so you have lots of ideas. You have ideas for products your company could create. Awesome. But with all these different ideas, how do you determine *which* idea is worth pursuing?

Start with the problem 😡

"I think this could really help the business", isn't enough. If your product idea solves a customer's problem, how painful is that problem? Let's start with a simple analogy.

Aspirin or a vitamin 💊

Are you offering them an aspirin or a vitamin? Vitamins are something I know I *should* take daily. But the impact a vitamin has on my daily life is unclear. How can I tell if this vitamin really gave me my daily allowance of vitamin C?

I remember driving with a bad headache. My head was pounding, so I pulled into a gas station and bought 2 aspirin for what a full bottle would cost at a pharmacy. I handed the cashier my money. When my headache went away, the impact was clear. The pills were worth every. single. penny.

Make sure you're creating an aspirin 🤖

So, does one of your product ideas cure a headache? Start with that idea and ask: How painful is the problem? What is their "headache" preventing them from doing? Answer these questions, and you are on your way to understanding the business impact.

PS - If you need help with this stuff, we have a [free mini-course](#) you can start with.

PPS - This is the 5th post in a series of the 10 problems all innovation teams face.

How painful is the problem? 🩹

A great product idea is one that solves a problem for your customers. Preferably, it's a painful problem for them. If it's an expensive problem for them, then they'd be willing to pay to have it solved.

Before you spend a lot of time and money prototyping or building something, it helps to spend some time thinking about the impact it could have on your business.

6. Gaining trust 🙄



10/10

David's thought

- Being known as the idea guy/girl isn't the same as being a trusted strategic partner. How do you develop a track record (and thus trust) of successful idea development?

The best way to gain trust is to deliver a successful outcome. But what if you are never given the opportunity to try? Or what if it's not safe to fail?

Start small 🧐

Instead of swinging for the fence with your first at-bat (too many sports ball references?) try starting with something small. Often that means something that is not very risky. And that's totally OK.

Even Jesus is quoted in Luke 16:10 as saying:

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much..."

That's one of the reasons we are so excited that the Innovation Workshop doesn't end with asking [the Decider] for thousands of dollars to go build this product you have dreamed up. Instead, participants ask to run a low-cost experiment to see if the idea is worth pursuing.

Gain trust in something small, and you can keep building on that trust. And it's not just about the Decider in your organization trusting you. You'll learn to trust yourself as well.

PS - Needing to build trust at your organization?

Having a step-by-step framework for developing and vetting product ideas gives you (and everyone in your organization) confidence you are "doing it right." It builds trust in you, in your partner, and allows you to build trust with management.

[Get started with our free mini-course](#)

PS - This is the 6th post in a series of the 10 problems all innovation teams face.

7. Not sure what management cares about 🙄



10/6

David's thought

- Usually doesn't have visibility into what the c-suite or management is carrying on their shoulders. A team's world is relatively small - isolated to their immediate context/concerns. The owner is carrying the whole pie. The team's slice might be 10% of that pie.

If your innovation team is wanting to create a new product, it can only succeed if it aligns with what leadership cares about. So how can you know what they care about?

Just ask 🗣️

If you are not the Decider in your organization, then simply ask a Decider, "If I was going to come up with new product ideas, what is most important to our customers and our bottom line?"

I can't imagine a good manager who would not LOVE to hear that question. It shows you are smart, creative, and motivated.

What if you are a manager? 🏆

If you are a leader in your organization, and you are able to approve the creation of a new product idea (AKA the Decider), then this is for you. The easiest way to encourage your organization to come up with impactful ideas is to clearly state what you are looking for. Let the team know, "We are wanting new ideas around X and Y customer problems." That tells your team "we want new ideas" and "we want new ideas about these specific things". It's really as simple as that.

PS - If you need help with this stuff, we have a [free mini-course](#) you can start with.

PPS - This is the 7th post in a series of the 10 problems all innovation teams face.

8. Lack of accountability

10/17



David's thought

- Popping out ideas is fun, but that's a quick thing: Where's the structure and team accountability that helps to usher one through a process and be validated? Note: There's a movement of ppl on twitter who are "building in public" just to harness this type of thing

Ideas are a dime a dozen. It's easy to come up with a new concept or thought that seems revolutionary at the time, but it takes much more effort to turn that idea into a reality. This is where structure and team accountability come into play.

Here are some ways you can add accountability to your innovation process.

Get buy-in early 🤝

Once you have determined that your idea is worth pursuing, it's important to identify the "Decider," or the person who has the authority to approve or reject your idea. Consider reaching out to them with a brief overview of your idea and a commitment to follow up with more details at a later date. This simple act of promising to follow up with the Decider can help hold you accountable to continue working on your idea.

Don't go it alone 🧑

Your alarm clock goes off early in the morning. You want to sleep in, but you know your workout buddy will be waiting for you at the gym. Choose a partner at your organization. They can help you generate more ideas, vet the good ideas, and hold you accountable when you get distracted. And they make the whole process more fun.

Follow a process 🏠

Building in public, a movement gaining traction on Twitter, is all about sharing the process of creating something new with others. It's a way to be transparent and accountable to a community, which can help keep you motivated and focused on your goals. But it's not just about sharing updates and making progress visible to others. It's also about having a structure in place that helps guide you through the process of turning an idea into a validated product or service.

Having a clear roadmap can help ensure your idea isn't left stuck at the 63% complete mark.

Don't forget to measure the results 📏

To stay accountable and achieve your goals, it is crucial to establish clear criteria for success at the start of your project. Identify specific, measurable benchmarks that will allow you to track your progress and determine whether you are on track. This will help you stay focused on the tasks that are most important and avoid getting sidetracked by irrelevant distractions.

PS - Looking for more ways to hold your innovation processes accountable?

Our team used to have no clear process, so we created a step-by-step framework that anyone on our team could use. We were then able to turn “possibly good ideas” into a solid product that has already been battle-tested and de-risked.

[Get started with our free mini-course](#)

PPS - This is the 8th post in a series of the 10 problems all innovation teams face.

9. Lots of organizational roadblocks



10/18

David's thought

- Orgs are risk-adverse. But aside from that, multiple management layers, already-in-progress work, expectations, and in-office politics can all be a hindrance.

Finding new ways to work can be challenging even at the best companies. Organizations can be risk-averse, and when you are trying to develop a new product or service, there can be lots of organizational roadblocks. But there are ways to hurdle each one.

Organizations can be risk-averse ⚠️

Your company being risk-averse is not something you can change, but you can find a way to lower the risk. Break your idea into smaller goals, and run small experiments to see if you can hit those goals. Each experiment you run helps pay down that risk while you practice finding success.

Management layers 📁

Is your organization “flat” or does it have multiple layers of management? Either way, focus on who the Decider is (the person who could greenlight your idea), and consider what’s in it for them. Get their insights and their buy-in as early as possible.

In-office politics 🗨️

As much as we hate that office politics exist, we can’t ignore the elephant in the room. Having your Decider advocate for your idea makes a huge difference. If you can make this idea a “win” for them too, they can help navigate any politics you run into.

It’s not in the budget 💰

Budgets are always an intelligent guess. You may think they are set in stone, but often when a big opportunity comes along, management finds a way to fund it. If the company is confident an idea will bring 3-5x returns on that investment, they’ll find the money.

It all comes down to this !

Companies get set in their ways. They get used to how things have always worked. But if you have the company’s bottom line in mind and have a solid plan for how to develop and present your idea, you can find a way to overcome any roadblock.

PS - Need a solid plan for developing an idea and overcoming organizational roadblocks?

Our team has created a step-by-step framework for unlocking roadblocks and turning “possibly good ideas” into a solid product that is ready to share with your Decider.

[Get started with our free mini-course](#)

PPS - This is the 9th post in a series of the 10 problems all innovation teams face.

10. New development is too risky



10/19

David's thought

- Again, orgs are risk-averse. Having a clear vision of a benefit for the company helps. Trust also helps.

- Reduce risk by experimenting
- Only invest more time and money after experiments are successful
- Might be riskier to do nothing

Innovation teams can struggle to get started because new development could be seen as “too risky”. So what can you do when leadership at your company grumbles about the risk?

Address the risks head-on 🤖

It's well known that organizations are naturally risk-averse, so go ahead and address those risks. Make a list of things you think could go wrong. Ask management, “What is the worst thing that could happen if we try and fail?” After they share their fears, say, “Yes. I had some of those myself,” and then list a few of your own.

Propose ways to limit those risks 🤖

After you've listed the things that could go wrong, it's easier to manage them. Turn those risks into “How Might We's”, and then think of a few ways you could address each one by either:

- removing that risk (find a different way to address the issue)
- limiting that risk (like with a smaller experiment)
- contrast the risk with the potential reward (define how it might still be worth it)

It all comes down to this 👉

There will always be risk in trying something new, but there is also risk in doing nothing.

- Your competitor innovates before you do, or
- The customer market moves on and leaves you behind, or
- Technology evolves and your company is left as “the way things used to be done.”

The best way to address and manage risk, is by having a clear vision of the benefit to the company. And the best way to have clear vision is to follow a plan that helps you define and build that vision.

PS - Need help coming up with a plan to reduce product risk?

Follow our step-by-step framework for turning “possibly good ideas” into a solid product that has already been battle-tested and de-risked.

[Get started with our free mini-course](#)

PPS - This is the final post in a series of the 10 problems all innovation teams face.

Why innovation is a muscle you strengthen with practice 💪 10/18

“I’m just not very creative”, is something I hear often when running [Strategy Workshops](#).

Ironically, with a little practice in the workshop, those same people have some of the most creative ideas.

Innovation and creativity are more like muscle than bone. No matter how you train a bone, it won’t get taller, but muscles will continue to grow with training.

Often, people who think they are “uncreative” don’t lack ability but practice.

I personally want to become more creative, so I’ve been training. 🏋️

To follow along with our muscle analogy, my personal trainer has been the Zero to Product Idea course.

I’ve been using it twice a week to challenge myself to become more innovative.

I’ll share what I learned in a future post, but if you want to join me...

The course is FREE, check it out → <https://bit.ly/IW-mini>

Other ideas

- How can you be an innovation team of one?
-
- Can anyone be innovative or just “creative” people?
-
- What happens if we don’t listen for new ideas from our team members?
- How important is curiosity when it comes to having an “innovative culture”?

Pitch at end of the email

Are you wanting to bring more innovation to your workplace? We did too, so we created a step-by-step framework that anyone on our team could use to change “possibly good ideas” into a solid product that has already been battle-tested and de-risked.

[Get our free mini-course](#)

How legos improved our workshops

Who is this for:

Main point: We use story building to complete 2 objectives.

What is it.

The story building exercise has a few components to it. Participants use 20-30 legos to build something to answer the question. While the questions can change, they are typically general questions about how their business works or how it is frustrating.

How has it changed the workshop?

We have seen 3 big positive changes

- 1. Warm up the creative side of the brain as we prepare to be more creative*
- 2. Create a safe a comfortable environment to come up with bad ideas*
- 3. Hopefully uncover an idea of concept that is better explained with an analogy (like legos)*

Who is this for? Team managers

Article starts here —————

It's not every day that I get to build Legos at work, but I always love it when I do.

We've added a new exercise to our strategic arsenal called Story Building

Story Building uses 20-30 legos to explain complex ideas.

Whether we're working with #cybersecurity or #healthcare clients, we've seen 3 big wins.

1. It wakes up the creative side of your brain 🧠
2. It gives everyone permission to fail 🌈
3. It uncovers and explains complex ideas quickly and simply ♟️

(read the full post on how Story Building can facilitate creativity)

You are creative 🧑🏻

One of our strongly held beliefs at Sodium Halogen is that *everyone* is creative. So we are passionate about providing some structure to pull creativity out of each person. Whether we are working with a [cybersecurity](#) or a fintech company, we start every project with workshop filled with exercises that pull creative ideas out of their head.

(read the full post on how Story Building can facilitate creativity)

Story Building 🧱

We've recently added a new exercise to our arsenal. Story Building allows participants to use a

handful of legos to explain an idea. We've found the exercise is most impactful at the beginning of the workshop and here are some reasons why.

Warm up your brain 🧠

When a team is asked to think creatively, it can be intimidating and overwhelming. By starting with a simple exercise like building something with legos, team members can ease into the creative process and feel more comfortable coming up with ideas.

Permission to fail 🌂

Another key benefit of story building is that it creates a safe and comfortable environment for everyone to come up with bad ideas. Often, when a team is brainstorming new ideas, they are afraid of being judged or ridiculed. But with Story Building, there's no right or wrong answer – it's simply an exercise to be creative. Everyone feels more free to share their ideas, even if they might not work out.

Analogies are worth a thousand words 🗣️

Finally, Story Building can help uncover ideas or concepts that are better explained with an analogy. Building something with legos is a visual and hands-on way of explaining an idea. It engages a different part of your brain, and it can be easier for others to understand and relate to. This can be particularly helpful when working with a team or presenting to a larger group.

Ready to give Story Building a try?

1. Give each participant 20-30 legos
(look at our pictures to see examples of what types of lego pieces to use)
2. Share your prompt with the group
 - example prompts: "Build something that..."
 - shows our ideal customer experience.
 - shows what you want to accomplish with this project.
 - *add another example*
3. Give them 3 minutes to build
4. Give each person 1 minute to tell their story with the legos.

Let us know if you try this exercise, or if you have any questions.

I wondered if using a split keyboard could improve my efficiency and decrease the strain on my wrist.

I got a split keyboard to test it out.

Day 1: My initial reaction is that it feels pretty odd.

Granted, I am not a standard touch typer as I float around the keyboard. I've realized the split keyboard has slowed me down a ton.

My frustration mainly lies in where a few of the center keys are split. Because the B and Y are dead center of the keyboard, I typically use both pointer fingers to type them.

I wish they had put duplicates of the keys on both sides

Another thing to note: I am used to a mac keyboard. I have struggled a little with how deep these keys are.

So far, my typing has slowed and is littered with typos, but it has felt nice on my wrists.

I am going to use this keyboard all week and see what I think at the end.

When to create a process

Image - https://sh-drop.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/wd/non-keep/IMG_9286.HEIC

Have you ever had a teammate say this? “I’m not sure what to do in this situation.”

Me too! Here’s a process we use to create more autonomy in our team.

Our team uses a principle called [5on2](#) – before you start a 2+ hour task, spend 5 minutes consulting a teammate to make sure your approach is the best one. 5on2s have drastically reduced time spent moving in the wrong direction while also sharing knowledge across our team.

The typical 5on2 looks something like this.

1. We discuss the problem.
2. I’ll recommend a few steps of how I believe it should be solved.
3. We discuss and iterate.
4. Then they execute that plan.

While this process is often effective, I find myself reducing the autonomy of my team and spending much longer than 5 minutes to do it.

So, we have decided to experiment with something new.

First, pause and consider if a process could be created to solve the “I’m not sure what I should do in this situation” problem. Here is how that process might go,

1. Write out the problem
2. Reframe the problem into a [How Might We](#)
3. Find examples of how others have solved this problem ([Lightning demo research](#))
4. Based on what you find from research, list the best 3 solutions you propose
5. Share those 3 potential solutions with a decider (5on2)
6. The decider chooses
7. Implement that solution

It’s a simple experiment to try with very little risk. So this teammate is going to try running through this process the next few times they are “not sure what to do”. If it’s successful, then we’ll share it with the rest of the team.

We’ll let you know how it goes in a future post.

How Might We: turn your problems into opportunities by reframing the problem into a how might we

The best way to get honest feedback on your idea 🚀

Part of our product design process involves lots of #userresearch, and here's the best way to get honest feedback on your idea from your friends (and even strangers). It's simple to try.

Don't let them know it's *your* idea. 😊

Cut out the “nice” feedback ✂️

I was talking with a potential client today. He wanted to get real feedback on his idea, but he knew most folks would tend to “be nice” and tell him what he wanted to hear.

I shared the best technique I know for getting honest feedback in that situation. Replace “What do you think of my idea?” with “I heard an idea the other day...”(explain the idea). “What are your thoughts?”

We have gotten some of our most critical and helpful feedback using this method.

Stay impartial and grateful for their feedback 🕊️

Once they share their opinion, staying impartial can be tricky. You and I both can get attached to our own ideas. For some, it can be tempting to become defensive if your friend hates the idea.

Do not become defensive!

Don't make them regret sharing their opinion with you. Simply thank them for their honest feedback and address any concerns in a later conversation.

If you can do this, then boom! They won't be afraid of offending you and you'll get to hear what they really think.

PS - This technique works great for #usertesting and #customerinterviews

It's possible to be innovative with workmanship on a budget 🖋️

cs 2/3/2023

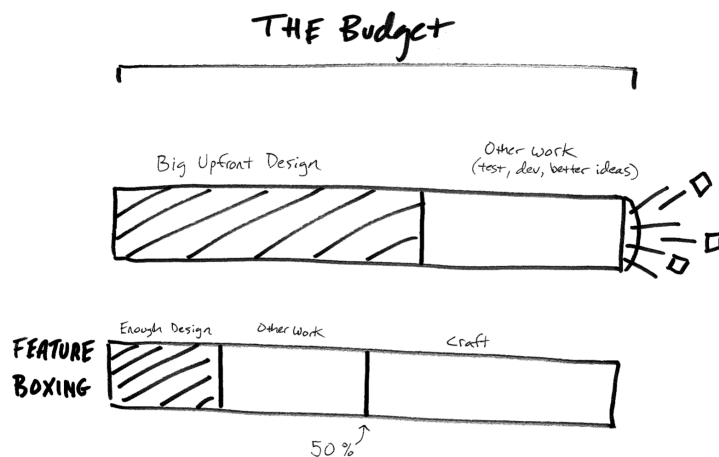
When estimating tasks and features, two parts of your brain and team compete; the creative and efficient.

The creative side says, "It takes what it takes."

The efficient side says, "Let's create just enough."

Any skill set among a project can employ creativity. The amount of resources we allot to creativity can leave little room for other skill sets to do their work well.

So, how can we have creativity and craft (attention to detail) while staying within the budget?



Feature Boxing: a practice of focusing on the must-have features first in the first half of the budget. Feature Boxing leaves room for bug fixing and nice-to-haves without blowing the budget.

With Feature Boxing, you'll have frequent functional releases. You'll focus on a small portion of the product with great attention to detail. There is craft all along the way. You've retained the attention to detail.



Quality isn't saved
for last.

Stay on budget cs 2/3/2023

- Must haves first
- Project updates at each quarter of the budget ($\frac{1}{4}$)
- Don't get bogged down with big tasks. Meet with other team member to break the tasks up. If a task is greater than a day, could it be divided up a bit. This shows clarity in the direction and what potential road blocks might be.
- Have tests to prevent must-have regression

AMBT diary

Week 0

We held a Strategy Workshop to learn everything about Aembit
Aembit showed us their current app
We laid the ground rules and expectations for working together

Week 1

We started working on the wire flows.
We begin with industry research
Then moving into wireflows that consist of the ways users would interact with

Youtube Shorts

Brand pyramid

:16 to 1:06 [Brand is more than a logo](#)

Better way to run team meetings

:18 to :55

Speed up creativity

:06 to :57

Creating on purpose matters

1:09 to 2:07