[Start Here]

Welcome to Kickbox.

You hold in your hands the tools you'll need on your personal journey into the heart of innovation. You will be guided step by step through imagining something wonderful, experimenting to make it great, then turning your vision into reality. Kickbox can light the way but only you can choose where the journey leads. This is not a training exercise. Kickbox is about doing it for real.

Starting now.

To begin, turn this card over.

The red box contains six levels, each with objectives called actions. Complete these actions to advance to the next level. Once you begin, the red box can only be exited by succeeding or by giving up. Here is the secret to beating the red box: don't give up.

If you conquer the red box, you earn an exceptional prize: a blue box. What awaits you in the blue box? There is only one way to find out.

[Begin]

Inception. 1 — To start any journey without understanding your true purpose is to fail before you begin. Your own motivations illuminate the path to success.

Ideate. 2 — Great ideas emerge from great insight. Learn to spark your imagination by observing the world not as it is - but as it should be.

Improve. 3 — All ideas begin life as bad ideas. Learn to grow bad ideas into good ideas and the secret of knowing which is which.

Investigate. 4 — Is an idea valuable? It's a question only customers can answer. Find out quickly by validating your ideas with real-world experiments.

Iterate. 5 — Assess the data from your experiments to evolve your hypotheses. Devise clever experiments to reveal the true nature of your idea.

Infiltrate. 6 — Even great ideas must prove their worth in corporate combat. To conquer the red box, use data to sell an idea to your organization.

[Stop. Rest.]

Collect your blue box. Change the world.

Inception

This is where it begins. There are no born innovators. Ordinary people become great innovators when powerful motivations demand it. Corporate mission statements are not enough. There must be compelling reasons. Personal reasons. To start any journey without understanding your true purpose is to fail before you begin.

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➡

LEVEL
1

Why are you starting this innovation project?

Before accepting the challenge of a personal innovation project, consider if it matches your goals. Success is far more likely when work and personal objectives align. In short, motivation matters. What personally meaningful goals will a successful innovation project help you achieve?

Refer to card 1a for inspiration.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

This box is denotes an action. Mark when complete

Complete one action. Go to Level 2.
Do not share this card. Your reasons are powerful because they are yours.

Motivations

- Prove to myself I can do this.
- Be a positive example for others.
- Invent something that matters.
- Make something that helps others.
- Create something people love.
- Make something cool.
- Make a difference.
- Show the world I can innovate.
- Increase my company's share price.
- I love doing hard things.
- I like surprising people.
- I have a healthy ego. It has needs.
- I want it. It doesn't exist. Let's fix that.
- Create something that reflects my values.
- Raise my visibility inside my company.
- Raise my visibility outside my company.
- Help my family.
- Help my community.
- A deep sense of personal satisfaction.
- Get a raise or bonus.
- Get a promotion.
- Life is a game. This how I 'Level Up."
- Demonstrate my value.
- Change the world.
- Change one corner of the world.

- Spend more time with customers.
- Directly drive new revenue.
- Do work I love.
- I'm an untapped natural resource.
- Dammit, my company is doing it wrong!
- The whole industry is doing it wrong.
- Protect my job during the next layoff.
- Protect my group during the next layoff.
- Prevent the next layoff.
- I'm bored.
- The act of pure creation drives me.
- How smart am I? Let's find out.
- How creative am I? Let's find out
- Create moments of astonishment.
- I have something to prove to myself.
- I have something to prove to family.
- I have something to prove to _____.
- Know myself better.
- Work with great people I like.
- No one else can do what I can.
- Learn to innovate so I can do a startup.
- Buff my resume.
- This is how I keep insecurity at bay.
- I hate my boss.
- I love my boss.

Motivations are different because people are different. None are right or wrong. Choose wisely, if your reasons are unable to change you, they certainly cannot change the world.
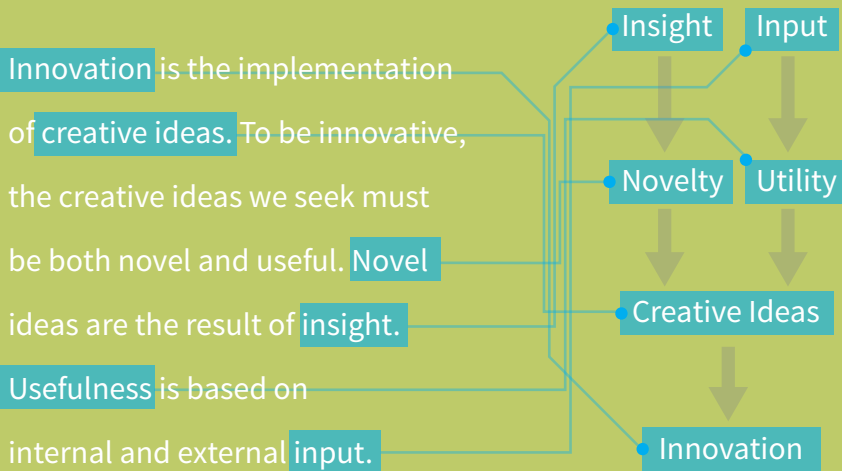
Ideate

Creativity is not mysterious. While the brain chemistry that sparks neurons into creative connections is not well understood, we can follow steps likely to trigger the kind of creativity we're after. Here's how.

Innovation is the implementation

of creative ideas. To be innovative,

the creative ideas we seek must

be both novel and useful. Novel

ideas are the result of insight.

Usefulness is based on

internal and external input.

Insight | Input

Novelty | Utility

Creative Ideas

Innovation

a   b

LEVEL
2

Ideation begins with inputs and insights.
Go to cards **2a** and **2b** now to learn how to gather input and generate insights. Return when completed.

Your objective is to generate bad ideas.
A lot of bad ideas. Most great ideas begin life looking like bad ideas. That's why the red box contains a notebook for Bad Ideas but none for Good Ideas. Here on Level 2 they are the same thing. We're less judgmental if we label our raw ideas "Bad" in advance. Keep that notebook handy. Once you begin ideation, ideas can land at any time.

BAD IS GOOD

Kick off your process with a formal idea generation session. Block 45 minutes on your calendar at a time you'll be rested. Find a quiet place and silence electronic distractions. Place a pen, the Bad Ideas book and a pad of Post-It notes in front of you. Set the Kickbox timer for 25 minutes. Do not allow interruptions. Use your observations and questions from 2b as a jumping off point. Brainstorm. Jot down interesting thoughts. Jot down crazy thoughts. Some spatial thinkers place sticky notes in rows, circles or clusters to reflect related concepts. If any unrelated thoughts encroach, like "Don't forget to call Bernie", queue it on a Post-It off to the side.

After your solo ideation session, be patient. Creativity is a background process. It may be helpful to have ideation sessions with others as well. Do what works for you.

Complete actions on 2a and 2b. Go to Level 3.

Input

From inside the company

Ideation requires input from sources inside the company to frame the objectives, requirements and constraints.

• Company mission statement
• Company strategic objectives
• Manager or group long-term objectives and KPIs
• Discussions with co-workers, particularly those in different groups and fields of expertise. This is a frequent habit of successful innovators. Discoveries are often found in the gaps between business groups or job functions. Innovators consistently reach across these boundaries.

From outside the company

External input sources are essential to spark new observations and questions about the world. However, do so in moderation. Many entrepreneurs succumb to "TechCrunch Blindness" where the blast from a firehose of new product announcements from sites such as Beta News, TechMeme, Mashable and others causes indecision paralysis. Explore, but be targeted. Use the internal inputs above to focus your discovery.

• General news sources
• Industry news sources
• Research and technology papers
• Trend-spotting websites
• Conversations with potential customers.

See Level 4 for ways to engage with customers.

SECTION
2a

Inspiration

Don't overlook the importance of exposing your brain to divergent sources of inspiration such as music, art, architecture and more. Brain studies show that all of these can elevate the creative function of your brain. It's like seeding the random number generator of creativity.

Complete any three actions below.

Then advance to card 2b.

☐ Have coffee with an interesting co-worker that you rarely interact with. Try for someone in a different group or field.

☐ Discuss your group's long-term objectives with your manager or senior manager.

☐ Browse trend-spotting websites until you discover two interesting trends you didn't know about.

☐ Talk to a customer who is relevant to an area of interest. Talk about their problems and desires.

☐ Read a research paper in an area of interest.

Insight

Active Observing

To think differently you must be able to see differently. Observing is more than just watching, it's active observing. This means watching through different eyes. Try imagining how someone else might see the problem or situation you are observing. For instance, a child, the oldest person you know, a great innovator or even a time-traveler from the future. What questions would they ask?

Ask Different

"Why is it this way instead of another way?"
"How could it be different?"
"What would 'perfect' look like?"
"What is the one question no one has ever asked about this?"

Great answers come from good questions.Innovators are insatiably curious about the world around them. Interrogate what you observe by asking deep questions.

Encourage your curiosity beyond products and technologies to people, problems and businesses. Nurture your passion for understanding how things work and why they don't.

Often your colleagues can be good sources of intriguing questions. Call a "Question Storming" meeting. Instead of answers, focus on generating thought-provoking questions.

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Divergent Thinking

The ability to shift perspectives is crucial to insight. Here is a framework that can be useful. Experiment with applying different transforms to what you are observing and questioning.

Deconstruct   Can you deconstruct it into component elements? Can those elements be recombined in different ways?

Scale   What happens if it is bigger or smaller, from nano to macro? What if far things become near and near things become far?

Scope   What changes when here becomes everywhere, when one thing becomes everything, when that which was local becomes global and what was global is local?

Sequence   What occurs when that which was first becomes last, before happens after and easy becomes complex?

Time   How does it change if right now is forever, if faster is slower, shorter is longer, the frequent becomes rare or the random becomes regular?

Value   What if good is bad or best is now worst? What if the perfect becomes average, the free becomes priceless or the important fades to trivial?

Complete three actions. Return to card 2.

☐   Actively observe in a familiar context. Shift your mental perspective until an interesting new question occurs to you.

☐   Read news articles to find a problem that exists in the world. Use the divergent thinking framework above to generate three interesting observations or questions about it.

☐   Using the inputs from 2a, generate 3 insights, observations or questions related to your innovation interests.

Business Model Canvas

A business model canvas defines the key elements of your proposition. It can be absorbed in seconds yet highlights the critical elements of an opportunity. You will likely make changes to the canvas after you begin. Review the canvas with your colleagues. Is it clear to them? Does it make sense? Is it compelling?

Problem	Solution	Unique Value Proposition	Unfair Advantage	Customer Segments
Top 3 problems	Top 3 features	Single, clear, compelling message stating why you are different and worth paying attention to	Can't be easily copied or bought	Target customers
	Key Metrics	The "Wow!"	Channels	
	Key activities you measure Examples: Monthly active users, Website unique visitors, Sales calls, Revenue, Requests for info	The one insanely cool, feature that every review will rave about	Path to customers Examples: Website, Sales force, Resellers, Distributors, Direct response ads	
Cost Structure Examples: Customer acquisition costs, Distribution costs, Web hosting, Employees, Manufacturing, Support			Revenue Streams Examples: Direct sales, Subscriptions, Training, Support contracts, Upgrades	

Based on the Lean Canvas by Ash Maurya and the Business Model Canvas www.businessmodelgeneration.com. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 3.0 Unported License

Print a copy of the canvas from the pdf found on the Kickbox website.

Hint: Finding good Unfair Advantages is very rare. Most successful products don't have one. For more, read this: blog.asmartbear.com/not-competitive-advantage.html

Complete two actions. Go to Level 4.

☐ Compose a product statement. Complete a scorecard for your idea. Get feedback from at least three colleages by having them complete scorecards. Compare their scores with yours and explore differences.

☐ Complete a Kickbox Canvas for your idea. Review it with colleagues.

Improve

Raw ideas can have great potential but they are not yet ready for testing with potential users. First they must grow stronger and more refined. Level 3 gives you powerful tools for improving ideas.

Capture

It's helpful to express each idea in a consistent product statement. Boiling a product or service down to one sentence is hard. It requires deciding what *really* matters and can sharpen the idea in powerful ways.

"A <product/service description> for <target customer> that <key value> enabling <primary benefits> unlike <existing alternatives>."

An example would be:
"A portable music player for audiophile music lovers that plays music files from lossless formats enabling improved quality unlike iPods and other compressed file players."

Combine

Many of your raw ideas may have similarities. Go through your list and consider each idea based on relevant criteria such as problem space, value proposition, customer type, distribution channel, delivery platform and technical components. Can any ideas be logically combined? If doing so strengthens the ideas without defocussing them, consider combining them.

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LEVEL
3

Find the "Wow"

Most compelling innovations have a "Wow!" moment. This is the moment in a user's product experience when they say "Wow!" It might also be described as an unexpected burst of delight, satisfaction, or best of all, astonishment. If you do not know what the Wow! moment might be in your idea then continue to ponder this throughout the Kickbox process until you're able to identify a "Wow!" Your ideas must have at least one element that could plausibly be a "Wow!" to users.

The Kickbox Scorecard

The purpose of the scorecard is not to rank ideas in some kind of contest but rather to elicit higher value feedback from colleagues. It can reveal ways a good idea might be made stronger. Once you have completed your own scoring, ask at least three colleagues you respect to help you by completing a scorecard. Do this individually if possible. While completing the scorecard they will ask a lot of questions. Driving this dialog is the key benefit of the scorecard. When finished, compare your scores to theirs. Discuss any that diverge by two or more points. Clearly they see the idea, the customer or the world differently than you do. Learn why and you'll either improve the idea or how you're explaining it.

KickBox Scorecard	Customer Value	Company Value						Company Fit				Risk 1=high risk, 5=low risk		
Concept	Compelling Customer Need	Compelling Solution	Sustainable Advantage	Addressable Market Size	Future Market Growth	Path to Future Opportunities	"Wow" Value	Fit With Go To Market	Fit With Technologies	Fit With Brand	Fit With Strategy	Market Certainty	Technical Certainty	Testable Incrementally

Scale is 1-5 with 5 being best   Copyright Adobe 2014. This work is licensed under a

Print a copy of the scorecard from the pdf found on the Kickbox website.

The scorecard is designed so that no idea can score highly across all categories. Higher scores in one area inevitably lead to lower scores in another. Each area is merely another lens through which to view an idea. Do not obsess on the numeric scores themselves, they are all relative and only approximate indicators, instead focus on how differences in perception or opinion can reveal new ways to think about an idea.

The *least* valuable scorecard is one that mostly matches your own scores.

Refine

Ask each colleage you do a scorecard with what they see as the most significant unknown or risk related to the idea. Do you agree? Discuss ways this risk or unknown could be eliminated or minimized.

Select

How do you know which idea you should pursue? One key is how excited your colleages are. Don't just listen to those that give you positive feedback. The highest praise is when someone likes your idea enough to want to help you. When you keep evolving and improving an idea, eventually you may reach a point where others begin volunteering their time or resources to help. That's a sure sign you may be onto something!

Ultimately, how you feel about an idea is the most important indicator. Not just intellectually but also emotionally. Refer back to the Level 1 card. Review your motivations. If the idea you're envisioning makes the leap from your imagination to reality, will it be meaningful to you? If not, the idea isn't ready yet or it's not the right one. The right idea is a spark that lights you up.

Remember, if an idea doesn't excite you, it certainly won't excite customers. Don't proceed until you have an idea worthy of your devotion. You and this idea are going to be spending a lot of time together.

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Step-by-Step: Launch your experimental website

1 Define your value prop hypothesis (what's it good for?)
2 Define your target customer hypothesis (who would use this?)
3 Pick a way to express your value prop by exploring existing sites and looking at their sign-up strategies.
4 Pick a domain name and register it.
5 Pick a web hosting/authoring solution and forward the domain there.
6 Make your site.
7 Build your value prop mechanism (e.g., slide show, video, mockup etc.)
8 Create a sign-up form on the site.
9 Pick an ad platform and write ads.
10 Make sure your domain is resolving properly, and then start your ad running.
11 Watch the ad performance and sign-up performance and adjust as necessary.
12 Define the next hypothesis you want to test.

Complete 6 actions. Go to Level 5.

☐ Interview three customers either in person or via phone. It must be an interactive conversation. Verify the problem is real and high value.

☐ Create a product website.

☐ Test 5+ value props in web ads. Identify the best click-thru performer.

☐ Drive 250+ visitors to the site with ads.

☐ Get 25 or more visitors to express interest or engage.

☐ To complete Level 4 you must review your validation data with a Kickbox mentor. Email them to schedule. This review must be completed before advancing to Level 5.

Investigate

LEVEL
4

Level 4 is where you engage potential customers to gather data. This data will indicate whether your idea should be pursued, changed or dropped. It begins with two steps: **Discovery** and **Validation**. You can also think of them as Ask and Sell or Learn and Confirm.

The key to success is proving your product and market hypotheses as quickly and cheaply as possible. Validating key assumptions against actual customer behavior quantifies risk and reduces uncertainty. The worst validation result is one that says, "Everyone loves everything!" You need to discover which parts of the idea aren't going to work. Discovering what's bad - is good. Very good. You can then adapt and iteratively retest in hours or days instead of weeks and months. Level 4 shows you how to confirm the customer problem, validate your solution and prove out a viable sales channel. Your experiments may also reveal new ways to profoundly improve the idea and delight customers.

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LEVEL
4

Be wary of confirmation bias. Every idea isn't a winner. Most aren't. To be a scientifically valid test, it must be possible to falsify your hypothesis as well as confirm it. As long as the results are conclusive, either outcome is a win for your company and for you. That's why it's vital to document and share negative results as well as positive.

Discovery
None of the answers you seek can be found inside your company's buildings. Interview potential customers within 24 hours of choosing the idea. In those first conversations you'll discover things that change the idea. Talk to a customer today. Seriously... do it now!

You can do phone, webcam or even screen sharing interviews at sites like www.usertesting.com for about $40 each. You can conduct customer surveys at www.aytm.com for $1 per response but don't do automated surveys until you've talked live to a few customers. These interviews will help you craft much better survey questions. Message boards and user forums can also be good places to find customers.

The primary focus during Discovery is understanding and confirming the problem and the customer's mindset. Ask open-ended questions. Listen to the terms they use to describe the problem. Do not ask "Do you like my idea?" In court, judges call that 'leading the witness.' Customer compliments are not customer commitment!

If the customer confirms the problem and values your solution, discuss what they might pay for it. Then learn how they find out about similar solutions and how they decide which to buy. Get confirmation that your promised solution appears likely to not only solve their problem but that customers could find your new solution and would really buy it. Because you are doing this testing before even starting to create the product, you do it with mockups of the product experience and mockups of product marketing material like brochures or advertisements.

Negative answers learned quickly and cheaply are better than positive answers learned slowly at great expense.

Validation
Customer interviews can provide valuable directional info as well as sharpening your innovator's product intuition. What they do not provide, is accurate behavioral data. While better than no data, it's still asking a customer what they *might* do in the future instead of observing what they would actually do right now. Just as a physicist wouldn't survey photons asking which slit they might go through, we need to construct an experiment to observe customers interacting with our proposition as exactly as they would when it's for sale.

In the real world, when a prospect sees your ad they will be distracted with a million other priorities. Will your value proposition cut through the noise in that context? That's the environment in which your idea needs to succeed, so that's the environment you need validate.

The most popular way to generate behavioral data is creating an external website and driving traffic to it with keyword-targeted Google AdWords or Facebook ads. By measuring click through rates on various value propositions in the ads you can gauge relative effectiveness. By offering a product description, screenshot, tour or video and a way for visitors to express interest, you can get a rough estimate of customer acquisition cost.

When creating an experimental website it's important to follow the legal guidelines in your red box including using the supplied Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. It's even more important to treat prospective customers as you would want to treated. We fulfill every commitment made to customers and always strive to exceed their expectations.

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Iterate

At this point you have a functioning experimental platform running with traffic, customers expressing interest and data being captured. **Now it's time to use that platform to optimize your idea.** Start by identifying which metrics are most central to validating the idea is working. If it's not clear, review the key risks from the Level 3 scorecards and the key metrics from your Kickbox Canvas.

Develop clear hypotheses like:
"If visitors could see a short walk-through of screen shots, it would increase sign-ups by 50%."

"If the value prop focused on teaching adults to draw instead of kids, sign-ups would increase by 25%."

"A product that offers results in one hour for $10 instead of one day for $100 will increase sign-ups 5x."

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LEVEL
5

Before development ever starts, you can test customer's behavioral response to various value propositions, the relative desirability of particular features and the effectiveness of explaining the product different ways. That insight is priceless. Your experimental platform can also enable exploring wild variations revealing new opportunities that shift the entire product concept while such changes are still essentially free.

Occasionally, it can appear that a certain user behavior or business metric cannot be tested without actually building the entire product. This is rarely true, a little cleverness can go a long way. Ask "How could we get some data right now, even if it is only preliminary?" For example, to learn if a "Be Anonymous" feature is desirable to users, begin by adding a checkbox option for the feature. If visitors click on it, present a message informing them this feature is not yet available but capture the click in your metrics. This allows you to measure customer interest in various features.

When doing iterative testing, don't make the mistake of changing things too slowly or incrementally. Feel free to push changes daily. Don't just change the text of your headline, try extreme changes to see what happens. Since Kickbox brings the cost of learning dramatically lower, you can now afford to ask "What won't work at all?" and try that. You might find some unquestioned assumptions to be wonderfully wrong. Try doing A/B testing where visitors are randomly shown two different versions and measure the difference in response. Services like Optimizely.com can be useful and implemented in minutes.

Complete four actions. Go to Level 6.

☐ Develop a hypothesis. Change your experiment to test this hypothesis (but keep screen shots of each version of your site).

☐ Drive 100+ more visitors than Level 4.

☐ Get 20+ more sign-ups.

☐ Compare to the baseline set in Level 4. Learn.

LEVEL
6

The Pitch

Your entire executive presentation must be ten minutes. Practice it. Conclude by asking explicitly for money. What you hear after you ask for money (whether Yes or No) will be the most valuable feedback you get. The structure of your presentation will be

- **Customer**
- **Problem**
- **Mockup**
- **Experiment**
- **Data**
- **Ask**

What are you asking for?

Just what you need to get to the next actionable data. Not a zillion dollars to fund the project to launch. Your 'ask' could be in the form of time, money or other resources. You are also asking for the executive's endorsement and ongoing engagement in guiding your project forward.

Complete three actions. Exit the red box.

☐ Prepare a ten minute presentation on your project using the Kickbox presentation template from the Kickbox site as a guide.

☐ Review your presentation with a Kickbox mentor. Email them to schedule. You must complete this review before advancing to the next and final action.

☐ Convince any executive (senior director or above) to invest what you need for the next step in your project. It might be in the form of time, resources or funds but it must have a value of at least $2,000. They must also commit to join your advisory board to guide the next round of experiments.

Infiltrate

LEVEL
6

This is the final level. The path behind you is long. Many have fallen along the way. When others gave in, you pushed on. Some call it inner strength. Others call it stubbornness. **You have reached the last level of the red box. Well done.**

You've acquired arcane knowledge, built unique skills and turned raw data into powerful evidence. You will need them all. Every action on your journey has been preparing you for this moment. Welcome to the 'Boss Level'.

Only one action remains ahead. You must infiltrate your idea into the company and earn the warm embrace of executive approval. You may have heard Level 6 is hard to solve. You've now fought your way here, so you're ready for the truth. You cannot win… if you play by the rules. That's why innovators are so good at rules. Not at following them; making their own. Innovation is not a thing one does. It is a way of being. To solve Level 6 you must use the final secret of the red box: make your own rules.

Ready? Let's begin.

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Target Practice

Make no mistake, **innovation is as much about selling as it is creating.** You've successfully 'sold' your idea to customers but selling inside your own company can be even harder. To gain internal support, even the best ideas must be packaged and presented as attractive business opportunities. You must spark the imagination, curiosity and vision of business stakeholders.

Who are your targets? Managers with resources you might 're-appropriate' for your project. Why? Because there is rarely unallocated money or headcount just sitting around waiting for a cool idea. If resources exist, it is because there is already a plan for where they will go. You need to do more than convince a potential sponsor your idea is 'good'. You must convince them it is *better* than at least one idea they are already funding. If you follow the rules and wait patiently in the endless line for these mythical "uncommitted resources", you'll find they are as rare as the unicorns that deliver them. If you know your idea is worthy, go get the data, then use it to convince others to support you.

Meeting your potential sponsors in-person or via video is recommended. Your sponsor-to-be needs to see the fire in your eyes because **they are making a bet on you as much as your idea.** Before pursuing your executive supporters, practice your pitch first on your peers and direct managers. Then develop a list of executives overseeing areas related to your idea. Finally, identify those people your executive target interacts with, such as direct reports or peers. Pitch these people first before pitching the executive target. If their peers and reports 'get it', ask them to mention the project favorably to your target. If they don't, ask why not. They understand your target's business priorities. Listen to them and apply their advice. This can be the key to earning a "Yes".

Telling Stories

The most effective way to tell your story is to *tell it as a story*, not a sequence of dull eye-chart slides. Product funding decisions are not based solely on market studies, customer personas and competitive analysis. Those are weak proxies we're forced to use when we don't have real user behavioral data. You have real data. So use it to

Tell a compelling personal story.

What makes a story compelling? When it's personal. Here's an example in one run-on sentence: It's a story about you and this idea you had, and these neat customers you met, and this problem they have, and how you wanted to help them, so you came up with a clever solution and put together this mockup to see if you understood the problem correctly, then you showed it to the customers, but it wasn't quite right, so you changed it and then they said they would totally buy it, so you decided to test the idea with a website, and that showed you'd gotten some stuff wrong, and then you fixed that stuff and tested again and that test was way better, and so now the data indicates maybe there's an interesting business here, so you need to run another experiment which will reveal some more data that would prove it, except now you're out of money - so you just need some support to get to the next round of validation or this cool story will end just when it was getting interesting.