




# The A-Z of Intrapreneurship

26 stories of employee ideas  
that changed the world

by Henry Rowley



“The people who are  
crazy enough to think that  
they can change the world,  
are the ones who do.”


- Steve Jobs

# The A-Z of Intrapreneurship

The most fascinating and innovative  
employee ideas from the last 100 years

By Henry Rowley

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PRODUCTION



“Never doubt that a small  
group of thoughtful,  
committed people  
can change the world.  
Indeed, it’s the only thing  
that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead

# Hello

I'd like to say thank you to everyone who has helped in the creation of this book.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Chris Sheen for all his guidance throughout the process, consistently providing ideas, insight and support.

Thank you to James Boross for lending us his wonderful design skills and thank you to Sideways 6 for providing the means, resources and inspiration to bring this book to life.

Also, thank you to all the intrapreneurs whose ideas have been featured in this book and the companies/leaders that have enabled these to flourish, proving that a great idea really can come from anywhere.

And thanks to you, the reader. I hope you enjoy these stories as much as I've enjoyed writing them.

**Henry Rowley, Author**



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“No idea is too small.  
Any idea has the  
potential to change  
things for the better.”

- Richard Branson



# Foreword

Everything starts with an idea. From running water to Amazon Prime, electricity to the pillow, PlayStation to the printing press, no matter how big or small, it all begins with an idea.


Every innovation goes through a unique 'idea journey' to get to where it is now, with different thoughts and perspectives contributed along the way.

Take a moment to think of your favourite car. Let's look at how it came to be.

The ancient Mesopotamians had an idea which led to the invention of the wheel. The wheel merged with other ideas, eventually growing to become a fundamental part of larger inventions, i.e. a wheelbarrow or a cart. With consistent development, the cart became a horse and carriage, then eventually the breakthrough innovation – the car. From here, various ideas have branched off from the car with new models being developed: Sports cars, 4x4s, electric cars, etc.

With the evolution of various designs and colours, we ultimately arrive at your favourite car.

Even now, millions of people across the world are thinking up new ideas that could achieve anything from making billions of dollars to finding the perfect heat/time ratio for a slice of toast.





The point is that no matter how big or small (not every idea can be as powerful as perfecting the ideal piece of toast), ideas are consistently shaping our future and the way we do things.

This book is evidence of what can happen when people are free to pursue their ideas. It demonstrates how vital it is that we are all committed to creating and maintaining a world where ideas can flourish and lead us into exciting new stages of innovation.

**Will Read,  
CEO at Sideways 6**

**“Everything begins  
with an idea.”**

**- Earl Nightingale**

## FUN FACT!

Nearly 1 in 3 Americans  
has a Prime membership





## Amazon Prime

### Amazon

What better place to start than with the highest-grossing employee idea of all time?

Part of Amazon's core identity, 'Prime' is a membership offering that gives subscribers free next day shipping - and it's actually the product of intrapreneurship in action within the ranks of Amazon's employees.

A team led by former Amazon VP Greg Greeley formulated the 'Prime' idea to improve upon the 'Super-Saver Shipping' offer it had at the time.

**Back then, even two-day shipping was seen as something of an indulgence and Bezos was quick to seize upon the initiative.**

'Prime' now generates over \$19bn per year on customer subscriptions alone - not bad for a simple idea!

**FUN FACT!**

A British Airways flight  
takes off every 90 seconds





# Bb

## Beer

### British Airways

An idea we can definitely 'get on board' with.

To commemorate BA's centenary, the company launched a campaign that asked its cabin crew for ideas to make the onboard experience quintessentially British.

**One winning idea was to introduce a tasty new British ale to complement its existing, and mainly European, beer selection.**

Teaming up with Scottish craft brewery, BrewDog, it created the world's first brewed beer at 40,000ft.

Cans of the bespoke ale, aptly named Speedbird 100, were an instant hit!

What a beerilliant idea!

## FUN FACT!

Montañez iron sealed and hand-drew logos onto each individual baggie!





## Cheetos

### Frito-Lay

This is a pretty hot idea! In the mid-1980s, after a series of unsuccessful product launches for Frito-Lay resulted in a dip in sales, the CEO announced a new initiative for all 300,000 employees to “act like an owner”.

Richard Montañez, a janitor earning just \$4 per hour, had an idea. He called up the CEO’s office and the CEO, impressed by his initiative, agreed to a meeting.

Montañez had noticed that there were no hot or spicy products on offer, so he brought 100 different baggies to the meeting, each containing a Cheeto covered in his own home-invented spice mix.

Flamin’ Hot Cheetos is now a multi-billion dollar product and Montañez later became a VP, amassing a personal fortune of over \$20M.

## FUN FACT!

Hilton houses 125 million  
customer visits annually,  
more than any other  
company in the world







# Dd

## DoubleTree Cookies

### Hilton

How can little gestures be used in such a way that they make a big difference to the customer experience?

For more than 30 years, Hilton DoubleTree hotels have provided guests with an extra tasty VIP treat upon arrival.

This originally started in the 1980s when one 'clever cookie' began baking fresh cookies for colleagues, and then thought it would be nice to offer the leftover treats to arriving guests.

The cookies we see now are the product of a 'secret recipe' developed by Hilton and at check-in, guests are presented with a fresh, warm, chocolate chip cookie.

The tasty treat has become a staple mark of Hilton's customer service and has earned them a lot of 'chips' in customer loyalty!

## FUN FACT!

Bluetooth is named after  
a famous Viking King who  
united Norway and Denmark  
in the 10th Century





## Ericsson Bluetooth

### Ericsson

It's highly likely that Bluetooth is part of your daily digital use for pairing speakers or headphones.

Some of you may even remember transferring songs and photos over Bluetooth.

It all started in 1994 when Ericsson employee Dr. Jaap Haartsen wanted a low-power, 'local' alternative to WiFi.

**His idea was put into development at Ericsson and became what we now know today as 'Bluetooth'.**

Despite Bluetooth being invented in 1994, the first phone utilising the technology wasn't released until 2001, but today we see the capacity and usefulness of Bluetooth growing year-on-year.

## FUN FACT!

In 'Cars', Luigi's license plate reads 445-108, which is the latitude and longitude for the Ferrari factory in Modena, Italy





## Female Heroes

### Disney Pixar

Jessica Heidt, an American Script Supervisor at Pixar Animation Studios, had noticed a major gender imbalance whilst looking over the first draft script for Cars 3.

Heidt then developed a method of counting the percentage of male/female line distribution in Pixar's scripts, finding that the Cars 3 script she had been looking over was 90 per cent male and only 10 per cent female.

**Upon seeing Jessica's research, the director was quick to adapt the script and introduce more female characters.**

Jessica's idea is now shaping the future of all Pixar films, pushing for equal gender representation across the company with more female heroes.

What a way to 'drive' gender equality!

## FUN FACT!

The original code-name  
for Gmail was 'Caribou'





## Gmail

### Google

Google's legendary 20 per cent policy enables employees to dedicate 20 per cent of their work time towards personal projects, and Gmail is a prime example of the benefits!

Paul Buchheit, a Google engineer, was building what originally began as an email-based search engine.

As the project developed, the idea transformed into a high-functioning alternative to the existing email platform.

**Despite a lot of negative pushback on Buchheit's idea, Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin remained supportive throughout.**

Gmail is now the most widely used email platform across the world, with 1.8 billion users!

### FUN FACT!

The iconic 'I'm Lovin' It' jingle was written by American rapper Pusha T and originally recorded by Justin Timberlake!







# Hh

## Happy Meal

### McDonald's

Name a more iconic meal in a box than the Happy Meal.  
We'll wait...

In 1977, the St Louis Regional Manager, Dick Brams, wanted to trial a new meal that was just for kids. He pitched his box-based idea to management, and they were lovin' it!

Along with Ad Executive Bob Bernstein, McDonald's developed and designed the Happy Meal for kids.

**Two years later, McDonald's rolled out its first Happy Meal. It was circus-themed and very similar to the one we see today.**

In the time you've been reading this story, approximately 2,937 have been sold, with 3 million Happy Meals enjoyed every day.

## FUN FACT!

If you ask an Imagineer "How many imagineers does it take to change a light bulb?" they will answer "Does it have to be a light bulb?"





# Imagineering

## Disney

Imagineering is known as the 'creative engine' of Disney, the place where magical ideas are brought to life.

Started by Walt Disney himself, Disney's Imagineering is responsible for the creation, design, and construction of all the company's worldwide theme parks and attractions.

One notable success is the development of audio-animatronics with the iconic 'Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln' show that saw the first ever audio-animatronic human unveiled at the 1965 World's Fair.

Since 1952, Imagineering has been responsible for the creation of 12 theme parks, a town, four cruise ships, dozens of resort hotels, water parks, shopping centres, sports complexes and various entertainment venues.

### FUN FACT!

Boofuls, the green jelly baby, is always crying; this was addressed in an ad in 1993 when Boofuls was revealed to be something of a 'cry baby'





## Jelly Babies

### **Bassetts**

The origin of the Jelly Baby is a legend lost in time.

In 1864, an Austrian immigrant was tasked with creating a mould for jelly bears, but somehow, he made a mistake, and the jelly baby was 'born'.

Some years passed, with the sweets being referred to as 'unclaimed babies' before they were rebranded as 'peace babies' to mark the end of WWI.

The production of these sweets was halted due to shortages in WWII, but the sweet was relaunched in 1953 under the familiar 'Jelly Babies' name!

From The Beatles' George Harrison to Doctor Who, Jelly Babies are now a traditional favourite sugary treat for people across the nation.

## FUN FACT!

On Twitter, KFC follows five former Spice Girls and six men named Herb. A nod to their secret '11 herbs & spices'





## KFC (Secret Menu)

### KFC

(Don't tell anyone about this one...)

In Australia, KFC was looking for a way to attract people to its new app.

KFC staff had always loved 'hacking' the menu by mixing and matching familiar ingredients to create new and exciting snacks.

One such staff member, who shall remain nameless (it's a secret after all!) thought it would be a great idea to hide these creations deep within the app.

As a result, KFC saw more than 460 million media impressions without spending a penny and Secret Menu users spent an average of 77 per cent more than non-Secret Menu users.

The wacky staff creations have resulted in inventions such as the 'Beese Churger', and the 'Zinger Chipster'!

## FUN FACT!

Seven LEGO sets are sold every second. By the time you have read this fact, dozens of LEGO sets have been sold around the world







## LEGO Ideas

### LEGO

How do you ensure you continue to create innovative new products that your customers really want?

Well, one way is to make your customers the inventors! That's what LEGO did when it launched 'LEGO Ideas' - a place for enthusiasts to put forward their own ideas for new products.

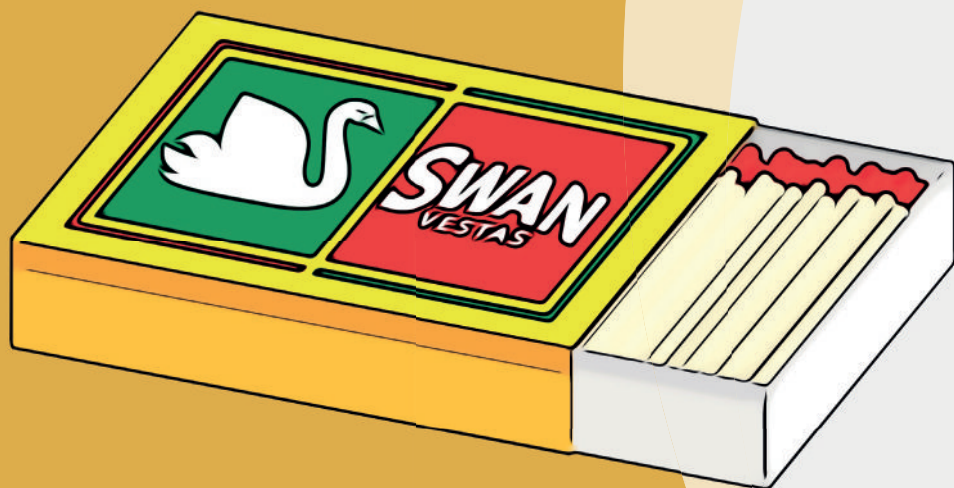
Once ideas receive 10,000 votes from other users, they are reviewed by LEGO itself before the best are then put into production.

**27 new products have been launched as a result of the initiative, including themed sets based on various favourites such as The Flintstones, Friends, Ghostbusters and Back to the Future.**

The original designer receives 1 per cent of the royalties of sets sold. Way to (le)go!

## FUN FACT!

Swan Vesta matches are mentioned in the Ian Fleming novel *You Only Live Twice* and appear in four Bond films!





# Mm

## Matches

### Swan Vesta

In the early 1900s, a factory worker at Swan Vesta, the match company, went to senior management and told them he had an idea that could save the business millions of pounds in production costs.

After months of pushing and persuasion, the factory worker managed to get just a few minutes in front of the board, a sceptical audience ready to laugh at his 'million dollar' idea.

**The idea? To put the sandpaper strike on only one side of the matchbox rather than both.**

As any Swan matchbox will prove, the idea worked and the business saved millions!

Sometimes the best ideas are strikingly simple!

## FUN FACT!

Starbucks stores intentionally have round tables to help you to feel more 'at home' when you are by yourself





# Nn

## Names

### Starbucks

Sometimes, an idea becomes so embedded in our culture, we simply take it for granted.

Founded in Seattle back in 1971, Starbucks went on a mission to become its customers' 'third place' to go – a relaxing and comfortable environment in between work and home. This mission was founded on selling not just coffee, but a unique customer experience.

**In 2011, when one smart barista decided to add to that experience by writing the names of customers on cups, it quickly got back to head office.**

Today, this little thing happens four billion times a year at almost 30,000 locations worldwide.

Not a bad way to perk up the daily grind!

**FUN FACT!**

7.5% of the working age  
population of Seattle are  
Amazon employees!





## One-Click

### Amazon

If you're one of the more than 250 million people that visits Amazon's website every day, then you'll have noticed the enticing 'buy with 1-click' button.

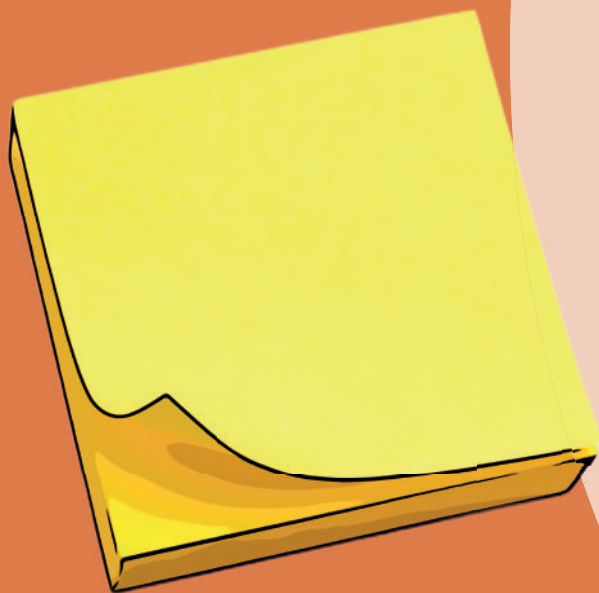
Amazon programmer Peri Hartman wanted to find a way to 'make the ordering system completely frictionless', and so he built the software to enable 1-click purchases. It worked, and was patented by Amazon in 1997.

**Not only did this innovation provide Amazon with a huge competitor advantage, it also created a new revenue stream as it licensed the technology to other companies (including Apple!).**

By the time the patent expired in 2017, Amazon's turnover was \$177bn. Not a bad head start...

### FUN FACT!

The original canary yellow colour of the Post-it Note was an accident, it just happened to be the colour of the scrap paper that the adhesive was tested on







## Post-it Notes

### 3M

The simple and effective Post-it Note – a key part of any office worker's arsenal.

3M scientist Spencer Silver's invention – a sticky, but not solid, adhesive – went without use for years until Art Fry, a fellow 3M employee, needed a bookmark that would stick without damaging the pages.

Partnering with Silver, they began developing the product, realising their potential to hold messages and communicate around the office.

**Fry supplied the entire company with the new notes, and they were universally loved!**

Post-it Notes now generate some \$1bn annually. That's what we call sticky business!

## FUN FACT!

A QR code can embed 200x  
more information than a  
standard bar code



Try me!



## QR Code

### Denso

Employees working in Denso's warehouse found that a large chunk of their day was wasted on scanning bar codes (each worker scanned approximately 1,000 bar codes every day!)

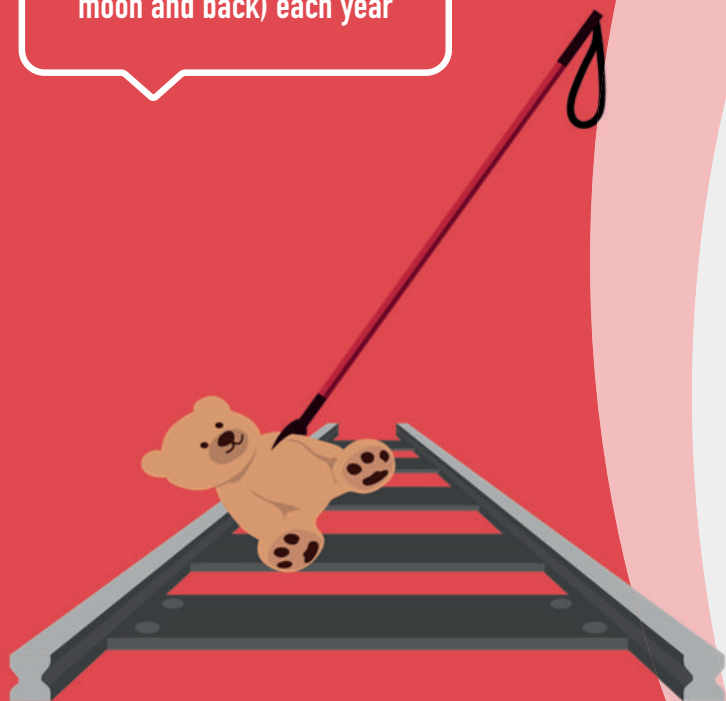
**Engineer, Hara Masahiro, was playing his favourite strategy game during his lunch break, when he suddenly had a 'eureka moment'.**

When arranging black and white squares on the grid, Masahiro realized that this represented a straightforward way of easily conveying large amounts of information within a single 'grid'.

Thus, the idea for the QR Code was born. Today, with various online menus and apps, 87 per cent of smartphone users have scanned a QR code at least once in their life, with 36 per cent scanning at least one QR code per week!

## FUN FACT!

According to TfL, London Underground trains travel a total of 1,735 times around the world (or 90 trips to the moon and back) each year





# Rr

## Rail Retrieval

### TfL

Have you ever been affected by train delays? That was a stupid question... of course you have.

Transport for London reports that 195,000 hours of delays every year are down to its clumsy customers (our words, not theirs) and two TfL employees decided to do something about it.

**The 'Track Retrieval Device' was designed and built by track maintenance workers John Raynes and Paul Allen.**

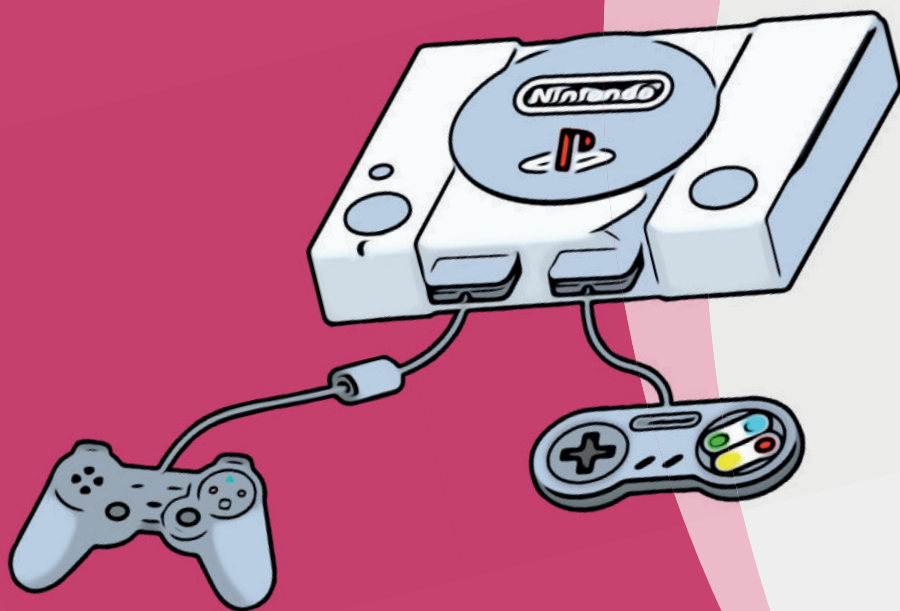
The 'TRD' can be used without turning off the power supply to the tracks and without staff having to step down onto the track. It can pick up bags, mobile phones and even teddy bears.

And those pesky delays? Reduced by 18 per cent in the device's first year.

Looks like TfL is well 'on track' for avoiding delays.

## FUN FACT!

Teiyu Goto, the creator of the iconic PS controller said that he felt the 3D design (as opposed to the standard 'flat' joypad) was inspired by the 3D graphics of the console





## Sony PlayStation

### Sony

In the late 1980s, Sony junior staff member Ken Kutaragi, a self-proclaimed 'tinkerer', created a special chip to make his daughter's Nintendo more powerful and ultimately provide a better gaming experience.

Kutaragi went to his bosses with the idea of creating a new console for Sony, but he hit a wall. Sony just didn't 'do gaming'.

**Refusing to give up, he eventually managed to reach Sony's CEO, Norio Ohga. Increasingly aware of the value of the gaming industry, Sony then developed its own console - the PlayStation.**

The PlayStation launched in 1994 and has sold over half a billion units since. Kutaragi went on to become Chairman and CEO at Sony, and no one at Sony questions the credibility of the gaming industry anymore.

### FUN FACT!

It was originally called 'Duck Tape' because it repelled moisture "like water off a duck's back" and only came in green, not silver!







## Tape

### WPS and J&J

The original idea for Duct tape came from Vesta Stoudt, a mother of two sons who were serving during WWII.

Vesta wanted to save soldier's lives as she noticed that the boxes of ammunition she had been packing were sealed by both tape and wax, making them incredibly difficult to open, especially whilst under fire.

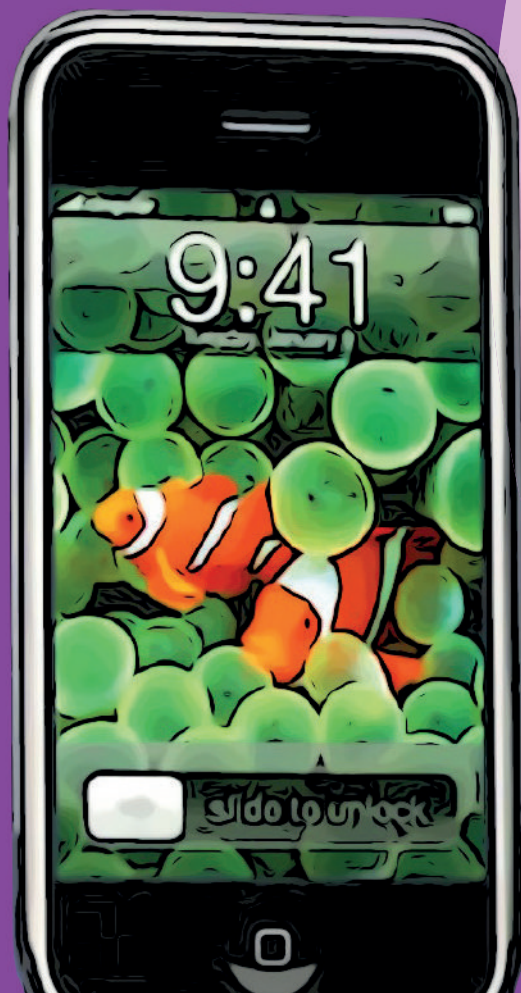
**Vesta's idea was to create a waterproof tape that could be used to seal the boxes and would be easy to remove.**

She decided to write a letter (complete with diagrams) to the US President outlining her idea. Soon after, Johnson & Johnson was tasked with the production of this tape.

Duct tape is now so popular, that the amount sold every year could reach the moon 1.2 times!

## FUN FACT!

The iconic 'unlock' sound of the original iPhone is actually a recording of Freddy unlocking his high school locker





## Unlock

### Apple

Many of you won't remember a time when simply looking at your phone wasn't enough to unlock it. However, long ago, the 'unlock button' often caused accidental phone calls, aka 'The Butt Dial' (we've all been there!).

That was until Freddy Anzures, an employee at Apple who was working on the development of the first ever iPhone, needed to go to the bathroom during a flight.

**Freddy was struck by how easy it was to lock and unlock the airplane bathroom door - you simply had to swipe, nothing else.**

Teaming up with a group of engineers at Apple, Freddy's idea was developed, leading to one of the key features of the revolutionary iPhone.

Sometimes, all it takes is an idea to 'unlock' a whole world of potential.

## FUN FACT!

Mark Heslehurst, the van driver who came up with the idea, was awarded a £10 gift voucher as thanks for his idea





## Van Diesel

### Argos

Shortly after catalogue business Argos was bought by UK supermarket giant Sainsbury's, the company asked its employees for money saving suggestions aided by the new collaboration.

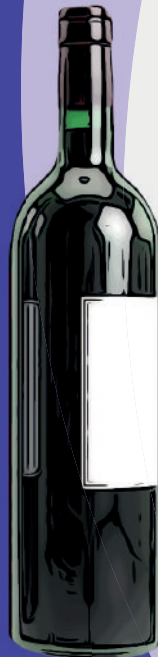
While out on his rounds, Argos delivery driver Mark Heslehurst realised that one idea was staring him right in the face: He could use Sainsbury's own petrol stations to fill up.

**What would the cost saving be if van drivers only filled-up with Sainsbury's fuel he wondered...? The answer: \$2 million a year.**

Unsurprisingly, the idea was implemented and to this day you will never see an Argos delivery van in anything but a Sainsbury's petrol station. Unless it's to buy a sandwich...

## FUN FACT!

Air Canada is also known for  
providing the first ever exclusively  
smoking-free flight!





## Wine Bottles

### Air Canada

We couldn't keep this one bottled up.

In the early 2000s Air Canada had been looking at ways to operate more sustainably, whilst also identifying new areas to reduce costs.

During an Air Canada return flight, one 'high-flying' employee noticed that the plane was carrying lots of empty wine bottles unnecessarily (they'd been emptied on the flight out).

The employee suggested that the wine bottles be recycled at the final destination to reduce weight on the return flight, saving fuel costs.

**The idea was later implemented and it ended up saving Air Canada well over \$250 million per year.**

Certainly nothing to w(h)ine about there!

## FUN FACT!

It was actually Chester Carlson, an independent physicist, who came up with the idea for photocopying in 1938. Xerox saw the potential in it and signed an agreement with Carlson in 1946!







## Xerox Green Ideas

### Xerox

Xerox wanted to become a greener company, looking at ways of becoming more sustainable.

So, the printing supplier announced the 'Earth Awards' programme, challenging employees to think up innovative solutions towards saving company resources.

**Through this initiative, Xerox employees helped their company to save \$10.2 million as well as eliminating 2.6 million pounds of waste.**

Some of the standout ideas have included packaging for coloured ink created from 100 per cent recycled material and altering the rate at which ink was printed onto paper.

Xerox 'Green Ideas' initiative is still running, with the company looking to its employees for innovative solutions towards operating more sustainably as a business.

## FUN FACT!

As a result of 'InGenius Intrapreneurs', Nestlé has innovated around an old favourite snack, developing a Korean rice cake flavoured Kit-Kat!





## Young Treats

### Nestlé

As part of Nestlé's 'InGenius Intrapreneurs' campaign, employees are asked to think up innovative ideas for potential new products.

Stéphanie Daru and her co-working husband, Mathieu Van Hove, came up with an idea for a new product that was very close to home...

After noticing their teething baby biting on wooden frames and experiencing pain, the couple thought it would be a great idea to develop a treat designed exclusively for teething babies.

**Soothe 'N' Chew is a first-of-its-kind grain-based product designed to massage babies' gums, without using any plastics or medicine.**

The treat is made from real food with a banana taste, satisfying a baby's desire to chew.

What a sweet idea!

**FUN FACT!**

There is no first-class on  
Southwest flights!





## ‘Zany’ Safety Demo


### Southwest Airlines

When Flight Attendant Martha ‘Marty’ Cobbs noticed passengers were ignoring the pre-flight safety demonstration, she decided to spice it up by ad-libbing a few lines of her own...

**“Put the oxygen mask on yourself first, and then place it on your child. If you’re travelling with more than one child, start with the one with the greatest earning potential.”**

Quickly, the cabin started taking notice... and as Marty continued, soon it was in hysterics. She rapidly achieved YouTube fame with passengers sharing recordings of her announcements. Management noticed too, and they absolutely loved it.

It is estimated that the Southwest Airlines safety announcements are worth \$140 million a year in increased customer loyalty. That’s no joke.



“Invention is the root  
of our success... Keep  
inventing, and don’t  
despair when at first  
the idea looks crazy.  
Remember to wander.  
Let curiosity be your  
compass”

- Jeff Bezos, Founder of Amazon

# About

## The Author

London-based Henry Rowley works in the marketing department at idea management company Sideways 6.

He is the Co-Host and Editor of 'The Ideas Show', a podcast about ideas that change the world, and the people that make them happen.

Henry loves skiing, reading, and writing. He is a lifelong fan of Leicester City Football Club and when he was younger, he wanted to be a famous actor (it didn't work out).

## The Publisher

Sideways 6 exists to help companies change the world for the better by bringing ideas to life.

Our idea management platform works alongside the tools your employees already know and love, helping you capture their ideas and bring the best ones to life.

We've enabled over 4 million people, from the likes of British Airways, AstraZeneca and Nestlé, to have their ideas heard. Our goal is to put employees at the heart of innovation and prove that great ideas really can come from anywhere.

This book showcases the power of the individual, the power of collaboration, and the power of ideas.

What do Amazon Prime, Sony's PlayStation, the Post-it Note, and Jelly Babies all have in common? They are all examples of intrapreneurship in action.

We go from A-Z, sharing the stories of some of the most innovative and fascinating employee ideas from the past 100 years, featuring the likes of Disney, British Airways, Amazon, 3M and many more.

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**“Great ideas can come from anywhere.  
There are no titles around an idea”**

- Steve Stoute

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