

Idea logistics

By Faraz Maqsood Hamidi

We have taken them for granted because they come for free, mostly out of nowhere and are used (or abused) liberally, at will, for the benefit of your clients. That is the nature of ideas. They are useless, until they are not. They are pointless, until they happen to ignite the future. And they are worthless, until someone decides to pay for them. After all, a manufacturer's patent doesn't spread quite the way a creative person's ideas do.

Ideas can change fortunes. We all know that. But to do so, they must possess the good fortune to land in the hands and minds of those who have the agency to see them through. As Lee Iacocca said: "You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across, your ideas won't get you anywhere." Or the clients paying for them, to boot. But, sadly, like the majority of products, dreams and start-ups, most ideas don't see the light of day. This is not because they are not any good. They might be spectacularly remarkable. Merited with demonic economics

to shift paradigms and cultivate new markets. And they might even have survived the most myopic boardrooms. But to get ideas through, we need a system – a set of logistics so to speak – that can transport your cargo of emotion, through the client, to the customer and in ways that can leave them aggressively intact, beautifully-packaged and ready to harness the change they have been made to unleash.

Dr Rodney Perkins, one of Silicon Valley's great biotech visionaries, says that new ideas alone are no guarantee of success. He used to have them all day, by the dozen, often at the expense of someone else stealing and patenting them. But, he says, it is the implementation of these ideas that blazes trails. He points out the number of times any one of us is guilty of saying how 'I could have come up with that,' quite forgetting that possibly thousands of people are manufacturing ideas in their heads all day, but only a handful have the audacity and the stamina to see them through. Idealists, who didn't stop at mere generation, but pursued their idealism to

productisation. They made it happen – which happens to be Perkins' motto. Let's say they followed through with their own supply chain for ideas.

Sadly, most of us don't know of such a supply chain. Which is okay – because it doesn't exist – or is so uniquely personalised to the temperament of its creators, it can't be scaled. So I looked around but ended up concluding that there is really no such thing as a set of logistics capabilities for the business of ideas. Which is why, we continue to invest time, energy and money in the conditions required to generate ideas, but we lay ignorance, apathy or a lacklustre imagination on those who just don't 'get' it. So what do we do?

Shouldn't there be a set of conditions, principles or processes dedicated to the implementation stage of ideas and where they can actually be delivered effectively? In supply chain terminology, shouldn't ideas have some 'process flow' associated with them after they have been generated so that they stand the best chance of speed to market without human or technical error getting in the way?

Logistics gets a bad rap. It's often seen as a tedious and humdrum back office faculty. Yet, without logistics, our interdependent and interconnected global economy would fall apart – which is precisely how we should think about logistics for ideas. While creating an idea is important, it is in keeping it current, in process and tied to significant milestones that will help it along to yield its wonder.

Charles Dickens was prescient in noticing "an idea, like a ghost, must be spoken to a little before it will explain itself." Ironically, it is the leading logistics firms that have harnessed the power of systems, processes and supply chain methodologies

to orchestrate the flow of goods and services. Ideas, too, need to be managed, moved along and presented at the right touchpoints to have real, lasting value. Value that can help them explain themselves at every intersection of their journey. Instead of an adhoc process, valuable ideas deserve their own supply chain to minimise waste and cycle times and maximise their potential and impact.

Or we will be heading back to the drawing board. ■

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THE ENDGAME

The Marie Kondo phenomenon

By Julian Saunders

What I think a lot of people don't understand is that Marie Kondo's book isn't just about tidying up. It's a whole philosophy and way of life. I didn't think it was a big deal either but as I read her book, I really found myself thinking about the way my environment affects my life, health and happiness. By clearing out your environment and all the clutter and negative energies attached to that clutter, you allow yourself to bring things to your life that spark joy.

Try Googling 'Marie Kondo' and you will get a glimpse of the 'Marie Kondo' effect. She inspires many a comment just like the one above. She has found a fresh angle on one of the perennial questions of humanity – how to find calm and happiness amidst all the noise, hubbub and pressures of modern life. I am not sure if this is an entirely new problem but we like to think it is, what with social media, globalisation, Trump, climate

change, not to mention 'the black swans'; the unknown-unknowns just around the corner.

Anyway, we feel that we cannot control these things – and we are probably right. But we can dominate our immediate environment and more specifically, the rooms we live in. That sense of control satisfies a deep need not to be unmoored and merely tossed hither and thither by events and all the other people in our lives to whose tune we must dance.

But there is something else that provides deep emotional satisfaction. At the risk of sounding very pretentious, it is the process of making order out of chaos.

A word of explanation: I spent much of the 1980s studying the cleaning habits of European women for Unilever (I worked on the ads for CIF). At the end of the TV ads, there was a shot where the woman (it was always a woman in the 1980s) stands back



and the camera sweeps round to appreciate the glorious shiny end result of her cleaning. It is an Olympian moment of triumph for mum. She has restored the order that is continually undermined by the mess of family life. Unlike King Canute, she has held back the tide. She can now skip off for a coffee with friends, guilt-free and with a lighter step.

That Google search also reveals something else – Marie Kondo is no amateur YouTuber who has just struck lucky. No. She is 'multiplatform' with four books to her name and a great PR profile in the new media

(like YouTube/Netflix) and the traditional media (like CNN and *The South China Morning Post*). That takes dedication, funds and a professional approach. Marie Kondo is not just Marie Kondo – she has a team behind her.

She partners with celebs and turns up on YouTuber channels. None of this is accidental.

She is also quietly absolutist in her light and lilting Japanese.

When helping Katie Couric – a high profile American journalist – to declutter, she says, "that should be your goal.

To discard everything." It is a tough-minded philosophy that leaves you feeling lighter and liberated.

With her words ringing in my ears, I am thinking of tackling the mayhem that is my son's bedroom with the sediment of over a decade of abandoned socks, amongst other things.

On second thoughts, I am not sure I have the courage. I wish Marie would come round to help out. She is bound to be both quietly charming and steely-minded.

And if I was a celeb, she would probably turn up. ■

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