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Inside MIM

- *Brief about MIM Group*
- *Making Ideas Happen*
- *Time Productivity*



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Inside MIM is a periodic newsletter written by MIM staff. It discusses key topics in management, consulting, auditing and accounting, etc. Since MIM is engaged in the field of management consultancies, our professionals have adequate expertise that they have gained through their years of experience at MIM. They therefore share their expertise and thoughts through this newsletter. Martten Cox, MIM sister company, is engaged in the field of auditing and accounting. Our professionals, through their experience in auditing and accounting, share updates, insights and information about auditing and accounting to keep you informed and up-to-date.

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Brief About MIM Group

MIM International Consultancies



- MIM is a specialized leading consultancy firm with over 33 years of experience in the field of feasibility studies and management consultancies serving the region's top organizations and governments.
- Our professionals are result-oriented and thrive on achieving clients' satisfaction which is the benchmark that measures our performance and success.

MARTTEN COX & ASSOCIATES Auditing & Consulting



- We offer a wide range of professional services in auditing & assurance, bookkeeping & accounting, and consultation services to small and medium sized organizations.
- Our professionals are highly educated and well trained, and are fully dedicated to serve our clients with due professional care and integrity. We do not just deliver reports; we make sure that our services will be a major contribution to your success and business development.

EBTIKARAT

- Ebtkarat is MIM representative office in Cairo, Egypt. Its core business is management and business consultancies.
- Our Ebtkarat team collaborates with MIM team in order to ensure the best quality services are provided to our clients to achieve our clients' satisfaction and maintain a long term business relationship.

EBTIKARAT Development



- Ebtikarat Development is a leading software house for developing desktop, websites and mobile applications, based in Egypt and Dubai. With the use of the latest information technology and telecommunication tools we achieve targets depending on a strong technical base and carefully selected expert resources.

Making Ideas Happen Overcoming the Obstacles between Vision & Reality

Creative types, we all know them — perhaps you are one? — have no problem churning out new ideas, but converting them into reality, says Scott Branson, is "a laborious and despised process." And the more creative you are, it seems, the less likely your ideas will ever see the light of day — because there's usually an inverse relationship between idea generation and organizational skill.

Taken to its logical conclusion, this implies that people who produce mediocre ideas are likely to be more organized and therefore better equipped to realize them. Which is what happens. Great ideas flop; middling ones win.

From this, we get the clue to the main theme— how to get yourself organized. At first sight, there's nothing especially revolutionary about this. The thrust is a focus on capturing action points from meetings and other activities. But the method also involves filtering out background information, sidelining ideas and actions that can wait, and learning how to prioritize.

"a relentless bias towards action," that pushes ideas forward. The key to achieving this is identifying and capturing every **action step** that flows from an idea, and then conferring ownership, that is, agreeing which named individual (including yourself) will be responsible for delivering on each one. This applies not just to meetings but also to every idea that's worth pursuing — even the brainwaves you get in the shower. You start by considering everything you want (or have) to do, from a marketing campaign to doing a feasibility study for a project, as a project that you break down into 3 primary elements:

1. Action steps – the specific tasks needed to implement the project.

Branson and Behance provide a productivity application at www.actionmethod.com to help users apply and manage his system. The author, a noted speaker, writer and entrepreneur, also identifies two additional critical tools in the ideas-to-action conversation process: the involvement of others and a set of leadership skills to help you get the best out of them.

The Action Method and Beyond

"The way you organize projects, prioritize and manage your energy, is arguably more important than the quality of the ideas you wish to pursue," Branson declares. Take for example, the renowned "painter of light" Thomas Kincade and the best-selling author James Patterson.

2. References –(documents, sketches, meeting notes, etc.,) you may need to refer to as you work through the project.

3. Backburner items – elements that you don't need to do right now but might want to someday.

Visualize it this way: A folder with your action steps stapled to the front, your reference material inside, and your backburner items listed on the inside of the back cover. That way, the action steps are always in sight and, therefore, in mind. Their wording should be short and energized by starting with an action verb.

In reality, we might collect and store these components in a different way, for example by maintaining visible and easily accessible lists of project action steps, which you review

regularly, then filing away reference material in date order and having another repository for backburner stuff.

The important thing is that you capture those action steps everywhere, every time, so you should always have a convenient way of doing so — for instance a notepad, recording device or Behance's action method online tool. Where others are involved, at meetings for instance, a useful process is to identify each action step as it arises and then to ask the proposed owner something like: "Did you capture that?" At the end of the meeting, invite each attendee to state the action steps they own. This will eliminate duplication and highlight any that are missing.

In Belsky's mind, almost any meeting that doesn't produce action steps is a waste of time, unless its purpose is to seek understanding or buy-in. Meeting routines ("we meet because it's Monday") or those called to salve your feelings of insecurity about progress are out. Similarly, compulsive note-taking is of little value — most reference material is never, in fact, referred to. And ideas that come up that are not actionable should be noted on a separate sheet for your backburner list and set aside. Your focus, remember, is on action. So now you need a process for organizing and prioritizing your steps, otherwise you fall into the trap of what Belsky calls **reactionary workflow** — responding to whatever is at the top of your list or falls into your inbox. Accordingly, you must make time to process all the material you receive or generate each day.

"At periods of the day that you designate for processing," he explains, "you break down everything into action steps, backburner items and references. You associate each item with a project, whether it is personal or work-related. As you do this, quick actions are being completed, while longer term action steps are being added to the appropriate projects' task lists or your task management application." Backburner items can be filed in an appropriate folder, while references are either trashed or filed in the relevant project folder.

Now, perhaps in a spreadsheet or project management program, you have an ever-growing list of action steps — some for yourself, some for others to complete but which you must keep track of. To help you prioritize, Belsky suggests visually representing your various projects on what he calls an **energy line**, which is simply a horizontal spectrum with "idle" at one end and "extreme" at the other, along which you list projects according to their economic and strategic value.

You can prioritize further by keeping separate lists of action steps for each project according to whether they are urgent or important. This will help you distinguish between short-term actions that need to be done now, without losing sight of longer-term ones that otherwise might be neglected. Belsky recommends setting aside separate time periods for dealing with each list and making a daily focus area with just five action steps from each to be key for that day.

He stresses the importance of making time to complete these actions. After all, being well-organized is only the first step towards making ideas happen. You also need a technique for execution.

Speaking of which, keeping the focus on action, Belsky is an arch-proponent of the "just do it" school. His term is **act without conviction**, meaning: don't waste too much time thinking about the pros and cons of your idea — try it out. No ifs or buts. This may seem anathema to creative types who are great procrastinators, but he quotes the example of the innovation and design consultancy IDEO which encourages creative team members to produce prototypes of all their fledgling ideas, even competing ones, at an early stage of any project instead of spending time arguing their relative merits. The corollary of this approach is that one should then not be afraid to kill off the unsuccessful approaches liberally, so a project continues to move forward.

In similar spirit, when reviewing ideas, you should turn your back on the paralysis-inducing fear of failure, which stalls execution of so many projects. If you want to know how, meet marketing guru Seth Godin, renowned for his awe-inspiring output of books, blogs, presentations and public appearances. He knows some of them will not succeed but, in his own words, "I just keep shipping." For Godin, shipping is the final act of execution (and making things happen). Godin believes the source of obstacles to shipping is the lizard brain which tries to keep us safe by avoiding danger and risk. But he's comfortable with the risk of failure because it is the key to being able to execute. As a result, he's made ideas happen again and again.

Some other tips on execution:

- Be persistent in following up others' delivery on their action steps; just don't let up.
- Develop and set constraints for a project — for example budget, time or specification considerations. Without them, you'll struggle to complete.
- Temper your tolerance for change. Modification and new ideas in the early stage of a project are fine but can be crippling in later stages. Proposed changes late in a project phase may be better left to the next version or iteration.
- Celebrate progress. This motivates further action and progress. Behance, for example, covers one of its office walls (called the **done wall**) with completed lists of action steps.
- Develop an action routine — a structured, timed approach for getting things done at particular times of the day. Visit DailyRoutines.com for examples of how artists and authors use routines to get through daunting creative projects.
- Reduce your **insecurity work** — the amount of time you spend checking your inbox and reviewing information that has no real meaning in terms of moving a project forward.
- Consider your environment. Is it conducive for action — in terms, for instance, of noise, interruptions and other distractions? Interestingly, research also shows that confined spaces help us focus more intensely, while high-ceilinged, open spaces encourage more unfettered thinking.

Counting on Others

Creative people tend to be somewhat insular and even narcissistic. They love their own ideas, seek the credit they believe they're due, and do not instinctively reach out to others for help and support. Yet, as Belsky points out: "Ideas are not made to happen through solitary genius or ingenuity. Other people always play a role in pushing your ideas forward and your success will depend on how well you harness the efforts of others."

The term "others" embraces a whole community of individuals — family and friends, clients and customers, collaborators, people you "meet" online and, of course, your team. You and members of your community fall into one of three categories when it comes to idea creation and execution — dreamers (idea creators), doers (the action people) and incrementalists (a bit of both of the previous characters). Being an incrementalist isn't necessarily a good thing, by the way; people who are good at both generating and implementing ideas tend to get lumbered with too many projects.

But, it's fairly obvious where Belsky is coming from: you need a combination of at least any two of these three for successful development and delivery of great ideas. All three can be seen in harmony at Apple Computer, Inc. — chief designer Jonathan Ive (dreamer), COO Tim Cook (doer) and founder and CEO Steve Jobs (incrementalist). Corporate success stories are littered with these types of partnership for example Bill Bowerman and Phil Knight of Nike, and, in the fashion world, Calvin Klein and Barry Schwartz.

T-shirt design outfit Threadless is another example. Co-founders Jeffrey Kalmikoff (the dreamer who's always onto something new) and Jake Nickell (the doer who keeps them on track) have taken their venture from zero to \$35m sales over the past 10 years.

In other instances, dreamers select partners for individual projects or even hire people (that is, not as partners but as employees) to help convert their ideas into action.

If you are a dreamer, there are a number of approaches or activities you must adopt to increase your chances of linking up with the right doer. First, says Belsky, you must bite the bullet of your tendency towards protective secrecy. It may sound like heresy to a dreamer but, he says, you have to **share your ideas liberally**. It helps keep them alive (when you might prefer to be moving on to the next one) and you are much more likely to gain the resources and team support you need to make them happen.

"Ultimately," Belsky points out, "most ideas die in isolation because they are not shared and, as a consequence, are ultimately forgotten."

As well as sharing ideas, you should let people know what you're up to when projects are actually in progress — a form of **transparency** which may help open the door to potential future collaborators or improved productivity.

Furthermore, you should seek and welcome **feedback** on your ideas. This will expose their true potential, during which you must suppress your tendency to be over-sensitive.

A useful method for gaining feedback came to the author from a Hewlett-Packard VP who would poll participants after meetings using what he called a **start, stop and continue** system. He would invite them to each submit their thoughts on which aspects of a project should be started (that is, something new that hadn't previously been tried), stopped (something, for example, that might be hindering progress) or continued (such as an aspect that seemed to be working well). He would then aggregate this feedback to help direct the project. And because it was an aggregation of views, criticisms wouldn't seem to come from anyone in particular or necessarily to be directed at any individual, thus avoiding personality issues

Other aids to draw in the support of your community include:

- Setting up or participating in groups of like-minded people, face-to-face, and online for mutual support.
- Seeking and welcoming competition — ideas tend to lie stagnant, says the author, until creatives are jolted into action by what others are doing.
- Publicly committing yourself to a project based around your idea. This will naturally encourage others to show a similar commitment

Creating systems of accountability — people are more likely to perform when they know they have to show and explain the results of their actions.

- Sharing workspace — for example groups of artists and writers who share an office or studio yet work independently are less likely to allow themselves to be visibly inactive.

□ Marketing yourself — developing a following, which is relatively simple these days with online social networking groups.

One caveat, though: Many of these actions involve operating inside your preferred circle of people who share an interest in your ideas, or, as the author puts it, "the visionary's tendency to focus on what fellow, open-minded early adopting visionaries value." You can counter this by **grounding your ideas outside your community** by including skeptics in your team to reduce **idea intoxication**. Says Belsky: "You need to work with people who ask difficult, practical questions that are frustrating but important when pushing ideas forward."

Creative Leadership

Ultimately, how you make ideas happen, both through your own organized approach and the community you round-up to work with you, depends on your skills of leadership, both of others and, in a way, of yourself.

One of the biggest challenges you face is motivating people to work through their action steps on long term projects, when so much of today's contemporary corporate environment is focused on short term results and, correspondingly, short term rewards — nearsighted motivations, Belsky calls them. Furthermore, it's well known that financial rewards — short or long-term — are not the principal performance motivators. At leading online shoe retailer Zappos, for instance, an employee survey placed it in fourth or fifth position, below attributes like corporate culture, vocational fulfillment and even having a good boss.

This prompts Belsky to recommend unplugging from the traditional reward system as a motivator and establishing a different structure — like a truly inspiring mission that everyone can buy into. Consider Zappos with their motto "Powered by Service." If people can't walk the talk, Zappos pays them to leave the company. The result: A team so committed to service they look for every opportunity to demonstrate it, in turn deriving personal satisfaction, even happiness, from their achievement.

Another route to keeping creative teams engaged is to find entertaining ways to interact with them — such as using games to foster learning, creativity and motivation. This is the approach used by Ji Lee, creative director of Google's Creative Labs and lecturer at New York's School of Visual Arts. Lee challenges colleagues and students to email each other with unusual links that stretch the mind in some way. Belsky quotes him as saying: "It's really fun, but at the same time it's very important because I think it breaks the routine of their work flow and brains to something totally difference"

In addition, of course, a philosophy that acknowledges performance through public recognition creates a powerful reward that further motivates those who play a part in making your ideas happen. Sometimes, acknowledging others' contribution to the successful implementation of your ideas is difficult for creatives — but it's a very powerful strategy.

Choosing the people who will make just such a contribution is clearly critical to the whole process of converting visions to reality. You want people who can share your vision (à la Zappos) but you also want **initiators**, people with a reputation for taking action to make things happen. You may already know these people within your organization but, if you're recruiting externally, forget their résumés, says Belsky, focusing instead on their interests and what they have done to further them. You also want a good mix of expertise. Consider, for example, the approach of previously-mentioned consultants IDEO, who use a model 'T' to assemble teams — the horizontal top bar of the letter representing broad skills everyone needs and the vertical bar representing a depth in a particular field relevant to the project.

Some other thoughts on optimizing the value of your team:

- Measure people on performance rather than the amount of time they work. Commonly known as **Results Only Work Environment** (ROWE) this approach has shown huge productivity gains at the likes of retailer Best Buy.
- Encourage killing of ideas. Think of this technique as being like the body's immune system. Empower people to throw out ideas that don't work.
- Don't discourage conflict. This ensures all ideas are fully explored. Get team members to present ideas, without comment from the others; then, when this is complete, invite constructive debate.
- Don't hunt for consensus, otherwise you run the risk of "settling on what offends no one," a watered down solution. Instead, empower someone to make a final decision.
- Share ownership of ideas — so that they belong to the team, not just you. ("The more people who lie in bed thinking about your ideas, the better.")
- Encourage your team through **appreciation** feedback. This means focusing your comments on what they've done well, their strengths. This motivates, while prompting individuals to consider the other areas you did not mention, without you appearing negative.

"Our best hope of staying on track," he says, "is to notice when we stray and to figure out why." The key ingredients of self-leadership are self-awareness, patience (so we avoid decision-making driven by emotion rather than intellect), learning from mistakes (and modifying future behavior accordingly) and avoiding the trap of **visionary's narcissism** (as mentioned above; remember that this is a collective effort - don't claim all the credit). Finally learn to be comfortable with your own contrariness.

Conclusion

Belsky asks: "If you were told the exact time your life would end, would you manage your time and energy any differently than you do now?"

We often spend too much time dreaming of what might be and not enough on making it happen.

Yet, by following the author's action-focused method (by segregating action steps, references and backburner items), enlisting the support of others (especially finding doers to counterbalance our dreaming) and by applying basic leadership skills to motivate and manage them and ourselves, we really can bring ideas to fruition.

Let's go back to Belsky's challenge of how we would behave if we knew our expiry date, what he calls watching the **backward clock**:

"As you seek to capitalize on your creative energy, insights, and ideas, the window of opportunity is always closing. A dose of pressure is a good thing. The fact that time is ticking should motivate you to take action on your ideas. When little opportunities present themselves, you might decide to seize them. An eye on the backward clock helps you stomach the risk because, after all, time is running out. Get on it."



Mr. Mahmoud Ibrahim
Managing Director
MIM International Consultancies

Time Productivity



Just look around, and you see many material items around you. Have you ever thought of the source for them? Have you ever wondered the amount paid for them by their owners?

For all the material man made items, you will find that the ultimate payment made by their owners are only for the time of many different people. Let it be labor hours, consulting hours or investment hours.

By labor hours I mean the time spent by labors in extracting the raw materials for the item, molding the shape and bringing it to the final usable form.

Consulting hours is also similar to labor hours that this are provided by consultants such as architects, designers and other consultants.

Investment hours are the return for business owners for investing their money in bringing each component of the item to its final form. Investors usually pay for the labors and consultants, as they foresee an opportunity in the material item.

The same can be observed true for any service that you avail. So my point is that, whole of the raw source for all materials are free from nature, and we only pay for the time of a bunch of people in one form or the other.

It is business managers who identifies an opportunity and accumulates the resources and brings the final product/service into the market. As such they are the ones always concerned about the productivity and motivates to utilize the time in most efficient manner possible. They always prefer those who can get more things done in comparatively lesser time frame.

Make sure you utilize your time in the most efficient manner and concentrate on getting more things done every day than the previous day. This doesn't mean working overtime but within your working hours.



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