



## 5 Tips to Help You Protect & Grow New Ideas

Lion cubs are born tiny, blind, and helpless. Weighing just 3 pounds and with their eyes shut tight for a week or longer after birth, the baby lions only get a chance to become apex predators because their mothers protect and nurture them until they're old enough to hunt and survive on their own.

New ideas may be even more vulnerable than lion cubs, as most organizations don't have fearsome mothers guarding them.

From the humble sticky note — now available in a near-infinite variety of colours and sizes — to the camera in your phone, ideas that are now ubiquitous were once small and vulnerable, their potential unknown.

Even leaders who value creativity often quash new ideas before they've been given a fair hearing.

When we surveyed global executives, 94% said innovation was important or very important to their organizations. But only 14% said their organizations were good at innovation.

Doing a better job of nurturing new ideas is a good place to begin addressing that innovation gap.  
How to Protect a New Idea

<https://www.ccl.org>

The Paper Industry Technical Association (PITA) is an independent organisation which operates for the general benefit of its members – both individual and corporate – dedicated to promoting and improving the technical and scientific knowledge of those working in the UK pulp and paper industry. Formed in 1960, it serves the Industry, both manufacturers and suppliers, by providing a forum for members to meet and network; it organises visits, conferences and training seminars that cover all aspects of papermaking science. It also publishes the prestigious journal *Paper Technology International* and the *PITA Annual Review*, both sent free to members, and a range of other technical publications which include conference proceedings and the acclaimed *Essential Guide to Aqueous Coating*.



In *How to Treat New Ideas*, authors David Magellan Horth and Michael T. Mitchell draw on decades of personal experience, data, and lessons from scores of organizations around the world. They identify 5 tips that can help companies nurture new ideas:

**5 TIPS TO HELP YOU PROTECT & GROW NEW IDEAS**

Center for Creative Leadership

- Resist the Instinct to Kill a New Idea**  
Take a deep breath and think through the idea a little more before rejecting it.
- Practice Innovation Thinking**  
Innovation thinking gives new ideas the oxygen they need to continue developing.
- Frame and Clarify the Idea's Purpose**  
Ask yourself what problem a new idea can help solve or what opportunity it might address.
- Use the POINT Technique (Pluses, Opportunities, Issues, New Thinking)**  
Consider the opportunities and challenges a new idea presents, and think through potential solutions to those challenges.
- Connect Ideas to Ideas**  
Brainstorming, mind-mapping, and forced connections can connect one idea to another.

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### **1. Resist the instinct to kill a new idea.**

Leaders need to understand that their first reaction to a new idea is typically “fight or flight.” When an idea that is new, foreign, or maybe even odd emerges, we’re programmed to fight it or resist it, perhaps maybe even ignore it in hopes that it will go away.

Steve Wozniak, cofounder of Apple, worked at blue chip firm Hewlett-Packard before he joined forces with Steve Jobs. He reportedly went to his HP bosses 5 times with the idea of building a personal computer; 5 times they said no.

This instinct comes from a finely tuned and powerful part of our brains—the limbic system. The limbic system is one of the larger and most ancient part of our brains. It’s the part of our brains that helped insure that we survived as a species.

Where would we be without our limbic brains and the deeply embedded “fight or flight” response? Likely, our ancestors would have been extinguished as they chose to try to hug some prehistoric beast rather than fight it off with a club or run for their lives. The drive to fear or run away from a particularly novel idea is a natural reaction, and one that’s so powerful it overwhelms us.

But leaders who want to encourage innovation should take a deep breath and allow themselves and their teams to think through the idea before rejecting it. They must watch out for signs they are subconsciously sabotaging innovation.

### **2. Practice innovation thinking.**

Innovation, by definition, means doing things differently. That creates risks and uncertainty—often considered enemies of a successful business.

The logical, analytical thought processes we rely on usually are not very helpful in the early stages of innovation. The key is to practice innovation thinking.

That means listening to your intuition and asking “What if?,” believing there’s always a better way.



There's nothing wrong with traditional business thinking—it's required to manage a modern organization. But when a new idea comes along, it's time to switch into innovation thinking mode. Innovation thinking gives new ideas the oxygen they need to continue developing.

### **3. Frame and clarify the idea's purpose.**

Now that you're starting to dig into the possibilities of a new idea, how do you give that new idea some concrete direction? One important technique is to frame and clarify the idea's purpose. In other words, what might this be good for?

Successful innovators will often ask themselves what problem a new idea can help solve or what opportunity it might address. Sometimes this takes a little patience.

When 3M scientist Spencer Silver created a “low-tack,” pressure-sensitive adhesive instead of the super-strong glue he'd been trying for, he couldn't imagine what it would be good for. When a colleague mentioned a problem with the slips of paper he used to mark songs falling out of his Sunday hymnal, Silver had a solution.

The result was 3M's Post-it notes, now a staple item in every office supply closet.

### **4. Use the POINT technique.**

At this point, the promise of at least some new ideas might be starting to clarify. But to sharpen that promise and test it a bit more rigorously, you can use the POINT technique developed by Pfizer executive Bob Moore.

**POINT** stands for:

**Pluses:** Praise the idea and consider what's good about it as presented.

**O**pportunities: Picture the opportunities and benefits that might be realized if you implemented the idea.

**I**ssues: While you don't want to kill new ideas, it's OK to consider some of their challenges and limitations.

**N**ew thinking: Use new thinking to develop solutions for the issues you've raised about the new idea.

Nurturing new ideas doesn't mean being naive about them. Rather, it means considering, with clear eyes, both the opportunities and challenges a new idea presents, and thinking through potential solutions to those challenges.

### **5. Connect ideas to ideas.**

Not every new idea will become a fully realized product or business solution on its own. But that doesn't mean those ideas don't have value.

One useful exercise to get more value out of new ideas is to combine previously unconnected ideas. Consider the Sony Walkman, which combined two concepts: pre-recorded cassette tapes and a device small enough to carry around. For the first time, people could take their music wherever they went.

Brainstorming, mind-mapping, and forced connections are techniques that can be used to connect one idea to another.

Learn more about our guidebook, [How to Treat New Ideas](#).