

CREATIVITY+PROBLEM SOLVING  
AWAY OF THINKING

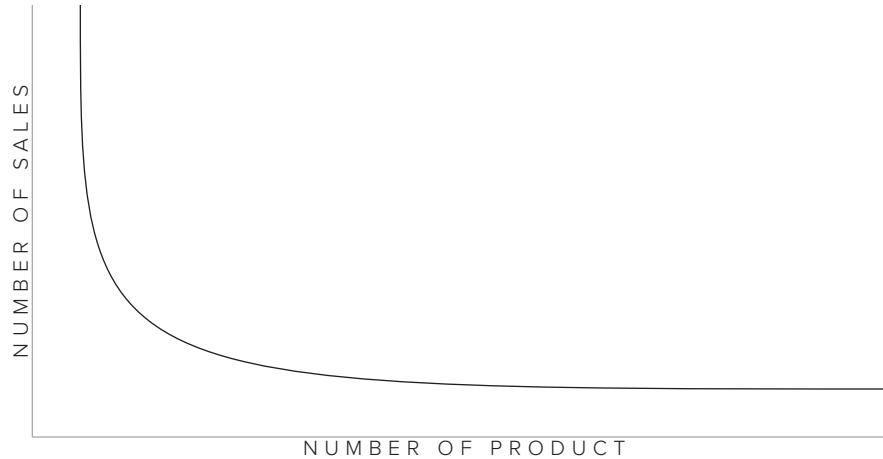
BUILT ON THE MANY THOUGHTS OF **HIDESHI HAMAGUCHI**

**BRAM PITOYO**

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& PROBLEM SOLVING  
**A WAY *of* THINKING**  
*built on the many thoughts*  
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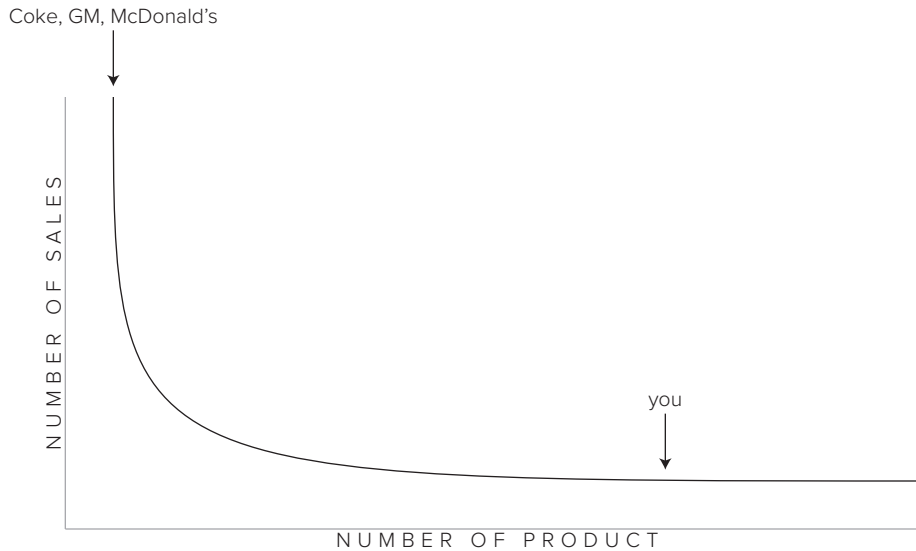
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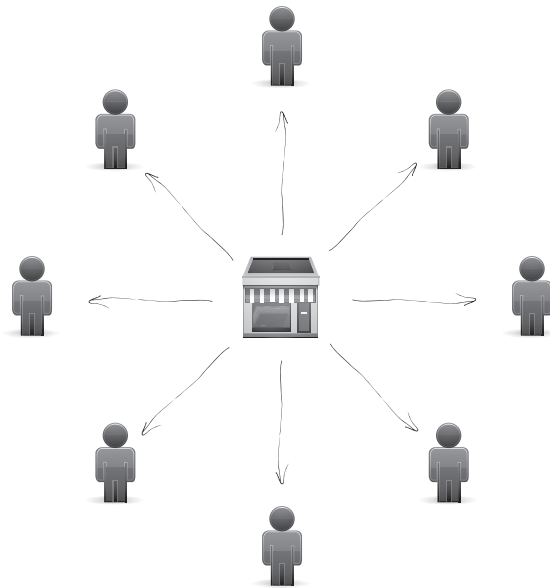


Today, less things sell more at less price, and more things sell less at more price. This happens universally, across all category, industry and situations. You call it *niche marketing* or *specialization*. I call it *The Long Tail*.

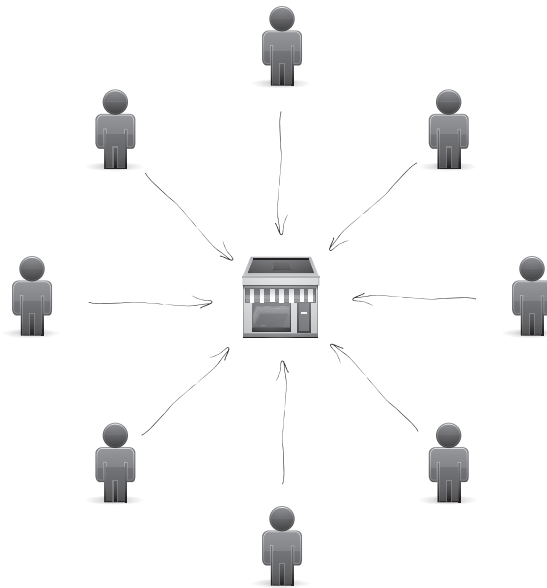
The long tail means that businesses can leap significant profit out of selling small volumes of hard-to-find items (right side of the tail) to many customers, instead of only selling large volumes of a reduced number of popular items (left side of the tail.)



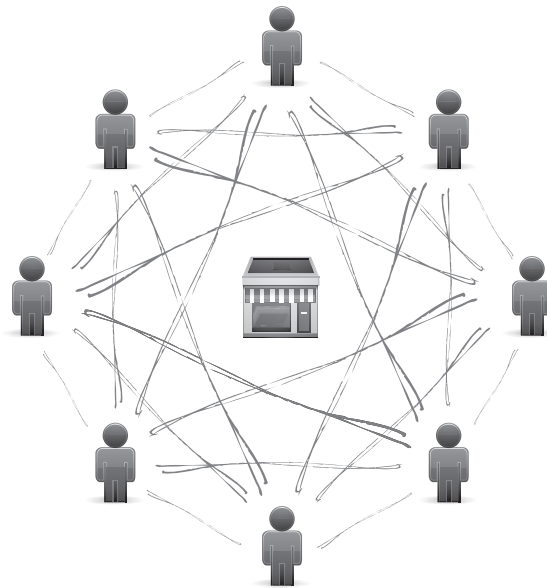
The result is, when you want to enter a new business, launch a product or strategize a campaign, you have to be on the *right* side of the tail, because your budget and brand awareness is probably isn't as big as GM, McDonald's or Coke.



In the past, companies project their messages *outward* to their customers. The communication mode is one-to-many. One company. Many customers. We call this *advertising*, and this is how most companies today choose to communicate: print, web, outdoors, etc.



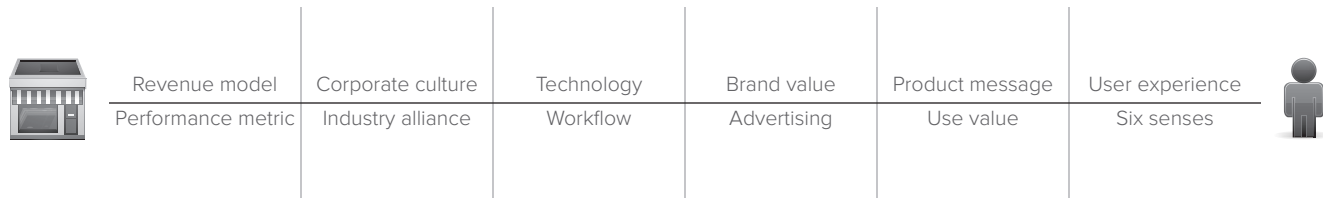
Next, customers started giving feedbacks to the company. The communication mode: many-to-one. The customer may say, *your product is too expensive to afford*, or *your support team isn't attentive*. The company's role is to listen and respond by making themselves better.



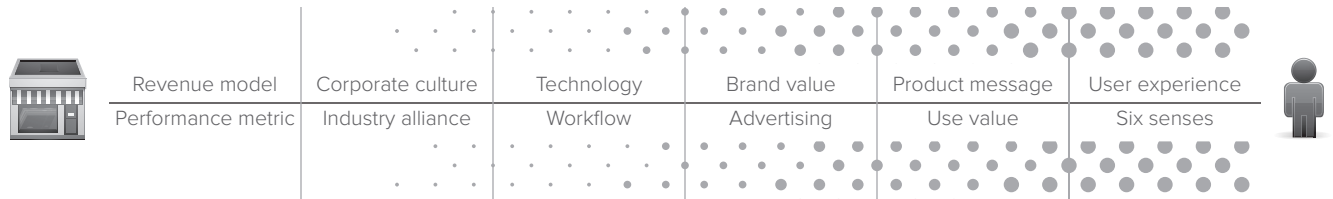
Today, *yes*: customers still talk about products, services and initiatives that companies makes all over the place (including the web); but *no*: they're not directing it towards the company. Part of this is because, though the world moves closer together, its many communities actually diverge. The internet only amplifies this effect further.

The question is, *how do you tap in and listen? And how do you respond and answer?*





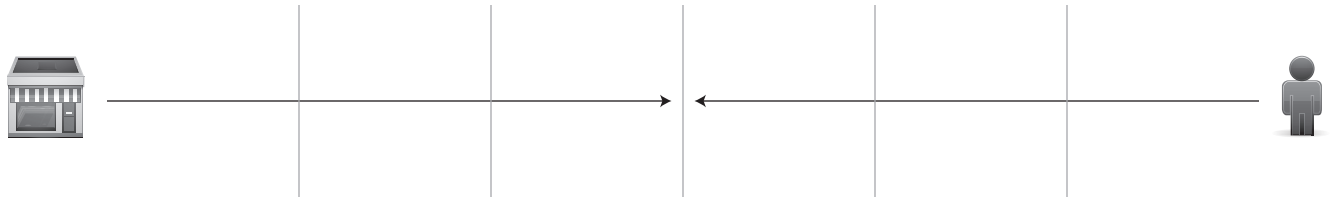
Part of why tapping in is so hard is because companies and customers are located on either side of a long line with many layers. The layers that are closest to the company can be its revenue model, corporate culture, industry alliances, etc. The layers closest to the customer is their experience with the brand (what they see with their six senses), advertising message, brand value, and so on.



Problem is,

1. The customer can only see a few layers deep. For example, they don't understand the business model, company culture or strategic alliance.
2. As businesses get more complex and savvy, the layers increase.

With the relative complexity and interdependence of businesses today, no wonder they feel like they lost touch with their customer base!



The solution is twofold:

1. Move the company closer to the right. Eliminate redundant layers and clarify vague ones. When brands talk about *making something relevant*, this is really what they're talking about.
2. Move the customer closer to the left. Revealing the inner workings of a company. When brands talk about *making something transparent*, this is really what they're talking about.

The question is, *how do you become both more relevant and transparent?*



- Obviously, a creative solution is needed. There are three ways to look at solutions:
1. Economist
  2. Designer
  3. Ecologist



The economist looks at *how many people can this solution impact at what price point*. On the left, you have a solution that solves a problem that a very specialized group of people had, or one that requires a relatively major investment in capital. On the right, you have a solution that solves problem for everyone (ie. it 'absorbs' problem at the level lower than it) or one that has a stronger price point.



The designer looks at *how elegant the solution is*. If the economist looks at the solution in context of its surroundings, this approach looks at the *content* of the solution itself. On one side, you have a solution that's clunky and unwieldy. On the other, an elegant and streamlined one. Keep in mind that, while elegant solutions may lead to faster problem solving, it is less likely to result in new perspective. Sometimes, the 'hard' way is the best way to learn.



The ecologist looks at the problem *as a system of relationship and interdependence*, where ideas both try to coexist with and succeed each other. Much like organic systems, ideas that survive must *change the shape of the space* around them and create uncertainty.

On the left, you have solutions that tends to be evolutionary (“a sharper razor invented in 2004.”) On the right is revolutionary ones (“rock knife invented 15,000 years ago.”)

Note how the example above contains both *content* (ie. “a better razor”) and *context* (ie. “invented in 2004.”)

1

2

3

The question is, *how do you make more solutions that change the shape of the space around it?*

There are three interdependent steps to do this:

1. Have the right tools
2. Have the right way of thinking
3. Have the right way of doing





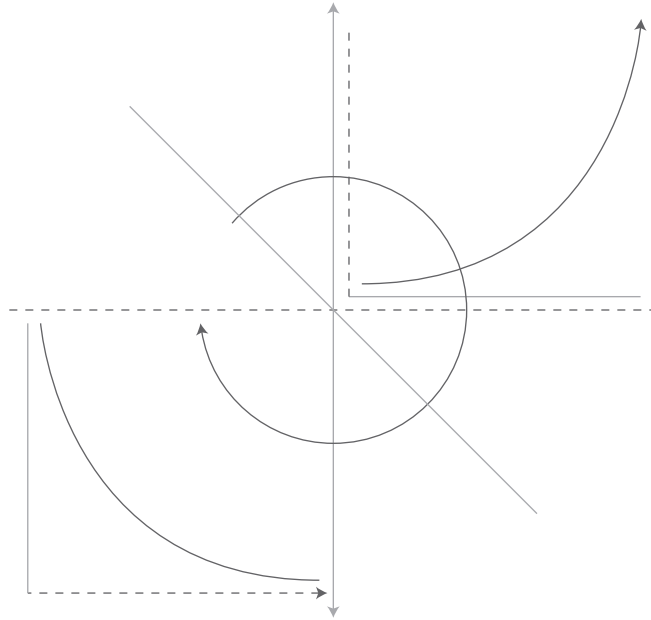
IDEATION

EXECUTION

*Have the right tools.* A large part of the reason why we think creativity is fickle or unpredictable is because we lack the tools and methodologies to do it.

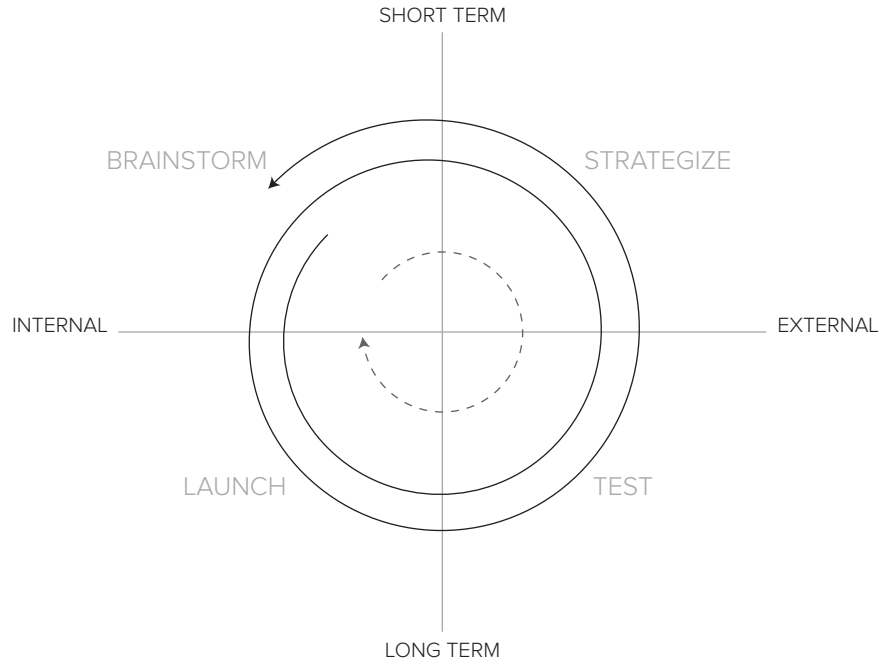
Creativity lies in the brainstorming or ideation stage of the process, but there exist no tool to brainstorm or ideate with (besides the trusty “think about it in the shower.”) Compare this with how things are in the execution stage, where we have plenty of applications to do many things, be it Microsoft Office, Adobe Creative Suite, etc.

I like diagram? It’s simple. visual and logical. *But it’s just the first part of the solution.*



*Have the right way of thinking.* Every idea can be thought of as occupying an *axis*. Masculine–feminine. Hot–cold. One–many. The possibilities are endless. Think in extremes and categorize your ideas into perspectives, and you’re halfway there.

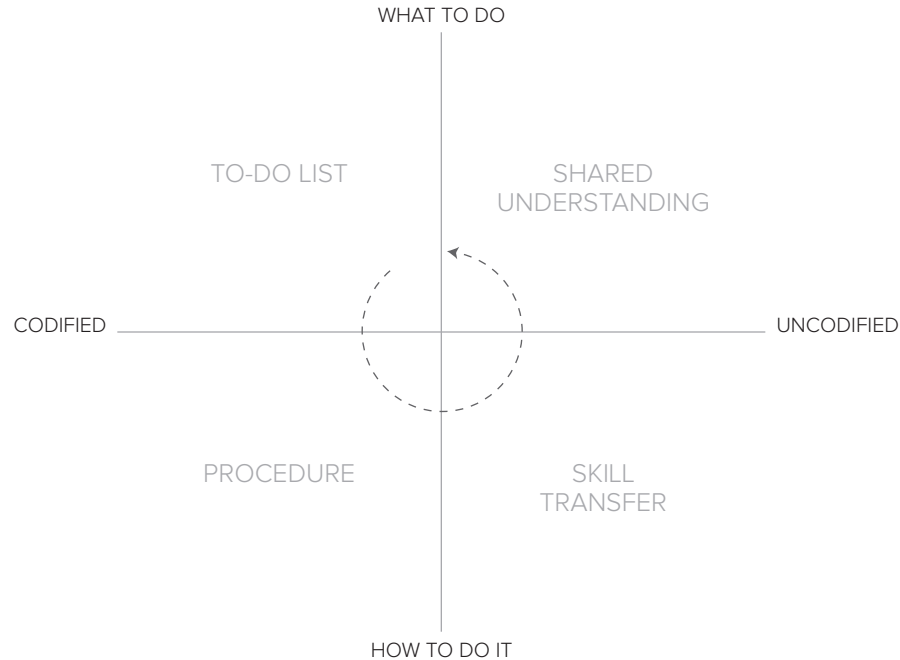
The second half is about mixing and matching these perspectives to create maps of opportunities. This you have to ask when we meet in person.



*Have the right way of doing.* Most people brainstorm their ideas, strategize their viability, test them out in a controlled environment, then launch it.

This method isn't bad, but there are very few chances that you're going to get it right the first time you try. But what if you start by brainstorming ideas, quickly launch them 'in the wild,' test assumptions and hypothesis you made on the brainstorming stage, make improvements by on the test result by careful strategy, then finally go back to brainstorming *more accurate ideas*?

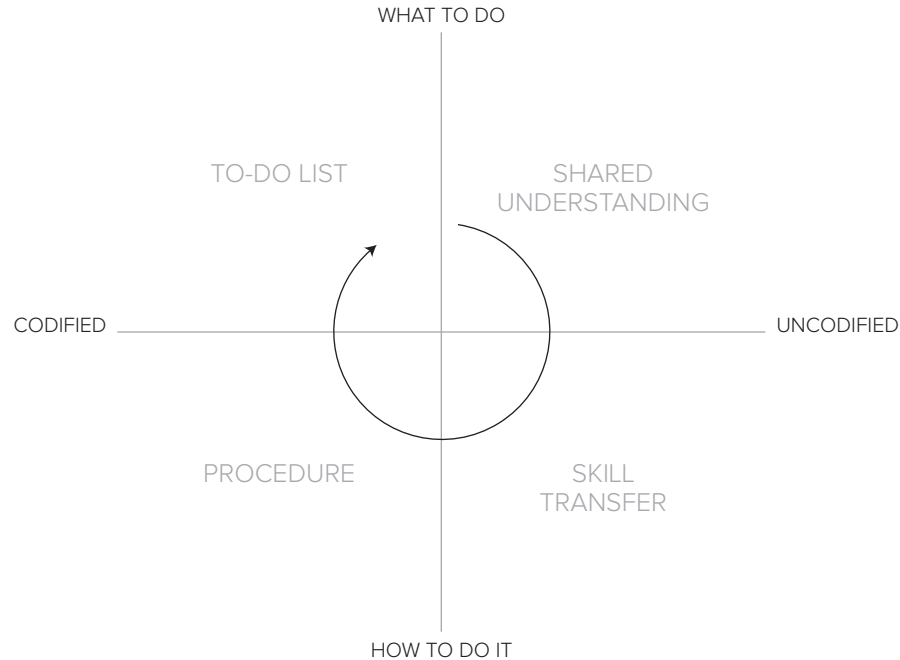
This allows you to continue the creative cycle, rather than break it the first time.



You've heard a lot from me today. I hope it has been useful.

When most people want to transfer knowledge, they:

1. Assemble some sort of a *to-do list*
2. Clarify this list into a *procedure* that details how to do it
3. Distribute this procedure to the desired target (subordinate, boss, coworker), hoping that *some skills will be transferred*
4. Have a *value that's shared* among this group, so they now know exactly what to do, even without a to-do list or procedure



What I did in this book was:

1. Try to give you some ideas about tools I use to come up with better solutions, so we have a *shared understanding*
2. From this, your job is to take these ideas and practice them in your professional and personal life, so they become *skills*
3. Hopefully, you'll develop *methods and procedures* for ideation that works for you
4. So the next time you're encountered with a problem, you'll know exactly the *list of things that you need to do* to generate better solutions

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bram Pitoyo is an independent brand developer, typography/readability consultant and online communication strategist who aims to unite the creative and technology communities in Portland, Oregon, and around the world.

He has helped founded and organized citywide events like:

- Cre8Camp  
<http://cre8camp.org>
- Refresh Portland  
<http://refreshportland.org>
- CyborgCamp  
<http://cyborgcamp.com>

And organized community projects like:

- Portland Tech Twitter wiki  
<http://aboutus.org/PortlandTechTwitter>
- Portland Coffee Shop wiki  
[http://aboutus.org/PDX\\_Coffee\\_Shops](http://aboutus.org/PDX_Coffee_Shops)

Online, he covers, tweets and livestreams local events, identifies typefaces, writes about design, marketing and innovation, and bootstraps systems at:

- Link En Fuego  
<http://linkenfuego.wordpress.com>
- Portland Creative/Tech Event Review  
uStream channel  
<http://tr.im/pcter>
- Designer Daily  
<http://designer-daily.com>
- Makerlab  
<http://blog.makerlab.org>

By day, he is an account planner who works with agencies like Wild Alchemy, CoatesKokes and PMS1 to help brands like DoveLewis, Ski Washington, Stevens Pass, Tuality Healthcare and E. & J. Gallo Winery sing killer choruses with an equally beautiful opus.

He, fortunately, is available for work, and may be contacted at  
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