

# Your Second Ideastorming Mission

## Your mission:

To continue the work of designing your own big idea through the process of ideastorming.

## Your first task:

Go through the mini course and content found at the following if you haven't already:

- <https://www.straightupbusiness.institute/mini-courses/ideastorming-exercises>

Read about Coffitivity and be sure to understand the difference between brainstorming and ideastorming. As you know, the work we're doing here is about ideastorming.

## Your second task:

Do this completely on your own:

1. Walk to a space in which you don't usually work. Spend some time there. I'm recommending a coffee shop for the reasons identified in the Coffitivity example. I'd also recommend walking (vs. driving) for the reasons outlined in the research about how that boosts creativity. Some people like to walk the whole time, stopping only to capture their thoughts. Others like to walk and sit for while. Do what works for you.
2. While you're gone, come up with at least 10 different new venture ideas of your own (subject to the constraints and structures shared in the following pages.)
3. Then write them down on the Personal Ideastorming worksheet I shared in class (I'm also sharing it again here with this handout). As you can see, this worksheet makes use of a simple templated structure of an idea that includes three elements: 1) the customer or human being that would be helped by your proposed offering; 2) the problem you'd be solving for that person; and 3) the solution you're proposing, i.e. your offering. Last time I just wanted a list of ideas. This time I want you to represent each idea you come up with as a customer-problem-solution triad.
4. When you're done, circle your "best" three ideas.
5. Then put a box around your "best" one.
6. Submit your best three through the second lesson of the above-linked mini course.
7. Bring your worksheet to class.

Although you won't be locked into to any of the ideas you come up with here – this activity is intended to help you learn the process – it's quite possible that you will hit on something great that seeds your Idea Maker project in this course. So do take it seriously.

## Context and constraints:

We're going to look at the definitions and differences between invention and innovation in class, and I'm pretty sure you're already good at inventing and developing things. (You're in fourth year engineering after all). So I'm going to add some constraints to this activity that will help us keep our focus on innovation (vs. invention) in order to help you build the right competencies.

As such, here are the constraints for this second ideastorming task:

1. Your ideas must include a tangible element that someone can hold or touch. (To use language we'll get into later, this means your offering could be a product, service, process, or experience – i.e. you don't have to just make and sell a tangible product – but it must be based heavily on something tangible or “holdable” that people can touch or interact with physically while engaging with it.)
2. The tangible part must be made primarily from cardboard. Yes, cardboard. And yes, any kind of cardboard. You can augment the cardboard but the main raw material used for your ideas needs to be cardboard. Don't hesitate to let me know if you have any questions at all about this and, if in doubt in the meantime, ask yourself whether someone you walked up to on the street would agree that your idea is based on cardboard, e.g. that they'd say “Yeah, sure that's made from cardboard. Why do you ask?”
3. The ideas you generate here should be of a scope that you and a team would be able to go through the whole entrepreneurial life cycle (e.g. back of the napkin through to first revenues) before this course ends. I will give you lots of guidance on this and how you'll be assessed through the projects we undertake, so for now in this learning phase, just keep in mind that the ideas you consider should be do-able in the timeframe of this course.

In this way, **your task in this activity is to come up with as many ideas as possible (narrowed down to 10, and then three, and then one) that involve solutions to the real problems of real people, that are based on cardboard, and that could be implemented in the timeframe of this course.**

## For inspiration:

I recommend the following videos for a little bit of inspiration:

- Caine's Arcade: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faIFNkdq96U>. This was done by a very young person and you can see that he had some help. But it demonstrates how even something very simple has the potential to create value. It's an experience offering and not a product offering (i.e. he's selling the chance to experience the games, not the chance to buy them) but the offering still depends on tangible features made from cardboard. It also clearly shows the power of persuasive communication to the right people.

- Leak Guardian: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3SlZ7aviQc>. This was done for a university project where the task was to create something of value using cardboard, and in which the students only had 7 days to go from ideation to first revenues. The unique (loud?) style of presentation aside, this takes product development a little beyond where Caine took it with his arcade and shows how a pretty basic idea can serve a very real function for a clear target customer. This one's also interesting because the designers augmented the cardboard with other functioning parts. Sort of a "smart cardboard" approach. Nothing wrong with that as long as everybody looking at your idea would agree that it is indeed made from cardboard, and as long as you can convince me and others in the class that the cardboard is critical to the value being created. I also share it because of the team's hustle – again, this is not about their style of presentation in the video, but, rather, the fact that they went out and sold their offering door to door. Because of the feedback that yields, you will see that learning through sales and pre-sales (e.g. traditional presales or those done in Kickstarter-like fashion) are as important in this course as the design and development phases. A simple product implemented quickly based on real customer feedback can get you just as far in this course (and the real world) as a highly technical play.
- Google Cardboard: <https://www.google.com/get/cardboard>. This is an interesting example too that I share for a few reasons. First is that it's obviously not a standalone product, i.e. it can't be used without the smartphone and carefully designed app. And I share it precisely for that reason. You're encouraged to come up with entirely new and self-contained new venture ideas but I also want to encourage you to look for ways to add value to existing contexts using cardboard. You don't need to provide the whole context in order to innovate. Second, I like the relative simplicity of this solution. It makes the VR experience available at a lower cost than might be possible with other materials, and it's easy to produce and ship (e.g. in a flattened form). Third, it has the potential for some real impacts,

All that said:

- None of these examples is meant to be better than another; they're just ideas meant to provide some inspiration to those of you who might be tempted to fool yourself into thinking that something highly impactful can't be built out of cardboard.
- Your ideas don't need to be like these at all. They can be for anything you can imagine as long as it meets the constraints described here.

### Advice:

- Keep in mind that the Idea Maker project, the Opportunity Maker project, and the Revenue Maker project in this course are going to be about designing and implementing opportunities that are the most **impactful**, imminently **feasible**, and deeply personally **inspiring** as possible for you to carry out. (And carry out for real in the timeframe of the course.)

- Recall from the notes that ideastorming is a way of coming up with ideas, which can be thought of as triads of **problems** (that one or more people have) and **solutions** (that you or a team of people might be able to offer) to a **customer** (or target human) in such a way as to yield an opportunity. You're trying to think of ways to create value.
- When you carry out this ideastorming activity, clear your mind, your schedule, and the space. Don't spend the time checking email or thinking about other things. In fact, I'd recommend leaving your cell phone and other distractions at home if you can. And give it some real time and attention. If you do feel the need to bring a computer or device so you can look something up, then don't open your email or Facebook or anything else that prompts you with stimuli. You should be in active mode, only using devices to seeking input about your own thoughts, not response mode - responding to other people's thoughts.
- As you come up with ideas, you might try thinking through things that bug you or have bugged you in the past – problems or challenges that need solving. This is how the Coffitivity guy did it. Or times you have thought about something that would have made life easier for you or someone else. Or things that you're naturally good at doing and could do for others. Or things that you've seen others do to create value, but which aren't done here. There's no cheating here and you should feel comfortable getting inspiration in all of these ways and more. In fact, there's nothing wrong at all with asking others for their answers to these questions. Or in Googling "cardboard products". There are no rules in ideation.
- You might also consider doing more than one ideastorming session. As in the Coffitivity example, the connections don't always happen right away. Coming back at this task multiple times can add perspective and make a big difference. So can having your subconscious working on things in the spaces between.
- Although ideastorming is an ongoing personal practice and you can't necessarily command yourself to come up with a great idea at a certain time of day, there is a real benefit from practicing the practice and learning the discipline. You never know when that idea will come, but it won't come if you're not ready for it. So just do it. Even if you don't feel like the ideas that are coming to you are amazing, make yourself put them down on paper.
- I've provided the customer-problem-solution worksheet to help emphasize the importance of adding a little structure to your process, but there's nothing special about it, and there's nothing to stop you redrawing the little problem-customer-solution triad and using it in a regular idea notebook.

Good luck!