

GUIDE 06

The Full *Tank*

Chapter 6 of the book: Imagination and Ideas

DEV (in the car, a podcast playing)

"I had the whole pitch in the shower. Now it's gone."

BEFORE YOU WATCH

Read Chapter 6 before the episode. The exercises come in three parts (Combining, Receiving, Capture) and this week's page uses all three.

Have the book open, and bring your chief aim. The chapter asks what ideas you already have that could serve it, and who could make them better.

Bring one thing you could write in: a small notebook, or the notes app on your phone with a fresh note open. Put it on the table before the episode starts.

THE SCENE

Dev is an account executive at Ninefold. He has carried the Whitfield pitch around for a week with no way in, and at seven-ten on Thursday morning, in the shower, the whole thing arrives: the opening, three moves, the closing line.

His phone is on the sink. He does not touch it.

Towel, phone, elevator, feed. Car, podcast. Office elevator, feed. By his desk he has the first line and a feeling. The rest is gone. He has the shape, not the thing.

Across town, Carla's Tuesday mornings have been slow for a year. Across the street from her salon, the senior-center van unloads at nine-forty. She has never once put the two on the same page.

At the table, Walt asks Dev what was playing when he got in the car, and when he last drove anywhere with nothing on. Dev asks why he would do that.

Walt asks Carla what is across the street from her shop. She tells him, and asks why. He says he is just asking.

THE IDEA

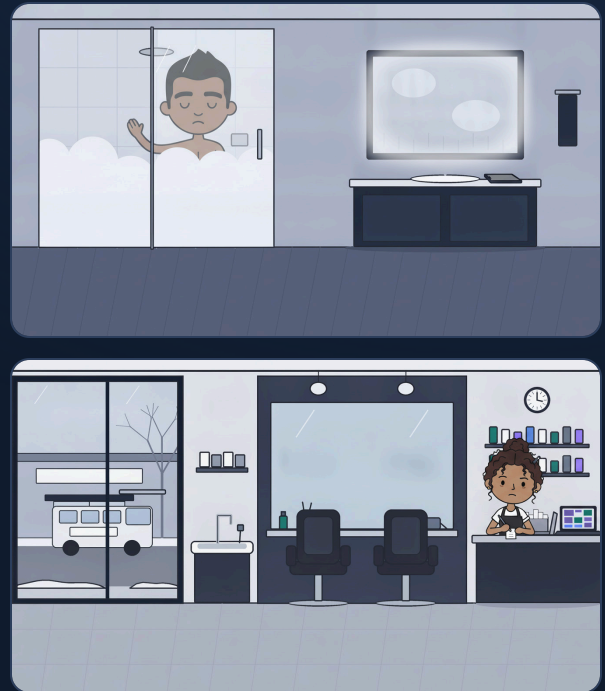
The *idea*

Most of what you used today was an old idea rearranged. The phone in your pocket is a telephone, a camera, a map and a record player stacked together. None of the parts were new. The arrangement was.

That is the kind of imagination that makes money, and the good news is that it is a skill, not a gift. Anyone can take two things that exist and put them next to each other and ask what happens. The book calls this combining.

There is a second kind of imagination, rarer and stranger, where the idea arrives whole, from nowhere you can trace. The book calls this receiving. It works best when you have loaded the problem thoroughly and then stepped away. It is not mystical. It is the part of your mind that keeps working after you have stopped paying attention, and it reports back when it has something.

Imagination is the workshop where desire gets turned into a plan. A wish is formless. The imagination gives it shape, and the plan gives it legs. Both kinds get stronger with use, like any muscle.



The best predictor of good combinations is breadth of raw material: people who read outside their field and talk to people outside their industry have more parts to combine. The receiving kind has been tested, and the rule that falls out of the test is this: load the problem deliberately, then do something undemanding. Do not fill every idle minute with input. The idle minute is where the work happens.

The other rule is capture. Your mind is for having ideas, not for holding them. An idea that is not written down within a minute or two is usually gone. Record every hunch, however small, and review the notes weekly.

Ideas are cheap. Everyone has them. What gives an idea value is the desire, the plan, the action and the persistence that get attached to it. An idea can be shared with other people at no cost, improved by them at no cost, and handed back to you better than you gave it. This is the real reason the phrase "it takes money to make money" is false.

THE MEMO

MEMO

THE PATTERN, NAMED

SUBJECT

The Full Tank

CC

One account executive. One shower. One podcast queue with no bottom.

MOVES

Load the problem. Get the idea. Fill the next minute with input. Lose the idea. Fill the minute after that. Call the week busy.

OUTCOME

He is never bored, and he has never had the same idea twice.

Why it is tempting: input feels like work. A podcast about closing feels like getting better at closing. The feed in the elevator feels like staying current. And an empty minute feels like falling behind, especially at twenty-six with a number under your hand and a team you mean to be running by thirty. None of it is lazy. It is the opposite of lazy, which is why nobody at the office would ever call it a leak. The pitch was real, the mind that produced it was working the whole time, and the only thing it needed was ten quiet minutes and a place to write. Both were available. Both got filled.

THE REWIND



Same car, same bridge, Thursday morning. This time Dev's hand goes to the dash and comes back empty. Ten minutes of road noise, and he hates every one of them. Halfway across the bridge the pitch comes back, in a different order than it left, and at the first red light, with the car stopped, he opens a note on his phone, titles it "Shower," and types three lines. The second move is Carla's, and it is older: on the back of a receipt she writes "slow Tuesdays" on the left and "senior center" on the right, spends five minutes asking what she would get if she combined them, and writes one word in between: clinic. The van drops people at her door at nine-forty; the chair is empty at nine-forty. The next Tuesday she tells the table, and in five more minutes they improve it: that is where the apprentices learn (Dez), the van stops there anyway so ask the driver (Hal), one flyer, one morning, call it the clinic (Dev), and when is the first one (Walt). Two weeks.

What it cost: Dev drove ten minutes in silence, hated it, got honked at, and came away with three lines instead of the whole thing; Carla gave up the one quiet morning she had and told four people an idea before it was finished, which she had never done.

THE PAGE, IN THE EPISODE



Imagination and Ideas

*slow Tuesdays**the senior center***A wish is a feeling. A goal has edges.****DESIRE, PLAN, ACTION, PERSISTENCE**

THE PAGE

The *Page*

1. Do you have ideas for making something better, faster, cheaper or more convenient? Write them, all of them, without judging. Then mark which could contribute to your chief aim, and how.

2. Who could you share an idea with who would improve it, or help you carry it out? Name them.

3. Take two things from different parts of your life or work that have nothing to do with each other. Write them side by side. Spend five minutes asking what you would get if you combined them. Write whatever comes.

4. The receiving practice. This has to be daily to be any use, and if you have not been using this faculty it is weak, and it will take a few weeks before it starts to deliver. Choose a time when you will not be disturbed; most people find the first minutes after waking best. Sit up. Close your eyes. Let your mind unfocus and watch what passes through it. Ignore the chatter. If a thought shows up with any bearing on your chief aim, let it develop. Stay as long as you can. Then open your eyes and write down every idea that came, without judging any of them. Review the notes once a week. Write down where you will do this and at what time, and the date you start.

5. Capture. Where will you record ideas when they arrive at inconvenient times? Name the tool. Put it in reach now.

The full set is in Chapter 6. Do those too.

THIS WEEK

This *Week*

1 One: put a capture tool in reach, now. A notebook, or a note on your phone. Put it where your ideas happen: the sink, the car, the bed. Everything goes in, however small. Read it once a week.

2 Two: one walk or drive this week with no input. Load the problem first; say what you are working on, out loud if you have to. Then nothing on. Ten minutes is enough to hate it. Twenty is enough for something to come up.

3

Three: two unrelated things, side by side, five minutes. Write them next to each other. Ask what you would get if you combined them. Write whatever comes. Most of it will be nothing. Then tell one person anyway.

DAY	DID IT	ONE LINE ABOUT IT
1	☐	
2	☐	
3	☐	
4	☐	
5	☐	
6	☐	
7	☐	

GO CHECK

Combinational creativity and breadth of raw material: creativity researchers, as the book summarizes them, with no single name given; most creative work is old parts rearranged, and the best predictor of good combinations is how much material you have to combine.

Incubation: Benjamin Baird and his colleagues, whose experiment found that a break spent on an easy, mind-wandering task produced far more creative solutions than rest or a demanding task.

The default mode network: the brain network, identified by imaging, that becomes active precisely when you stop focusing; the shower insight is this network delivering.

Capture: David Allen, who wrote about productivity for decades: "your mind is for having ideas, not for holding them."

NEXT TUESDAY

HAL (phone face down)

"The buyer walked."

BEV (O.S.)

"So what are you going to do?"

HAL

"Ask around."

Chapter 7: the first plan is a draft, and Hal is about to poll five people and change his mind with every one.