CHAPTER 2 DRAFT BLUEPRINT: IDEA GREEK (EUREKA!)

A sneak peek into Idea Greek. A view into how some of us in product development might come up with ideas and inventions. The underlying principles can be broadly applied to other situations and roles.

α **ALPHA DECISIONS:** ***Signify a clear understanding of priorities, guiding the focus and direction.***

First things first: Hierarchy exists, so it's important to understand the nature of your role in the organization and how it fits within the existing structure. Concentrate on the strategy laid out for the organization by high-ranking leadership. Developing ideas consistent with that direction can allow you to focus creative energy to solve very specific, identified problem areas. If you are in leadership or the sole proprietor, this is an opportunity to reconnect with your own vision and mission.

Identify one key strategy within your organization that is most relevant to your work and write it here:

....

....

....

....

> ***Tip:*** *Mission, vision, purpose, strategic plan, yearly priorities, and monthly town-halls are all ways that organizations and leadership communicate their goals, values, and targets. In what ways are you or your functional group supporting this strategy? How can you creatively align your priority tasks/goals/projects with this strategy?*

- As you think about this strategy, do any questions or opportunities come to mind for new ideas and innovative thinking?

- Who can you discuss these strategies with to learn more?

> ***Suggested Goal:*** *Converse comfortably with the strategic intent of your organization and how your work fits within the overarching structure.*

β **BETA TESTING:** ***Facilitates the generation of invaluable feedback, enabling iterative refinement.***

Evaluate the prototypes of new concepts with customers and seek feedback on features based on a minimally viable prototype. Industrial supply chains may influence product creation, functionality, and distribution channels. Many products are sold directly to the consumer, while others are sent to original equipment manufacturers (OEM), so the client is not always the end consumer.

Who do you consider the customer(s) or audience for your work? List them here:

....

....

....

....

> ***Tip:*** *Understanding any output produced or aspects of a given product's life cycle can be incredibly valuable when considering the potential impact of your work. The more information you have, the better the ideas that may arise.*

- How might you enhance the outcomes of your work by embracing this feedback?
- How often do you seek and/or review customer feedback within your work?

> ***Suggested Goal:*** *Understand customer/user perspective and create a hopper of new ideas based on the feedback you get from whomever you consider your customer(s).*

Δ **DELTA ASSESSMENT**: ***Involves a critical evaluation to identify and rectify shortcomings and inefficiencies.***

Establish the shortcomings of current products and find solutions to evolve with customer needs.

List the benchmark products relevant to your specific area of interest:

....

....

....

> **Tip:** *Online product reviews can be a great source of information about features and shortcomings. User forums are also very informative – users may go into great detail about what they do or do not like. These insights can then be validated quantitatively through surveys and customer research.*

- What do you think could be some innovative twists or tweaks to this product, and why do you believe that? What are the key assumptions you are making?
- How well do you know customer needs to be able to improve upon the product's performance? Do you have to validate with the customer what you think may be their needs?

> ***Suggested Goal:*** *Secondary research to assess possible improvement opportunities and add to the list of potential ideas to validate internally and externally.*

Θ **THETA FUNCTION:** ***Encourages embracing complexity, fostering solutions to multifaceted challenges.***

Understand the unarticulated needs that can lead to disruptive ideas by finding the connections between complex customer variables, much like theta functions in math.

List everything you know about how the customer uses this product in their own setting:

....

....

....

....

....

> ***Tip:*** *Product use videos can offer clues to unarticulated needs. Observation of how the user interacts with the product can be insightful, providing rich context for further understanding.*

- Focus on the context and try to imagine what would make the customer's life easier as it relates to the 'jobs being done'.
- Is there a completely different product that can be used to make an impact on customer productivity and disrupt the current product?

> ***Suggested Goal:*** *Understand how your output or product is used. What needs are the customers not articulating that become clear when you see the job to be done by the product?*

Σ **SIGMA FACTOR:** ***Encompasses environmental factors, ensuring solutions are contextually relevant.***

Observe external factors, such as technology or business trends, that can create or change customer requirements, just like the sigma factor in gene transcription, which depends upon environmental conditions.

For instance, in large part, baby diapers moved from sticky tapes to hook and loop fasteners because more parents were using baby oils. Once that oil got onto the tape, the adhesive was rendered nonfunctional. Hook and loop diaper closures are more contamination tolerant compared to an adhesive closure.

List some of the trends that are likely to impact the customer's product requirements. These may include regulatory requirements, demographic details, or new technologies.

....

....

....

....

> ***Tip:*** *Consider the ecosystem in which the product operates. More often than not, it is what drives change. How are you or your organization monitoring all these external factors, and when do you think there will be a tipping point necessitating change?*

- What building blocks can be put in place to be ready to scale the innovation when the trends take hold?

> ***Suggested Goal:*** *Understand the trends that may impact the customer, the product, and its usage. Anticipate what could be potential improvements given that context.*

Ψ **PSI PHENOMENON:** ***Creating space for serendipity and the power of luck in the ideation process.***

Sometimes ideas can appear to me from nowhere, almost like paranormal factors or psychic abilities that cannot be explained. Gut and intuition do play a role, but as Louis Pasteur famously said, "Chance always favors a prepared mind."

List all the trade magazines, scholarly journals, conferences/expos, and key opinion and thought leaders that relate to the area you are working on.

....

....

....

....

> ***Tip:*** *It is always good to know the history of various innovations that you encounter and how they came about. What were successes and failures along the way that led to the current final format? What inspiration led to the original idea? I have found that the more you know about how ideas come to life ... the more ideas come to you in life.*

- How often do you review conference proceedings? How often do you read what the experts are proposing or the key opinions of recognized thought leaders?
- How often do you scan patents and publications to understand the needs and problems to solve and the technology solutions at play?

> ***Suggested Goal:*** *Seeding disparate thoughts in your mind to foster uncommon connections that often lead to new ideas.*

Coming up with ideas gets easier as you come up with more ideas. Giving the process of ideation some structured boost can lead to many more eureka moments.

Well thought-out idea fragments often inspire a complete vision to bring them to life.