

ideation in the real world

reimagining the Royal Melbourne Show



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**ROYAL
MELBOURNE
SHOW**

New ideas – the kind of ideas that can transform your organisation – rarely fall out of the sky into our laps while we stare out the window. In many cases the development of good ideas requires an organisation to create the right conditions to spark the ideas and fertile ground in which they can seed and grow, yet knowing how to bring about those conditions is where many of us need help. One way is to introduce fresh thinking by bringing in people who are external to the organisation and involve them in a process of co-design.

Earlier this year Right Lane assisted the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria (RASV) to 'Reimagine the Royal Melbourne Show', involving external participants with specific expertise, in a structured ideation process. The RASV was seeking to identify step-change growth opportunities for the Show through this process.

Involving external participants in the ideation process enables us to introduce different experiences and fresh perspectives. In this case, management were so close to the daily operations of the Show that it was hard for them to think of ideas without being constrained by current operational challenges. By carefully selecting participants with demonstrable success in delivering innovation and growth in related fields, the internal team were inspired to think differently about what was possible. Through a highly structured, facilitated approach we were able to create the conditions to unlock new possibilities and enable step change thinking.

Right thinking

Our five-step innovation process introduces external perspectives by involving external participants in deliberate ways. External participants with expertise and experience in delivering growth and innovation in related fields can provide new ideas and push the organisation to think differently about what is possible. The introduction of these external perspectives is coupled with a highly structured and facilitated approach and that respects the expertise of the internal team while unlocking new and expansive thinking.

The problem went from a conceptual challenge - 'we need to grow' - to something far more tangible and ambitious.



Right Lane's five step innovation process:

1. Define the problem

First, we spent time defining the core problem that the project was seeking to address and reframing it in a way that was motivational for participants to engage with and solve. The problem went from a conceptual challenge – 'we need to grow' – to something far more tangible and ambitious – 'we want to re-invent the Show to make it a must-see annual event for 1 in X Victorians'. Having this clarity helped motivate participants to think beyond incremental improvements, and, further into the process, ensured we had a yardstick to prioritise the ideas with the greatest impact.

2. Develop hypotheses

We then worked with the client team to develop broad hypotheses on the greatest opportunities to solve the problem we'd identified. As this step lays the ground for the rest of the process, it was important to take time to do this in a way that provided enough clarity to enable, but not constrain, the later phases. Hypotheses were therefore framed as broad questions – could step change growth be generated through: a radical change in the physical design of the event, a revamped education program that brought large numbers of school children and their parents along, or a distinctive offer targeting migrant groups or tourists?

3. Select participants

External participants were then carefully selected based on their experience and track record as it related to these broad hypotheses. For example, as the team had formed a hypothesis that step-change growth might come from changing the event design, we invited an expert with deep experience in innovative event design whose resume comprised multiple major events including the opening ceremony for the Sydney Olympics. Another participant had a proven track record in developing innovative schools programs linked to the state curriculum, and understood how to successfully deliver a program that created a value proposition for schools and teachers. Internal participants were also carefully selected, on the basis of their operational experience and their perceived openness and willingness to engage with the fresh thinking their external counterparts could bring. We also felt it was important to create some value for the external participants; in this case, opportunity to connect with interesting like-minded people, be part of shaping an iconic event, invitations to events and where appropriate opportunities to continue collaborating.

4. Facilitate structured ideation session

We engaged external participants by providing them with a briefing in advance, and then involved them and their internal team in a highly stimulating and productive half-day ideation workshop aimed at addressing the problem we'd identified in step one. This workshop was carefully structured and involved using convergent and divergent ideation techniques to capture the current thinking and then extend the thinking of participants. In total over 100 ideas were identified, many of them completely new to the internal team. At the final stage of the workshop, a smaller number of the ideas – deemed to be the most prospective and solving our core problem – were prioritised by participants to take forward into the validation phase. Participants – both external and internal – left feeling energised and motivated to continue the work and stay connected to the process.

5. Validate the ideas

Following the first workshop, we conducted research to validate each of the prioritised ideas. This involved gathering basic data on addressable market size, likely benefits and costs, competitors/case studies and so on. The intent was to provide enough information to persuade the team to proceed (or not) to a trial phase or a point where material investment was required to advance the idea. We sought further input from a fresh group of external participants, those with even more relevant 'on ground' experience; now that the ideas were progressing beyond basic hypotheses we could be even more targeted in who to invite. We conducted another half day workshop – this time aimed at prioritising the remaining ideas by assessing the strength of their value propositions and their size and economic attractiveness. We also involved the RASV board in another short listing process once the ideas were advanced enough to enable them to make a decision to further invest in their development. All told, four of these new ideas were taken through to implementation for the 2017 or 2018 Show, with another sitting in the pipeline for development in 2019 and beyond.

Benefits of our approach as identified by RASV

RASV's CEO and Head of Strategy and Research identified the top three reasons that Right Lane Consulting and its approach made a difference to RASV:

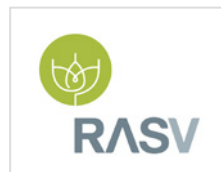
1. Right Lane acted as a connector: Right Lane assisted RASV to develop the growth hypotheses, identify the external participants to involve in the process, introduce the opportunity to these participants and gain their commitment to participate.
2. The value of passionate people: By engaging the right external participants, in the right way, they became emotionally invested in the outcome of reimagining the Show.
3. Diversity of the thinkers: Having external participants that each brought a different perspective and range of experience enabled the best opportunities to be fleshed out to a high level of detail within the workshop.

Benefits of this approach

The process that we have developed enables our clients to open up their organisation to collaborate with external individuals in a highly structured way, that respects the expertise of the internal team while unlocking new and expansive thinking. External participants don't see the roadblocks that can limit those within an organisation and their involvement helps inspire internal teams to imagine new possibilities.

By involving external participants with the right skills and experience you can gain access to enormous data sets to inform the decisions you make. This approach also enables you to identify partners that can lend the skills required to successfully execute on the opportunities identified.

We can't always expect our organisations to have all the skills internally to tap into trends in technology, consumer preferences and regulation and policy, as well as have sufficient experience in executing new ideas. Involving the right external participants in a structured and stimulating process can inject the right amount of new thinking to allow you to reimagine your organisation.



'Right Lane facilitated the identification of realistic, implementable step-change ideas for RASV. They supported us in engaging remarkable external participants and individual pre-briefings underpinned this successful outcome.'

RASV and our stakeholders were impressed with the passion and professionalism the team exhibited.'

Jeanette Mayes, Manager, Strategy and Research, RASV

For more information on co-design see Diego, G and Pappas, Z 2017 'Innovation is for everyone', Right Lane Review, December.

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want to know more?

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About Right Lane

Right Lane is a flourishing, top quality, management consulting firm.

We employ our distinctive ideas and processes, and our absolute commitment to delivery, to help clients we care about pursue their inspiring missions.

We work alongside clients who do great work within the sectors they operate, and we are excited to be involved in creating outcomes that truly make a difference.

We are an ethical consulting firm with a strong belief in the work we do, and with a passion to give back to the broader community with the skills and expertise available within our walls.

Right Lane was established in 1997 to help private, not for profit and public sector clients to clarify and accelerate their future plans. Over the past 20 years, we have helped the executive teams and boards of more than 150 organisations to define and adapt their direction and strategy, identify and clarify their priorities, align their efforts with their aspirations, get their major projects started and finished, and measure and improve their performance.

Our areas of focus

- Developing and managing strategy and planning processes for clients
- Leading strategic growth projects, such as pre-merger analysis, new product feasibility, marketing expenditure effectiveness and growth options evaluation
- Implementing strategy through aligning and engaging the organisation, and measuring and monitoring performance
- Assisting clients with governance projects – from board culture and capabilities to board appraisals and reviews

B Corp certified - what does it mean?

In 2015 Right Lane became Australia's first B Corp certified strategy consulting firm.

This follows Right Lane's decision in 2011 to adopt 'for benefit' principles, including reasonable returns, inclusive ownership, stakeholder governance, transparency, and social and environmental responsibility.

B Corporations are a new kind of company that uses the power of business to solve social and environmental problems. Certified B Corporations meet higher standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability. The performance standards measure a company's impact on all its stakeholders, including workers, suppliers, community, and the environment. It's like Fair Trade certification but for the whole business.

