

Thinking Managers

Edward de Bono of www.thinkingmanagers.com considers why ideas often die – even the good ones!

Ideas Don't Always Have to Die

Ideas do not always survive. Sometimes they are forgotten, discarded or never make it beyond the initial stages of discussion. There are plenty of reasons why ideas die.

For instance, an idea might die when:

- ... the idea is attacked by a certain number of people.
- ... the idea isn't responded to with enthusiasm or passion.
- ... the cost of trialing the idea is too expensive and there are other priorities demanding funds.
- ... the idea is deemed too risky.
- ... there is no one in a senior position to champion the idea.
- ... there is a lack of feasibility attached to the idea at the initial stage.
- ... there are power struggles between those promoting the idea and those opposing it.
- ... the idea is thought to be too similar to an older idea or the same as something already in place.
- ... there is a change of circumstances, or strategy is adjusted which lessens the value of the idea.
- ... an idea is deemed a failure after being tried out for the first time.

There might be many other reasons to add to the list above.

Too often, an idea dies and it is forgotten and never looked at again. But it might be worthwhile to review these 'dead' ideas periodically.

If an idea offers some value then it is worthwhile assessing it from time to time in order to see if the value can be delivered or if the value is perhaps even more significant.

You have concepts of delivery and concepts of value. As in all types of creativity, there is an importance in extracting and defining the concept that seems to be in use for the new idea.

If the concept of delivery is outlined, this concept can then be challenged and an alternative way of providing the same value can be found. If the concept of value is made apparent, then there could be other forms of value that arise from this basic concept.

An idea can die for whatever reason, but the concept behind the idea does not need to die at the same time. The concept could survive, with an effort being made to see how it might be delivered through a practical idea.

If an idea fails to survive then an attempt should be made to spell out exactly why that idea has died. It could be because of the cost of the idea, or is it a matter of implementation? It could be because of a lack of feasibility and practicality, or is it a matter of risk? It could be a matter of low value. In practice, ideas often die because of a combination of several different factors. Perhaps there is low motivation for the idea. That is always difficult to admit.



About the author:

Edward de Bono is the world's leading authority in the field of creative thinking and the teaching of thinking as a skill.