

## **Exercise #1**

### **Building Ideas into Concepts**

*“Ideas are a dime a dozen.”* When we first begin to think about a new project, we’re looking for lots of ideas... reaching for new thoughts, new possibilities, new opportunities. Most of our ideas will be impractical, impossible, and sometimes downright ridiculous. That’s the way it should be.

*“Concepts are the starting point of new value.”* At some point, we need to take some of our ideas and craft them into a working concept that has possibilities for reaching our objectives.

One method of building ideas into concepts is to get other people engaged with your thinking. This simple process of asking people to build on your idea is a powerful way to build diversity into your thinking and to test the water to see how people react. It also often reveals potential pitfalls.

The primary point of this exercise is to *listen*. Watch how people react to your idea, and listen to their builds. You don’t have to incorporate their ideas; just listen and let their words and ideas stimulate more thinking for you.

**Step 1:** Give your idea a title, and write it at the top of the Idea Build Worksheet. Example:  
Weekly Employee Email Newsletter

**Step 2:** Briefly describe the idea so that someone else would understand the basics. Example:  
Create a weekly newsletter to be delivered to employees via email and would give them updates on benefit changes, policies, and company events.

**Step 3:** Workshop: Pair up with one other person. (In real life, think of three people who might have different perspectives and insights from your own. Ask them for 20-30 minutes to give you some feedback on a new idea you have.)

**Step 4:** Read your idea to the person. Answer any clarifying questions. Ask them to brainstorm other things you could do to make your idea bigger and better. Remind them that the ideas do not have to make sense or be practical. Encourage them to be wild and crazy.

**Step 5:** Capture the person’s suggestions as quickly as possible. Don’t question or discuss the suggestions, just record them.

**Step 6:** Once the other person has run out of suggestions, switch roles and brainstorm his or her idea.

**Step 7:** After both ideas have been built on, you might want to take a few minutes and rewrite your concept using any or all of the suggestions provided or any ideas that were triggered during the process.