

# Preface to the new edition

**WRITING A BOOK ABOUT HOW TO** overcome the resistance to ideas was always going to be fraught with danger.

I felt that this was an important and much neglected topic, and one that would be of relevance to a wide range of people who were trying to get new ideas adopted. I saw that, in contrast to the myths that claim that the world will beat a path to your door for your good idea, the reality is that the newer and more important your idea, the more strongly it will be resisted and ignored. If I was right about this, my book risked sinking like a stone.

However, the key message of the book is that “Resistance is normal, so don’t get demoralized, get smart.” This meant that people would naturally be interested in how the book was received, which might be embarrassing.

The responses to the first edition were most encouraging. My first sign of the reactions to come was an email, a few days after the book launch, which started, “It’s absolutely bloody brilliant!”

It rapidly became clear that I was right that this was a topic of great interest to a wide range of people. I got wildly enthusiastic feedback from entrepreneurs, environmentalists and engineers; chemists, clergy and campaigners; librarians, managers, novelists and parents. For all their differences, they were all people who were trying to get new ideas adopted.

In some cases they were trying to promote a new business, an idea or an invention, and were finding that the traditional marketing techniques didn’t really seem adequate to unlock the deep-seated resistance that their ideas were facing.

Others were motivated by trying to make the world a slightly better place. Campaigners have well-proven tactics for influencing politicians and the public, but increasingly these were seeming inadequate in the face of complex global threats like climate change, food shortages and poverty.

The third group didn't necessarily see themselves as creative or as innovators, but were trying to deal with unwelcome changes that were being forced upon them. For example, the public library service is faced with a massive change in its role. In the past, information was scarce and hard to find, so librarians collected and classified it and made it available for the public. Today we have the opposite problem: information is readily available, but too much of it is biased, inaccurate, or blatantly fraudulent. Like it or not, library services around the world are having to develop a new vision of their role and change the way they do things in order to survive. For staff within the service, this means that many of them are faced with the unfamiliar problem of how to develop and spread new ideas and ways of working.

People in all three groups told me that it was exciting and inspiring to find a source of new insights into how to move their ideas forward. Interestingly, the more understanding people had of creativity and innovation, the more significant they tended to find the book.

The converse of this was that it was hard to get the mainstream press interested, because those with less experience of working with new ideas couldn't really see the point. As one BBC presenter pointed out to me, the concept that ideas are resisted doesn't really fit with the comfortable myth that you can have a "eureka moment" and immediately make your fortune. As discussed in Chapter 4, when ideas don't fit with the way someone sees the world, they usually get ignored.

The publisher and I persisted. I wrote articles, ran workshops, gave talks and answered emails, explaining the ideas to people and helping them relate them to the issues facing them. Often people found it quite shocking to realize why their ideas were being resisted, but became gleeful as they then realized there were proven techniques to help. This personal approach obviously has its limits: there is only a certain number of hours in the day. But it is proving very successful in developing a network of people who, in their own individual ways, are enthusing about the ideas to their colleagues and friends.

People are surprisingly skilful at misinterpreting new ideas to fit with their expectations, so we discovered that some people were misled by the original title *The Myth of the Mousetrap: How to get your ideas adopted (and change the world)*. On-line retailers helpfully categorized the book under "pest control". Others decided that it was just a book for (mad) inventors and hence not for them.

One of the key aspects of getting your ideas adopted is to hold fast to your inspiring vision, but be flexible and responsive: new ideas almost always

need to be morphed to reach their true potential. This meant that, although we were fond of *The Myth...* as a title, we decided to pare it down for this new edition, changing it to simply *How to Get Your Ideas Adopted (and Change the World)*.

The ride so far has been occasionally frustrating, but overall fun and fulfilling. I look forward to the reception of the new edition with great interest.

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