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 innova-
tors, 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 serv-
ices 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 obvi-
ously 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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Autumn 2008