

November 2012

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## The newsletter of the Institute of Inventors and Innovators

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Markus Schorn from Pattern Matched Technologies, was a real treat for all of us at our Gauteng Branch Meeting in October.

He is not only an accomplished businessman, but an active innovator in the world of technology, especially in the mobile phone and banking forums. He aims to improve the lives of people through his innovations. (He has successfully built up and then sold companies, of which most were really profitable deals )

He emphasized the difference between 'inventing' and 'innovating'. Innovation is not the same as invention, as **inventors generally focus too strongly on the present and don't pay much attention to trends** and other important factors which determine the future. **Innovators tend to focus on putting a vision in place**, where a large amount of risk is required, as most serious projects look at a time frame of 2/3/5 years. Markus believes in encouraging vision by asking oneself: "Where do I really want to be in 5 years?" This question is also so important when working on innovative projects.

Markus' talent was obvious from a young age. As a teenager his first electronic devise was in a Fiat Uno in 1991, where he made a devise to switch off the air conditioner every time this small car stopped at the traffic lights. He made 200 of these devises at home in his garage and sold them. Needless to say, future models of the Fiat then came with this as a standard fitment and

Markus was never recognised or rewarded for this innovation! A hard lesson he had to learn early in his career of innovation.

Other interesting ideas he worked on in his early life included identifying the need for asthma sufferers to keep the bridge of the nose clear by applying a butterfly pressure Elastoplast. This too came into the market before he could patent it. Another was developing a bar code system for a Video shop way before this was in common usage.

A **controversial** point that Markus raised which had the whole audience thinking, concerned his approach to IP ( Intellectual Property) He is in favour of launching innovative products to the market first, prior to wasting money and time on IP. He feels we must change our approach to patenting, especially with software products as this market changes so rapidly and some products could be obsolete before they even get to the market and the patents would then be ineffective. An example is the "Money Wallet" launched two years which has already been surpassed.

In short, Markus recommends being controversial or simply disputing the norms of doing things as this disruption tests common thinking and helps create innovation.

He then described his latest innovation which is about to be rolled out nationally with a large retail supermarket chain. This will be a banking

service/switch where there be will **almost NO banking charges** aimed at low end mass banking. This will enable clients to switch cash from one branch to another of the retail outlets for a nominal charge. The retailer is happy to be involved as it reduces their daily cash ups and cash in transit value drops. Minimal banking charges apply as the money just keeps revolving and far less needs to be banked.

Loyalty points with M & O's will also be offered to consumers at the till. The retailer can, for example, offer a client a R3/ R5 prepaid airtime credit in lieu of change/cash. The rounding off at the till is then passed onto the consumer who has just bought a bag of goods, and will perceive it as even better value and stay shop loyal!

These products will be game changers which will shake the market. Well done Markus!

Markus final remarks related to NDAs and mentorship. A point worth noting is his emphasis on the importance of including a non-circumvention clause in non-disclosure agreements. Through bitter experience and costly legal battles, he learnt that this clause allows recourse to the inventor / discloser. We must be aware that often corporates undermine the inventor and simply take the product / invention and cut out the inventor. Having a non-circumvention clause protects you.

Finally Markus spoke about the importance of mentorship programs. Those with experience should assist younger people to develop and flourish.

This is one of III's principles and our goal is to establish a school to assist and guide inventors. An open standard must be created for sharing and the good of society.

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## **Branch Meeting**

*We are ending the year with another Question & Answer Session, by popular request. We will have a panel of experts and you can prepare to have your questions answered!*

*Questions on Patenting or IP or Trademarking; Product Design and general R&D, questions on Marketing and those questions peculiar to invention and innovation will be answered.*

*This III Gauteng Branch meeting is on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> November at 19:00 for 19:30 (7:30pm) at the JAPARI SCHOOL in Parkview, Dundalk Avenue, corner Jan Smuts Avenue, opposite the Zoo.*

*(The UJ venue is currently not available as they are turning the Intellilab into TV studios and relocating the lecture room*

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*Tudor Arthur gave the talk on TESLA – you can read his full article at: <http://teslataalk.posterous.com>*

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**Look out for stimulating articles which are linked to the III website under “NEWS”.....**

- ***There are the INNOVATION winners of 2012 from POPULAR MECHANICS***
- ***Felix Baumgartner's Extreme Jump and Red Bull's smart involvement .....etc.....***

## **PITCH IT TO THE PANEL**

Members get advice worth R000's for a nominal fee of R400-

### **Next Johannesburg session: Saturday 19 January 2013**

**This is a premier III service, a must if you want to explore the potential of any idea.**

Present your idea to our expert panel in complete confidentiality. They will provide you with a whole spectrum of information and guidance to help take it forward.

Booking is essential. For all the information you need, email Jean at [info@iii.org.za](mailto:info@iii.org.za) or call 011 487 1536

*Kindly note that there are no more PITTP in 2012.*

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## **Have you paid your 2013 fee?**

**Pay your R100 membership fee right !**

**We need your support.**

Account Name: **Institute of Inventors**

Bank: **Standard Bank of South Africa**

Branch: **Rosebank**

Branch Code: **4305**

Account No: **004780205**

USE YOUR **NAME and SURNAME** as the REFERENCE  
Membership for young people under 25 remains free.

**Should members wish to donate more or assist in our fund raising program, please send an email to [info@iii.org.za](mailto:info@iii.org.za)**

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*Comments / articles can be forwarded to the Editor at : [info@iii.org.za](mailto:info@iii.org.za)*

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## ***...and now for something different.....***

### **Business lessons from the Dalai Lama-**

**by Michael Hess from CBS news**

"I had the distinct pleasure and privilege of attending an extraordinary event featuring a speech by the [Dalai Lama](#). I'm a huge fan of the man and his down-to-earth wisdom, and I was initially very hesitant to write about it in my business column, thinking I might be trivializing the philosophies of a deeply thoughtful person of global importance. I thought twice, then three times, and decided there would be no insult (certainly none intended) in sharing the message in this context and forum.

My rationale for writing a business article about the Dalai Lama's speech and philosophy is that so much of it centers around **human kindness**, or as he put it, "**warmheartedness**." And as I believe, **this very same philosophy is the key to running a truly exceptional business.**

The Dalai Lama describes himself as "a simple Buddhist monk," despite that his honorific is "His Holiness." Either way, it's important to note that in his public talks there tends to be no religious overtones (or even undertones). On the contrary, his tremendous popularity and appeal largely come from the fact that he reaches out to everyone, taking religion out of the equation. In fact, he stresses the importance and value of viewing human relationships through a universal, secular lens.

**The very nutshell version of the Dalai Lama's speech is that solutions to some of the world's biggest problems boil all the way down to the kindness and warmheartedness of individuals.** That true kindness extends from the individual, to the family, community, nation, and so on. Self-centeredness and selfishness, on the other hand,

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stand in the way of solving problems between people, religions and nations.

Sounds simplistic, but try to poke a hole in the basic concept or its scalability -- you can't. And usually, **the simplest answer is the best one.**

And so it goes in business. Business is obviously a subset of society, and the same rules apply. A business can do extraordinary things if it has a heart and soul, a true foundation of kindness and warmheartedness. I'm not getting all earthy-crunchy-kumbaya or pretending that a hug-fest will help a struggling business make payroll. Nor am I necessarily talking about businesses that have caring and generosity as their actual purpose for existing. Providing goods for the poor or protecting the environment is admirable, noble, meaningful and important, but I'm talking about *any and every company*. A company with these qualities -- with a sense of humanity -- is more likely to be rewarded by all of its stakeholders:

**Customers** are more likely to give their business, their approval and their good word to others.

**Employees** are more likely to trust and respect their employers; enjoy their work and perform at their best; treat customers and each other well; and stick around longer.

**Suppliers** are more likely to be supportive and motivated to provide the highest possible level of service, and to give a little extra help in extraordinary circumstances.

**Financial stakeholders** are more likely to be trusting, patient and supportive. Certainly this last group is, understandably, driven mainly by objective facts and figures. I am a business owner and, again, I'm not living in the land of rainbows and unicorns. But "money people" are still human (despite what some may think or say), and any good banker or investor will tell you that the character of a business or owner does affect their behavior and decisions at some level. A self-centered business owner, or one who puts up

barriers to trust and good faith, is going to have a harder time getting chequebooks to open.

Just as the Dalai Lama's view of the world distills to the attitude and behavior of the individual, sooner or later most of what happens in business similarly comes down to relationships and transactions between people. So if a society functions best when its people are kind and unselfish, and obstacles to quality relationships are eliminated, a company with those traits will perform at its best, too."

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***"Learning and innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow."***

William Pollard -

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## **Creative Thinking Techniques for an Inventor**



A guest post by Joseph Benn from [Ideas Mapping](#) and author of [Brilliant Business Ideas](#)

I have a fascination with inventors having helped many develop their ideas for over 7 years. To me they represent some of the most creative thinkers in the world. In this post I'm going to give you **creative thinking techniques** that can make you more inventive.....

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## Intelligent Questions?



Questions are one of the most powerful creative thinking tools I know of. Creativity is about linking objects together in a way they have never been linked before. An excellent example of this is the [iPopper](#) (I love this idea!). Asking intelligent questions sends instructions to our brain to start making new connections and look at old connections in new ways. Make a habit of asking such questions and we start to change our mind sets and eventually our behaviour.

### Some questions for you to ask:

- How can this be made better?
- What is wrong with this?
- How else could this be done?
- How could this be made more efficient?
- What is it about this that is really irritating?
- What really frustrates people about this?
- What could this be combined with?
- What other applications could this have?
- How could this be made faster?
- How could this be made smaller?
- How could this be made suitable for a particular group?
- How could this be simplified?
- Is a deluxe version possible?
- Could a home version work?
- What are the negative things about this?
- What is currently missing from this?
- How could the principles this operates on be transferred to XX?
- What are the weaknesses of this?

What other questions could you ask that will increase your inventiveness ten fold?. Some of the above questions will most likely be familiar to you. Focus on those that aren't.

## The Missing Link



The inventors I have worked with like this technique. You start with a product or a problem and then a blank space then a potential customer or result that you want. It works better if you get someone else to select products and customers for you.

### Here's how it works:

Mobile phones \_\_\_\_\_ Over 70s

You now need to make the link between mobile phones and over 70s. That link needs to be a new product or service. The most obvious example would be a mobile phone designed for OAPs. Would this work? Who knows and right now I don't care the whole point is to have a little fun and warm your brain up. At the same time you are conditioning your brain to make new connections faster and more easily. This technique is really good for sorting out problems you may be having with a current invention. First word would be the problem then a blank then the required result. Limit yourself to no more than two words per part – this really forces you to focus on the actual problem. Displaying things in this way really helps the brain work things out.



## Negative Thinking



The third and last technique I want to look at is called negative thinking. People have come up with new ideas (especially for products) using this technique. I worked with some guys from India for a whole day using this technique on a ballpoint pen. By the end of the day they'd completely redesigned the pen, and come up with other viable products.

For this technique to work you need a product or service to focus on. If you have a mobile phone put it in front of you. Whether you like it or not I want you to whip up feelings of anger, frustration and even disgust at it.

### What's wrong with it in terms of :

Shape, Smell, Availability, Popularity, Lifetime, Ease of use, Feeling, Effectiveness, Extras

Colour, Sound, Cost, Aftercare, Size, Speed, Weight, Duration, Number of applications

## The Aim of these Techniques

The aim of these techniques is not necessarily to come up with a new invention but to increase your inventiveness by shifting your mind set slightly and developing a different view of the world. Use them and have fun. Many of you will already use these sorts of techniques without realising it. Using them in a more habitual way will massively increase your inventiveness.

Joseph Benn is passionate about creative thinking and how it can be used practically. He writes a blog [www.ideasmapping.com](http://www.ideasmapping.com) and offers a free 10 day creative thinking course.

***.....and finally, an African idea to blow your hair back!.....***

## **Blade-less wind turbine blows fresh air into power generation**

*A guest post by Kahenya, Founder of **Simple Community***

The name **William Kamkwamba** might not sound familiar to many, but he is one of the most significant technology game changers in Africa. He did not design the most glamorous device on the planet, and neither was his creation unique. However, it was extremely significant.

Using just a book, Kamkwamba, now 25, designed and built a windmill that generated electricity and pumped water in his home village in Malawi. This was significant because he proved that it was possible to build things with instant grassroots impact that did not require a business plan, a website, a marketing strategy, a funding strategy or even a glamorous launch. He gained instant fame.

Kamkwamba managed to ensure that he could meet his immediate power needs using tree branches and scrap material. He was able to generate electricity and pump water using pure green energy. That was a decade ago.

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## A NON-ROTATIONAL BLADE FREE SYSTEM **THE SAPH** A ZERO BLADE WIND CO



Enter the future and a decade later, we have the Saphonian Blade-less wind turbines – another African design, this time from Tunisia. It focuses on clean energy.

The inventing company, **Saphon Energy**, led by Mr Anis Aouini, understood that older generation turbines, built in Europe, had some fundamental flaws that no-one had resolved.

For one, they generated a lot of noise and vibration. There is the unmistakable whirring, and if you live next to one, unless it is not in motion, you could have sleepless nights before getting used to the sound. They also unwittingly kill a lot of birds. Unaware birds collide with the blades and get killed.

Not the Saphonian. It has a sail shaped body, similar in concept to sails on a boat or dhow, which makes it bladeless. The unit does not have the famous rotating blades common with older generation turbines and windmills. Even better,

the advantages are not limited to aesthetics or providing environment friendly energy. The Saphonian eliminates inefficiencies usually created by moving parts in a windmill.

The lack of blades and other rotating gears means that there is very little aerodynamic energy, and this results in improved power generation. It also reduces mechanical losses. Thus, the Saphonian has been found to be about 2.3 times more significantly efficient than conventional turbines and windmills. It also means that due to the hydraulic system, the Saphonian is able to store energy, which enables it to supply a steady flow of power, provided there is wind flowing or there is energy stored in the system.

In ordinary systems, whatever is generated has to be consumed instantly. National power grids usually supply the exact amount required. This means that when demand exceeds supply, there will be some places without power. On the other hand, excess energy, not being stored, would go to waste.

The storage capability of the Saphonian is therefore significant. Further, the equipment is cheaper to produce than conventional systems. It costs 45 per cent less to develop and deploy a Saphonian Blade-less turbine. With customisations, that cost could be further reduced.

Saphon Energy has tested a 300–500 Watt system as a prototype. It has performed better than was anticipated. The company is now

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focused on developing a second generation prototype that in many instances, will improve on the hydro-mechanical performance of the first generation unit.

What will matter for this development and its growth is how many national electricity providers deploying wind infrastructure decide to use this more cost effective technology. The Saphonian has proved that Africa can actually improve on previously available technologies that were not as efficient as they could have been.

For William Kamkwamba, this would be a climax to his dream, that affordable energy solutions developed in Africa could actually compete with foreign platforms and even outperform them.

As Africa struggles to meet electricity needs for a growing population, it is necessary for the continent to develop its own home solutions suited for the environment and the pocket. Convenient and relevant innovations such as the Saphonian stand a good chance.

It is no wonder therefore that the Saphonian has won its parent company the KPMG innovation Grant for 2012.

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**The Africa Innovation Competition**  
***has extended their deadline to the***  
***30 November.Why not enter?***  
***Details on our website***  
***www.iii.org.za***

***.....Just a reminder that the  
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***..... Look out for the latest monthly  
supplement "INNOVATE" in the Mail  
& Guardian on 16 November 2012***

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