

The Power of Ideas

What makes powerful ideas become true innovation?

Everyone talks about innovation, the power of ideas, how to change and adapting to the new times. But do they really mean it? How does it begin?

I am going to share in a two-part article series how I view the creation of ideas, change and innovation, and what different authors, industry leaders, friends and mentors have helped me to realize.

Sharing of information

The first stop in this journey is sharing information with others.

With time I have learned that ideas are not worth anything without implementation. You can have a great idea but without execution there is absolutely nothing; it is just another idea that did not even make it to the start line.

When we think or read about a great idea, it's because it was placed into action and it's something that changed our lives and the world we live in. What really determines, however, when an idea goes from an idea to something you can access and use every day?

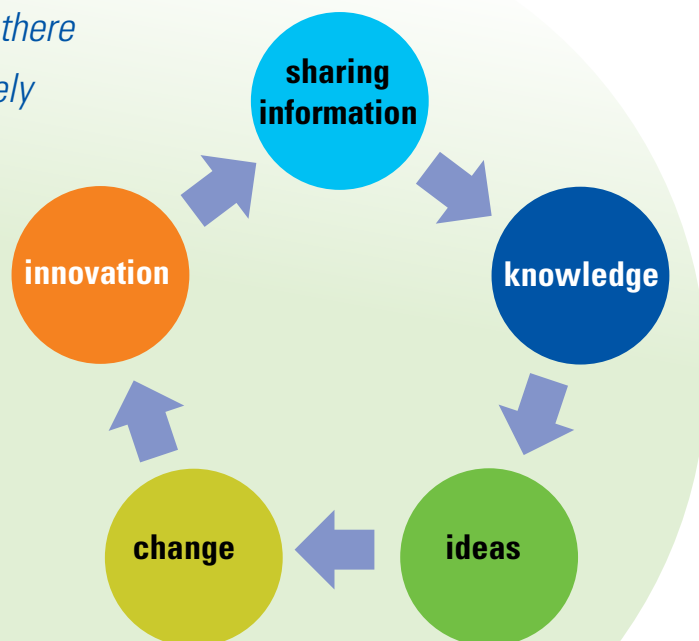
People tend to think that they are going to patent something and sell it for millions. However, many times they are secretive and not willing to share information with others. What normally happens then is that they are so secretive that it is very difficult to pitch the idea to others. On the other hand since they don't share information they cannot learn anything or even more important improve upon it. I have seen in some cases that the product already exists and they did not know about it.

Why do I say this?

People tend to forget that in order to have an idea you have to be exposed to it. You can't decide that you are going to invent the steam engine if you have never been exposed to engines. I will give you a personal example.

I was studying engineering in 1995 when I saw the first SLA, now called 3D printing machine, in an MIT lab in Boston. I was amazed at the concept. During the summers I continued to work in dental labs learning the traditional processes. But it was in 2001 when I started to work for a lab that I started to think about milling and Rapid Prototyping (RP). Back then metal was primarily used in C&B. I thought to myself that milling was very inefficient. For nonprecious you needed very expensive equipment and for precious

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and noble it was insane the amount of material you needed to mill a coping. I decided to go to a RP trade fair. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that there were 3D printers that could do metal. Back in my college days there were only resins and powder materials and it was referred as the “toy industry.”

I decided it was time to pursue my idea. I made contact with a manufacturer in Germany to see how their machine worked. Once there, I shared what I wanted to do and how this technology could be incorporated in dental and I discovered that I was not the first person to have this idea. I found out that another major dental company had already bought a second machine but the manufacturer of the machine didn't know what the use of his equipment was for, how the dental market worked and if there was a potential market and he asked for my feedback. At the time the cheapest machine was almost 1 million euros, but I did not feel discouraged even though there were barriers such as software formats, work functionality and now positively knowing that I was racing against one of the biggest dental companies in Europe.

But it was the sharing of information with other people in the industry that led me to try RP or 3D print dental units. Sure, I was not the first one to have the first dental 3D printer in Europe or the U.S. I tried in Europe to start the first dental RP center and was not able to sell the idea to anyone. However, I started sharing this with U.S. colleagues and after years of pitching the concept it was DSG that bought into the project of creating a Milling and RP (3D Printing) centralized center. It took very little time to assemble the team and bring them up to speed. It took more time to get delivery of the equipment. As a matter of fact, Argen was able to have the first laser sintering machine in the U.S., however, in 2008 DSG was the first in the U.S. to produce the first 3D printed parts for dental in metal.

Why do I tell you all this?

Because it is only through the exchange of information that knowledge is achieved. Without knowledge we cannot generate ideas, without ideas there is no change, without change there is no innovation.

You can take examples like the invention of the transistor or the personal computer and it might seem that one single person took the credit for it, but there is no doubt that it was the collaboration and exchange of information with others that led to knowledge, change and innovation. Walter Isaacson describes it very well in his book, “The Innovators.” Another example are Exponential Companies; companies that grow at 10x or larger (Exponential Organizations, Salim Ismail). Their culture is of collaboration.

With this said, I find that every day many people come to me for advice but do not share information; they only seek information. Should I stop feeding them information?

The answer is... (to be featured in the next issue of JDT) **JDT**

About the Author

Severino Gomez has more than 15 years' experience in the dental industry and is founder of Business Strategy Consulting (www.b2strategy.com). His firm specializes in business and technology consulting. Its customers range from manufacturers, distributors and dental labs. Severino has acted as CTO for companies such as Bonadent Laboratories and Dental Services Group.

