



October 20th, 2011

Take a trip to the Idea Store

A few weeks ago, Mrs. PinkBlog and I hopped into the family Toyota and drove to southwest Washington, DC, for the (e)merge art fair – a sprawling assemblage of creations from up-and-coming painters, sculptors, photographers, and performers. We saw some interesting stuff (and a lot of total dreck), but one of the most arresting pieces was the kind of art you can't exactly hang on your rec room wall.

On the first floor of the fair, Athena Robles and Anna Stein, two Brooklyn artists, set up an installation called **The Idea Store**.



The premise was simple. People who visited a makeshift storefront – think *Lucy Van Pelt's psychiatrist office* – could fill out a card offering an idea and get paid a penny for it. Robles and Stein then placed the card on the kind of rack you might find at a Hallmark store. Then other visitors could select an idea from the rack and purchase it for two cents.

Some of the ideas on offer were silly. Others were thumbsuckingly obscure. But many were sublime.

Over to the right is an idea that I bought with two pennies I dug out of my pocket. (You might need to click the photo to actually read the card.)



Yet the best idea of all may have been the notion of the store itself. It evoked all sorts of associations – the marketplace of ideas, contributing your two cents worth, and so on. And it raised lots of interesting questions: Why is one idea “worth” more than another? Why are some ideas easier to “sell”? Is it possible really to “own” an idea? And, of course, why does this topic make me use so many quotation marks?

Although The Idea Store was formulated as a piece of art, I think that with a few tweaks it could work well in other settings for other purposes.

Maybe something like an Idea Store could be a feature of your organization's next offsite or your association's next conference. Maybe you could set one up in the student union or school cafeteria. Maybe having one in your office lobby could generate suggestions and trigger conversations.

Give it some thought. This might be an Idea Store whose time has come.

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Daniel H. Pink is the author of five provocative bestselling books about the changing world of work. He lives in Washington, DC with his wife and their three children. [More about Dan...](#)

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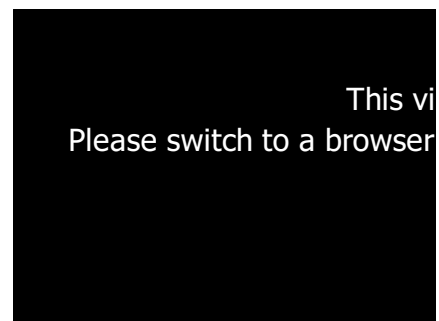


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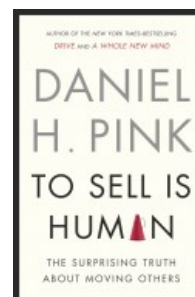
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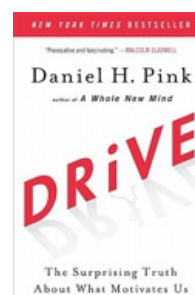
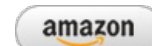


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14 Responses to "Take a trip to the Idea Store"



Wes Chow

October 20, 2011 at 9:22 am

Reminds me of Ayres & Nalebuff's Why Not? Idea Exchange: <http://www.whynot.net/>. I do not know if anything significant has ever come of it, but it's a fun idea nonetheless.

Reply



Sedrico Husselman

October 20, 2011 at 1:04 pm

Ideas to share ideas can help to create a solution some might not be able to see alone! Good 1 Mr. Pink.

Reply



Terry Williams

October 20, 2011 at 4:11 pm

Great concept! Thanks for sharing your experience Dan. If 'Idea Stores' catch on, the way the global economy works though, I expect that very soon there will be a global derivatives market for idea futures...

Reply



Kevin Kruse

October 21, 2011 at 7:43 am

Dan, what a fun idea with so many applications. Most of us who do corporate work of some kind have experienced flip chart "work outs". Teams brainstorm ideas for innovation, or engagement, or improvements of some kind and then everyone is given sticky dots to "vote" for the best ideas (which are you usually then promptly ignored, but I digress). This Idea Store concept would be a fun alternative.

Side note: how great is their form! They include "official use" notice and right to reject language. Brilliant!

Reply



Ben Knight

October 21, 2011 at 8:05 am

Conservative art leads to conservative ideas/actions.

Reply



Kira Campo

October 21, 2011 at 8:18 am

Love the concept. Another underlying question: does the value lie with an idea itself or the successful execution?

Reply



Jeffrey Cufaude

October 22, 2011 at 10:17 am

I do something similar sometimes in workshops. I get one of the rolling hotel coatrack with tons of hangars and ask every participant to note a new habit or tactic (related to the workshop topic) that they think others should "try on."

They attach their suggestion to a hangar place it on the rack. I then let people go shopping to find a new approach that will be a good fit.

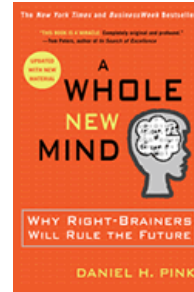
Reply



Karen McBride

October 22, 2011 at 12:15 pm

Wow! Love this idea. As a teacher, I could use this in my classroom for so many applications – kids sharing test taking strategies, research topics, solutions to historical or current social issues (you'd be amazed at the ideas kids come up with). I just love it for the conversation that it



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could incite! I have one particularly quiet class (go figure in jr. high) and this might just get them rewed up. Heck, I would even fund it with my own pennies! I love conversation about the course content in my class. Thanks for sharing this.

 Reply



Duncan - Vetter

October 23, 2011 at 6:50
am

Maybe my startup (helps companies get ideas) could do this as a kind of publicity mini-stunt at a big conference... if nothing else, it sounds like great fun.

Duncan

 Reply



Ruth C

October 23, 2011 at 8:53
am

I agree with Karen on this—great idea for the classroom to foster collaboration and teamwork. Also, for professional development for teachers to share learning strategies and lessons that work. It is a concept that is right in line with Professional Learning Communities.

I think that is what “art” is about—stimulating thought and ideas. Thanks for sharing Dan.

 Reply



Joe F

November 6, 2011 at 7:38
am

This idea rocks. As a teacher I would love to connect with Karen and Ruth. My first instinct is to use this for writing. Either Creative Writing story ideas or strategies for essay writing.

 Reply



Joe F

November 6, 2011 at 7:40
am

Whoops! I don't have a website yet. Just wanted to get my email address out there ferraro22@hotmail.com and now I am red. Sorry.

 Reply



Justin Brady

December 20, 2011 at 2:21
pm

Wait a minute..... you, Daniel H. Pink, had pennies in your pocket? I thought you hated pennies!

 Reply



Dan Pink

December 20, 2011 at 3:42
pm

@Justin — I got them from my wife! Seriously.

 Reply

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