

**GOOD  
IDEA.**

HOW  
TO  
MOVE  
IDEAS

TO  
EXECUTION

**NOW  
WHAT?**

**C H A R L E S   L E E**

**CEO, IDEATION**



## Praise for *Good Idea. Now What?*

“Getting from step 0 to step 1 is often the hardest part, and Charles understands that. This book lays out a comprehensive strategy that skillfully maps out how to move ideas into that next stage of creation, which will be helpful for any leader.”

—**Ben Keeseey**  
CEO of Invisible Children

“In this approachable, pragmatic book, Charles presents us with a fresh, thoughtful approach of how to get our ideas into the world, while also providing critical perspective on the implications of new ideas on the entrepreneur’s often overlooked personal life. Read this before you launch your next project.”

—**Dave Blanchard**  
Founder of Praxis;  
Former IDEO Principal Designer

“Structure and process that powers creatives! Charles T. Lee has penned a witty, inspirational, and approachable manual for both aspiring and veteran entrepreneurs that focuses on turning ideas into strategic execution. Take Nike’s advice and ‘Just Do It!’”

—**Wade Kawasaki**  
Executive Vice President of Coker Group

“People often approach me for advice on making their ‘new idea’ reality. They usually ask for help via a short e-mail or a quick conversation. The truth is there is so much more to idea making than what can be communicated through a simple response. Having a resource like *Good Idea. Now What?* will help me point people to a practical guide that helps them get on a path that marries their passion with a plan.”

—**Tyler Merrick**  
Founder and Social Capitalist of Project7

“Thomas Edison (not Albert Einstein) rightly stated that ‘Genius is one percent inspiration, 99 percent perspiration.’ While you’re on your own for the 1 percent, Charles T. Lee’s *Good Idea. Now What?* takes you through the 99 percent. Lee’s book is light-hearted and witty, but also a sincere read that offers solid business insights, essential for any idea to take flight. If you have a passion to take your idea to market, then *Good Idea. Now What?* will make sure that you are well equipped for the climb.”

—**Keith Kall**  
Senior Director, Corporate Partnerships for World Vision

“For many creatives and change makers the road isn’t always clear, but what Charles has done through *Good Idea. Now What?* is to boil down the vital steps around idea generation, branding, collaboration, and putting first things first—in order to help us chart our course to move the best ideas forward.”

—**Jeff Slobotski**  
Founder of Silicon Prairie News

“Tired of your ideas limping along? Lost and don’t know where to start? Does your world changing idea demand a big dose of momentum and practicality? Charles T. Lee delivers it all in his inspiring book, *Good Idea. Now What?*”

—Mike Foster

Creative Principal and Cofounder of PlainJoe Studios

“Charles T. Lee has penned a guide to the hard work of birthing an idea into life. If you read this book, your idea will have an exponentially greater chance of seeing the light of day. Read it.”

—Jeff Shinabarger

Founder of Plywood People

“With driving clarity, Charles T. Lee helps us cut through the clutter of good intentions and get to work. This book will not only catalyze action, it will lead you to create transformation.”

—Bethany Hoang

Director of the IJM Institute

“*Good Idea. Now What?* is a great handbook to navigate the chaos of creativity! I love Charles. You’ll delight in his practical insights forged in the furnace of his own ideation!”

—Dave Gibbons

CEO of XEALOT

Author of *XEALOTS: Defying the Gravity of Normality*

“Charles T. Lee is one of the best idea guys I know. Better than good ideas are ideas that lead to impact—a hallmark of Charles’ life. Charles’ new book, *Good Idea. Now What?* is a hands-on resource that will serve you as an idea coach helping you to move your great ideas to implementation and finally to major impact!”

—Greg Ligon

Vice President and Publisher of Leadership Network

“For many creatives and change makers the road isn’t always clear, but what Charles has done through *Good Idea. Now What?* is more than just a book— it’s an opportunity to make something. Through proven insights and principles, Charles T. Lee offers you everything you need to turn ideas into realities. All you have to do is follow along.”

—Scott McClellan

Editor for *Collide* Magazine

Director of ECHO Conference

“Our current world is in desperate need of doers. Men and women who dream big and see that dream come to life—and that’s where this book comes in play. Charles is a doer; this book proves that. Well done Charles, thanks for sharing your ideas!”

—Chris Marlow

CEO and Founder of Help End Local Poverty

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*For Tina,  
my love & best friend.  
For Jonathan & Alexis,  
my inspiration & hope.*





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# PREFACE

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## Born into a Legacy of Idea Makers

**M**y parents were born during the infancy of the Korean Conflict, a civil war that devastated our small, developing country in Asia. Our postwar Korea was literally in ruins, and the economy was a shambles. There were an estimated 2 million casualties as a result of the war, and thousands of family members were displaced, separated from loved ones on both sides of the border. The environment was one filled with deep grief, anger, and hopelessness.

Fortunately for Korea, the children born during this time—the generation of my parents—refused to let their circumstances get in the way of their efforts to turn their country around. They chose resilience, an unparalleled work ethic, and a “we can’t fail” attitude that has helped Korea catapult itself into the top 15 ranking for gross domestic product (GDP). Unbelievable!

When it comes to implementing ideas well, my parents’ generation has always been a great source of inspiration for me. Many of them traveled the world to provide new opportunities for their children, as well as develop strong credibility for their homeland. Family and country have always been a source of great pride for my parents’ generation. Barriers such as language, education, and discrimination were no match for their unwavering belief that sacrificing for future generations was a privileged responsibility.

*They took their ideas and found a way to make them reality.*

My heroes. My heritage. My passion.



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**G**ood Idea. Now What? was a team effort. It would not have been possible to complete without the help of many great friends and family members. First and foremost, my beautiful wife, Tina, who never ceased to believe in me and supported me throughout the entire process. My kids, Jonathan and Alexis, who allowed Daddy to take some time away from family to write. Bill Denzel, my longtime friend and now agent, who gave me great advice about writing and took the time to walk me into this new world of publishing. The cultural influencers who agreed to be interviewed by me for the book—in the midst of their busy lives—for their friendship and shared passion to help ideas come to life. Sarah Schick, for organizing my life and making sure I had time to work on this book. The team at Ideation who covered me and allowed me to pursue this project in the midst of all of our client work. Dan Ambrosio and the team at John Wiley & Sons, Inc., who saw potential and approached me about the book project. My family of friends (you know who you are!) who have invested in my life with much needed love, encouragement, and perspective. Last, the countless people I have been privileged to interact with over the years about idea making via blogs, projects, and conferences. I'll forever be grateful for all of your input in my life!





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# INTRODUCTION

## Idea Lovers versus Idea Makers

Ideas are sexy.

They are attractive, unbridled, and full of inspired passion. We want to platform them, tell their story, and introduce them to as many people as possible.

Most of us *love* ideas and fall for them quickly and regularly. We are idea lovers! This is probably the reason you picked up this book.

There's no need to apologize here.

Ideas are great. I love ideas. Ideas are what move our world into its future.

Unfortunately, many who have good ideas will never see their ideas come to life. They will actually end up taking their ideas to the grave (literally!). Whether it was a brilliant idea for a business, organization, or personal fulfillment, their ideas will never see the light of day. Tragic.

These individuals are lovers of ideas, not makers of ideas. You see, all idea makers love ideas, but not all idea lovers make ideas come to life. Unlike idea lovers, idea makers are not satisfied with just having a great idea. They are committed to seeing their concepts actualized in the real world. In addition, they are willing to reframe their lives so that their ideas can be implemented well.

### Who Is This Book For?

I wrote this book for two kinds of people:

1. The idea lover who is sick of just sitting on great ideas: These are individuals who recognize that their ideas may never come to pass without a strategic process and a developed skill set.

2. The idea maker who needs to refresh and reaffirm his or her understanding of the elements for implementing ideas well: No matter how experienced you may be, this book will be a good resource for sparking meaningful conversations about your ideas.

Whether you are starting a new venture or recalibrating an established work, *Good Idea. Now What?* is designed to be extremely practical. In addition, this book will serve as a springboard for further idea exploration and refinement. You will find numerous recommendations of other resources that will be of great help to your endeavors as an idea maker.

## How Does This Book Work?

The format of this book was designed to be engaging at multiple levels and provide ample opportunities for productivity:

- **Parts:** These are the large sections of the book that contain chapters focused around a common theme. I recommend that you do a quick skim of these parts in the Contents each time you pick up the book. This will give you a bird's-eye view of the overall direction and provide context for each collection of chapters.
- **Chapters:** Each of the chapters was designed to stand alone. In other words, you can open up to any chapter and dive right in, without having to go back and read the content prior to that specific point. Although it would be best to start from the beginning to get the full experience, I recognize that some, given their context, may jump straight to a section they perceive to be the most helpful and needed. You'll notice the chapters are brief as well. I wanted this book to be flexible and bite-sized enough for busy individuals and busy teams. Thus, the chapters are purposely short and distinct enough for you to read on the go or together as a group during a staff meeting. (I told you it was practical!)
- **Good Idea. Now What?** At the end of each chapter, I've provided some space for you to work through your ideas about the topics covered in the reading. Under "Good Idea," you'll notice that I've highlighted some key thoughts from the chapter to refresh your memory and stir new ideas. You're encouraged to add your own notes for takeaway. The "Now What?" section provides space for you to jot down your next action steps. Always try to be as specific as possible

when you work on this section. I encourage you to include details such as dates for follow-up, names of people to connect with, visualization of an idea or process, and so forth. It's your space. Use it!

- **“Taking It Further”**: This is a section at the end of each major part created to provide some practical ideas and suggestions to help you take your concepts further. I think you'll enjoy pausing after each large section to process the ideas by yourself or with a group.

This book was not designed for you to simply read and pass along. I'm hoping that some of your thoughts will end up on the pages of this book (or at least on the pages of a corresponding Moleskine journal). I want this book to be functional—something you carry around as you seek to implement your ideas. View it as an idea journal. May it document the evolution of your next great concept!

## The Business of Good Ideas

Every good idea needs strong business philosophy and strategy in order to take flight and scale. Although not every idea becomes a business, there are still timeless business principles that can bring much-needed infrastructure, strategy, and perspective for anyone desiring to implement well. This is why I've integrated several business development insights throughout the book to help the idea maker implement his or her idea with good business sense. Creative ideas and the best practices of business should go hand in hand. (You can thank me later!)

## A Conversation over Coffee

This book is written to carry the tone and feel of two friends talking about ideas over coffee. It is intentionally informal, uninhibited, and filled with dry humor (or attempts at humor, at least). I wrote in this manner because I think it allows us to be more honest in engaging these important and sometimes complex topics without faking expertise. The truth is that we're all learning and refining along the way.

So sit down with this book and a cup of coffee and enjoy some insights from a friend. And since we're now in conversation, please send any thoughts or questions you may have about the content directly to my personal e-mail: [charles@TheIdeation.com](mailto:charles@TheIdeation.com) (yes, it's real) or use the book's hashtag on Twitter: #GoodIdeaBook. I'll do my best to promptly respond

whenever possible. Just don't add me to any e-mail lists that I have not subscribed to, especially since I'm your friend now!

I'm grateful that you've picked up this book, and I look forward to chatting with you in the chapters to come.

—**Charles T. Lee**  
[www.CharlesTLee.com](http://www.CharlesTLee.com)  
@CharlesTLee  
#GoodIdeaBook

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PART

1

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# Where Do Good Ideas Come From?



# Strategy or Chance?

“It’s about strategy! Be intentional.”  
“It’s about timing and chance! Pray for luck.”  
How does a good idea come to life? Strategy? Timing? Luck?  
Yes.

A good idea is often a thought conceived at the intersection of strategy and chance.

Louis Pasteur, a nineteenth-century French scientist and the inventor of the process of pasteurization, said it this way: “Chance favors the prepared mind.” In other words, a mind that is trained to engage new ideas is far more likely to recognize important idea connections than the casual observer.

Want to stack the odds in your favor? Here’s a little secret that the most effective idea makers use to their advantage: a good grasp of the former—intentional strategy—can actually increase your odds when it comes to the latter—the favor of chance.

Although none of us can control or predict these chance opportunities, we can work toward developing a mind-set and process that allows us to be more proactive toward making our ideas come to life. Our eyes should be focused on the hard work of executing ideas rather than being distracted by the flash of chance. Unfortunately, far too many people over-exert themselves in finding the right opportunity to gain exposure for their idea without giving enough attention to the core business of what they hope to produce. This often comes back to bite them.

History has shown us repeatedly that it takes intentional time and effort to develop a good idea. Even in our age of instant access to information