



THE IDEA BOOK

by Fredrik Hären

INTERESTING BOOKS

Copyright © 2004 Fredrik Härén, Stockholm, Sweden.

Translated from Swedish by Fiona Miller

First published in English in 2004

www.interesting.org

ISBN 91-975470-3-4

Design: André Wognum · www.wognum.se

Thanks for an inspiring book!

LEIF PAGROTSKY, MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY, SWEDEN

The book is fun, wonderful and it has a great design. By the way, you should know that 'wonderful' is a word I seldom use.

SARA NORBERG, APOTEKET

Thanks for a great read! This is a book that I will often carry around with me.

FREDRIK SÖDERHJELM, THE ADVERTISING ASSOCIATION

I bought myself a copy of the Idea Book.

Looked through it, read, smiled to myself. Showed it to my colleagues, talked and looked through it some more.

Talk about inspiration!

Time to start filling the blank sides with my own brilliant ideas. Thanks for the good ideas and a great book. I'm already looking forward to the second volume.

LARS JÖNSSON, FORCE

I read the book straight through from start to finish with a constant smile on my lips. It gave me several concrete tips on how to solve creative tasks and come up with new ideas.

This is definitely something I can use in my work.

ELIN ELKEHAG, BUSINESS DEVELOPER AT TELIA

What an inspiring book! And so beautiful!

ANITA BERGQUIST, THE MARKETING ASSOCIATION IN STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

When I read this book, I got a real rush and felt like sitting down immediately to try out your activities. I felt joyous: it was a bit like drinking champagne — my whole body tingled.

EWA GOOS, TELIA RESEARCH

That was a good idea —write it down!

This book is based on the premise that good ideas do not just appear by themselves: they need to be enticed out. Inspiration and motivation are two surefire ways of drawing out ideas. And it is just this that is the purpose of the book in your hand: to inspire and motivate you to come up with and write down lots of ideas.

This book contains more than 60 quick-to-read, inspiring sections about creativity as well as a host of relevant quotations by people like Albert Einstein and Ingvar Kamprad (founder of IKEA). Each section rounds off with an activity designed to help you tap your own well of creativity.

The book also contains 150 blank pages for your own ideas! When you have filled your book with notes, observations, doodles and ideas, then you will have a complete idea book.

Foreword

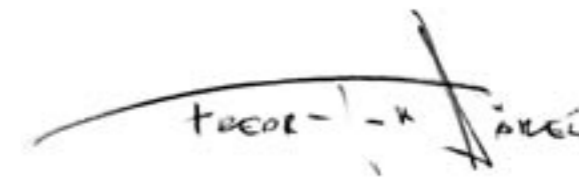
Thomas Edison understood the importance of writing down his ideas. He always had a notebook (or ‘idea book’) on him in which he wrote down his thoughts, ideas and observations. This jotting down of ideas was something he got from Leonardo Da Vinci, who produced a large number of sketches, notes and scribbles, often written in left-handed mirror-writing.

Edison may not have used backwards or reversed writing—but one thing is clear, he did write. He jotted down an idea as soon as it came to him. Whenever he was stuck or lacked inspiration, he went back to his notebooks to see if he could come up with any new ideas from the ones he had already written down. After Edison’s death in 1931, an amazing 3,500 notebooks were found in his home.

This book hopes to follow in the footsteps of Edison and Da Vinci and motivate you to write down all your ideas. Make sure you do! Jot your idea down even if you think it is a mediocre one. Who knows? Sometime in the future you may develop a couple of roughly-written thoughts into a brilliant idea!

I hope that my creativity examples and activities will touch your imagination and entice out many ideas.

As Isabel Colgate said: *“It is not a bad idea to get in the habit of writing down one’s thoughts. It saves one having to bother anyone else with them.”* This is as good a reason as any other.



“Where all
think alike,
no one thinks
very much.”

WALTER LIPPMANN

Beep! Beep!

Dare to change branch—and find a hidden treasure of untapped ideas.

BACKGROUND

What would happen if Nokia or Sony Ericsson suddenly started producing cars? Well, you might be able to choose the ring signal—in other words, you could choose different horn melodies.

There is no doubt that car designers are innovative. They come up with many new ideas, like side airbags. However, the longer you work in a certain branch and the more expertise you have in your area, the harder it gets to look at your branch with new eyes. Quite simply, familiarity breeds contempt.

As far as the car designers at Ford are concerned, the car's horn is so taken for granted that they do not even question it. In the world of cars, the horn is always found on the wheel and when you press it, it goes beep. Even 21st century cars have a little picture of an 18th century bugle to signify the horn's function.

ACTIVITY

Bring in outside experts to solve a problem, or use your own expertise to develop a branch that you have no experience of. Best of all: take a couple of people from different branches and see what solution they come up with together.

By the way, what would a mobile phone developed by Ford's designers be like?

"Creativity can solve almost any problem. The creative act, the defeat of habit by originality, overcomes everything."

GEORGE LOIS

The world's first creativity test

Bring out more ideas.

BACKGROUND

Many regard J.P. Guilford as the father of modern creativity. At a psychology conference nearly 50 years ago, he held an attention-grabbing speech about creativity that sparked off a great interest in it. An interest that grows larger every year.

Guilford's own story is an interesting one. He was a psychologist who, during the Second World War, worked on personality tests designed to pick out the most suitable bomber pilot candidates. In order to do this, Guilford used intelligence tests, a grading system and personal interviews. He was annoyed because the Air Force had also assigned a retired air force pilot without psychological training to help in the selection process. Guilford did not have much faith in the retired officer's experience.

It turned out that Guilford and the retired officer chose different candidates. After a while, their work was evaluated and, surprisingly, the pilots chosen by Guilford were shot down and killed much more frequently than those selected by the retired pilot. Guilford later confessed to being so depressed about sending so many pilots to their deaths that he considered suicide. Instead of this course of action, he decided to find out why the pilots chosen by the retired pilot had fared so much better than those he had selected.

The old pilot said that he had asked one question to all the would-be pilots: *"What would you do if your plane was shot at by German anti-aircraft when you were flying over Germany?"* He ruled out everyone who answered, *"I'd fly higher"*. Those who answered, *"I don't know – maybe I'd dive"* or *"I'd zigzag"* or *"I'd roll and try to avoid the gunfire by turning"* all gave the wrong answer according to the rule book. The retired pilot, however, chose his candidates from the group that answered incorrectly. The soldiers who followed the manual were also very predictable and that is where Guilford failed. All those he chose answered according to the manual. The problem was that even the Germans knew that you should fly higher when under fire and their fighter planes therefore lay in wait above the clouds, ready to shoot down the American pilots. In other words, it was the creative pilots who survived more often than those who may have been more intelligent, but who stuck by the rules!

Guilford suddenly realized that it was a talent to be able to think differently, unexpectedly, creatively, and so he decided to study this skill further. It was his aim to find a way of selecting the most suitable pilots by identifying those creative candidates who improvised and came up with unexpected solutions.

One of Guilford's first creativity tests for the Air Force was asking candidates to find as many uses for a brick as possible. Although simple, this is a good way of testing someone's creativity. Some just churn out an endless number of uses faster than you can write them down while others think for minutes before coming up with five uses.

This is also a good way of kick starting the creativity skills of a person or group.

ACTIVITY

You guessed it! This activity is, of course: How many uses for a brick can you think of? Start by trying to come up with 50 different uses in 15 minutes.

Of course, thinking of new uses for a brick does not raise efficiency in a company or lead to innovative products, but it is an interesting test to find out who is not held back by what they have learnt.

Metaphors are strong mountains

Realize the value of identifying a metaphor.

BACKGROUND

We think in metaphors—and we do it more often than we realize. A metaphor is an excellent way of explaining something new by using a toolbox of old experiences.

Have you ever realized that we often use metaphors taken from the world of birds to describe ideas? We brood over a thought, hatch ideas that are as delicate as eggshells and when an idea really takes off, it soars away on the wings of creativity. The whole idea process is similar to that of a bird's development.

Another classic example arose when a group of arms manufacturers were developing a new weapon for the air force. They could not come up with any ideas, so a member of the group suggested that they change metaphor. *"Imagine that we're in the desert,"* he said to the others. *"Describe what you see."* *"I see a cactus,"* said one. *"I see an oasis,"* said another. *"I see a sidewinder,"* said a third. A sidewinder is a snake that can hone in on its prey by detecting its body heat. Suddenly, one of the engineers had a brainwave. *"Couldn't we make a missile capable of detecting the heat from an enemy engine?"* They worked on this idea and developed the highly successful heat-seeking missile, the Sidewinder.

Which metaphor best describes your branch? Which metaphor have you chosen for the problem you are working on now? It is often the case that we have not identified the metaphor that is relevant for us. And by not identifying it, we cannot see if the metaphor has forced us into a corner or not.

ACTIVITY

How can we generate ideas by developing a metaphor? Can we create a nest of ideas? Can we feed newly-hatched thoughts? Must an idea cry out for food? Do migratory ideas develop best by flying south when winter comes? Try to develop the idea/egg/bird metaphor.

Always try to identify and develop the metaphor that forms the basis of the idea you are currently working on.

Edison's idea quota

Understand the importance of coming up with a multitude of ideas as opposed to a handful.

BACKGROUND

Thomas Alva Edison was a man who realized that you had to come up with many ideas in order to have one good one. Edison was, undoubtedly, an inventive genius. He held the world record for the greatest number of inventions. He invented the gramophone and the incandescent light bulb, developed a storage battery and improved film projectors as well as founding what is today the world's largest company, General Electric.

Edison realized, however, that good ideas do not come about by themselves, so he enforced an idea quota on himself and his employees. His own quota was this: A minor invention every ten days, and a major invention every six months.

ACTIVITY

Force yourself to come up with more ideas! When facing a problem, think of 50 different solutions. Many of the ideas will not be good ones, but the chances are that the first ideas will not be the best ones anyway. Practise finding many solutions to many problems. Make a habit of asking yourself, *"What other ways are there of solving this problem?"* Do not give up until you have thought of at least three new solutions. Remember that there are always different ways of solving a problem.

The unhappy professor

Challenge the impossible.

BACKGROUND

There is a story about a grumpy university professor who was always bitter and angry. In fact, he was so grumpy that many postgraduates were afraid of him. Finally, one student gathered enough courage to ask the professor why he was always so grumpy. *“Well, you see,”* said the professor, *“back in the sixties when I was as young as you, we came up with the ideas for everything that is now a reality: the mobile phone, the automatic lawnmower, computer networks and so on. And now, when all this is possible, I retire in a year.”*

The poor professor was bitter because he had not been young in an age where the electronic circuit was small enough and cheap enough to be fitted into anything and everything. He was annoyed because it was no longer technology that stood in the way of what could be developed, but the human imagination.

Learn to question the statement that things are impossible to do. Today’s rapid development means that it is now possible to accomplish many things that were previously considered impossible. At the same time, we must also learn to set ourselves new impossibilities: otherwise, our thoughts run the risk of stagnating. As we solve yesterday’s impossibilities, so must we find new impossibilities to solve tomorrow.

ACTIVITY

Describe something in your organization that is currently impossible, but which will soon become possible to achieve. Describe the effect it will have when the impossible becomes possible. How can you benefit from these changes?

“A thing is not right
because we do it.

A method is not good
because we use it.

Equipment is not the best
because we own it.”

JOHN ALDAIR

‘Broken’ monitors

The importance of asking the right question.

BACKGROUND

We often learn how to find the answer to something, but seldom how to find the question. Learning how to ask questions is something we could all do with improving. Just questioning your own organization to see if you can find a better way of running it, is the first step in the right direction. Know how to ask the right question and you are already halfway there.

One of the cafés in an international European airport was often full. The problem was that people sat nursing their coffees for a long time as they waited for their planes to depart. The café asked itself: *How can we encourage our customers to vacate the tables more quickly?* Their first ideas were probably along the lines of uncomfortable chairs, a seat charge, clear the tables immediately and so forth. However, the idea they finally decided upon was this: to turn off the flight monitors in the café! This made people worry about missing their flights, which led to them looking for monitors that worked, thus leaving empty tables. When the café had enough empty tables, the flight monitors suddenly started working again to attract new customers.

Formulating a question in different ways can help you look at a problem from different angles. In the case above, for example, you can find new angles by putting the question in another way: How can we sell more? So, instead of finding solutions to the problem of getting people to vacate the tables more quickly, you can also come up with solutions such as set up a take-away stand so that people can have a snack or drink by the departure gates, or sell picnic bags that passengers can take onto the planes with them and so on.

ACTIVITY

Ask more questions and learn to question things that work well in order to see if they can work even better!

When facing a problem, formulate it as a question and then try to find several answers. If you get stuck, ask the question in another way. You can always formulate a problem in many different ways.

“When you are a Bear of Very Little Brain, and you Think of Things, you find sometimes that a Thing which seemed very Thingish inside you is quite different when it gets out into the open and has other people looking at it.”

WINNIE THE POOH

A preview of IDEA BOOK.

A sample from Fredrik Häréns new book - Idea Book.

The book is over 300 pages:

150 pages about ideas.
150 empty pages for your own ideas.
An idea book.

For more information please contact interesting.org at

info@interesting.org

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read this book. I hope that it has acted as a tool to help you generate new ideas. Do not forget to go back and read your old notes and ideas now and then. Sometimes ideas improve if left to mature a little.

If you have a favourite story about creativity or have recently heard of a company that has done the opposite—then share your stories with me! Everyone who sends in anecdotes that I have not heard before and that I include in *The Idea Book 2* will receive a free copy of the new book and 100 dollars as thanks.

You can contact me at fredrik.haren@interesting.org or on my mobile: +46 705 86 18 18.

ideabook@interesting.org

Inspiration

Here is a list of a few of the books and people who inspired me while writing this book.

BOOKS THAT HAVE INSPIRED ME

The Art of Innovation, Tom Kelley

Creativity & Beyond, Robert Paul Weiner, 2000

Den kreativa människan, SVD Pocket, 1983

Du är kreativ, Michael LeBoeuf, Liber, 1980

Funky Business, Jonas Ridderstrale, Kjell Nordstrom, Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2000

Kodboken, Simon Singh, Norstedts förlag 1999

Pippi in the South Seas, Astrid Lindgren, Rabén & Sjögren, 1948

Flow, Michály Csíkszentmihályi, NOK, 1996

Salvatore Grimaldi, Salvatore Grimaldi, Ekelids Förlag 2000

Uppfinnaren, Alf Mörk, Atlantis, 1981

100 råd om innovation, Bengt-Arne Vedin, Ljusåret, 1998

Skapandets psykologi, Frank Barron, Alma, 1971

Fantasins Grammatik, Gianni Rodari, Korpen, 1973

A Whack on the side of the head, Roer von Oech, Warner Books, 1998

Kreativitet – en outnyttjad resurs, Dag Romell, Liber Läromedel, 1974

Edison: A life of Invention, Paul Israel, John Wiley & Sons, 1998

Brain boosters for business advantage, Arthur B VanGundy. Joeesey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 1995

Notebooks of the mind, Vera John-Steiner, Oxford University Press, 1997

Influence, Science & Practice, Robert B Cialdini, Harper Collins, 1993

Tankekraft, Bodil Jönsson, Brombergs, 2001

Deals of lightning, Michael A Hiltzik, Harper Business, 2000

75 Cage-Rattling Questions to change the way you work, Dick Whitney
Melissa Giovagnoli, McGraw Hill, 1997

The Mechanism of mind, Edward de Bono, Penguin Books, 1969

Selling the invisible, Harry Beckwith, Warner Books, 1997

Fursten, Niccoló Machiavelli, NoK, 1513

Yates' Guide to successful inventing, Raymond Yates, Funk & Wagnalls, 1967

Citat för alla tillfällen, Brombergs, 2001

The art of creation, Arthur Koestler, Picador, 1969

Unleashing the idea virus, Seth Godin, Do you Zoom?, 2000

Svar., Anna Thurfjell, Carlssons, 2000

Att bryta vanans makt, Vernet Denvall, Studentlitteratur, 2000

The book of truly stupid business quotes, Jeff Parretti, HarperPerennial, 1997

Upptäckter som förändrade världen, David Elito Brody & Arnold Brody,
MånPocket, 1997

Nätokraterna, Alexander Bard & Jan Söderqvist, K-world, 2000

The inmates are running the asylum, Alan Cooper, Sams, 1999

Cracking Creativity, Michael Michalko, Ten speed Press, 1998

Uncommon Genius, Denise Shekerjian, Penguin, 1990

Collaborative Creativity, Jack Ricchiuto, Oakhill Press, 1997

Träffad av en snilleblixt, Roger von Oech, Odulate Förlag, 1987

Creative thinking and brainstorming, J Geoffrey Rawlinson, Management
Skills Library, 1981

Verklig kreativitet, Edward de Bono, Brainbooks, 1992

Creativity, George Gamez, Peak Publications, 1996

Idéer, så får du dem så utvecklar du dem, Jack Foster, Richters, 1999

Handbook of creativity, Robert J Sternberg, Cambridge, 1999

Ett svenskt geni, David Lagercratz, DN förlag, 2000

Speaker's sourcebook 2, Glenn Van Ekeren, Prentice Hall, 1994

Din upphovsrätt och andras, Kerstin Ahlberg, Tiden, 1995

Christofer Columbus, var han riktigt klok, Herman Lindqvist, Fischer & co,
1992

2000 percent solution, Donald Mitchell mfl, Amacom, 1999

Patafysisk Antologi, Claes Hylinger, Bo Cavefors Förlag, 1973

Copy, Hal Stebbins, Spektra, 1974

Människor, miljöer och kreativitet Nobelpriset 100 år, Red, Ulf Larsson,
Atlantis, 2001

Den vite mannen, Papalagi, Korpen, 1920

The art of looking sideways, Alan Fletcher, Phaidon, 2001

Alice i Underlandet, Lewis Caroll, nyöversättning, Bokorama, 1982

Awaken your birdbrain, Bill Costello

Guldägg och beska droppar, Sören Blanking, Fischer & Co, 1996

A designer's art, Paul Rand, Yale University Press, 1985

Where the Suckers Moon: The Life and Death of an Advertising Campaign,
Randall Rothenberg, 1995

Think out of the box, Mike Vance & Diane Deacon, Career Press, 1995

Don't Panic, Troed Troedson & Lotta Alsén, Troedson Konsult, 2002

The Creative Problem Solver's Toolbox, Richard Fobes, Solutions Through
Innovation, 1993

Rules for revolutionaries, Guy Kawasaki, Harper Business, 1999

Creative Thinking, Mike Vance, audio book

PEOPLE WHO HAVE INSPIRED ME:

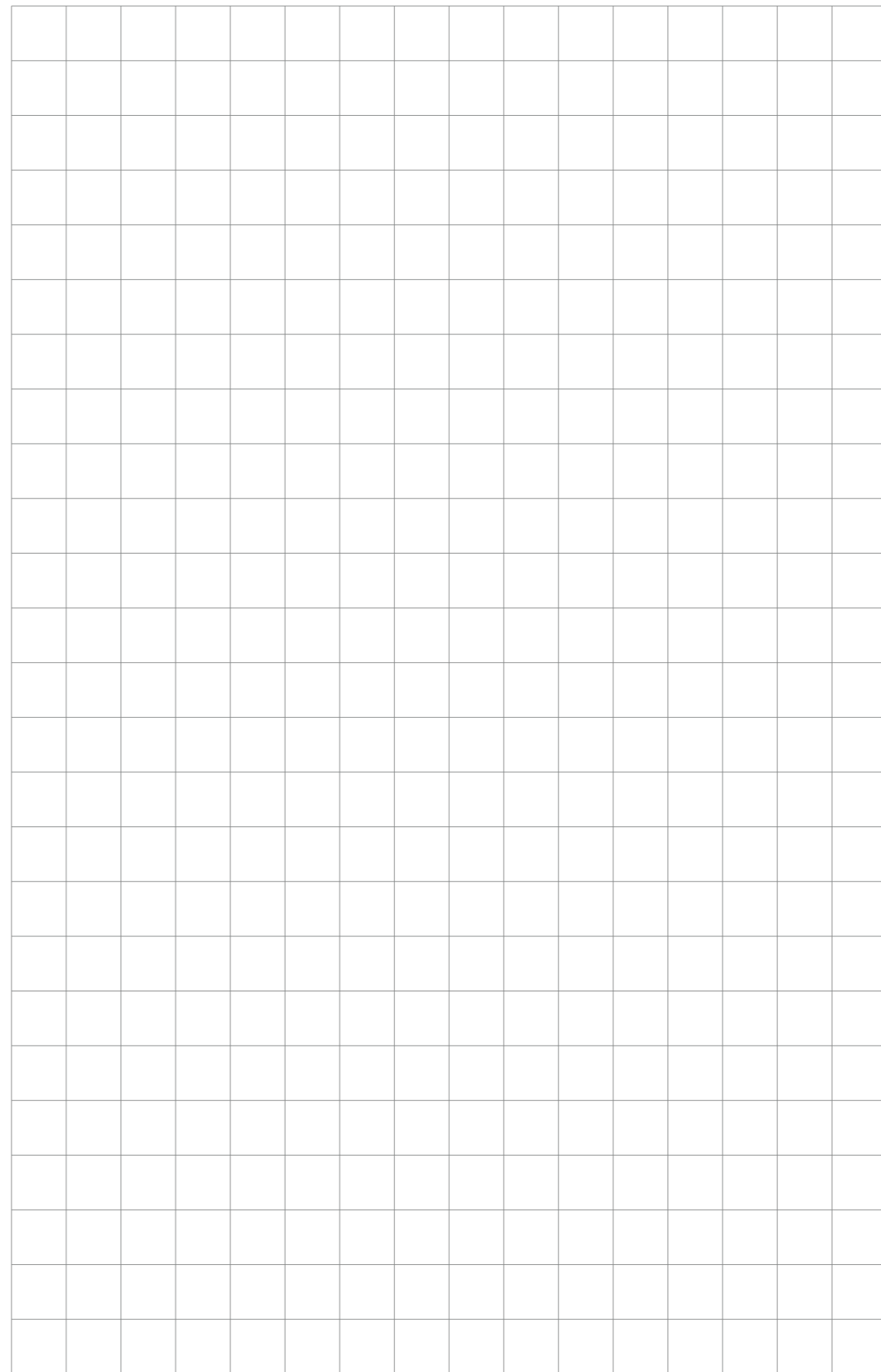
Teo Härén
Marie Thorsbrink
Albert
Berit Härén
Hasse Härén
Torbjörn Härén
André Wognum
Maria Ehn-Notrica
Mårten Norman
Andreas Pardeike
Jocke Berggren
Fredrik Ahlman
Erik Reimhult
Bengt-Arne Vedin
Bengt Renander
Yngve Bergqvist
Leif Pagrotsky
Marie Hallander Larsson
Mats Ohlsson
Maria Blom
Fabian Månson
Kerstin Karlsson
Therese Foleby
Alexander Bard
Gustav Bard
Anders Carlberg

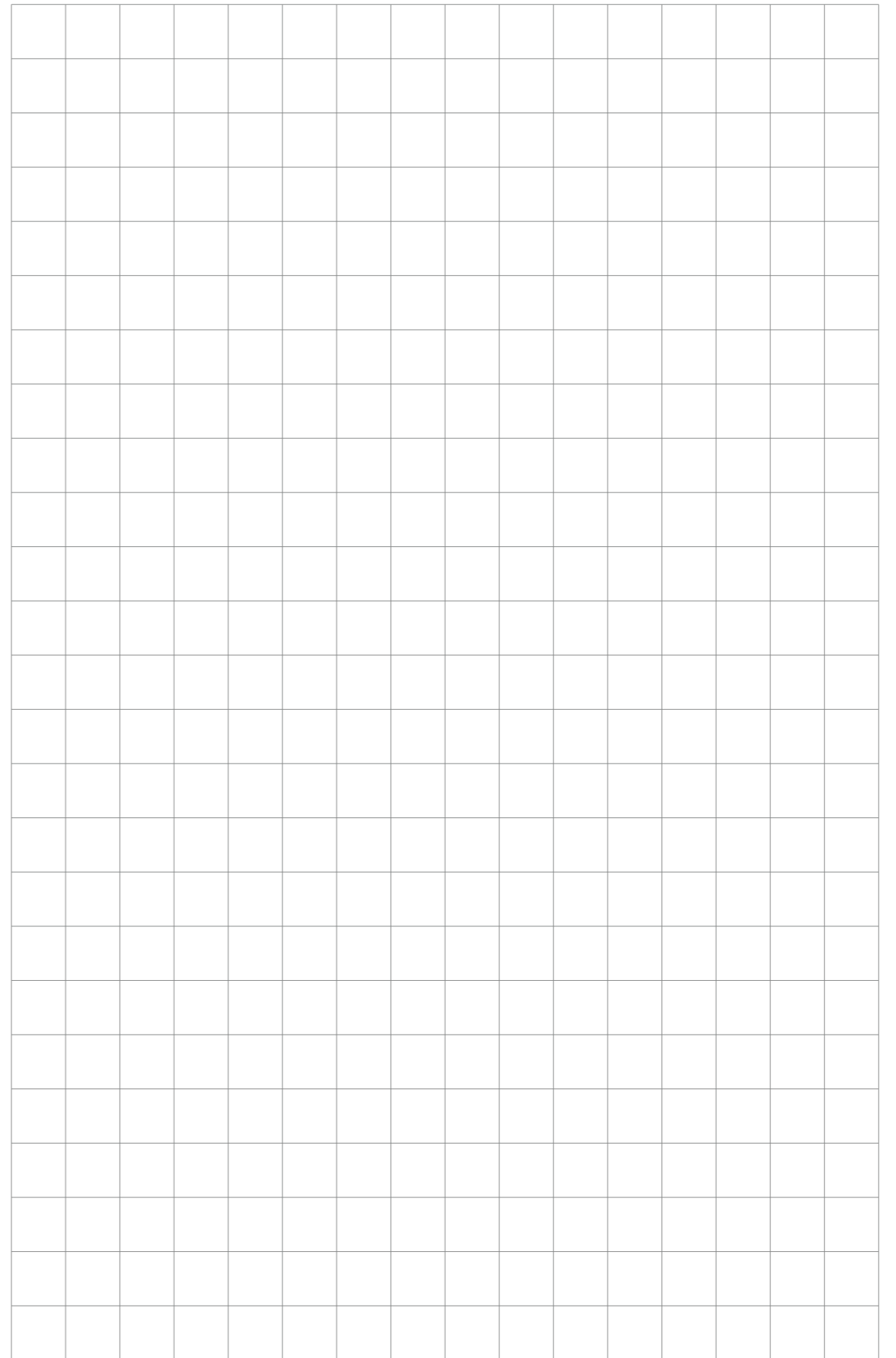
Amelia Adamo
Soki Choi
Philip Cohen
Monica Lindstedt
Bengt Möller
Marita Bohlin
Tommy Karman
Thomas Magnusson
Lars Fallberg
Petra Pardeike
Lars Larsson
Christer Skoglund
Jack Hansen
Jan Segerfeldt
Anette Gustafsson
Jan Linnaeus
Ann Westfelt

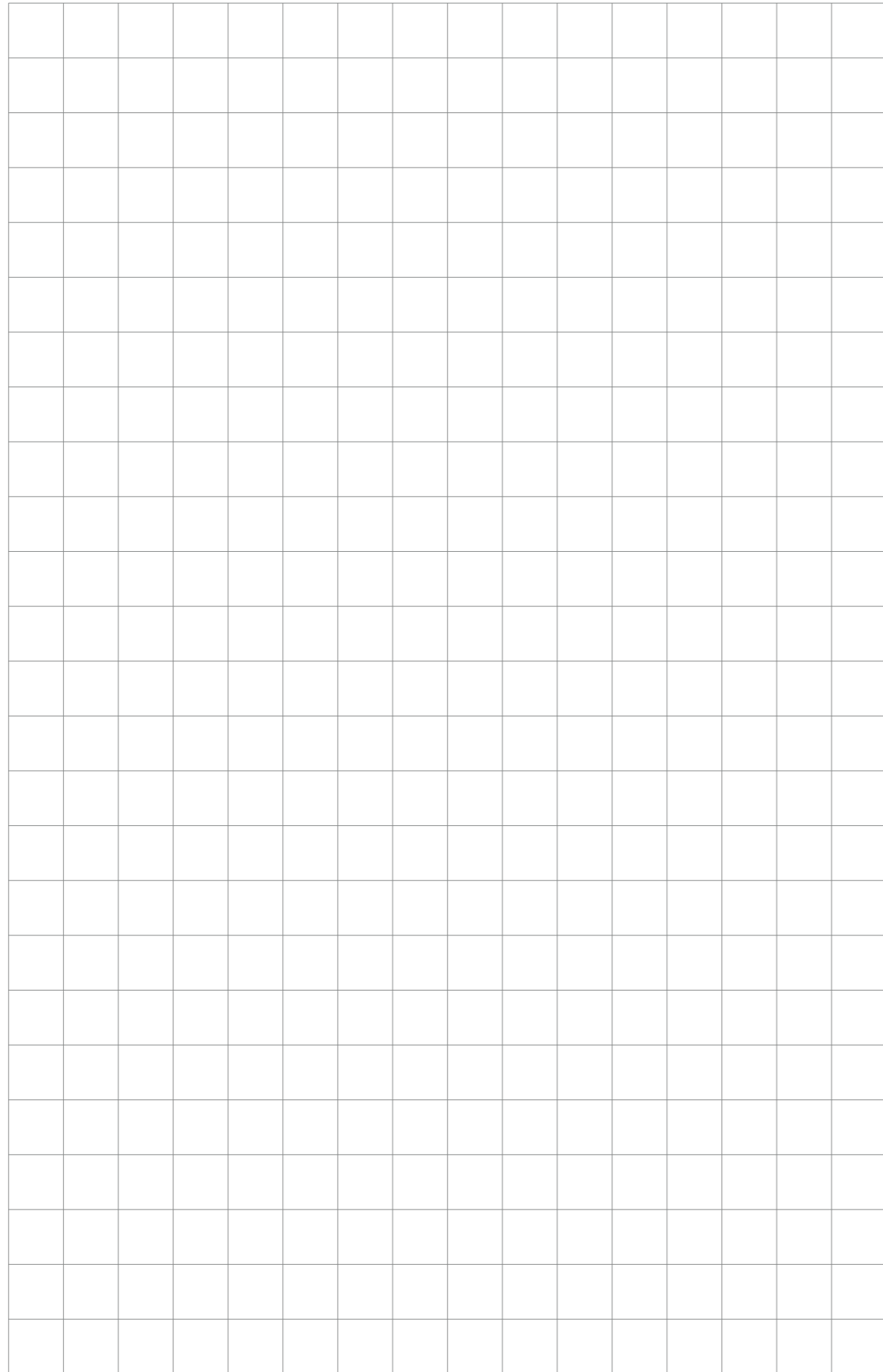
+ everyone who helped with the proofreading of this book in one way or another!

All the members of interesting.org and your wonderful ideas!

And finally, Anna Breitholtz—for inspiring me more than I thought was possible and more than you can understand.







About interesting.org

Fredrik Härén and Teo Härén are the founders of the idea broking company interesting.org. Interesting.org's business idea is to do business from ideas. It is our vision that all ideas should be assessed and that more ideas should come into the world.

Interesting.org helps companies get in new ideas and suggestions as to how their products and services can be improved. The company was founded in the belief that there are many brilliant ideas outside a company about how a company can improve.

Interesting.org is the link between approx. 10,000 creative problem solvers and companies that realize that good ideas can be had, even outside the company's own four walls. Clients include: The Swedish Post Office, Telia, Stockholm City, SOS Children's Villages and The Swedish Board of Trade and Industry.

You can find more information about the company on:

www.interesting.org



Book a lecture or workshop

Invite your co-workers or customers to an inspiring seminar on business creativity. A lecture about the importance and value of new ideas. An uplifting talk to encourage creativity and innovative thinking.

The lecture includes many entertaining examples and Fredrik knows how to interact with his public. The aim of the lecture is to help the audience understand how valuable it is to think in new ways—and how difficult this is to achieve.

Fredrik has given his lecture to: Entrepreneur's Day, the Swedish Parliament, The Swedish Police Force, The Stockholm School of Business, Telia and the SEB bank.

Find out more at: www.interesting.org

About the author

This book is written by Fredrik Härén. Fredrik has quickly become one of Sweden's most sought-after lecturers. In 2003 alone, he held more than 180 lectures and workshops in subjects such as creativity, idea generation and entrepreneurship.

He is the founder of several companies, the most recent being convenient.info and interesting.org—a company whose business idea is to do business from ideas. This is Fredrik's third book.

Research

Research has been carried out by Teo Härén (teo.haren@interesting.org). He is the CEO and founder of interesting.org and during the past few years, he has read, sorted, assessed and rated more than 30,000 business development ideas. If there is someone who can tell a good idea from a bad one—then it is Teo.

Graphic design

The graphic designer of this book is André Wognum—a creator whose breadth and depth is hard to come by. André has designed everything from virtual worlds and Internet services to print and company trademarks (www.wognum.se). One of his latest projects is UNIQUS®—Assorted Sensations for Your Brain: a tasy box containing mental gymnastic exercises. See page 266 of this book.

Translator

The translator of this book is Fiona Miller, a love immigrant from Britain, who came to Sweden in search of a writing job back in 1996 and who has been stranded there due to the snow (and a husband) ever since.

Fiona is the author of more than ten educational books as well as co-author of a TV series designed to teach English to China. These days, she dabbles in anything interesting and creative—such as writing scripts for interactive media and translating books like this one!

Tell a friend

Ideas are there to be passed on! And good ideas should be rewarded. Do you know someone who would buy large quantities of The Idea Book? Then do this:

1. Send an e-mail to the person in question and recommend this book. (Tell them about: *www.interesting.org/ideabook* too!)
2. Send a copy of your mail to: *fredrik.haren@interesting.org*.
3. If your contact orders more than ten books, then you get a commission.

For your company

This book is based on the belief that all organizations must become much better at encouraging more creative thinking. For information and prices regarding books for some/all of your employees, please send an e-mail to: *info@interesting.org*.

www.interesting.org/ideabook

The book's own web site.

