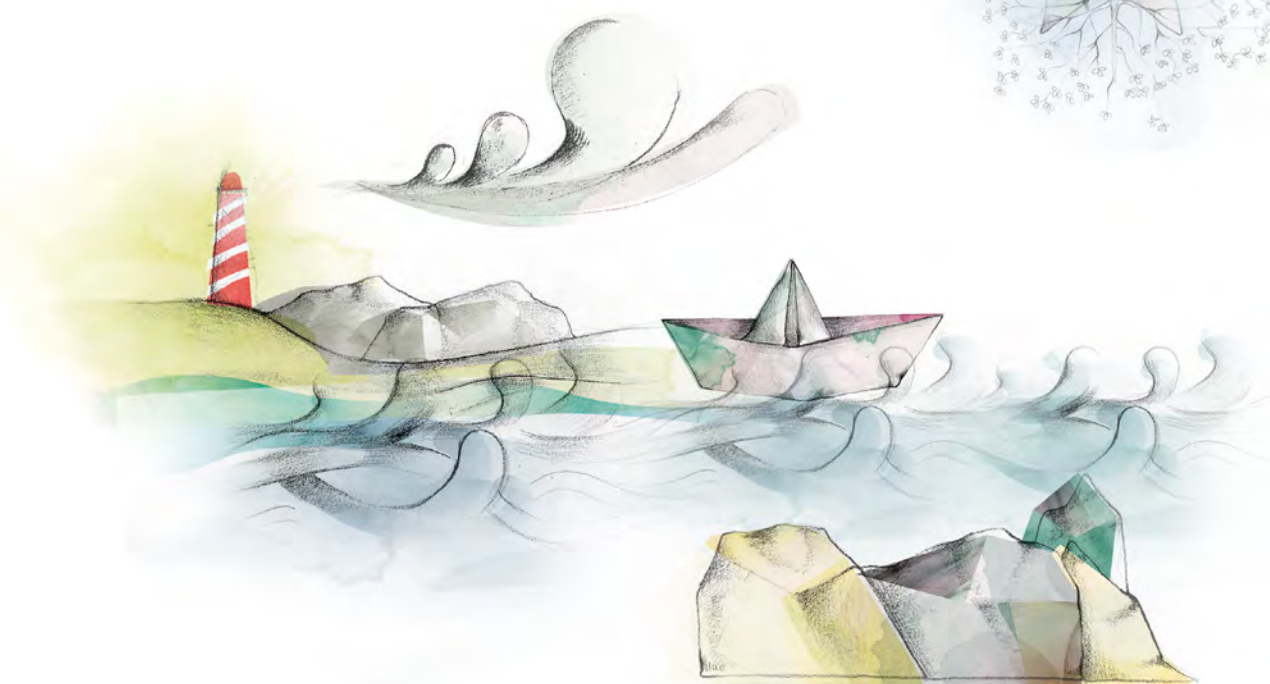# MAKE THE SKY BLOOM
A SIX STEPS METHOD TO THINK AND DEVELOP EXTRA-ORDINARY IDEAS BASED ON A TRUE STORY.

a book by Jacopo Perfetti

THE BOOK

Fai Fiorire il Cielo, Jacopo Perfetti, Sperling&Kupfer (Mondadori), 2015.

Make The Sky Bloom

Inspired by the life of entrepreneurs, musicians, directors, philosophers, writers and artists, "Make The Sky Bloom" offers a six steps method to think and develop extraordinary ideas based on a true story.

Many years ago I was walking among the street of my city, Milan, when a brief poem written on the wall caught my attention: «*He, who throws seeds in the wind, will make the sky bloom*». As all the poems, the meaning is in the eyes of the reader, and in my eyes that verse was an hymn to going beyond the ordinary way of thinking and trying to create something extraordinary.

Nowadays, we live times in which all certainties are uncertain and the future for which we were raised is not what it used to be. Restless times, in which every blank page holds the potential of a hidden history that no one but us can write. This is our present, and there could not be a better time to flesh out our ideas and go back to the deepest meaning of "desiring" – from the Latin de-sideràre – «to stare at the stars». Whether we are craftsmen, creatives, artists, musicians, designers, managers, writers, philosophers, entrepreneurs or non-entrepreneurs, an idea can be developed along a unique path,

just like it can be conceived by a unique person, having a specific identity. The world needs uniqueness. It needs new logics and new synergies to solve old problems. Luckily, endless sources of inspiration surround us. In my book "Make The Sky Bloom", I have collected the stories of people who – thanks to their longing for the stars and their cleverness – were able to give life to extraordinary ideas.

Prompted by this inspiration, I have created a method to think and develop ideas in six steps. 1) We first start from our idea based on a true story (metaphorically speaking, *our b.o.a.t.s.*); 2) we create the right context for the idea to be developed (*our sea*); 3) we find people to support it (*our wind*) and 4) resources to develop it (*our rocks*); once we have our idea set in the right positioning with the right people and the right resources we are ready to confront the outside environment (*our harbour*) and 6) go beyond and *make the sky bloom*, in other words, create something unique and extraordinary (*our stars*).

01. Chapters Summary

As an author and university teacher, I always try to present thoughts from different perspectives using culture and creativity as tools to teach leaders and students managerial and strategic theories, in order to widen their thinking and enhance their entrepreneurial attitude. That's why all my books and lessons are full of inspirational stories belonging to different background.

Following this path, "Make The Sky Bloom" is divided in six chapters, each of them begins with a story in a different fields: music (with Lemmy Kilmister, Springsteen, Sex Pistols and many others), art (here come Duchamp, Banksy, Damien Hirst and other artists), entrepreneurship (I talk about companies such as Airbnb and TOMS or entrepreneurs like Richard Branson or Olivetti), philosophy (with the thought-provoking thinking of Nietzsche, Žižek, Bauman and many others) and cinema (*Apocalypse Now* by Coppola, *Ocean's Eleven* by Soderbergh, *They Live* by John Carpenter and so on).

Chapter 01: B.o.a.t.s.

First of all, you need your *b.o.a.t.s.*, your idea "based on a true story". The absence of essence generates degeneration and having a true story is the essential base of any successful idea, this ensures it can engage people and change over time without losing its strength.

The first chapter starts with the assumption that the absence of essence generates degeneration and having a true story is the essential base of any successful idea, independent of the context. The first section focuses on 1977, year of the Pop-Punk eclipse, and introduces many of the stories I go on to tell in the following chapters. I talk about value propositions, Richard Mutt, and what I consider to be the invisible side of a true story. I explain how to go beyond an object to focus on the process and on the thinking that led to that object. Then I move to Belgium and set forth the thirteen crucial features of any success story. I tell the stories of companies, artists, and marketing campaigns that expressed those features and were able to put them to good use: from English artist Banksy to Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, from the wow evoked by Dove to the one by Microsoft, from Jeff Koons to Damien Hirst, from Barbie to Kodak, from Charles Saatchi to the 80,000 artists living in London and New York City, and from AC/DC to Marina Abramovic.

In the following section I focus on branding and on how a story creates an image, not the other way around. Then I move to Los Angeles, in 1924, to discuss how people may project themselves into a success story. To do so, I use the mise en abîme in Buster Keaton's *Sherlock Jr.*, and the four B's of value proposition evolution. I conclude the first chapter telling the stories of New Coke, Bob Dylan's electric guitar in Newport in 1965, and explain that you can give anything up, but not your own true story.

Chapter 02: Sea

Once we defined our idea, we must pinpoint the best context for it to thrive, and ride the wave of the imaginary without betraying our promise. «Change the context. Change the value». We should never get used to change but get passionate about it, without losing our ability to be amazed and to see the extraordinary in the ordinary.

The second chapter starts with the story of a shark that well explains how context can determine value; I then go on to apply the same principle to music, gas, and the circus. Expanding on the theme, I analyze the importance of giving your idea the right context – using the permanent art installation *Prada Marfa*, by Danish duo Elmgreen and Dragset as an example; I further apply this concept to some instances of globalization, proving how context can be an effective tool to turn a basic attribute into an exciting one. In the third section I tell three stories: one about a singer-songwriter, one about a violinist, and one about a work of art. I tell each one from two opposite but symmetrical points of view, to prove the impact of context on the development of a successful idea. I then explain the fluidity of today's context, and why you should never get used to change but get passionate about it, never losing your ability to be amazed and to see the extraordinary in the ordinary. The chapter ends with two sections in which I focus on the concept of collective imagination – the metaphorical wave that can make your story soar or sink in the sea that is your context. To do so, I start from two movies – *Revolutionary Road* by Sam Mendes and Wild at Heart by David Lynch – then present the medieval *Frau-Welt* myth and the case of Dürer's Rhinoceros in the Renaissance.

Chapter 03: Wind

Companies are not only an expression of profit they make, but also an expression of people who make them profitable. It takes Hegel. It takes Lemmy. And it takes that kind of enthusiasm that make us yell: «*It Could Work!*».

The third chapter is entirely dedicated to the wind supporting our idea's development: people.

To paraphrase English singer-songwriter Bill Fay, *life is people* and people are one of the cornerstones of any success story. Starting from Lars Von Trier's *The boss of it all* metaphor, I write about a system created to shift responsibility from who to what, so that conceptually a person grows increasingly distant from the consequences of his or her actions. I go on by introducing, through the myth of the Latin goddess Cura, the Hegelian interpretation of the geographical *Germany-France-England* triad, setting it side-by-side with Meredith Belbin's theories; this allows me to present what I consider to be the key features of an ideal team for a success story. I highlight such features in various cases, including Camillo Mastrocinque's movie *The Band of Honest Men*, Apple, and the genesis of Ozzy Osbourne's *Mama, I'm Coming Home* and *Se telefonando*, famously sung by Mina. The following section focuses on Lemmy's Matrix, inspired by Motörhead leader, Lemmy Kilmister, which I use to define the four potential attitudes a person can have towards a project and, more in general, towards life; I then make comparisons between Lemmy Kilmister vs Sid Vicious, Niki Lauda vs James Hunt and Francesco Sforza vs Cesare Borgia. The fourth section in the chapter introduces the entrepreneurial approach based on the three features summed up in the acronym A.P.E., tells the story of how Virgin Atlantic started, and explains why it is important that the State have an entrepreneurial approach too. I then present the Art, Cash & Glory model inspired by Jim Collins's hedgehog concept, and tell the story of The Body Shop and Newman's Own. I end the third chapter with the concept of serial multiskilling, based on Frederick Taylor's and Henry Ford's thinking and on stories from Arnold Schwarzenegger's and Harrison Ford's life.

Chapter 04: Rocks

Let's focus on ideas and creativity rather than on budget and cash. Let's work on networks, credit and reputation. Let's take our time, there is no system «to have it all and have it now», and a deep love for hard and patient work is therefore necessary. Let's work hard to imagine a future that is an expression of what we want and not of what we always believed to want.

The fourth chapter concludes the phase of the idea in itself, and tackles the theme of resources necessary to develop a true story. The first section focuses on the importance of decreasing the need for resources by making the best possible use of ideas and cleverness. I write about the jugaad movement, the miniskirt, Intel, and Jamaican singer Brushy One-String; I finish by telling the story of Emile Leray, interpreted through Peter Suedfeld's REST theory and the Neoplatonist teachings of philosopher Plotinus. Next, I introduce the theme of networks as a crucial resource for the development of a project, and suggest how you may create a global supply chain thanks to a strong and believable brand. I conclude the section with the concept of *working capital* and the idea of creating a system in which every component of the production chain can be enhanced. The next section focuses on a specific resource: money and, more in detail, access to credit. I write about how finance has come into our personal lives, and use examples from Michael Mann's movie *Ali*, John G. Avildsen's *Rocky*, and Gavin O'Connor's *Warrior*, before presenting the method formalized by Thorstein Veblen in the early 1900s to divide society into categories. The fourth section starts with the story of General Zhuge Liang and goes on to introduce the natural balance by which the better the reputation, the fewer resources are needed. The fifth section focuses instead on time as a resource, though stories on Van Gogh's left ear, *Apocalypse Now*, and surfing, helping you understand that any project must go through a necessary period of maturation. I report various examples that prove that there is no system to have it all and have it now, and that a deep love for hard and patient work is therefore necessary. Finally, the chapter tackles the subject of method, through an analysis of the recent remake of *Ocean's 11* and its eleven key steps towards the creation of a success story.

Chapter 05: Harbour

We are ready to implement our idea and to confront the outside environment to test it. Connect the dots and listen to our stakeholders, without forgetting our responsibilities both as a sustainable producer (*push*) and a conscious consumer (*pull*).

The fifth chapter is dedicated to the second phase in the development for an

Idea in brief

THE IDEA

We live times in which all certainties are uncertain and the future for which we were raised is not what it used to be. Times in which every blank page holds the potential of a hidden history that no one but us can write. This is our present, and there could not be a better time to flesh out our ideas and turn them into something extraordinary. Inspired by the life of entrepreneurs, musicians, philosophers, writers and artists, this book offers a method to think and develop extraordinary ideas based on a true story.

THE 6 STEPS METHOD

1) The idea based on a true story (boats) 2) Create the right context (sea); 3) Find the people (wind) and 4) the resources (rocks) you need; 5) Confront the outside environment (harbour) and 6) Create something extraordinary (stars).

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idea: confronting the outside environment. It starts with the ritual initiation of shamans in some Australian tribes. The first section focuses on the external environment and on the importance of understanding its dynamics and changes. I go on to introduce the theme of execution, referencing how Bruce Springsteen's third album, Born To Run was born, Engels' ounce, and the action in Elvis Presley. The third section in the chapter is dedicated to competitors and to the need to innovate through an original and unique way of thinking that can create new connections for new ideas, like Christian Oersted did when, in 1820, he put together two phenomena that had always existed – electricity and magnetism – laying down the early foundations of electromagnetism. The section also tells the stories of Miles Davis, Sergej Ėjzenštejn and Picasso, and explains how a bicycle can become a bull's head. The chapter then presents the theme of interlocutors as a crucial dialectic element in implementing an idea. I go back to Coca-Cola and present the concept of mediated participation through a story about Marylin Monroe and an American soldier on a desert island. I conclude the fifth chapter tackling the subject of responsibility towards the external environment, from two different points of view: the one of the producer (*push*), where sustainability of actions is key, and the one of the consumer (*pull*), where awareness of one's own habits is key.

Chapter 06: Stars

Aim for the stars. Why be a second class Ravel when we can be a first-class Gershwin? Don't think out of the box: create our own box. Seek art everywhere, although this will fill our head with question marks. Let's go beyond the nostalgia for a future we've never been in order to give meaning to the chaos, create new models and *make the sky bloom.*

The sixth and last chapter makes up the third part of the book, focused on the importance of going beyond one's idea. In the first section, I tell the story of Forrest Gump's great race and write about how, once we start developing our idea, we can run while looking around but need to move past the concept of arriving first to create our own context. I then go on telling the stories of the young Polish artist Andrzej Sobiepan and of JR, and introduce the beyond the box concept. Next, I continue on the theme of art, telling the story of a performance by graffiti artist Bros in Franciacorta and highlighting all the ir's that bring art to life and allow it to vibrate

among the streets, and most importantly, among people. I write about the importance of going beyond shock as a dialectic element to create a unique and original idea. The fourth section focuses on mistakes, with the three ways to confront them and the cases of Ronald Wayne, Bruno Iksil, and Richard Branson. It then references Nietzsche and times of chaos, and explains why disorder makes the situation excellent and how you can go beyond the concept of trade-off, both in social and business terms. To support this point, I tell the story of Olivetti and compare it to Porter's *creating shared value* theory and to Foxconn's more recent case. I then move on to the theme of crisis and write about the way many of the companies that can make or break the Dow Jones today were founded during periods of economic difficulty. The chapter ends with Ray Bradbury and his *The Martian Chronicles*, the movie *The Mechanic*, and Bauman's concept of tourist, which I compare to Robert Safian's definition of *generation flux*. Finally, I write about the future not being what it used to be in the past and about the importance of getting used to the effort the imagination must make to stay down to earth. Just not this earth.

02. Comments

Here is a brief selection of comments by readers or journalists who read the italian edition of the book: Fai Fiorire il Cielo, Sperling&Kupfer (Mondadori), 2015.

"A creative Manifesto for marketers and entrepreneurs"

- Reader

"A recipe to grow"

- Corriere della sera

"A mix of enthusiasm and inspirational stories"

- Reader

"Art + Marketing + Entrepreneurship. An innovative recipe to develop ideas that can change the future"

- La libertà

"Perfetti: crisis as a starting point to make the sky bloom"

- Giornale di Brescia

"A six steps brilliant path to develop successful ideas"

- Il Tempo

"A sort of MBA but certainly more fun"

- Reader

"Make The Sky Bloom: how to build a company in six steps"

- EconomyUp

"Companies, philosophy, art, music, movies and history: a unique approach to turn insights into business ideas"

- Reader

Street artist Seacreative "makes the sky bloom". Watch all videos here, https://vimeo.com/maketheskybloom

03. Artists

In order to promote the book, I asked 20 artists to paint 200 original pages of the book and then we showed them in many exhibitions. After that, I also asked 5 artists to "make the sky bloom" painting a skyscraper's window. Here are all the videos: https://vimeo.com/maketheskybloom. Here below a selection of pages, you can find them all on: http://maketheskybloom.com/

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