

# ONE IDEA CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE FOREVER

COME UP WITH MANY EVERY DAY



## CHRIS WINFIELD

LIVE MORE LIFE



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L I V E M O R E L I F E

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## 1. WHY YOU NEED TO **GENERATE** IDEAS EACH DAY (AND WHO NEEDS THIS GUIDE ANYWAY)?

If you're perfectly happy with having your life continue just the way it is right now, stop reading this right away. If you're not interested in self-improvement, because you're perfect just the way you are, this guide isn't for you. In fact, it may be counter-productive. If you keep reading, it may pop your "I'm perfect" bubble. Why take the risk?

Still with me? Good. I happen to think most of us can and should strive to continuously improve ourselves, and enhance how we view and interact with the world. That's what I'm committed to for myself, and what I hope to bring others, including you.

So, ideas. We all have them. All the time. Most of us don't even recognize them as ideas. Most of the time they show up disguised as complaints, aggravation, irritation, and sometimes *wishes*. You know what I'm talking about, right?

"If only this stupid cash register line would move faster!" or "How am I

supposed to get the grocery shopping done when my boss keeps me late, and I have to pick up the kids from after-care?!" or "I wish there was a simple way to find the best coupons for [fill in your favorite brand or business]!"

“A single idea from the human mind can build cities. An idea can transform the world and rewrite all the rules.”

-- **Dominic Cobb**

It's complaints and wishes like these, where they weren't ignored, that generated millions (if not billions) of dollars for businesses. Think Amazon, WhatsApp, Tesla Motors.

Wouldn't it be great if each time you were aggravated or irritated, you could turn it into an idea that could make you millions of dollars or simply make your life better? Each day just a little bit easier...

I always liked to think of myself as an imaginative person, with lots of creative ideas. It took a while, but I finally realized I didn't have a clear process for documenting my ideas. Heck, I didn't even think I needed such a process.

Before I committed to consciously generating ideas each day, I handled my ideas like they were only possibly, maybe, potentially useful at best, and a nuisance at worst.

My "process," if we could call it that, was limited to one of the following, in descending order of likelihood.

1. Ignore the idea and maybe it will go away quietly (most did) - I just didn't



believe in these, and didn't see any value in even recording them

2. Jot it down on a piece of paper and promptly lose it - this was how I handled the majority of ideas I wasn't sure were worthless
3. Email myself a note with the idea - now we're getting to almost worthwhile territory; I'm sure there are dozens if not hundreds of such ideas in my inbox; I'm also sure I'll never see any of them, unless I happen to have the same idea again

4. If I thought it was a great idea, I'd mention it to **someone else**; if **they** loved it, I **might** write it down and consider doing something with it; If they weren't jumping up and down in excitement about it, I'd consign the idea to "process" no. 1 above

Do you get the pattern here?

Most ideas I metaphorically chained to a heavy weight and drowned. Ideas I thought may or may not be worth revisiting, I consigned to limbo.

How about those few ideas I was really excited about? Those I let other people play Caesar, pointing their thumb up (let 'em live) or down (kill 'em off).

*This meant only a very small fraction of my ideas ever saw the light of day, and most of those enjoyed the lifespan of a fruit-fly (i.e. not very long at all).*

A while back, I read [Choose Yourself](#) by James Altucher and it changed how I think and approach many aspects of my life. One of my most profound takeaways, something that I added to my Daily Routine, was the

concept of **coming up with 10 ideas each day, no matter what.**

About a month after I finished 'Choose Yourself', I saw a video by [Ari Meisel](#) where he talks about the importance of getting your ideas out, even the bad ones. The only quibble I have with Ari is that in the sense of ideation, of brain-storming, there's no such thing as a bad idea. Now, this doesn't mean every idea you have will be worth implementing. Some are really not useful in and of themselves. Their use is in setting up a flow of ideas, and keeping it going. If you want to come up with great ideas, you have to accept two things.





First, most ideas are not all that great, but just like in baseball, if you only swing when you're positive you'll hit, you'll strike out every time. No, you need to swing at likely pitches, and if you're really good, one in three will be a hit.

The second thing you have to accept is that ideas flow like cars in traffic. If you stop the flow, guess what? Nothing will get through.

This was a revelation to me because I always felt an idea wasn't worth writing down or exploring *unless* it was a great one. It eventually dawned on me that I didn't have to come up with a breakthrough concept or the next light bulb with every idea. ***I just needed to get the stuff out.*** Then I could sort out the wheat from the chaff.



For you numbers guys out there, here's a way to think about this.

There are 365 days in a year (big revelation that, I know). If you come up with 10 new ideas each and every day, in a year's time you'll have come up with **3,650 new ideas**.

Next, let's apply the [Pareto Principle](#) and say 80% of those ideas are going to suck, and you'll get the most value from the other 20%. That's **730 new ideas** worth working with each year!

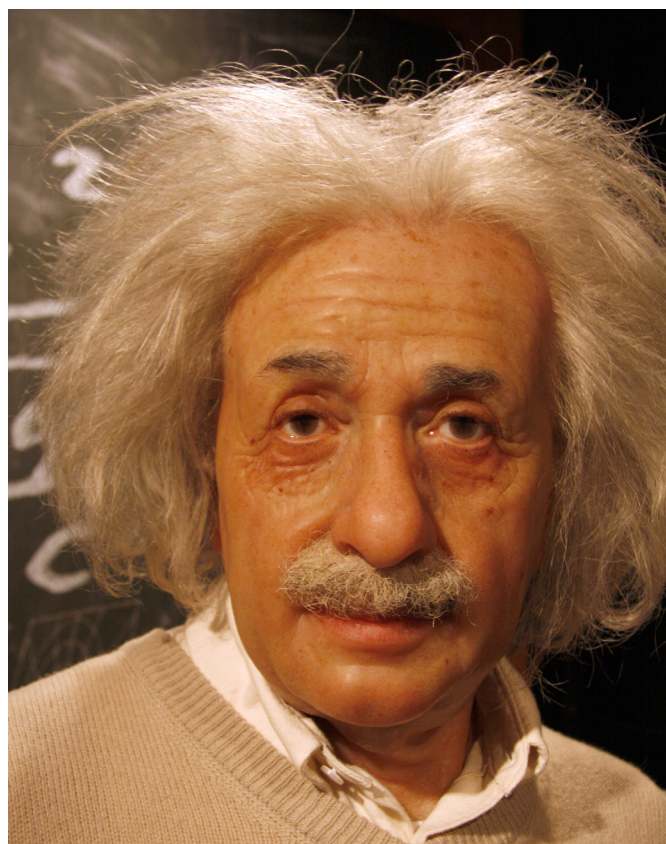
You may be thinking here "Who said 20% of my ideas will be worth anything?!" You know what? You're probably right. Let's be conservative and say that 99% of the ideas would be a waste of time to pursue. That leaves you **36 good ideas**.

"But even 1% is probably overstating it!" you may think. Ok. Let's be super-conservative and say that 90% of your good ideas are never going to pan out as the next breakthrough. That leaves you **three or four killer ideas each year!**

Think about that for a minute. If someone offered to sell you a program for \$99, or

even \$499, that routinely comes up with three or four great ideas each and every year, for the rest of your life, wouldn't you plunk down that cash and say "**Gimme!**"? I know I would.

So, why wouldn't you accept a system that does the same and costs nothing?! ***Remember, it only takes [one brilliant idea](#) to change everything***, and here's a way to come up with one of those on average every three or four months!



## 2. HOW TO GET IN THE IDEAS HABIT

I knew coming up with ideas was important. I understood the math. I got it. Still, for weeks I kept coming up with excuse after excuse for skipping a day here and there. Just to give you a sense of how pathetic our excuses for not doing what we committed to, here are some of my favorites.

- It's the weekend. I need a break!
- I'm tired. Nothing I come up with today is gonna be any good!
- I have way too much to do! How am I supposed to come up with brilliant ideas with so much on my plate?!
- I'm not feeling inspired. How can I come up with decent ideas if I'm just not in the mood?!

After a while, I took myself for a heart-to-heart and realized this just wasn't cutting it. Each time I'd stop (*"Just today, honest!"*),

I'd find it was much harder to start again. My flow was broken, my commitment was shaky, and ideas got stuck in my mind causing ideation gridlock. It was clear this wasn't working.

**“** *We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.*

**-- Aristotle**





After three months, instead of 900 ideas (of which surely about 9 would have been at least decent and one might have been killer) I had maybe 100 ideas, only one of which was any good, and it was certainly nothing to call the Nobel Prize committee in Oslo about.

**Consistency, structure, and commitment are key.**

Once I completely committed to this, accepting no self-defeating excuses, ten ideas each day came easily. Ten became my new minimum. Now I faced a new issue - ***How do I record all of these ideas during the course of a day?***

### 3. YOUR IDEAS TOOLKIT

I've always loved pen and paper, but it just wasn't practical to keep a notebook with me at all times. For example, the water in the shower would have made the paper a bit soggy. Even keeping the notebook out of the shower wasn't enough, as my active four-year-old proved to me with a spilled water glass.

What's more, physical notebooks are not easily searchable, and indexing them is not trivial either. I knew I needed a better way of getting all these ideas out of my head, but it needed to be a way that worked (almost) anywhere, and that was easy to search and review old ideas. Enter my iPhone.

Whether good or bad, I carry it with me pretty much everywhere except the bathroom or bed. Using the iPhone to searchably record ideas requires an app (or several). My two favorites are [Evernote](#) and [Day One](#).



I know it's not so original to mention Evernote as a productivity tool, but the reality is that Evernote does it better than everyone else and they keep getting better. I've been using Evernote for years, though I have to confess it was because I felt I should more than any other reason.

It's a bit ridiculous, but I never took the time to learn how to really use it and get the most out of it. That stopped when I truly understood that Evernote is designed to mimic the way [my brain thinks](#). Then, I read a post that made me realize [I'd been using Evernote wrong](#). You'd think that would upset me, but it was actually awesome news! Since reading that, Evernote has become my de-facto ideation central.

Here's how I now get the most out of Evernote as my ideation tool:

1. Each morning I start a new note titled "Ideas for 04-24-14" (or whatever the date is). I then update this note throughout the day with my 10 or more daily ideas.
2. If I come across something on my phone or when I'm on my computer

that inspires me, I email it to my Evernote upload address, adding notes about what my take on it is or why I thought it would be helpful. I don't tag it or get too specific. The Evernote search tool is great, so I don't need to set up different notebooks or folders. That's crucial, because that's what held me back in the past - I'd get so concerned with organizing everything perfectly that I'd just think 'this is too much work' and that was the end of ideation for a good long while. Now, I just focus on getting stuff out of my head and into Evernote.

3. If my phone is not with me, as hard to imagine that happening, I can still jot down an idea in a notebook, and then use the photo attachment option to add it to that day's idea note, keeping everything in one place. This is less searchable, so I try to minimize such events.



4. While some ideas jump out and beg to be implemented immediately, others take weeks or months to grow on me. That's perfectly fine. I can simply search Evernote for "ideas" and review my older ideas. Some that didn't impress me when I first had them now seem genius, while others remain in the "meh" category. I just leave those last in Evernote. Maybe they'll grow better with a bit more aging, and even if they don't, I'm not paying rent for them.

I tried using a Google Docs spreadsheet but categorizing everything *just right* was a pain. The main thing I use on my computer now, beside Evernote, is a simple Chrome Extension, [Email this Page by Google](#), that lets me email a web page to Evernote, or to myself if I want to develop the idea further in Gmail. You can do the same with the Evernote's web clipper function, but this method works better for me.

For those times when technology is not available, or not appropriate, I use [my favorite pen](#) and paper. I just make sure to have one on me, and some in every room. When all else fails, I can do what



used to work in high school - I grab a pen and write on my hand. I've had to do this a few times, and once it even saved a really good idea! Whether on paper or on my hand, I take a picture and upload it to my Evernote's daily ideas thread.

Having explored in depth how I use Evernote, let's move on to **Day One**. I started using Day One more than a year ago, to simply journal. This was completely unrelated to my ideation process. I'd journal as part of my daily reflection on what

bothered me that day, what worked, what didn't work, and what [I was grateful for](#).

I realized there were lots of ideas coming out of this reflective process, ideas that were hidden in my journal entries. In the [words of Leo Babauta in Zen Habits](#):

*"...every single post idea that I have for Zen Habits (or other blogs I write for) comes from reflection. Basically, I reflect on things that I'm doing or that are going on in my life. If things aren't going well, I learn stuff I can share with others. If I reflect on something that's a success for me, I think about how I got that success, and share that too. I've had hundreds of great ideas this year from reflection."*

I could have written my journal in a notebook, but the same objections came to mind as for my ideas logging. Notebooks are vulnerable to four-year-old serial water spillers, and are also not very searchable. I tried Word and Google Docs, but I preferred something more convenient than my computer, especially late at night, making the simplicity of Day One on my iPhone just perfect. It's a beautiful app that makes me feel great about being creative. You

may think that's shallow, but once you find something that works for you, like Day One and Evernote work for me, you need to embrace it. If you prefer other apps, or your computer, or even paper and pen, go for it. Just find the tools that keep you going, that don't get in your way, and start generating and recording your ideas.

I mentioned before that notebooks don't do well in the shower. You might think that's no big deal, after all, you're probably in and out of the shower in 10 or 15 minutes. That's less than 2% of your waking hours, so just do your ideation in the other 98%, right? Not so fast! The shower is an amazing place for inspiration and creativity, because you feel safe and relaxed, without having to concentrate on anything in particular. Leo Widrich from Buffer points to the shower as being a [magical combination for creativity](#):

*“If you are in a relaxed state of mind, easy to distract and full of dopamine, your brain is most likely to give you your best, most creative ideas.”*

So, how can I record ideas I come up with in that magical shower? Washable crayons! Remember I have a four-year-old? We bought her washable crayons so she could color while taking a bath, and we could erase it so she'd have a clean slate the following day. One day I just grabbed those crayons to jot down an idea I had in the shower. Then I took a picture of those ideas and added them to my Evernote thread of the day. Over time, I realized I was getting an average of two ideas a day this way. That may not seem like much, but it adds up to an impressive 730 ideas over the course of a year!

That improvisation worked fairly well, but then I came across an even better solution for my shower ideas. [Aqua Notes](#).

Seemingly obvious in retrospect, this product is pure genius. I don't know who came up with it, but I wouldn't be surprised if it came to them in the shower. They probably jumped out, slipped, and fell, but still made it to a pad of paper to write it down. Fast-forward a bit and they have an Amazon best-seller. This is just a waterproof pad and pencil, with a suction cup to attach to your shower wall.

The sheets can be torn off like any other writing pad.

Now, I find that I'm up to four ideas a day in the shower. Some days it's zero, but other days I come up with 10 in a row. The best thing is that I don't lose a single idea this way. Not impressed? Remember that with 10 ideas each day you'll get a killer idea about once every three or four months? How would you feel if that's the one you get in the shower and forget by the time you're dry? This is all about setting up your ideation tools so they don't get in your way, and do support you in consistently generating and recording at least 10 ideas each day, without losing any.





## 4. HOW TO **KEEP** IT GOING (AND WHY YOU REALLY SHOULD)

**Y**ears ago, I read a productivity secret Jerry Seinfeld revealed to software developer Brad Isaac. He called it 'Don't Break the Chain':

*"He told me to get a big wall calendar that has a whole year on one page and hang it on a prominent wall. The next step was to get a big red magic marker. He said for each day that I do my task of writing, I get to put a big red X over that day. 'After a few days you'll have a chain. Just keep at it and the chain will grow longer every day. You'll like seeing that chain, especially when you get a few weeks under your belt. **Your only job next is to not break the chain**.'"*

Remember that Aristotle quote? *"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."* Seinfeld found a way to create a habit and visually reinforce it.



I read this gem back in 2007. Unfortunately, I took over five years to put it into practice in my life, but as they say, that's water under the bridge. It's been more than a year and a half since I incorporated a version of this process into my life, helping me stick with my Daily Routine. Every day now, I figure out what I need to do, commit to it, and then do it. For example I saw the value in coming up with 10 ideas each day and instead of saying "I should come up with 10 ideas every day", I simply committed to it and changed that sentence to **"I will come up with 10 ideas each day."** No "should" about it. I just do it and don't break the chain.

My Daily Routine currently includes 35 things I do each day, no matter what. Generating 10 ideas is just one of those 35 things. It's very manageable. I wake up at 5 AM daily, and go to sleep at 10 PM, giving me 17 hours. That's more than an hour per idea!

If I thought about it as "I have to come up with 70 ideas each week," I'd get overwhelmed, I'd procrastinate, and I'd end up breaking the chain. Instead, I stick with the daily habit. Once a habit is in place, it actually becomes easier to do than to not do. If I even think of skipping a day, it preys

on my mind all day and plagues my day with negativity.

We all have an [idea muscle](#) and if we don't use it, it atrophies. You know that if you're stuck sick in bed for months, you'd have a hard time even walking once you got out of bed, right? That's because your leg muscles get used to not doing anything, and lose their ability to carry you around. Your mind's idea muscle is the same. If you don't use it for a while, it atrophies and coming up with good ideas becomes hard. I experienced this first hand and decided to change up my routine. Now I never take a day off from coming up with 10 ideas. I can always find enough time to do the things I committed to.



## 5. WHAT TO DO WITH **ALL** THOSE IDEAS

**N**ot knowing what your passion is, nor what types of ideas your ideation process will generate, I really can't tell you what to do with any specific idea. What I do recommend is adding to your process a couple of additional steps.

To start, when you come up with what you think is a killer idea, figure out if it's (1) one you can implement yourself, (2) one you can implement with help, or (3) one you really can't do much with. Once you've classified your killer idea, do the following, based on the class of idea.

1. Figure out what you want to achieve with the idea (e.g. build up a big business around it, build up a small business around it, develop it into an app or write it up as a book, e-book, etc.). Then, strategize what milestones you need to get from idea to result and what actions you need to take to get to each milestone.

Next, figure out what resources (financial, legal setup, mentor, etc.) you need to execute the plan. Finally, commit to the plan, line up the resources, and execute the plan.

2. For this class of ideas, identify whose help you need, put together a draft plan as described above, including a business plan if appropriate, and present to the person or people whose help you need. Then, together, follow the above process to strategize, line up resources, and implement the plan.



3. For the final class of ideas, consider if you can sell it to someone who can implement it. If not, and you still want the idea executed, consider giving it away to someone who can and will implement it.

mentioned above, to see if any of them has aged well enough to be worth implementing. More accurately, the question is whether or not I've come to the point that I recognize value in one or more ideas that I previously didn't.

The second step I've added to my process is to periodically review my ideas, as I

## 6. THE IDEAS PATH TO A **BETTER** YOU

**B**y turning yourself into an idea generating machine, you gain several important benefits.

**So, are you ready to take it on? Start with generating just ONE idea today.**

- You exercise your ideation and creativity muscle daily, making it much stronger
- You become more reflective, and as a result, most likely calmer
- You clear up the mental clutter caused by ideas you keep stuck in your mind
- You may come up with such a killer idea that will make you a ton of money, or even better, will make a huge difference in the world



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



I'm a passionate entrepreneur, strategist, leader and eternal student of life. I'm also on a never-ending quest to improve the world and myself..

Chris Winfield is a passionate entrepreneur and success strategist, who lives in New York City with his wife, daughter, and blue Shar-Pei. An eternal student of life, Chris is on a quest to constantly improve the world and himself.

Over the past decade and a half, Chris worked with many of the world's best known companies, including Disney, Virgin, Macy's, Viacom, Conde Nast, Intuit, NBC, Time, Inc. & many others. He's been featured in the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, AP, USA Today, CNN, NBC News, ABC News, CBS News, Forbes, TechCrunch, Inc., and 200+ media outlets.

Aligned with his commitment to improve the world, Chris founded Live More Life, where he shares proven systems, tools, and techniques he learned from some of the greatest people who have ever lived. Most importantly, he tested these in his own life, turning theoretical suggestions to proven practical methods. You'll find his writing is approachable, engaging, compelling, powerful, and what matters most to you, effective!

Learn more at [ChrisWinfield.com](http://ChrisWinfield.com) or follow him on Twitter [here](#).