

Elevating Ideas – Creating Meaning: A Five-Step Framework from Idea to Reality

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“There is one thing stronger
than all the armies in the world,
and that is an idea whose time has come.”
(Victor Hugo)

Ideas propel us forward as a species. There is no dearth of good ideas, but there is a large gap between those that merely remain ideas and those that become reality.² This gap between ideas and their execution has been studied by psychologists in domains like achievement motivation,³ goal setting, goal pur-

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² Cf. Belsky, 2012.

³ Cf. Maehr & Zusho, 2009.

suit, goal commitment,⁴ implementation intentions.⁵ Executing ideas is akin to goal pursuit, achievement, and implementation.

Central to the notion of individual pursuit of goals is ‘meaning.’ Indeed, researchers have argued that meaningful living is expressed in the form of pursuit of personally significant goals, and that such goal-driven pursuit contributes to a positive life.⁶ Meaning and the execution of ideas, or the achievement and implementation of goals, are therefore inextricably linked.

The importance of meaning to human life has been studied by philosophers and researchers in multiple fields for centuries. According to anthropologist Clifford Geertz, “Humans are symbolizing, conceptualizing, meaning-seeking animals. In our species, the drive to make sense out of our experience, to give it form and order, is evidently as real and as pressing as the more familiar biological needs.”⁷ More recently, psychologists have pointed out that a wide range of psychological motivations are expressions of individuals’ impulse to generate and maintain a sense of meaning.⁸ Baumeister and Vohs contend that individuals pursue meaningfulness in life, which positively affects their well-being and satisfaction and is instrumental to their constructive cognitions about the future.⁹ Indeed, researchers have posited and found that the search for meaning in life is a fundamental human need, and that this ‘need for meaning’ is associated with intrinsic goals.¹⁰

Given that goals are a “concretized expression of future orientation and life purpose,”¹¹ and that the need for meaning is associated with intrinsic goals, we contend that the transformation of our cherished ideas into reality is inextricably linked with the meaning we associate with and attach to those ideas. Further, the content of such meaning is essential to the pursuit and implementation of an idea. The central aim of this article is to develop a framework of the content of meaning that can elevate an idea and help transform it into reality.

The rest of this article is structured as follows. First, we develop a five-step framework based on insights from multiple research streams with the aim to empower those who want to turn an idea into reality. Then the article

4 Cf. Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987; Hollenbeck, Williams & Klein, 1989.

5 Cf. Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006.

6 Cf. Emmons, 2003.

7 Geertz, 1973.

8 Cf. Heine, Proulx & Vohs, 2006; Proulx & Inzlicht, 2012.

9 Cf. Baumeister & Vohs, 2002.

10 Cf. FioRito, Routledge & Jackson, 2020.

11 Emmons, 2003.

profiles the application of the five-step framework by four participants. Each of the four participants volunteered to share an idea that is personally significant to them and then applied the proposed five-step framework to their respective idea. They were not only the first ones to apply this framework but also co-authored the present work. In alphabetical order, the second, third, fourth, and fifth co-authors of the essay will then give a first-person account of how they applied the five-step framework to their respective ideas. The article concludes by discussing the theoretical implications of this framework and the implementation of ideas.

A Five-Step Framework to Elevate Ideas and Create Meaning

In order for ideas to be successful, it is essential to transform vision into reality.¹² Whereas psychologists have examined this through the lens of goal achievement and implementation,¹³ it is only recently that researchers have linked the pursuit of goals to ‘meaning.’¹⁴ Griffith and Graham argue that goal attainment strategies create conditions that allow people to experience meaning.¹⁵

Our construction of meaning is rooted in how we learn to make sense of stimuli as children. Lindqvist contends that children create meaning in their play, and that, when playing with an object, their imagination is not captured by the object but by the story which gives the object its meaning.¹⁶ This construction of meaning continues to play a significant role throughout our lives, not least in the way we deal with regular uncertainties. Indeed, constructing meaning is crucial for us to cope with personal uncertainty in our pursuit of goals.¹⁷

This article builds on the link between goal achievement (constructed here as transforming ideas into reality) and meaning. The novel framework developed in this article details five types of meaning that can elevate an idea and help transforming it into reality: physical meaning, emotional meaning, creative meaning, social meaning, and purpose-driven meaning. The following sections describe the rationale for assigning each of these types of mean-

12 Cf. Belsky, 2012.

13 Cf. Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987; Hollenbeck, Williams & Klein, 1989.

14 Cf. Emmons, 2003; FioRito, Routledge & Jackson, 2020.

15 Cf. Griffith & Graham, 2004.

16 Cf. Lindqvist, 2010.

17 Cf. van den Bos, 2009.

ing to an idea and provide practical tips for how to assign such meaning. Figure 1 depicts the five-step framework for elevating ideas and creating meaning.

Physical Meaning

Assigning physical meaning to an idea or goal makes the idea or goal more concrete. It allows for a more elaborate and tangible conceptualization of the idea or goal. Indeed, according to action theory, making goals more concrete by thinking of them in more detail helps in goal implementation and guards against procrastination,¹⁸ and this is especially true for entrepreneurial goals and actions.¹⁹ This assertion is supported by psychological research on construal level theory and procrastination. For instance, McCrea, Liberman, Trope, and Sherman showed that forming a concrete representation of a task reduces procrastination, and that this is independent of any effects of task planning or task comprehension.²⁰ Congruent with these findings, Hansen and Trope found that individuals primed with a concrete mindset (as opposed to an abstract mindset) experienced time as passing more quickly.²¹ This suggests that having a concrete mindset when approaching a goal (or an idea that needs to be implemented) creates a sense of urgency about the goal and helps avoid procrastination.

How can we make an idea more concrete by assigning physical meaning to it? For example by creating a tangible manifestation such as a website or flyer that describes the idea, or a physical object that embodies it and serves as a tangible reminder of it.

Emotional Meaning

It is well-established that our memory for emotional stimuli and events is typically more vivid and accurate than for neutral ones.²² Therefore, assigning emotional meaning to an idea or goal makes it more vivid in our mind, leading to enhanced accessibility and retrieval of the idea.

How can we make an idea more vivid by assigning emotional meaning to it? Research on how emotional memory is organized may hold a clue. Modell

18 Cf. Frese & Zapf, 1994.

19 Cf. Frese, 2011.

20 Cf. McCrea, Liberman, Trope & Sherman, 2008.

21 Cf. Hansen & Trope, 2013.

22 Cf. Talmi, 2013.

suggests that in the unconscious construction of meaning, the metaphor acts as a pattern detector that helps organize and categorize emotional memory.²³ Metaphor, he says, “is the currency of mind.” A metaphor can be described as a comparison that shows how two unrelated things are similar in a particular way. Building on this insight, assigning emotional meaning to an idea could involve thinking of an unrelated stimulus that the idea reminds you of. For instance, does the idea remind you of a person, place, song, book, or other entity? Hence, assigning emotional meaning through comparison or metaphor can make the idea more vivid and more accessible in the mind.

Creative Meaning

Creativity is closely linked to the process of finding patterns and engaging in associative thinking.²⁴ Thinking creatively about an idea involves these two mental processes – pattern finding and associative thinking – which can enhance our associations with the core idea. Recent research on creativity proposes that ‘meaning’ is an important (and previously ignored) component of creativity.²⁵ More precisely, it suggests that meaning is the third component of creativity along with novelty and usefulness, the two main dimensions in judging an object’s creativity factor. Hence, our creative thought about the goal or idea and the essential meaning of that idea are closely related. Finally, creativity has been positively linked to the value that an idea can generate.²⁶ Accordingly, thinking creatively about an idea can enhance its overall value.

So, how can we attach creative meaning to an idea, thereby enhancing its overall significance and value? Smith and Colgate propose that symbolic or expressive value is related to the extent to which perceivers attach psychological meaning and significance to a stimulus object.²⁷ Furthermore, research from multiple disciplines has linked creativity to symbolic expression.²⁸ Building on these insights, you can assign creative meaning to an idea by constructing a symbolic representation of it. Examples include drawing a visual that expresses the idea symbolically, or building a model with LEGO bricks that captures that essence of the idea.

23 Cf. Modell, 2005.

24 For a review see Mehta & Dahl, 2018.

25 Cf. Sääksjärvi & Gonçalves, 2018.

26 Cf. Cropley & Cropley, 2021.

27 Cf. Smith & Colgate, 2007.

28 Cf. Gardner & Gardner, 2008; Nowell, 2006; Pope, 2005.

Social Meaning

Human beings are social animals. Extensive research has shown that we derive not just meaning from social interactions,²⁹ but also meaningfulness.³⁰ Conversely, social exclusion or loneliness leads to loss in meaningfulness, to an increased perception of life as less meaningful, and decreases self-worth.³¹ Hence, assigning social meaning to an idea enhances our perception of how meaningful or important the idea is in our lives.

How can we assign social meaning to an idea, thereby enhancing its meaningfulness? Elaborating on how an idea relates to other people, how it affects people and interactions between them can help assign social meaning to it.

Purpose-Driven Meaning

Research on how people construct meaning in life has shown that purpose – in terms of core goals, aims, and direction in life – is a key component of such meaning.³² Human purpose has been studied by researchers in numerous fields – philosophy, psychology, sociology, theology, and organization behavior, to name a few. Leider argues that “purpose is that deepest dimension within us – our central core or essence – where we have a profound sense of who we are, where we come from, and where we’re going.”³³ Elaborating on how an idea fits with what we believe to be our purpose lends this very idea the highest level of meaning in our proposed framework. Purpose-driven meaning elevates the idea by linking it to the most essential question(s) that we strive to answer throughout our lives: who are we and what are we meant to do?

How can we assign this highest level of meaning to an idea? Clearly articulating how your idea fits with your purpose, and how it chimes with the core of who you believe you are or want to be, can help you assign purpose-driven meaning to your idea.

In sum, the novel framework proposed in this essay discusses five types of meaning that can elevate an idea and help transform it into reality – physical meaning, emotional meaning, creative meaning, social meaning, and purpose-driven meaning.

29 Cf. Gabriel, Harris, Carvallo & Troisi, 2012; Gibson, Gibbs, Stanko, Tesluk & Cohen, 2011.

30 Cf. Barick, Mount & Li, 2013.

31 Cf. Stillman et al., 2009.

32 Cf. Martela & Steger, 2016.

33 Leider, 2005.

Overview of the Five-Step Framework Applied to Four Ideas

The proposed five-step framework was first introduced by the first author in an interactive lecture series, “Changing Time – Shaping World: Changemakers in Arts and Education,” in November 2021. Four participants of the lecture series volunteered to apply the framework to an idea that was personally significant to each of them. The following sections detail how the framework was applied to each of the four ideas, including an outline of the idea, a profile of their creators, the motivation to elevate their idea, and a description of each of the five types of meaning attached to the ideas. The latter would be implemented in the short term (a yoga festival planned for summer 2022), short-to-medium term (a platform connecting aspiring psychology professionals), medium-to-long term (a mobile application for sustainability transparency), or long term (securing human thought against unethical access). The implementation of the five-step framework is reported in first-person accounts from each of the four creators, who are co-authors of this work.

Idea 1: Yoga Festival at the WFI Ingolstadt School of Management

The main objective of the Yoga Festival at the WFI Ingolstadt School of Management is to nurture well-being in our community by creating awareness and promoting the practice of yoga. It aims to provide knowledge about the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual benefits of yoga to students, professors, and administrative staff of the university, and encourage regular practice in a relaxing and joyful atmosphere. The festival takes place at the university on four consecutive Saturdays during the summer semester. Each of these days will consist of theory, pure practice, and experience-sharing, all imparted by an experienced, certified, professional yogi. Participants will be provided with a yoga mat and other materials to engage and motivate them to continue their practice beyond the festival. Unlike a mere event, the Yoga Festival aims to create a holistic experience for attendees. The environment is to be distinctive, with sessions taking place outdoors, awakening all senses with scents, textures, ambient music, decoration, and flavors.

Idea Creator and Elevator

I am Claudia Aranibar Chávez, a 27-year-old Bolivian student living in Germany. I attended the German school in La Paz, Bolivia, where I had the chance to learn the German language and embark on a student exchange program with Rostock, Germany. After school, I engaged in a dual career in foreign trade in my native country and began working for the Mediterranean Shipping Com-

pany S.A. at the age of 18. Later, I decided to continue my bachelor studies in business administration while working full time. In the meantime, the company chose me as the first Bolivian candidate to attend a worldwide training program in Brazil focused on the development of soft skills and specific know-how from the maritime industry. During that time, I was able to represent my country and meet new people from different Latin American countries. This is where my passion for supporting people in reaching their full potential through the development of soft skills was born, as I had experienced the same myself and concluded that collective well-being could only be achieved through the sum of all individuals' well-being. I took part in company projects that revolved around digital transformation, client experience, and corporate social responsibility. In 2021, I was awarded a scholarship by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung to continue my postgraduate studies in Germany. Today, I am in my first semester of the master-of-science program in business and psychology at the WFI Ingolstadt School of Management at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt.

Motivation to Elevate the Idea

Seven years ago, I joined a yoga class for the first time as an activity offered by the company I worked for. It is fair to say in hindsight that the practice of this ancient Indian discipline has brought well-being to my life and has helped me enhance my outcomes in a positive way. Yoga provides physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual balance and health. Research has evidenced that it improves physical and mental health through an immediate down-regulation effect on the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and the sympathetic nervous system (SYNS) response to stress, which may lead to the dysregulation of the system and diseases such as obesity, diabetes, autoimmune disorders, depression, substance abuse, and cardiovascular disease.³⁴ In addition, it has immediate psychological effects decreasing anxiety and increasing feelings of emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. As only five percent of the German population practice yoga,³⁵ I want to contribute to my environment by creating awareness of this discipline.

34 Cf. Ross & Thomas, 2010.

35 Cf. GfK SE, 2018.

Framework Step 1: Physical Meaning

A promotional flyer was created as a physical manifestation of the Yoga Festival (Fig. 2). It provides basic information about the event, including the name, dates and duration of each session, the incentive that would be given to the participants, and a QR code for registration. Attaching physical meaning to this idea takes it one step closer to its realization in 2022.

Framework Step 2: Emotional Meaning

When I think of yoga, I remember the setting in my room (Fig. 3), where I forget about time and space, where I practice yoga and meditate while activating my awareness, listening to peaceful songs, smelling the aroma of candles, with a warm and nourishing drink and a notebook to record my creative ideas. This place connects my emotions to the idea that I wish to elevate, giving it meaning beyond the merely physical.

Framework Step 3: Creative Meaning

I created a model with LEGO bricks (Fig. 4) that captures the essence of the Yoga Festival's setting and the goals it aims to achieve. The model showcases the scenario with participants and various elements of the environment. The figure on a podium represents each participant as the winner of their own battles. Establishing the idea's creative meaning elevates it and takes it one step closer to reality.

Framework Step 4: Social Meaning

I envision the WFI Ingolstadt School of Management as an ecosystem where students, professors and administrative staff nurture each other and form an interacting community. In order for the ecosystem to thrive, it is imperative to create a healthy environment in which the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of each individual is nurtured. Attaching this social meaning to an ecosystem with interdependencies represents the flow of energy essential to realizing the Yoga Festival.

Framework Step 5: Purpose-Driven Meaning

The idea of a Yoga Festival reflects my aspiration to support people in reaching their potential by developing their soft skills. It seamlessly integrates into my purpose of creating a healthier community and promoting well-being with a practice that has nurtured me and helped me grow as a person and professional. This purpose-driven meaning will propel my idea to reality.

Idea 2: Human Thought Security through Individualized Algorithm Encryption

Scientists and private companies are conducting research to gain deep insights into the human brain. Brain hacking is an emerging research area that is gaining increasing attention. Using artificial intelligence, machine learning, algorithms and chips, brain hacking aims for medical excellence with external control enabling, for example, the improvement of visual impairment, addictions, and other mental and physical handicaps. By systematically tracking neuronal structures of the brain based on the transmission of stimuli via synapses, scientists say that it will soon be possible to anticipate human actions and thoughts. Fundamental breakthrough innovations within communication technologies are expected any time soon, enabling humans to perform telepathic brain-to-brain communication. Reading human thoughts could then be a part of everyday reality. However, if third parties are able to read people's minds without permission, fundamental human rights could be breached. To prevent unauthorized access to human thoughts by external parties using sophisticated algorithms, thoughts should be encrypted by individualized algorithms. External parties should only be granted insight into thought processes if they are given the permission to do so. The idea at hand is to secure human thoughts from being hacked without permission.

Idea Creator and Elevator

I am Mahir El. I was born in Kempten, Germany. I have a bachelor's degree in international relations and management and am currently pursuing a master's degree with a specialization in entrepreneurship and innovation at the WFI Ingolstadt School of Management, Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. I gained professional experience as management consultant working on numerous projects across industries such as aviation, defense, aerospace, automotive, insurance, real estate, parcel and courier services, as well as banking and financial services. I am interested in entrepreneurship, innovation, deep tech, and social welfare. I am a volunteer with local associations to foster cultural diversity and equal educational opportunities for everyone, with a focus on supporting children and teenagers through social, educational, and cultural integration. My main goal is to contribute to future social and economic welfare through my expertise in economic, political, and cultural sciences by promoting innovation, education, and integration.

Motivation to Elevate the Idea

My main motivation for elevating the idea of individualized security algorithms that protect human thoughts is based on the impact that brain hacking could have on society. Promoting social welfare is one of my major personal goals, which is why encrypting human thoughts to secure fundamental human rights while also supporting technological progress that benefits society is of utmost importance to me. Brain hacking could help us, for example, to anticipate seizures through prophylactic identification of severe neurological deficits, or provide people with mild to severe physiological and psychological handicaps with better control of their body. However, the biggest threat of this technological progress might be the unauthorized access of external parties to the human brain. This could open the doors for unethical exploitation of human thoughts, which poses one of the biggest ethical dilemmas that mankind has recently faced. I am motivated to contribute to this evolving landscape by developing, facilitating, and ultimately promoting the security of human thought economically.

Framework Step 1: Physical Meaning

In order to attach physical meaning to my idea, I visualized it in four steps using a storyboard on the web-based design platform Canva. First, I broke down the idea into four concepts – human brain, algorithms, chips, brain hacking and security – and defined them to specify my vision. Then I drew the words symbolically to get a pictorial representation of my vision. Subsequently, I detailed the multiple industries and actors that would have to be involved in the implementation of my idea. Lastly, I depicted the formation of a collaborative, societal-technological vision that the idea demands. This physical representation transforms this ambitious idea from the abstract to the concrete, one building block at a time.

Framework Step 2: Emotional Meaning

I associate the safeguarding of thoughts with climbing a mountain summit. Summits can only be reached with endurance, motivation, and diligence. Once the summit is reached, an intimate sense of inviolability and pride can be felt as you look out over the wide landscape. In this secure place, thoughts are not shared with anyone, because they provide sanctuary that only oneself can, and should be able to, access. This image of a solitary mountain climber having reached the summit is deeply resonant, emotionally, to the idea of securing human thought

Framework Step 3: Creative Meaning

I attached creative meaning to my idea by visualizing a chip implanted in a human brain: the neurological processes of human thoughts are transparent, an individualized algorithm allows individuals to encrypt their own thoughts, empowering them to either permit access to their thoughts or deny it (Fig. 5). The visual simplifies the complex idea of securing human thought and allows me to discuss the idea with colleagues, friends and potential collaborators while explaining how unethical exploitation of human thoughts can be prevented.

Framework Step 4: Social Meaning

To implement the idea, I will need to collaborate with experts from the fields of medicine, psychology, business, engineering, information technology, and data science. This collaboration highlights the societal-technological vision of the idea and its implementation. To generate social meaning and validate the idea, I conducted preliminary discussions with a nanotechnology researcher, an engineer, and three business experts, all of whom strongly endorsed the idea and its vision. Gradually building a tribe of proponents with deep functional expertise in their respective fields creates social support for the idea.

Framework Step 5: Purpose-Driven Meaning

The idea of creating individualized algorithms to protect human thoughts is deeply related to my core values. I believe that the purpose of my private and professional life is to support, facilitate and promote technological progress to positively impact society and steadily change the status quo. However, transforming society through breakthrough technologies carries the risk of potential negative consequences. Technology should elevate rather than exploit the human condition. Hence, the idea of proactively combating the unethical misuse of the access to human thought is driven by my purpose to enable human progress and welfare through technology.

Idea 3: A Platform for Aspiring Psychology Professionals

My idea focuses on a gap that exists in the educational ecosystem of aspiring psychology professionals in Germany. Studying at a university in Germany is structured in a way that assigns a major role to students' personal responsibility. High school pupils are often left alone in their choice of study programs. Many pupils and students lack the inspirational input to develop a professional vision of their future and thus create a meaningful and motiva-

tional foundation for themselves and their higher studies. I would like to develop one such vision of the future by setting up a platform for high school pupils and college students that not only provides information about the application process and the content of study programs but also gives insights into professional and future career paths and options. I would like to start with the field of psychology, which I am familiar with, and gradually expand into other fields. This digital platform will be an open, inspirational, and informational forum for knowledge exchange and first-hand learning. It will offer multiple modes and interfaces, including video conversations, interactive search features and future path mapping. For instance, video conversations with graduates of psychology programs could feature their career path, day-in-the-professional-life snippets, and advice from the trenches. The platform will not only benefit high school pupils and college students but will also contribute to a better allocation of next-generation talent to current and emerging fields of work.

Idea Creator and Elevator

My name is Alina Hansen, I am 23 years old. Besides being socially active, I like to be creative in my free time painting, working on web design and digital art, or teaching myself how to edit videos. I took my bachelor-of-science degree in psychology at the University of Ulm and am now taking a master's degree in business and psychology at the WFI Ingolstadt School of Management, Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. During my bachelor's degree I volunteered with the Psychology Student Council (*Fachschaft*) and participated as a delegate in the Psychology Student Council Conference (*PsyFaKo*) and student council representative of the University of Ulm. At the conference I coordinated the admission test working group (*AG Zulassungstest*), which advocates for a countrywide bachelor program admission test. In addition, I worked as a student assistant for the student counselling psychology service (*Studienfachberatung*) at Ulm University. These working experiences helped me build a foundation for moderating the discourse between universities and students. Furthermore, during my studies, I gained insights into the challenging work processes of universities and into the demands of students. As a person who strives for effectiveness and positive change, I want to close the service gap(s) I have observed.

Motivation to Elevate the Idea

I am motivated to implement this idea, as I am convinced (and have first-hand experience to the effect) that it will benefit many confused and uninformed high school pupils and college students. An independent, credible, inspirational, and informational point of contact for high school pupils and college students is especially important in view of upcoming bachelor and master program admission tests and the Psychotherapist Reform Act (*PsychThRefG*), which is currently being implemented. However, my motivation is not driven purely by altruistic motives, but is also fueled by my desire to learn and grow as a person. This idea challenges my innate creativity and my ability to execute an idea, which allows me to sound out my abilities, resources, and limits.

Framework Step 1: Physical Meaning

As a means of attaching physical meaning to my idea, I started a YouTube channel last year (tenderresistance), but this year I only used it to respond to comments and questions. In 2022, I would like to revive the YouTube channel and build an information website where I could integrate the videos. I also aim to create a channel on the platform, Discord, where aspiring psychology professionals will be welcome to network, discuss, and build an engaged community with high school pupils and college students.

Framework Step 2: Emotional Meaning

I find the idea of creating this platform very exciting. I feel energized and full of drive. A song which embodies the emotional meaning of this idea for me is “The Eye of the Tiger” by Survivor. When I think of the idea, I think of an exciting and welcoming place where a lot of people come together and talk wildly.

Framework Step 3: Creative Meaning

I attached creative meaning to my idea by developing a board depicting the platform (Fig. 6). The visual captures the energetic exchange between the various stakeholders while providing information on and illuminating future career paths.

Framework Step 4: Social Meaning

The idea primarily caters to high school pupils and college students, while engaging psychology professionals in various fields. I want to create a compelling social and professional network for present-day pupils and students, who are about to become well-informed and empowered graduates and professionals

and pass on their knowledge to the next generation of pupils and students. In addition, the *PsyFaKo* offers a good interface to get information bundled and forwarded into this cycle, thus further enhancing the social meaning inherent in the idea.

Framework Step 5: Purpose-Driven Meaning

This idea reflects who I am and who I want to be, because it combines three aspects that are central to my purpose – social responsibility, the will to change, and communication. It allows me to put all my creative power into a meaningful vision for the future.

Idea 4: Accessible Sustainability Transparency for a Better World

My prime motivations are environment and sustainability. My idea aims for complete transparency in all activities a firm undertakes in developing, creating, and delivering a product or service to consumers. This applies to all stages of the company's value chain – from research and development to the sales of products and services. Many multinational companies fail to maintain social and ecological sustainability throughout their value chain. My idea is to create a simple yet powerful application that indicates the level of sustainability at all stages of a product or service value chain, for any product or service in the market. Such a platform would make it possible for consumers to trace the origin of any product or service and determine if it has been ethically and ecologically sourced, produced, and delivered. The application would be available worldwide and would be free for consumers.

Idea Creator and Elevator

My name is Aurore Keller. I am an international bachelor student in my semester abroad at the WFI School of Management, Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany. I study at the Burgundy School of Business in Dijon, France. I am an optimist and I believe that mistakes in life are proof that you tried. This quote is my lucky star. I also think that every person in the world can contribute in their own way to make it a better place. I am often described as smiling, persevering and committed to what I do. It is important for me to follow through on the tasks I perform daily, and to persevere. I like to immerse myself in my work, but also in my passions. I have been playing the piano since I was six years old.

Motivation to Elevate the Idea

I feel a sense of urgency about the overall state of social and ecological sustainability, or the lack thereof, when it comes to consumption. I believe that transparency about the social and ecological sustainability of products and services can empower consumers to reward firms that invest in social and ecological sustainability and punish those that don't. Though transparency by itself cannot solve all problems related to unsustainable corporate practices and consumption, it will contribute to raising awareness of social and ecological sustainability and help set norms for how products and services ought to be sourced, produced, and delivered.

Framework Step 1: Physical Meaning

To attach physical meaning to my idea, I created a mock version of the application using wireframing. The two screenshots of the mobile application (Fig. 7) show the name of the app, ECW, and the home screen of the app. The process of creating a mock app and thinking through its functionality afforded me a physical manifestation of the idea to return to every time I think of the idea and elaborate it mentally.

Framework Step 2: Emotional Meaning

My idea reminds me of an organization that I am affiliated with and actively engaged in: Ecologic'Owl is a student association at my home university, the Burgundy School of Business, dedicated to the implementation of sustainable initiatives on campus in collaboration with the university. Many projects have already been implemented to make our campuses greener, such as awareness campaigns for waste sorting, installation of playful ashtrays, installation of a book box with the school's art association, sales of eco-responsible products and DIY workshops on organic cosmetics. These initiatives provide students with tools and knowledge they need to contribute to our planet's future. The organization's flagship event is a voyage of discovery of socially responsible best practices, which is the subject of a comprehensive report distributed to all students, titled #Leadforgreen. My active involvement in this organization adds emotional meaning and heft to my idea of achieving complete transparency in all activities of a firm in developing, creating, and delivering a product or service to consumers.

Framework Step 3: Creative Meaning

An idea board I put together (Fig. 8) helps me attach creative meaning to my idea by visually depicting the various elements and value propositions of the mobile application. Working on many more idea boards like this one will help me refine the idea conceptually and balance it with practical aspects of its implementation.

Framework Step 4: Social Meaning

The idea of providing sustainability transparency on the full range of activities, which comprise the development, production and delivery of a product or service, is rooted in the interdependent nature of society and indeed our entire ecosystem. Sustainability affects every aspect of our social contract. Together we can make a more substantial difference than when acting alone. The impact of this collective action is much greater than the sum of its individual actions. This is the essence of the social meaning I want to attach to my idea.

Framework Step 5: Purpose-Driven Meaning

I consider myself to be a highly motivated, innovative, team-oriented person, and see myself as a ground breaker. New ambitions or discoveries do not scare me. This application is congruent with my idea of being ecological, international, ambitious, and persevering. Driven by my purpose and the core beliefs about myself, I regard myself as instrumental in launching this application worldwide. I plan to work with an innovation incubator to realize this idea. Let the adventure begin!

Discussion

Ideas are only successful when they are realized.³⁶ This essay posits that turning our ideas into reality is linked to the meaning we associate with and assign to those ideas. The article develops a novel, five-step framework to elevate ideas and create meaning, drawing from research insights in multiple disciplines. A collection of five types of meaning can elevate an idea and aid in transforming it into reality: physical meaning, emotional meaning, creative meaning, social meaning, and purpose-driven meaning. The overall aim of this framework is to empower individuals who want to realize a personal-

36 Cf. Belsky, 2012.

ly significant idea. Four cases were presented in which the framework for elevating ideas and creating meaning has been applied.

The proposed, novel framework contributes to multiple streams of research, including a) interdisciplinary theory and research on meaning making and meaning maintenance; b) research on how goals, goal implementation, and meaning are linked; and c) research on the content and types of meaning. The practical implications of this framework lie in its application in numerous contexts, be it individuals trying to achieve personally significant goals, entrepreneurs aiming for the acceptance and success of their ideas, or organizations striving to successfully bring their innovations to market.

Future research can examine whether applying this five-step framework to an idea creates advantages that can be reliably measured – for instance whether it affects variables such as goal perseverance and subjective well-being of the creator, or the implementation time of the idea. A longitudinal study which follows creators who apply this framework as opposed to creators who do not would do just that. Additionally, future research can identify how external or situational variables related to the idea, as well as individual variables such as the need for meaning, affect the five types of meaning. Most importantly, the proposed framework offers multiple avenues for interdisciplinary research and collaboration.

Elevating Ideas, Creating Meaning

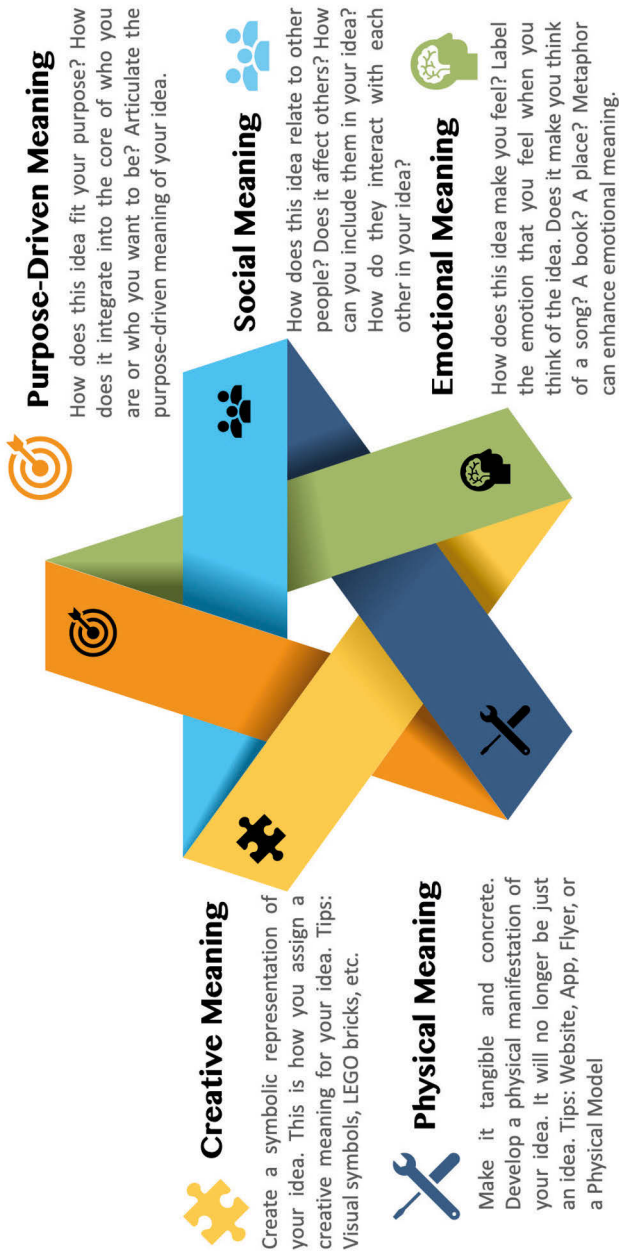


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

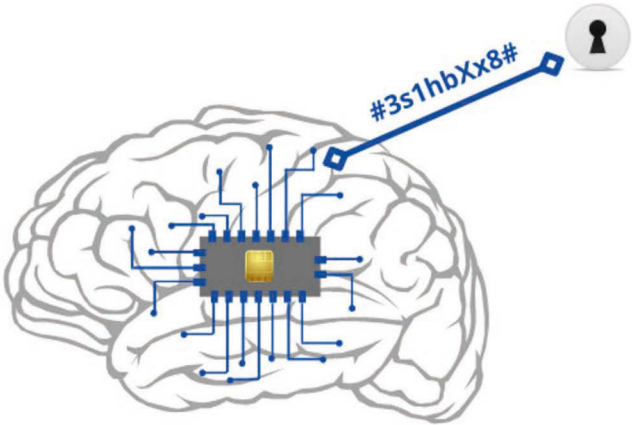


Fig. 5

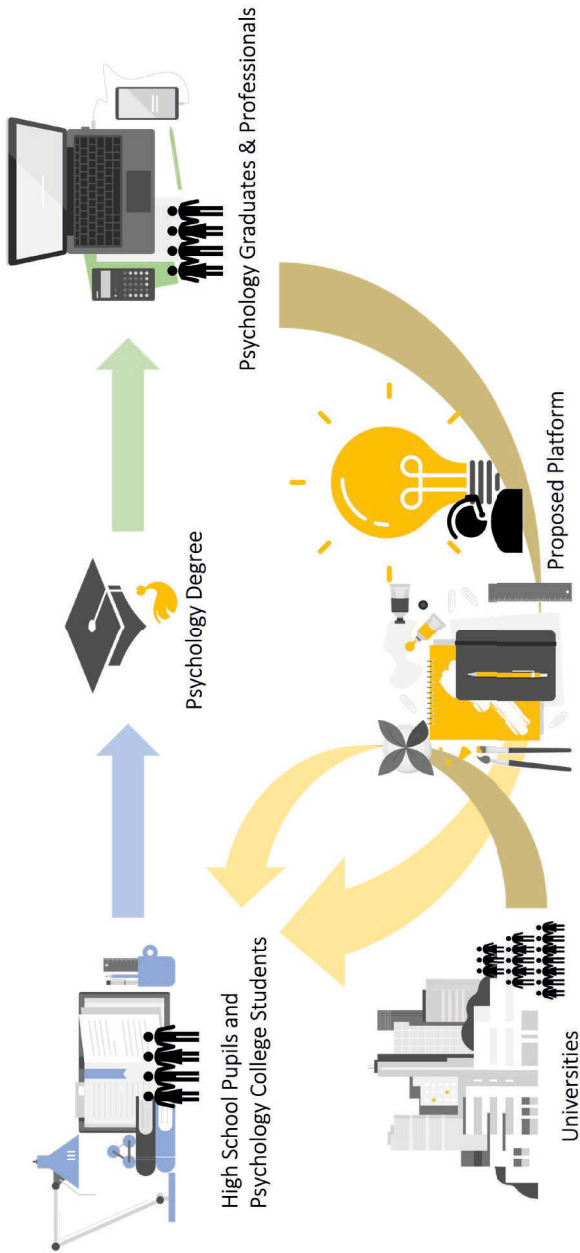


Fig. 6

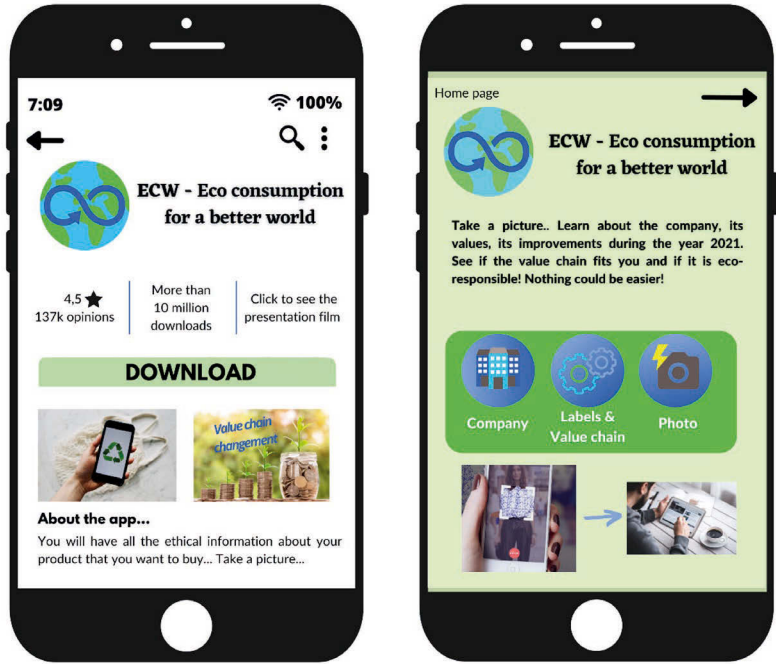


Fig. 7



Fig. 8

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Figures

- Fig. 1: Five-step framework for elevating ideas and creating meaning.
- Fig. 2: Flyer depicting physical meaning of the Yoga Festival idea.
- Fig. 3: Space and location that represent emotional meaning of the Yoga Festival idea.
- Fig. 4: LEGO brick model symbolizing the creative meaning of the Yoga Festival idea.
- Fig. 5: Illustration depicting the creative meaning of the idea to secure human thought against unethical access in brain hacking.
- Fig. 6: Idea board capturing the creative meaning of the platform for aspiring psychology professionals.
- Fig. 7: Physical meaning through a mock-up of the mobile application for sustainability transparency.
- Fig. 8: Idea board depicting the creative meaning of the mobile application for sustainability transparency.

