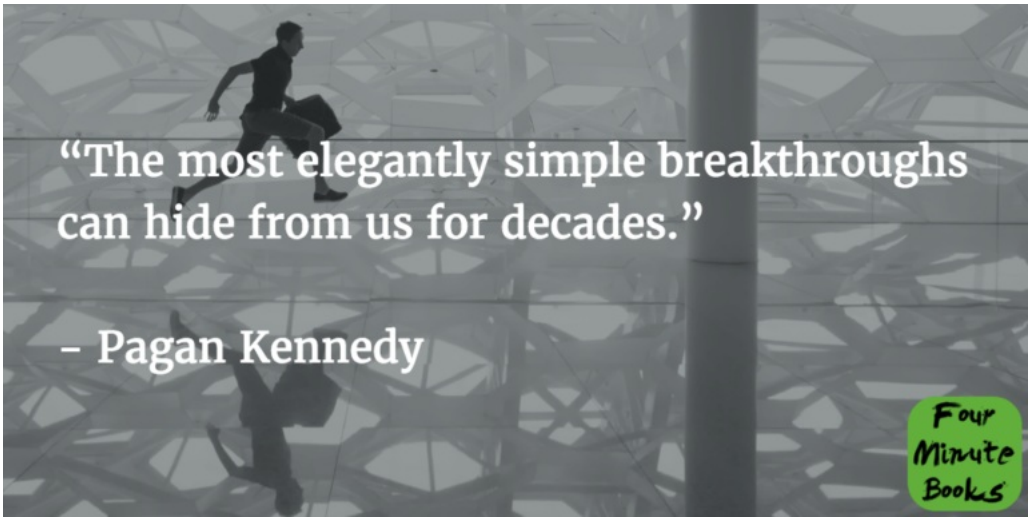
Inventology Summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *Inventology takes you through the history of how many of the world's best inventors came across their ideas, uncovering their creative process and how you can update it for today to figure out what drives great inventions and come up with your own.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Have you dreamed of being an inventor when you were a kid? I have. Fuzzy hair, a white lab coat, equations on a blackboard and pouring together colored concoctions until something explodes, that's how I imagined myself.

15 years later, the reality of being creative looks a lot different, but also a lot less dangerous. With her book *Inventology*, Pagan Kennedy takes the "great inventor" off his or her pedestal and makes the spirit of invention something that's attainable for you and me in our everyday lives.

She describes a process that's not restricted to an elite few, especially gifted, super smart people, but based on living life with open eyes, being optimistic, looking at the obvious data, and allowing your mind to roam.

Here are 3 lessons that might help you invent something that changes the world:

1. All great inventions are born from the desire to solve a problem.
2. Even if you understand a popular problem well, accept that it might take long for your solution to catch on.
3. Sometimes it's better if you're an industry outsider, because it allows you to bring a new perspective to the problem.

Inclined to invent something? Let's get our lab coats and start experimenting!

Lesson 1: At the beginning of every great invention is your desire to solve a problem.

When Bernard Sadow returned from his family vacation in 1970, a lightbulb went off in his head as he struggled with carrying two big suitcases, made by the luggage company he was vice president of, through the airport. As he watched an airport employee effortlessly push a huge, heavy machine on top of a wheeled platform, he turned to his wife and said: "You know, that's what we need for luggage!"

Upon his return to the office, he took the rolls off a big wardrobe trunk and put them on the bottom of his suitcase. After adding a leather strap to the front, he could drag his suitcase behind him, which seemed to now glide over the floor. Luggage on wheels was born (you can see Mr. Sadow's 1972 patent with sketches here).

People had been flying commercially since early in the 20th century , but it took 60 years and the vice president of a luggage company, who was sick of carrying his own suitcases, to come up with something as seemingly simple as putting wheels on a trunk.

This is a great example of how painful a problem really needs to become to drive enough creative thinking that someone invents a 10x solution that really changes everything.

To invent something great, you need to have a strong desire to solve a problem, so the more acute the problem is for you personally, the better your chances.

Lesson 2: You have to accept that it might take time for your solution to catch on, even if you know the problem well and lots of people have it.

People don't like change. Even though Bernard Sadow knew his invention was the right solution for a big problem, it took him many months, calls and sales presentations until finally Macy's ordered some and the product started taking off. That's because the pragmatic majority lacks the vision needed to try something new and it takes time for a new way of doing things to diffuse and reach the masses.

The same thing happened again when Robert Plath, an airline pilot, improved on Sadow's design in 1987, adding just two rolls to one side of the suitcase and the telescoping handle you now see on suitcases everywhere. He had an even better understanding of the problem, because he traveled with a suitcase more often than Sadow, who just encountered the problem during vacations.

Still, he first only sold his invention to flight attendants, who became the first followers of the movement. With more women traveling alone, and even the biggest machos eventually giving in to the convenience factor, luggage on wheels finally became the standard.

So even if you have a very deep understanding of the problem at hand, accept that all inventions take time to catch on. Generally, these are the three stages you'll move through:

1. You'll notice your frustration with a problem that's not obvious.
2. While collecting data about the problem, you see that solving it will help many other people.
3. You do what it takes to get the new solution out there, for as long as it takes to catch on.

Lesson 3: Don't be afraid of solving problems outside of your field of expertise, it means you'll bring a fresh perspective to the problem.

Being deeply immersed in a certain field is only one way to come across these hidden kinds of problems that desperately need a solution – sometimes others find them for you.

For example, in 1714, the British parliament offered a £20,000 reward (equivalent to over $3,000,000 today) to whoever could solve the problem of sailors not being able to tell the time at sea (and thus being unable to calculate their longitudinal position and often crash their ships).

The solution didn't come from an astronomer, sailor or explorer, but from a carpenter, who made clocks in his spare time. John Harrison spent the remainder of his life solving this problem, providing a first, proper solution in 1761 with the H4 (sadly he never received the full prize money, and what he did get lasted him only three more years until he died at 83 years old).

It doesn't matter what industry you're in. **As long as you understand the problem deeply, your fresh perspective an outsider might just be what's needed to invent a great solution.**

Inventology Review

So many great stories and examples, *Inventology* is really encouraging. I think it opens your perspective. If you like history, tinkerers, science and finding out how to make things better, then this is for you.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Why all factory workers are inventors
- How lucky people discover more interesting things
- What role the big data trend will play in the future of inventions
- Why not all inventions build on prior solutions

- What you can learn from Wayne Gretzky
- Why you don’t need a lab, as long as you have your mind

Who would I recommend the Inventology summary to?

The 15 year old car nut, who loves to tinker with nuts and bolts in his spare time, the 36 year old research fellow, who’s afraid she might’ve picked the wrong field to make an impact on the world, and anyone who loved watching Bill Nye The Science Guy as a kid.