



Similarly, John F. Kennedy knew what he was doing in May 1961 when he created a crisis for America by announcing to the nation they must win the space race against the Soviets or lose their place as the world's dominant nation. And, lo just over eight years later, on 20 July 1969, the United States of America became the first nation to put men on the moon. Kennedy had said in a speech to a joint session of Congress: 'Recognising the head start obtained by the Soviets with their large rocket engines, which gives them many months of lead time, and recognising the likelihood that they will exploit this lead for some time to come in still more impressive successes, we nevertheless are required to make new efforts. For while we cannot guarantee that one day we shall be first, we can guarantee that any failure to make this effort will find us last.'

**People tend to think of more innovative solutions when given a bigger problem to solve.**

It stops your thinking being in small increments and allows you to dream up big ideas that are very different in nature and scale. How can you dramatise your own business challenge so you focus creative energy in the right direction? How could you bring it to life to inspire yourself and other stakeholders to crack it?

How about a bit of exaggeration to make the point? This is without doubt the best business book ever written; it'll change your life and solve the world's problems too. Oh, and it's completely edible and nutritious and makes for a very tasty meal. Exaggeration is a wonderful thing. No, actually, it's the best thing ever, ever, EVER. Remember our ball-gazing technique of Chapter 3, and how thinking up what might seem like crazy future scenarios can free us from our mental shackles? No? Well, anyway, our point is that exaggerating a scenario to extreme proportions is also a great way to get the creative juices flowing. With our *too much traffic congestion in LA* example, an exaggeration of the situation (though not too much of one) would be that cars are absolutely stationary in LA. There is absolute gridlock. People can't get to work. They can't make their

ways home. Pregnant women can't reach hospitals. Michael Douglas leaves his car in the middle of the jammed street. (Oh, sorry that's a movie,<sup>6</sup> but it's also scarily real, and you get the idea. Nothing is moving.) A solution to this exaggerated scenario might be to quit using cars altogether. It might be impractical, but the notion might free up some ideas for ways to dramatically reduce the number of cars on the roads that otherwise we might not have considered.<sup>7</sup>

## MAD WORLD

While in business the temptation is to try to maintain control as much as possible, it is often a liberating and fruitful experience to think of the most outlandish ideas you can and then work on ways to make them practical.

**When trying to come up with creative solutions we need to ignore the most obvious ones, or at least put them to one side with a reassuring 'there, there, just wait quietly here' pat on the head.**

Obvious solutions are likely too similar to what the situation is already like now and won't take you anywhere meaningful and new (see the *Chaos Theory* section in Chapter 10).

You can make it into a game. Gather together a small group of people and sell them numbered cards for a pound each. Write up the problem on a board or piece of paper and give them ten minutes to write down on their cards the most unlikely solution they can think of for the problem, one idea per card. Players then look at one

<sup>6</sup>*Falling Down* (1993).

<sup>7</sup>Or at the other extreme, minimise the problem so actually it doesn't seem like much of one at all. Make it very, very tiny. Then the solutions would take more of a positive spin and be about ways to make the most of the situation, not try to radically alter it. Find you're spending a little tiny bit longer in the car than you'd want to? No problem, have some fun while you're there. There could be a radio station dedicated to people stuck in LA traffic with local news and gossip, or a series of self-improvement CDs or podcasts in bite-sized pieces that turn the delay into a useful experience. Rather than try to radically alter the situation, we have now accepted it and made the best of it.