

FutureScoping:



emerging trends, new
ideas and general thought
stimulation

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From: 

PILL FOR BAD MEMORIES

Scientists believe beta blockers, a common heart medicine, may be able to help people suffering from the emotional after-effects of traumatic experiences, altering how memories are recalled. In a recent study, researchers artificially created a fearful memory by associating pictures of spiders with a mild electric shock delivered to the wrists of volunteers. A day later the volunteers were split into two groups - one was given the beta blocker propranolol and the other a dummy drug before both were shown the same pictures again. The researchers assessed how fearful of the pictures the volunteers were by playing sudden noises and measuring how strongly they blinked, something called the "startle response". The group that had taken beta blockers showed less fear than the group that had taken the placebo pill. The following day, once the drug was out of their system, the volunteers were retested, and again those who had taken the beta blocker were less startled by the images. Study leader Dr Merel Kindt explained that although the memories are still intact, the emotional intensity of the memory is dampened.

Thought: help people forget past bad experiences.

QUICK CHARGE BATTERY

A new manufacturing method for lithium-ion batteries could lead to smaller, lighter batteries that can be charged in just seconds. Batteries that discharge equally quickly would be useful for electric and hybrid cars, where a quick jolt of charge is needed for acceleration. The approach only requires simple changes to the production process of a well-known material. A battery made using the new technique could be charged in less than 20 seconds - in comparison to six minutes with an untreated sample of the material. Researchers also found that their new material does not lose its capacity to charge over time in the way that standard lithium ion batteries do. That means that the excess material put into standard batteries to compensate for this loss is not necessary, leading to smaller, lighter batteries with phenomenal charging rates. What is more, because there are relatively few changes to the standard manufacturing process, the new battery material could make it to market within two to three years.

Thought: how quick could your processes be?

SWEET EXPLANATION

A compulsion for sweets is a well-known part of childhood, and research could now explain why children love sugar quite so much. The study found a direct link between children's growth and their preference for sugary drinks. It showed that youngsters who preferred the sweetest drinks were the ones that were growing the fastest. "This gives us the first link between sweet preference and biological need," said Danielle Reed one of the study's authors. "When markers of bone growth decline as children age, so does their preference for highly sweet solutions."

Thought: some 'bad' things play an important role in our development as people.

From: 

HOW TO LOSE CUSTOMERS

American Express has launched a program to help consumers "simplify your finances" by paying off and closing their accounts. The carrot? A \$300 cash card, redeemed when any outstanding balance is paid in full (although not all cardholders 'qualify'). AmEx has targeted specific customers that the company feels would benefit most from the offer...probably those who are also least profitable for the business as well. They will receive the offer, including a special passcode. It may sound a little counterintuitive, but AmEx's offer is right on target with consumers, many of whom will jump at the opportunity to profit from paying down debt and eliminating one more credit card bill.

Thought: remove your unprofitable customers...nicely.

RECESSIONISTA FASHION

Clothing is often seen as a discretionary purchase, but devoted fashionistas want to stay true to their craft. As a result, some of these cash-conscious clotheshorses are looking for creative and savvy retail alternatives to help them stay in style without spending a lot. And to help such 'recessionistas' cope in this economy, apparel rental services are coming to the rescue. Dress Vault facilitates the lending, borrowing, buying and selling of frocks. Members put pics of their dresses into their virtual closet and include a rental or purchase price. Borrowers cover shipping costs, but not the

cleaning bill. Similarly, Girl Meets Dress is helping women look their best on a budget by loaning high-end dresses from top designers. The shopper designates her loaner length and returns the dress in the package it was delivered in.

Thought: let people borrow what they can't afford.

STATUS SHIRTS

Consumers keep blurring the lines between online and offline, especially when it comes to social networking. And now they can wear their status on their sleeves ... er, chests, as companies start to put Facebook and Twitter updates on T-shirts. Status King is a Facebook application that lets consumers order T-shirts with their favourite status updates. There's no Facebook branding on the shirt, since it isn't sponsored by the social net, but the update does mirror the status update look and feel, complete with profile picture. Meanwhile, memorable tweets show up on T-shirts thanks to TWItoshirt. The 140-character message, along with username, profile picture and time are printed front and centre for everyone to read.

Thought: create personalised opportunities to share who you are.

From:



REWARDS FOR DRIVING LESS

As if the emissions reduction and petrol savings weren't enough to entice people to carpool, NuRide rewards users financially for doing their bit. After registering with NuRide, members can connect with neighbours, friends and coworkers to organize ride shares and log their non-driving efforts. Akin to frequent flyer miles for mindful commuters, members earn points every time they share a ride, cycle into town or skip their commute by telecommuting, which can be exchanged for retailer discounts, gift cards, and tickets to shows and attractions. Users can specify particular criteria for those they wish to share with, and can blacklist people they don't want to ride with. Proving that carsharing can achieve critical mass, Nuride has almost 40,000 users, who have been rewarded with over USD 1.5 million in return for cutting out 2 million car trips.

Thought: pay people to do good.

CHANGE YOUR NAME

Planning a wedding may be a time-consuming task, but any bride who elects to take her husband's last name after getting married soon learns that the process of making that change can be nearly as laborious. Enter I'm a Mrs, a new site that gives women an alternative to navigating the myriad forms, government requirements and notification letters themselves. It's a one-stop alternative, with all of the forms, instructions and personalized letters new brides need when they change their name. Two packages are available on the site: standard, which includes access to all of necessary government forms as well as three additional ones of the bride's choice, and premium, which includes access to all forms in the database covering government, banks, credit cards, utility companies and mortgage firms. With either package, brides are given a personal page where they select the organizations that are relevant to them. Then, they simply provide I'm a Mrs. with the details of their name change, and the site auto-completes the necessary forms and letters. After looking them over, brides need only sign the paperwork and send it out.

Thought: offer a simple way to make big changes.

SIMPLE INGREDIENTS

As a delicacy with relative affordability and universal appeal, ice cream is one of those products that serves as a barometer of the times. And the latest trend is simplicity, if the Häagen-Dazs Five line is any indication. In today's ailing economic climate, simplicity is something that holds a nostalgic appeal. And Häagen-Dazs Five's all-natural ice cream simply delivers. Crafted with only five ingredients: skimmed milk, cream, sugar, egg yolks and natural flavouring, the Five line also includes less fat than Häagen-Dazs's other ice creams. It's a way for consumers who may not be able to afford the big luxuries, know that at least there's still good, old-fashioned ice cream!

Thought: in tough times, people look to the good old days.

WEB ENABLED PILLS

GlowCaps are a line of electronic pill caps that use multiple means to ensure patients take their medicine when they should. Fitting on standard medicine bottles, and featuring a small computer that illuminates the pill cap and plays a

melody at medication time, the basic GlowCap Solo is designed for once-a-day medications. It flashes a visual reminder to attract the user's attention. And if the bottle is not opened within an hour, the device periodically plays a short melody for another hour after that. Alternatively, GlowCaps Connect are designed specifically for managing chronic diseases, and include internet connectivity as well for a range of new reminder mechanisms. A reminder schedule can be set up for more than one dose or medication per day, and the caps can be set to trigger a phone call to remind them. GlowCaps Connect can also be programmed to send weekly updates to a friend, family member or caregiver, and each month the service sends a report to the patient's doctor, thereby increasing accountability. Finally, GlowCaps Connect will also coordinate with the patient's pharmacy for automatic prescription refills.

Thought: manage people's important life tasks.

INSURER TXT ALERTS

A car insurer for women recently launched a useful new service. As soon as weather warnings are issued about conditions that could make driving hazardous, Onna-onna sends its clients a text message advising them to be extra alert or even stay off the road. The company relies on weather reports from the National Meteorological Institute, and provides the text messages free of charge to clients who have signed up for them. Aiming to reduce the number of accidents caused by heavy winds, icy roads and severe thunderstorms, the warning service is part of the company's wider efforts to promote road safety. Which isn't a purely philanthropic gesture, of course—lower accident rates are good for any insurer's bottom line.

Thought: keep your customers in the loop.

HYPERLOCAL NEWS

Billions of people may inhabit this planet, but when it comes right down to it, most of us are still primarily interested in what's going on in our own backyards. That's also the driving notion behind The Local, a new initiative from The New York Times. The Local is a group of community news and information websites devoted to residents of five particular areas of New York and New Jersey. The sites feature posts by both NYT journalists and community members alike about day-to-day life in their neighbourhoods, across a wide range of topics. Jim Schachter, the NYT's editor for digital initiatives, explains: "We'll be reporting on the big concerns in these communities, from deer hunts to property taxes, crime to school budgets. And we'll be striving to empower residents to report on their own communities, as well as to contribute their creativity and ideas."

Thought: empower local action.

CIRCUS FITNESS

Fitness gyms have been nichefying for some time now. Adding a new twist to workouts for women, however, is a class from Reebok and Cirque du Soleil that simulates the feeling of flying. Jukari Fit to Fly is a group exercise experience based on a new piece of equipment called the FlySet. Much like a free-hanging trapeze, the FlySet can be used for swinging, jumping, hanging, kicking, pulling up and strengthening. The equipment consists of a durable, three-stranded rope fixed to the ceiling with a 360-degree swivel point and an attachable FlyBar. Using that equipment, Fit to Fly classes offer an hour-long total body workout of cardio, strength, balance and core training for up to 12 people that's designed to provide a cure for the "workout blues." It's all about moving your body in a fun new way. Jukari Fit to Fly is named from a dialect word meaning "to play" and is just the first in a series of special projects to result from Reebok's new partnership with Cirque du Soleil. All makes sense, given that more than half of all women feel exercise is a chore, and nearly two-thirds would work out more if it was more fun, according to Reebok's research.

Thought: find an unexpected partner to add a point of difference.

From:  **GIZMODO**
THE GADGETS WEBLOG

SMART TEXTING

Kids tend to get a bit of stick from grumpy old folks for using too much nonsensical jargon in their text messages, but this might actually be masking a higher intellect than previously thought. There's nothing like a proper scientific study to quash ill-founded rumours. And this area intrigued the British Psychological Society enough to run a test of their own to find out if 'poor' use of language in texts relates to poor reading and writing skills. The short answer is 'no'. 88 children were asked to send a bunch of text messages to friends and the frequency of jargon was compared to tests of their reading, vocabulary and phonological awareness. Results showed that those who used the most text-speak also scored highest in terms of literary skills. This does make sense when you think about it, since a kid needs to know what

word they are trying to type and have a sufficient vocabulary to decipher the nonsense that's sent back, so perhaps it's not the sort of thing we should be discouraging after all.

Thought: look for the good in the bad.

From: 

BROWN BAG LUXURY

Upmarket fashion site, Net-A-Porter, is now offering customers the option of receiving their designer deliveries in brown bags so as not to get too much attention for their shopping habits. Which shows that even wealthy people who are not feeling the pinch may have become more cautious about spending ostentatiously. On the Net-A-Porter site, the company offers various packaging options including 'Discreet Packaging' for New Yorkers. The site reads: "*Psst... Your secret is safe with us! Your order will be delivered in an unbranded recycled brown paper bag*".

Thought: discretion is in; ostentation is out.

From: 

SEAWEED CARS

Toyota is looking to a greener future, literally, with dreams of an ultralight, superefficient plug-in hybrid with a bioplastic body made of seaweed that could be in showrooms within 15 years. The kelp car would build upon the already hypergreen 1/X plug-in hybrid concept, which weighs 926 pounds, by replacing its carbon-fibre body with plastic derived from seaweed. As wild as it might sound, bioplastics are becoming increasingly common and Toyota thinks it's only a matter of time before automakers use them to build cars. Bioplastics are being used already for everything from gift cards to cellphone cases. And demand for the stuff is expected to hit £50bn annually within five years, a figure that would account for 10% of the world market for plastic. Unsurprising, as one producer claims its bioplastic produces 60% less carbon dioxide than petroleum-based plastic and requires 30% less energy to make.

Thought: what could you make natural and sustainable.

From: 

COOKING MADE EASY

Jamie Oliver has recently launched his latest venture: local food and kitchen supply store Recipease. Just one of Jamie's many efforts to extend his approach to healthy, conscientious cooking and eating to as many people as possible, Recipease is a one-stop shop for both novice and more experienced chefs to get all they need to create Naked Chef-style meals. There are three choices offered for those who want to get more at ease with cooking and eating healthy foods. First there is "Easy to Go", a deli-style, take-away food section, where you can buy main courses and desserts pre-made. Next is "Easy to Make", where a brilliant meal can be assembled in around 10 minutes in on-site kitchens, using ingredients prepped for you ahead of time. Finally, "Easy to Learn" sees you taught from scratch by the pros: pick a recipe, book a time, turn up and get shown how.

Thought: help your consumer be a pro.

MODULAR TRANSPORTATION

Australian Anton Grimes has come up with a smart twist on the increasingly popular bike sharing idea. He's created a much more compact system for sharing electric scooters in urban areas. The Link scooter system is designed as a modular transport solution that can be retrofitted to existing street lights. It allows users to hire a small lightweight electronic scooter from a hub and ride to the desired destination and then return the scooter to another hub, where it is recharged. The use of existing light poles reduces the cost of the unit and provides strong anchors that carry both telecommunications and power to the hub.

Thought: provide short term ownership solutions

UNDERGROUND EATING

Underground restaurants are the dining equivalent of a speak-easy or a rave. Whether they are entirely legal or not is a bit of a grey area. But this is part of their allure. There's something very intoxicating about the combination of being "in the know" and illicitness that creates an experience that people can't help but talk about. It's word of mouth marketing at its most powerful. Underground restaurants are new to the UK in the guise of MsMarmitelover's Underground Restaurant in Kilburn and Horton Jupiter's Secret Ingredient in Hackney, but are much more familiar in other parts of the world. In America the underground dining scene is well established with covert organisations such as Ghetto Gourmet leading the charge. Ghetto Gourmet events tend to be relatively large scale and involve much creative collaboration between chefs, musicians and artists. So why has the underground restaurant scene suddenly sprung up? The reasons are twofold. The easy answer is the recession – as money has got tighter diners are looking for something more exciting but for less money. The second part of the answer is the internet. The online foodie community is very dynamic in London, which makes the marketing of an underground restaurant a doddle. This bottom up approach to marketing a restaurant has not gone unnoticed by the mainstream media or other restaurateurs. The Guardian reviewed the opening night and AA Gill wrote a piece about how bored he was with normal restaurants and how all he wanted to do was actually find an underground restaurant so he could review it!

Thought: offer something illicit on the side.

PAPER THIN SPEAKERS

A team of engineers at the University of Warwick in the UK have created a revolutionary new kind of audio speaker that has better sound than the traditional variety but, at less than 0.25mm, is as thin as a piece of card. The speakers are flat, flexible, lightweight and inexpensive to manufacture. And its particular method of sound generation could make public announcements in places like passenger terminals clearer, crisper, and easier to hear. The speakers could be concealed inside ceiling tiles and car interiors, or printed with a design and hung on the wall like a picture.

Thought: deliver your functionality invisibly.

VENDING LUXURY

The Mondrian South Beach hotel has a unique vending machine that sells everything from away from home staples like toothbrushes to luxury goods, such as a Bently Arnage. The fancy retail machine, called a Semi-Automatic stocks a list of over the top items including golden handcuffs, land and condos. For anything that can't fit inside the vast, auto-mat-like contraption, customers trade in a voucher at the front desk to receive their goods. Though the ultra high-end nature of this machine is a bit questionable and gimmicky, the concept behind it is interesting.

Thought: what could you vend?

From:  COOLBUSINESSIDEAS

MEDICAL TATTOOS

Diabetics monitoring their glucose levels may soon put the days of painful finger-sticks behind them. Instead, they can go through the one-time ordeal of getting inked with a nanoparticle tattoo. Heather Clark, a scientist at Draper Laboratories, has developed a nano ink particle that constantly samples glucose levels in the skin. The nano ink particles are tiny, squishy spheres about 120 nanometers across. Injected subcutaneously, the ink changes colour in response to glucose content.

Thought: how could your brand be tattooed (literally or metaphorically) into people's lives

Worth a look:

(A COMPENDIUM OF INTERESTING MISCELLANY TO WATCH AND LISTEN TO)

How to present while people are Twittering

- <http://bit.ly/rDgsl>

Are social networking sites damaging children's brains?

- <http://bit.ly/VUC1D>

IBM research into the enterprise of the future

- <http://bit.ly/13xjGu>

How the Gaussian Copula function destroyed Wall Street

- <http://bit.ly/RvXHv>

A manifesto for smart economic growth

- <http://bit.ly/o4suO>

An alternative view on food sustainability

- <http://bit.ly/dAjWx>

Why water is the next big sustainability issue

- <http://bit.ly/2cmXZ>

Nielsen on social networking's global footprint

- <http://bit.ly/yufT5>

7 reasons social media marketing fails

- <http://bit.ly/zQip6>

Our moral instinct

- <http://bit.ly/LIWIA>

The golden rules of digital comms

- <http://bit.ly/18ODo0>

Trends in social inequality

- <http://bit.ly/lj6Zr>

The age of commodified intelligence

- <http://bit.ly/27d3JV>

The rise of fuzzy faith

- <http://bit.ly/d7FYV>

Accenture research into usage of electronics products and services

- <http://bit.ly/JZTak>

We spend 8 hours a day in front of screens

- <http://bit.ly/uO7je>

The scavengers manifesto

- <http://bit.ly/qDKS>

Ending child poverty: a manifesto for success

- <http://bit.ly/3h8tSO>

Microsoft research into on-line behaviour in Europe

- <http://bit.ly/ASCnG>