

Where my ideas come from *continued*

unding and taking the community with you. It's all those things the business world now says it wants: creativity, innovation, not being linear, and being adaptable. Given the breadth, complexity and fragility of a performing arts organisation, just maintaining core activity is an entrepreneurial endeavour. Allowing it space for risks and creativity is an even bigger challenge.

What triggers my ideas is doing something physical. The longer I sit at my desk the more I drill into details. My best ideas come when I'm running, swimming, bike riding or walking. I'm hardwired to exercise; I run three or four times a week and swim a couple of times a week, plus do stationary biking and weights. I like being by the water or in parks. I get inspiration from natural beauty and being outside.

The other time I get my best ideas is when I'm hopping for clothes. I'll be walking around looking at dresses and shoes – ultimately it relates to moving, it gets my mind out of a rut.

I read a lot. I'll read the newspapers online every day. And I always find something I like in the *Harvard Business Review*. I read a daily arts clipping service (www.artsjournal.com) with news from theatre, dance, music, visual arts, publishing and media, plus blogs and articles. It is a great way to keep informed about the sector and colleagues – what people are doing about their organisations, choices they make.

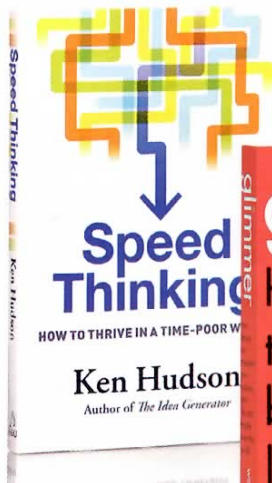
Because I've been in the business so long, former colleagues are a real resource. A couple of times a week I'll email one of them about an idea. Similarly, I'll get three or so emails a week from former colleagues with questions or requests about a project or career advice.

I also see performances – opera, theatre, films – at least twice a week. And I visit galleries and museums. I see it all as input.

Some business books are useful; I'm a great believer that there is no one way to do things. I like *Strategy Safari* by Henry Mintzberg, who is one of the professors at McGill University [in Montreal, where she did a master's degree in management]. His philosophy on business strategy is that it depends on what you're trying to do. Other helpful ones are *Good to Great and the Social Sectors* by Jim Collins and *Edgeware: Insights from complexity science for health care leaders*, by Brenda Zimmerman. Complexity science is interesting. It's about decision-making and strategy, taking into account constant change – a process that is not linear. *Lucinda Schmidt*

BOOK REVIEWS by Mike Hanley

- Buy it, read it
- If you are interested
- If you must



- **SPEED THINKING:**
How to thrive in a time-poor world
Ken Hudson
Allen & Unwin, \$24.99

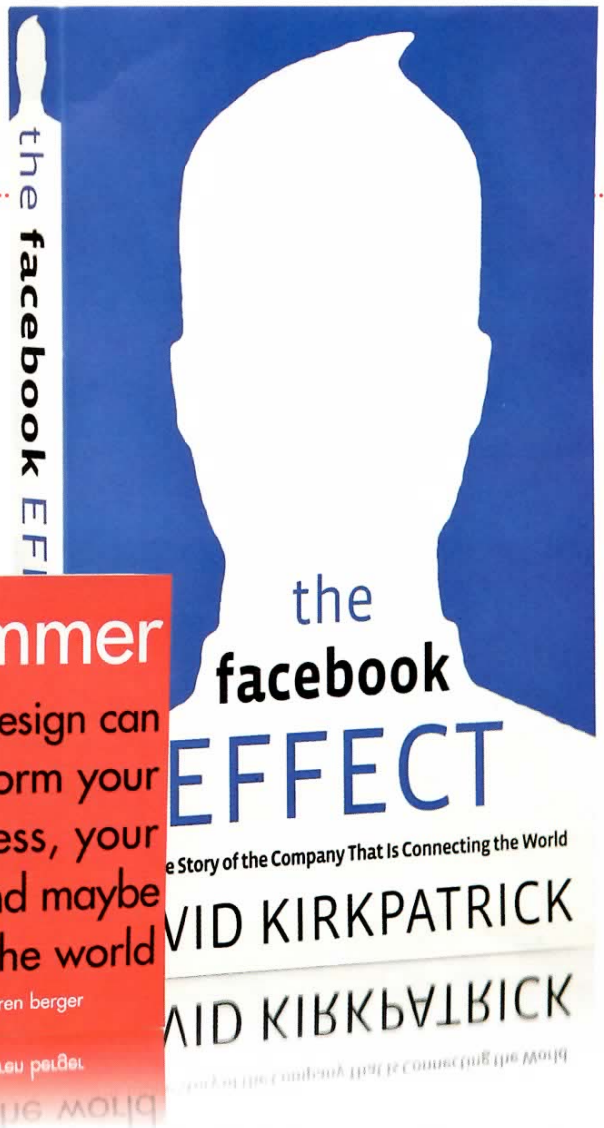
Readability ●●●
Usefulness ●●●

EVERY DAY seems faster than the last. While you used to juggle calls, now you juggle calls, emails, tweets, SMS, instant messaging and the rest. You are expected to deliver more with less, and to make more decisions per minute than you used to make in an hour.

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Give in to the speed of things, suggests Australian management consultant Ken Hudson. Learn to love it.

Hudson has designed a system to help people accelerate their thinking. The former marketer with companies such as American Express and Citibank reckons people make better decisions when they do it at pace, without letting their internal critics get a word in edgeways.

Speed thinking is a set of tools and techniques for getting your mind humming

and ideas flowing. In a traditional brainstorm, for instance, one person will have a pen and the other will shout out ideas. But we all know that the person with the pen has the power. If they don't write down the idea, it's not reported. Lose the constraint, Hudson says: give everyone a pen, then combine ideas in small and then larger groups.

"The idea for speed thinking came out of leadership seminars where I found that the less time I gave participants to come

up with an answer, the better their solutions would be," Hudson says. Time pressure helps people access both sides of their brain, get into the flow, and lower inhibitions.

Speed thinking is not the be all and end all of creative techniques, and no one would suggest that CEOs should use it when deciding whether to lay off a division. But Hudson doesn't pitch it that way. "It's the sprint station at the gym, a helpful addition to your workout," he says. "Better for you and cheaper than coffee."