

Think Bigger **Summer 2024**

Location & Time

Location TBC

Block Week 3, Jul 21 — July 25 (Sunday — Thursday)

Class takes place from 9am-5pm, with a 1-hour lunch break starting at 12:30pm

Professor

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Course Overview

Think Bigger is the course for you if you want to be on the cutting edge of innovation and knowledge-gathering. In Think Bigger, we answer a timeless question with enormous implications for problems of all kinds: “How can I get my best ideas?” Drawing on recent advances in neuro- and cognitive sciences, Think Bigger offers an evidence-backed method with six steps for innovative problem-solving.

Think Bigger uses three essential tools to spark creative thinking and help us make our most meaningful choices. For entrepreneurs, future team leaders, curious minds, and aspiring innovators looking to stand out, the black box of creativity is a mystery no more. In Think Bigger, we upend the myth that big ideas are reserved for a select few – everyone can become the innovator they have always dreamt of.

In every class, you will learn the science behind each of the steps in the Think Bigger toolkit. We will also show you case studies to help you understand the rationale for every step of the Think Bigger toolkit.

Think Bigger is a new and unique ideation methodology only offered here at Columbia Business School. We go beyond mainstream methods for ideation by leveraging tools such as the Big Picture Score (Compare Wants), the Choice Map for ideation, and the Third Eye Test for forecasting an ideas success before prototyping. You will become the expert in using this set of tools so you can come up with out-of-the-box solutions for complex problems, both big and small.

View the BIG ideas from past Think Bigger students: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/sheenaiyengar_congratulations-to-my-think-bigger-students

**Note: This class is not designed to help you develop an idea you already have, it's designed to help you practice generating totally new ideas for problems that interest you.*

Learning Objectives

There are three learning objectives in Think Bigger

1. **The Science:** In the last few decades, we've learned a lot about how we form ideas, what helps us, and what hinders the process. By the end of the semester, you will understand the science that helped inform each of the six steps of Think Bigger.
2. **The Practice:** This is not a purely lecture class, it is a workshop class. Class time will be dedicated to completing Creativity Challenges designed to illustrate the "how" and the "why" behind Think Bigger. You will also be applying the six-step method to a real-world problem of your choosing. By the end of the semester, you will create a solution worth presenting to industry leaders.
3. **The Network:** If you look at history and the moments when individuals, organizations, and nations were at their most creative, it was by mixing with others who were equally as passionate – not just about a particular idea any one individual had, but about creating a marketplace of ideas. That is why when I began to create Think Bigger, I knew it was important that the students learning the methodology did not exist in a vacuum. I created the Think Bigger Fellows Program a few years ago, which involves leading global business leaders and practitioners in the course. You will meet several of them during the course, but just as importantly, you will be able to tap into this network at any point you need.

Think Bigger Fellows

The Think Bigger course was first established in 2016. Since then, leading global business practitioners from industries spanning technology, media, sustainability, food and beverage, venture capital/private equity, consulting, blockchain, and fintech have increasingly become involved in this course by providing students feedback and mentorship at critical points in the ideation process. We now have over 200+ Think Bigger Fellows. You will meet a number of these Fellows on Mentor Sessions. They serve as a valuable resource to Think Bigger students interested in developing their experience and skills in the innovation space. The Fellows are an important part of the Columbia Business School ecosystem and, as members of the Think Bigger social network, you can connect with any of them throughout your careers as innovators.

Workload

Class Attendance and Participation (25%)

Attendance: Think Bigger is not a class that you can learn through watching recordings. Your ability to learn this method depends on your in-class participation. To this end, attendance in class is mandatory. More than one day of class missed constitutes a drop in one letter grade for the course.

Participation: For every class, there will be an in-class assignment posted in the Assignments section on Canvas. You are expected to submit the in-class assignment before class ends. This submission is integral to your overall participation grade.

Homework (25%)

Always refer to Canvas for homework assignment descriptions. We will make note – in class and on Canvas – whether your homework should be completed as an individual or as a group. If you are given a

group assignment for homework, all group members should work on it together and one person from each group must submit the final assignment with their group number in the submission title. Each member of the group will receive equal credit for the assignment. Homework (group and individual) should be submitted on Canvas by 8:59am the next day. (If you have homework assigned on Sunday, July 21st then that homework assignment is due Monday, July 22nd at 8:59am).

Presentations (25%)

During the last day of class, you will present your problem and its solution beyond the classroom to a group of industry experts who act as Mentors! They will advise you on your problem and potential solution.

You will present for no more than five minutes using a PowerPoint slide deck.

Final Paper (25%)

Take what you've learned from the Think Bigger method this semester to solve a problem! To accrue full points on this final, you must display that you understand all six steps of the method. That is, you should detail your definition of the problem, the subproblems in your breakdown, your search (in and out of the box), your grasp of Choice Maps and Big Picture scores, and how you used the "Third Eye."

You can accrue up to 15 points total: 2 points each for every step of the method, 1 point for overall creativity of your proposed ideas, 1 point for the overall usefulness/feasibility of your proposed ideas, and 1 point for the general clarity/organization of the document you submit.

For this exam, you have two options. You can choose any new problem that you want (entrepreneurial or personal) to solve or you can use the default problem we supply here:

In your new leadership role at your dream job, you are assigned to hire and build the most creative team as part of a new initiative internally. How would you go about choosing the five most creative candidates to create a functional team?

You must present your work on whatever problem you choose in 3-5 pages that include at least one fleshed-out solution and one less fleshed-out alternative solution that you came up with on your own. This submission must include a detailed Choice Map, highlighting some of the tactics that you used or were inspired by.

Class Readings

**All readings are posted to the "Files," section on Canvas.*

Pre-Class Readings

- Fallows, James, "The 50 Greatest Breakthroughs Since the Wheel" *The Atlantic* (2013).
- Schroeder, B. How To Avoid Being In The 90% Of Entrepreneurial Startups Who Fail. Six Insights On How To Find Real Problems, *Forbes* (2023)
- Deloitte Insights. "Eyes to the sky: Three enduring eternities," *Tech Trends of 2023* (2023).
- Vavac, Smil. [*How the World Really Works Introduction Audio*](#), Penguin Randomhouse (2022)

- Schultz, Alex. “100+ global problems worth solving,” *World Innovation Forum* (2019).

Post-Class readings are listed below each session.

Class Sessions

Day 1

Sunday, July 21st

9am-10:30am: Complete the Creativity Diagnostic and the Creativity Marathon

- At the start of this session, you will complete the diagnostic survey which will help you learn how to expand your Creative Mindsets later in the semester.
- You will get a taste of how to “Think Bigger” in this session by completing the Creativity Marathon.
- You will receive an overview of the six steps and the semester ahead.

10:30am-10:45am: BREAK

10:45am-12:30pm: Where do “Big Ideas” come from?

- In this session, we will talk about some of the “biggest” ideas of all time and walk through how the creators of those ideas pieced them together.

12:30pm-1:30pm: Lunch Break

1:30pm-4pm: The Creative Mind, Part I

- We will examine the stories of great innovators: from the Buddha who sat under the Bodhi tree and attained enlightenment, Archimedes who cried, “Eureka!” as he sat in his tub and observed the displacement of water, Steve Jobs’ idea for the Apple I as he sat in his garage with a typewriter wired to a television screen, or Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s iconic “I Have a Dream” speech which came about because a woman shouted from the crowd, “Tell us about your dream!”
- We might ask ourselves: do good ideas come to special people in special places? Is creativity something you’re simply born with?
- Using the latest neuro- and cognitive science, we will find out what creativity is, who has it, and how it can be fostered.

4pm-4:15pm: Thought Exercise

4:15pm-5pm: Rate Previous Ideas

- You will have time in session to complete a survey that includes the descriptions of previous Think Bigger student-projects. You will be prompted to read each idea and rate it on its creativity, likeability, and usefulness.

Homework: Will be posted the Canvas

Readings

- Iyengar, Sheena. *Think Bigger: How to Innovate*, Columbia University Press (2023). Preface and Chapters 1-2.
 - Duggan, William. “Discovery vs. Design,” *The European Business Review* (2021).
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Day 2

Monday, July 22nd

9am-10:30am: Step 1: Choose the Problem

- Einstein once said, “If I were given one hour to save the planet, I would spend 55 minutes defining the problem and five minutes finding the solution.”
- In this session, you will begin the Think Bigger process. You start by choosing a problem you care about and want to create a solution for. Too often, we identify problems that are unsolvable or trivial – you might even end up solving the wrong problem.
- You will learn the pitfalls of problem identification and how to choose problems that are worth solving.

10:30am-10:45am: BREAK

10:45am-12:30pm: Step 2: Break Down the Problem

- Any major problem is made up of multiple smaller problems. To crack the big problem, you must identify and solve the smaller problems.
- You will learn Step 2 of the Think Bigger method to settle on the right problem.

12:30pm-1:30pm: Lunch Break

1:30pm-4:30pm: Innovation Marketplace

- Here, you will complete the Innovation Marketplace. The Innovation Marketplace, one of the highlights of the course, is a unique exercise that enables you to survey the myriad problems present in the classroom.
- You will be able to invest in different problems and seek investment for your own. Everyone will present a pitch in 60-second to your classmates. You will then hear theirs in return.
- Now is the time to scope out the problems you are inspired by and edit your own.
- **BREAK from 3pm-3:15pm**

4:30pm-5pm: Debrief

NO HOMEWORK

Readings

- Iyengar, Sheena. *Think Bigger: How to Innovate*, Columbia University Press (2023). Chapter 3: Step 1 and Chapter 4: Step 2
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Day 3

Tuesday, July 23rd

9am-10:15am: Group Workshop

- You will learn the best tactics for creating a winning team and will meet with your fellow group members to write a contract to establish group norms before settling on a final problem statement.

10:15am-10:30am: BREAK

10:30am-11:30am: What's the Big Picture?

- You will learn about Step 3 of the Think Bigger method, Compare Wants.
- As a group, you will ask yourselves: why do I want to solve this problem? Who else matters? Answering these questions will help you learn how to sketch the Big Picture to your problem.

11:30am-12:30pm: Intro to Search

- You will learn the Think Bigger way of conducting a search (Step 4).

12:30pm-1:30pm: LUNCH

1:30pm-2pm: Intro to Search

- Here, you will learn the answer to the proverbial question, “How do you generate ‘out of the box’ solutions using a method that can be repeatedly used?”

2pm-2:30pm: Search Demo

- You will participate in a live demo to learn the best way to search for tactics that should be added to your Choice Maps.

2:30pm-2:45pm: BREAK

2:45pm-3:30pm: Group Workshop

- You will conduct individual searches and then work as a group to start filling in the pieces of your group Choice Map.

3:30pm-5pm: Choice Map & Combine

- You will begin to Choice Map (Step 5) and come up with three combinatory ideas that serve as a solution to the problem.

HOMEWORK: As a group, you will choose three different combinations and create a 1-2 page description for each (not just a list of tactics, but what idea you can build using these tactics as a starting

point). You will also create a Big Picture Score that visually evaluates each idea on the criteria you defined in the previous session (use the template on Canvas).

Readings

- Nordgren, Loran and Schonthal, David, “How do you get people to embrace a new idea?” *TED Ideas*. (2022).
 - Iyengar, Sheena. *Think Bigger: How to Innovate*, Columbia University Press (2023). Chapter 4-5.
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Day 4

Wednesday, July 24th

9am-11:30am: Choice Mapping, Continued

- In this session, we will show you the “secret sauce” of ideation and what to do when you find yourself “stuck.”
- You will revise your ideas and use the Big Picture Score to choose two final combinatory ideas to move forward with.
- You will begin to develop a slide deck for your final idea.
- **BREAK from 10am-10:15am**

11:30am-12:30pm: The Third Eye, Part I

- You will participate in a group exercise to hear a non-traditional form of feedback about your final idea.

12:30pm-1:30pm: LUNCH BREAK

Special guest and Think Bigger expert, Michael Costa, will come in for a Lunch & Learn session.

1:30pm-2:30pm: The Third Eye, Part II

- You will learn Step 6 of the method and, with a final idea in mind, ask yourselves, “what is my idea, exactly? How does it differ from what’s already out there? How will others see it?”
- In the sixth and final step of Think Bigger, you will present to your peers and learn if what you see, they see too.

2:30pm-3pm: Group Workshop

- Prepare your final pitch deck Mentor Day

3pm-5pm: Mentor Sessions

- You will be matched with four mentors to meet in thirty-minute intervals. During your sessions, you will present your idea and the Mentors will use the What Works framework to gain feedback.
- You will walk away with tangible feedback for how to proceed after learning from their perspectives “what works,” in your idea, “what doesn’t work,” in your idea, and recommendations for improvement.

HOMEWORK: Submit a revised slide deck based on the feedback received from Mentors. Make three changes or improvements to your idea or presentation based on the feedback you heard from mentors. Detail these three changes in the last slide of your deck.

Readings

- Iyengar, Sheena. *Think Bigger: How to Innovate*, Columbia University Press (2023). Chapter 6-8.
 - Casadesus-Masanell, Ramon and Ricart, Joan. “How to Design a Winning Business Model,” *Harvard Business Review* (2011).
 - Heath, Chip. *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*, Random House (2007). Chapter 1 (Pages 25-62).
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Day 5

Thursday, July 25th

9am-10am: The Power of Revision

- You now have an idea that feels ready to present to the world – before you can present anything, you must learn about the power of revision.

10am-10:15am: BREAK

10:15am-12:30pm

- In your groups, you will participate in the Think Bigger Lab to hear how your peers might reimagine your idea – this is the final phase of Step 6. You will have time to revise your final slide decks.

12:30pm-1:30pm: LUNCH

1:30pm-2pm: Edits to presentations

- Take the thirty minutes after lunch to practice your presentations.

2pm-4pm: Lions Tank (Final Presentation)

- You will present your final ideas to a panel of industry expert judges who will choose a winner.

4pm-5pm: Winners Announced and Networkign with the Judges!