

The Amazing, Technicolor, Super Cool Lemonade Stand

A Study Guide

by Chip R. Bell, adapted from *Inside Your Customer's Imagination: 5 Secrets for Creating Breakthrough Products, Services, and Solutions*



Let's start with a pretend scenario. You are an enterprising junior high school student with a desire to make your start in the world of commerce with an innovative lemonade stand. Your competitors make ordinary lemonade and sell it from a simple stand on a high-traffic corner. You are convinced that your customers—thirsty passersby—have bottled up inside them some super cool ideas for disrupting the way lemonade is conceived and delivered. You need your customers' help.

1. Why is it important to change the lemonade stand game today? What can you gain by co-creating a lemonade stand with your customers?

Consider the rewards you can attain at the end of a profitable summer. Think about the impact on your customers if you decide to do a lemonade stand again next summer. Don't forget the lemonade stand is long overdue for disruption and you are the one who can do it.

2. What are the realities of nurturing a co-creation partnership to recreate the lemonade stand? What is the SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) for a revolutionary lemonade stand?

Consider the importance of great lemonade in your customers' lives. Think about the need for a new delivery process in the hurry-up world in which your customers live. Don't forget you are examining every component of the lemonade stand experience, from product to marketing to delivery. For example, what would Uber, Disney, or Amazon do with this challenge?

3. Your first step is to engage your customers in a partnership relationship, not merely a drive-by transaction. What can you say or do to help your customers want to join you in the co-creation process long enough to capture their imagination, not just their top-of-mind suggestions?

Consider labeling it in a unique way (the Lemonade Dream) or having a fun poster or flyer to accompany your pitch. What can you provide as an inexpensive giveaway to intrigue your customer? What if you gave your customer a lemon carved in a funny face to hold during conversation? Use a stopwatch for a five-minute max conversation.

4. Let's assume you have convinced an enthusiastic lemonade customer to give you ten focused minutes. Your first step is to use curiosity to build trust in order to create a safe haven for their insights and ideas. What are ways you would begin that process?

Consider what authentic curiosity might look and sound like to your customer. Identify three

questions you might ask that are crafted to be deeply thought provoking. Don't forget to watch how your customers react to what you say or do as added evidence for your understanding.

5. There are lemonade stands and then there is your lemonade stand. Your next goal is to both elevate and sharpen your and your customers' focus on a new meaning of "lemonade stand." Your goal is to put the conventional on mute and turn up the volume on a unique meaning of your goal. How will you get your customers to think differently about what a lemonade stand can be?

Consider taking "lemonade stand" to the Miss America–pageant level of "solving world hunger." Think about applying new eyes to your focus (think in terms of different color, shape, role models, metaphors, senses, etc.). Don't forget that attracting ideas starts with making that pursuit fun, interesting, and enchanting.

6. Now, the hard work begins . . . the heavy-duty discovery part! This is where you want to encourage your customer to take a few risks. That means helping them take their idea-generator to mental places it has not been in, at least not in public.

Consider this: if you had a friend who was shy or overly cautious, what steps would you take to help this friend demonstrate courage? Apply those steps to your customer. Think about how you will model authenticity. Don't forget boldness and risk-taking are easier when accompanied by others being bold. Show your courage.

7. Vulnerability can sometimes make us suddenly cautious, like we might have gone a bit too far. You have encouraged your customer to "remove her or his shield"; it is now important to provide reassurance that you can be trusted. What are three ways in any relationship you can demonstrate trustworthiness? How can you get your customer to conclude that being genuine in front of you was the right move?

Consider the power of promise-keeping. Think about reaffirming an agreement made at the beginning of your relationship. Don't forget that making mistakes shows you are human; acknowledging mistakes demonstrates you are a courageous and compassionate human.

8. Great co-creation partnerships are noble affirmations of the best of who we are and a gallant pursuit of what we can be. What are ways you can demonstrate to your customer your gratitude for contribution? How can you celebrate your alliance?

Consider requesting your customers' email addresses, and send them your top ten most unique lemonade recipes. Give them a yellow balloon. Start a LemonLaughs e-newsletter with funny lemonade jokes or quotes. "If life gives you lemons, ask for tequila and salt" or "Squeeze the day" (okay, I'll stop!).

How was the lemonade?