

Open 24-hour key bureaux in major towns and cities at which the public could deposit a spare set of keys for their homes, offices or cars. Customers would pay an annual insurance premium, ensuring the spare keys would be immediately dispatched to them if they found themselves locked out.

Becky Clarke
18 August 2000

Design a baby's plastic bathtub that changes colour according to the temperature of the water (red – too hot; pale green – just right; blue – too cold).

Rupert Kaye
19 August 2000

Open a restaurant called The Ten Floors. The building would be a pyramid – with each floor being smaller than the one below it. The menu and price of meals would become increasingly exotic and expensive on each floor. The highest and most exclusive floor would be popular with ambassadors and kings, while everything on the ground floor would be priced at cost, and designed to appeal to students. A soup kitchen could operate in a bargain basement.

Chas Bayfield
20 August 2000

Curate an art exhibition of disposable cameras with which artists, photographers and other notable individuals have taken pictures but never developed the films. The exhibition would be minimalist in presentation, consisting solely of identical cameras with the artists' names displayed.

David Owen
21 August 2000

Editor's note:
We imagine that it would be left to the discretion of the buyer as to whether they would develop and perhaps publish the pictures or simply keep the camera and film intact as an art piece in itself.

Introduce a system in which motorists are billed annually for any recorded traffic violations. Drivers who do not incur any penalties for parking, speeding or such like within a 12-month period would be refunded their road tax. The aim of the scheme would be to provide free motoring for law abiding drivers, funded in full by those who break the rules.

Rupert Kaye
22 August 2000

Editor's note:
In an early press article on Idea A Day, Becky Clarke was quoted as saying, 'My ideas are ones which will make the world more convenient and easier to use.' She has never deviated from that noble agenda.

Found an agency representing female builders, plumbers, decorators and such like. In addition to pooling the resources of all existing women in the trades, the company would encourage others to enter into these professions. The attraction for the public would be clear: women are perceived as more trustworthy, considerate and generally agreeable.

Becky Clarke
23 August 2000

Design a photographic Internet search engine. The homepage of the engine would present a view of the earth from space that could be rotated using the mouse. Right-clicking would enable the viewer to progressively zoom in on continents, countries, places and, finally, specific buildings. A left-click at any point (on a cloud, a building, even a single shop or model of car) would call up websites best matching or supporting the object focused upon.

Chas Bayfield
24 August 2000

Produce a range of household paints and soft furnishings based on the colour palettes employed in famous works of art. The brochure would show, for example, Monet's 'Water Lilies' with colour swabs and an illustration of the colours working together in a living room with carpet, walls, cushions and curtains all combining to beautiful effect.

David Owen
25 August 2000

Editor's note:
This idea has now been put into practice in the UK by Virgin Trains. We have republished it here in the hope that the London Underground follows suit.

Install entertainment systems in underground and overground train carriages offering a variety of different radio channels (music, news, sport, listings) in a similar fashion to in-flight packages. Passengers would access the entertainment by plugging their own headphones into standard pins. The licence fees charged to operate each of the channels would be reinvested in running the underground and national rail services.

Justin Cooke
26 August 2000

Develop a virtual reality (VR) system for specific use with gym exercise machines. Rather than listening to music or watching MTV, exercisers could run through the streets of New York, row in an eight at the Olympics or cycle the Tour De France. All VR software and exercise machines in the gym would be synchronised allowing individuals to set times for themselves to improve or compete with others.

David Jones
27 August 2000

Build a replica of Noah's Ark to the actual biblical specifications. This modern recreation of an ancient maritime wonder would be 133m long, 22m wide and 13m high with three enormous decks housing museums of biblical and natural history and, on the top deck, restaurants, shops and a full-size movie theatre. The Ark would tell the amazing story of the earth's creation and development by juxtaposing theological and scientific accounts. The Ark would be a symbol of hope: encouraging responsible, sustainable and ethical economic development, and promoting the advancement of both human and animal rights.

Rupert Kaye
28 August 2000

Create a new brand of food and household products by simply adding the prefix 'The' before the name of the product. The Soap, The Tea and The Coffee would all be clearly defined products within an unlimited portfolio. The range would be sold in supermarkets but also in the company's own dedicated stores, 'The Shops'.

Chas Bayfield
29 August 2000

Editor's note:
Jay Pond-Jones really warmed to this one: 'You could create a franchise operation from this idea. It would be an easy way of unifying the nation's network of corner shops into a marketable organisation.'

Editor's note:

And to think that there were publishers who thought that 'The Big Idea Book' was a bit too quirky to find an audience!

Publish a book that can be read from both the front and the back. One half would be titled 'Old Tricks For New Dogs' and feature step-by-step line drawings of dogs being taught to fetch sticks, roll-over and play dead. The other half would be titled 'New Tricks For Old Dogs' and would feature dogs learning such tasks as online banking, text messaging and video conferencing. The latter half would be subtly targeted at people who may be too embarrassed to buy such a self-help book for themselves.

David Owen
30 August 2000

Produce a television show in which five applicants are selected and each given £1million. The lucky five must allow themselves to be filmed in a fly-on-the-wall style over the following 12 months. The show would chart the experiences of the newly made millionaires as they, their friends and family, come to terms with their good fortune.

Becky Clarke
31 August 2000

Introduce to customer service call-centres an option which allows callers held in a queue to push a button to have the call centre dial them back when they are next in line to speak with a representative.

Don! Snyder
1 September 2000

Editor's note:

This application is now a quite common feature of telephone hold systems but does anyone really trust the companies to call them back?

Produce designer plasters branded with the logos of companies such as Nike or Calvin Klein. These would not only sell to people with actual cuts and grazes but also to fashion victims.

David Owen
3 September 2000

Install sensors in parking spaces of multi-storey car parks such that a centralised system would know which spaces were unoccupied. Drivers entering the car park would be issued with a printed ticket displaying the position of the nearest available space. The system would offer an added advantage for drivers in providing a record of where their car is parked on their return.

Mark Waites
4 September 2000

Editor's note:
The houses should also come complete with at least one stranger that no one would recall inviting. They might actually be a representative of the hire company, who, whilst standing aimlessly in the kitchen, would check that nothing was getting too far out of hand.

Acquire detached residential properties and offer them for hire as venues for house parties. The houses would not sell alcohol and hosts or guests of each party would be responsible for providing their own food, drink and entertainment. However, cleaning services would be included in the hire fee. The hosts would be spared the stress of entertaining in their actual homes but as the houses would be fully furnished, guests would still enjoy all the trappings of a typical house party – bedrooms for the amorous, a garden for the talkers and the ubiquitous kitchen for those that are usually found there.

Chas Bayfield
5 September 2000

Develop a personal trainer service that is accessed by mobile phone. Exercisers would enter personal details such as height, weight, age, and so on into the website and choose from a selection of fitness plans. The system would then send reminders and targets each day or week by text message. The exerciser's phone would also function as a stopwatch during activities and could, with a fairly simple plug-in accessory, even take a pulse. 3G technologies would enable the duration of any activity to be relayed to the system, computed and the program adjusted accordingly.

Becky Clarke
6 September 2000

Design a range of study-aid bed linen. Sheets, pillowcases and duvet covers would be overprinted with exam revision notes including mind maps, mnemonics, quotations, diagrams and formulae enabling students to prepare for examinations in their natural habitat.

Rupert Kaye
7 September 2000

Editor's note:
At the time of publication, Rupert Kaye was a member of a think-tank established to highlight educational issues. We suspect that we got to publish this on the rebound – after the powers that be had given it short shrift.