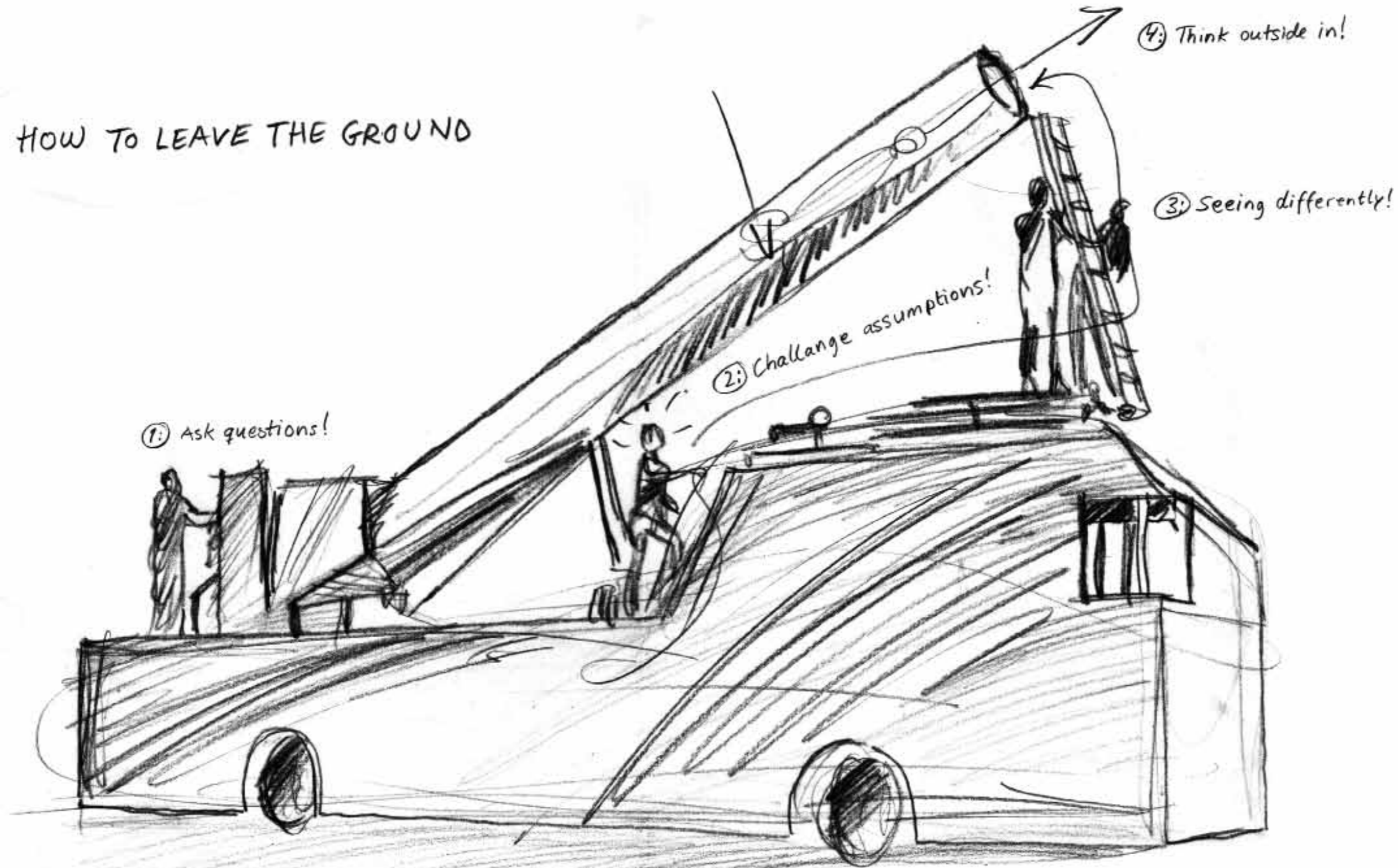


# HOW TO LEAVE THE GROUND



it's all about doing opportunities...

# Doing opportunities

Seeing an opportunity is a small part of making it happen. Businesses need to think about opportunities most systematically as they become more successful. Too many companies are so focused on the goal they have set for themselves that they will miss many new business opportunities on their way.

Opportunities are the core of your future business, and not much is yet known about them. Some persons and companies are experts in doing opportunities, but most of us wouldn't know where to start. We know it's important to constantly seek, see, and think in new possibilities so our company and business are not only adapting to the development, but actually creating the future we want.

– “We are so focused on our goals that we screen out new kinds of opportunity as they present themselves. This is called Selective Attention, or Bounded Awareness.

## INNOVATION VERSUS OPPORTUNITY

In looking at how challenger brands approach innovation, I was struck by how often they used a word to describe their approach – the word was ‘opportunity’. So, for instance, IKEA’s internal philosophy book is called *The World is Full of Opportunities*. Schrage talks about how he is ‘in the opportunity business’. Schultz talks about how he sees opportunities others don’t see. And eBay’s purpose is: ‘We are pioneering new communities around the world built on commerce, sustained by trust, inspired by opportunity.’

So my question is: What is the difference between innovation and opportunity? And why is it that challenger brands seem to benefit from focusing on the latter rather than the former? If we look at the two concepts, there are significant differences:

INNOVATION	OPPORTUNITY
- Department	- Everyone
- Difficult	- Exciting
- On demand	- Always on
- Product	- Everything
- Functional	- Functional and Emotional

Source: Adam Morgan, eatbigfish., in a working paper from his next and third book about challenger brands.

The more successful we are, the more stretching our business goals, the more intense our focus on a certain kind of winning, and the less we can see the very opportunities that we must see to realize those goals,” says Adam Morgan, of the consultancy eatbigfish.

Adam Morgan is working with two different kinds of Insights: *Reflective Insights* and *Insights of Opportunity*. According to him, Reflective Insights are the ones you get from the consumer, and these frame the tasks your brand faces. Insights of Opportunity are those that open up where the brand could go, and where the opportunities seem to lie. It is important to understand that these two kinds of insights are complementary. Looking for opportunity does not mean you should not talk to your customers – of course, they are the firm bedrock of your business. But simply talking to them will not yield the big opportunity breakthroughs that you will need in the future. This will come from looking for Insights of Opportunity, in a rather different way.

Ingvar Kamprad created IKEA concepts by visiting waste dumps and other places where people threw stuff away. For instance he found feathers from plucked hens (to make pillows), and other kinds of useful material to make cheaper furniture and home accessories.

## Innovation versus opportunities

We need to think about what opportunities are, how they work, and how we can create them in our business environment. Seeing the opportunity is a small part of making it happen. It is certainly the beginning, but not enough, and most of the time we won't actually realize how many opportunities are open to us.

We must learn more about the climate of implementation we must foster within our companies and organizations in order to see, create and do opportunities. One way to describe it is to look at the difference between the concepts of innovation and opportunity (see box).

The core purpose of futures studies is to make you more aware of your assumptions about the future. To stay ahead and to use opportunities, companies must more systematically explore, create, and test possible and preferred futures. Official futures are often dangerous as they generally are unarticulated and unchallenged. One way to start in the opportunity business is to ask questions, challenge assumptions, seeing different, and think outside in!



## #1: Ask questions!

Asking good questions is an art, and there are different ways to do it. When you look for new opportunities, it is essential that you ask questions that are open ended and will give you a wide range of answers. Naturally, they should be questions you really don't know the answers to. If you ask why questions, you can dig to the root of the challenge. You can ask why, why not and why not now?

Another set of useful questions are what do I need, what do you need and what is needed?

In futures studies, one of the core questions is: What if? You can use this question after some of the others stated here, and it will give you the opportunity to discuss and play with possible futures.

## #2: Challenge assumptions!

In the heart of futures work is the ability to challenge assumptions in a way that opens our minds. First, you must agree there is no best way of doing things: There are always better ways! It's human nature to cover up a problem rather than call attention to it. So, second, when challenging assumptions, don't just solve problems - be creative, spot wrong questions and ask new ones.

The only way to change the future, and create a better one, is by relating to the mindsets of today in new ways. Every strategy – whether in management, product development, market development, marketing, or human resources – contains has implicit assumptions about how the future will be. By making these assumptions explicit, and by challenging them, you will be able to navigate much more wisely.

## #3: Seeing differently!

We often talk about opportunities as something we see. Perhaps opportunities are also something that can be heard, smelled, tasted, and felt? When discussing development of your products, your organization or your market, perhaps you should do it in an unusual spot? Most meeting rooms aren't really rooms for seeing things in a different manner. By moving to an unusual spot, you'll see different things, and your mind will be opened. Wherever you are, though, see everything as a medium. Pick anything you have and make it a medium.

One example of seeing differently is Air New Zealand, which changed its definition of itself from being 'New Zealand's largest airline' to being the 'The World's

32nd largest airline'. The shift from high status, and the problems of pulling out of a route, for example, to another status where it becomes smart to sacrifice and over-commit in terms of routes, changed the airline and how it does business.

## #4: Think outside in!

In futures studies, the core element is working with the cognitive reframing of what is possible. The future is not a given, and 'the one size fits all' is never applicable. Every possible future is not an opportunity for everyone. But a possible or probable future might just be that for you and your company.

The world is constantly changing, and keeping an eye at your surroundings is a must for every business and organization. The windows of opportunities are out there. First of all, you and your company must stay focused on the big wins, and not drown in the small stuff. The hard part is still to translate possibilities into real business opportunities for your company, and this has to do with riding with change, quickness and skill.

You might want to add these sources or ways to look for opportunities:

#5: Recognize the creative process!

#6: Store ideas!

#7: Measure something different!

#8: Try it in a small scale!

#9: ... -and you can add to the list if you have more ways or even better:

Add examples of how you or your company do opportunities. Feel free to share them with the rest of us at our blog at fo-online.dk

Sources and inspiration: This article is based on substantive input from Adam Morgan, bestselling author and founder of eatbigfish. (www.eatbigfish.com). During the past years, he has worked with challenger brands all over the world and is now writing his third book about challengers.

The article is also based on replies from members of Organization of Professional Futurists (www.profuturists.org) to my questions about the difference between opportunities and possible/probable, and preferred futures. Especially Mimi Stokes-Katzenbach, Fabienne Goux-Baudiment, Jerry Clenn, Christian Crews, and Jay Forrest have been very helpful in my research about what an opportunity is.

The what do I need, what do you need, and what is needed questions are Sascha Amaransinha's – you can find her at www.repsond.dk.

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① Ask questions!

"The first people had questions, and they were free.  
The second people had answers, and they became enslaved."

THE EARTH WISDOM TEACHINGS



LEAVING GROUND