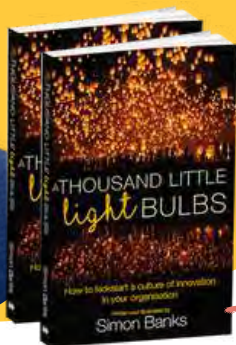


INNOVATIVE THINKING &

# Creative Problem Solving



INTERNATIONAL KEYNOTE SPEAKER,  
AUTHOR & PODCASTER



Complimentary e-book  
for each attendee!

DUBAI, UAE  
25 - 27 NOVEMBER 2025

## Simon Banks

Author of "A Thousand Little Lightbulbs:  
How to kickstart a culture of Innovation  
in your Organisation"  
(Michael Hanrahan Publishing, 2017)

### RAVE REVIEWS

**"Excellent speaker and trainer. The main strength of the event were the topics and soft skills relevant for daily usage and at professional settings."**

Chai Woon Geok, Senior Vice President, AmBank (M) Berhad.

**"Fantastic module and programme."**

Abdul Nazim Bin Awang Abdul Rahman, Manager - Brand, Campaign & Sponsorship, Sarawak Energy Berhad

**"Simon is an expert in his field. This training opened up my views on looking at things especially from a Marketing & Product Development point"**

Mokhzani Muhamad, Assistant Vice President, MIDF Berhad.

**"Content is very helpful & interesting. Presenter & facilitator is good"**

Jittima Nuntavichitraporn, Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Bumrungrad Hospital PCL., Thailand

**"His design thinking approach has helped accelerate our team development journey and has already started to produce great outcomes by making sure that the team focus on ready-to-use outcomes which are equitable, enjoyable and most importantly useful. Guaranteed, I would love to work with Simon again."**

Nigel Nisbett, Director of Professional Services for Asia Pacific & Japan, Boomi.

### KEY BENEFITS

- Taking the **creative energy and confidence** back to the organisation to drive change.
- Creating a **Rapid Innovation Action Plan** that will keep momentum going after the session.
- Developing **rapid Prototypes** and early-stage concepts to find **what users really value**.
- Develop **multiple frameworks** for ideation and divergent thinking to develop novel solutions to complex problems.
- Empathising** with customers and understanding the value of engaging with real people when innovating, rather than rushing straight to a solution.
- Building repeatable innovation habits** and team rituals that **embed creative problem solving** into daily work.
- Leading innovation** through psychological safety, coaching questions and an openness to uncertainty.
- Building the mindset**, behaviours and confidence to be more creative and innovative in problem solving and designing solutions that delight and create value.
- Gain tools to deal with blockers, friction and resistance to new ideas**, including how to reframe risk and get senior buy-in.

# DAY ONE | THINK DIFFERENTLY

## UNLOCKING CREATIVE THINKING AND REFRAMING PROBLEMS



### SESSION 1 CREATIVE MINDSET & INNOVATION CONFIDENCE

Why Innovation and Human Centred Design is more important than ever.

- Introduction to a Innovation centric way of thinking:
  - All problems are solvable, and the people who have the problems are the ones who have the answers
  - You can't come up with new ideas if you just exist in your own life or walk in your own shoes
  - It's about iterating, testing, tinkering, risk, experimenting, failing, and embracing ambiguity throughout the process
- Innovation handbrakes and how to avoid them
- The language of Innovation
- **Developing creative confidence**



#### ACTIVITY

**Epistemic Motivation Check:** Participants self-assess their comfort with ambiguity, complexity and curiosity, then reflect in pairs on how this shapes how they lead and solve problems.

### SESSION 2 GET A PHD IN YOUR CUSTOMERS CHALLENGES

Spending time in other people's shoes to understand their point of view.

- Understanding extreme users' scenarios
- Empathy Case studies
- The importance of observation and being highly curious



#### ACTIVITY

1. Creating **Empathy Maps** for customers and users to get different perspectives.
2. Creating **User Journey Maps**.



#### REVIEW

- What did we learn from the empathy work?
- What were we curious about?
- What surprised us?



### SESSION 3 REFRAMING CHALLENGES: DON'T BE AN ANSWER LOOKING FOR A PROBLEM

Defining the problem sets the direction and scope for creative solutions, ensuring efforts are focused on addressing the root cause rather than just symptoms or the 'perceived problem'.

- Based on the empathy work: Are we solving the right problem?
- Create design challenge statements and run it through a continuous checklist:
- Clear and concise with ultimate impact
- Can allow multiple solutions
- Does it have the right context



#### ACTIVITY

1. Using a **Problem Tree Analysis Framework**
2. Using the **Five Why's** problem solving framework
3. **How to frame questions** "How might we... so that we can...?"

#### PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

0830	Registration & Snacks
0900	Workshop commences
1015	Morning break
1245	Lunch
1500	Afternoon break
1700	End of day

### SESSION 4 SYSTEMS THINKING FOR COMPLEX PROBLEMS

When challenges are complex, it's essential to understand the interdependencies and ecosystems surrounding them. This session helps you map the broader system, uncover hidden relationships and identify small but strategic shifts that can lead to meaningful change.

- How can we map out how different elements of the system interact and see hidden relationships that may impact our challenge?
- Identify leverage points: Find the key areas within a system where small changes can create significant improvements
- What are the unknowns about our challenge?
- **Transformation Influence Model Overlay:** Map where role-modelling, rituals, skills and messaging could shift system dynamics and enable change



#### ACTIVITY

1. Using **Systems Thinking** to Map Ecosystems and System Interdependencies
2. **Ignorance Mapping**

#### WHY YOU SHOULD ATTEND

You can't solve 21st-century problems with 20th-century thinking. In a time where technology is driving rapid change and the usual rules don't apply, this programme offers a **transformative experience that equips individuals with invaluable skills and perspectives for tackling complex challenges in innovative ways**. Most importantly, it helps you design and create solutions that people truly value.

You will learn to appreciate the power of cross-functional teams and how to **effectively harness collective intelligence to drive innovation**, while building the ability to empathise with users, comprehend their needs and design solutions that truly resonate.

You will explore how to **build a sustainable culture of innovation** inside your team or organisation, using tools that promote creativity, accountability and real-world experimentation.

Through a focus on empathy and curiosity, you gain the tools to look deeper, move beyond assumptions, ask better questions and create solutions that that genuinely address real-life challenges.

The course structure encourages participants from diverse backgrounds to collaborate on projects. This dynamic mix of perspectives enriches the ideation process, sparking unconventional ideas that might not arise in a more traditional setting.

**You will leave with practical strategies for turning ideas into action, building innovation-friendly teams and leading change, even in organisations that prefer to play it safe.**

#### WHO SHOULD ATTEND

This intensive course is designed to help team leaders and professionals who are seeking to drive positive change and solving complex challenges. Ultimately, the programme offers a holistic learning journey that **empowers individuals to become forward-thinking problem solvers, adept at driving innovation** and fostering meaningful, user-centered solutions.

Especially beneficial for professionals in:

- Innovation & Strategy
- Product Development & Design
- Marketing
- Sales
- Engineering
- IT
- Project Management
- Operations

# DAY TWO | SOLVE CREATIVELY

FROM WIDE THINKING TO PROTOTYPES AND TESTING

## SESSION 5 IDEATION PART 1: TAKING THINKING WIDE

- Rules of engagement for **divergent thinking**
- Taking the team through a variety of different 'stretch your thinking approaches' or creative levers they can pull to shift their thinking. These include:
  - 99 Ideas
  - Creative Poaching
  - Different Perspectives
  - Disruptive Revolution and Blindly Assumed Truths
  - Constraints thinking



### ACTIVITY

Teams will work in groups throughout the morning and will also collaborate with other groups to provide a diversity of thought.

## SESSION 6 IDEATION PART 2 & DECISION-MAKING

Exploring a variety of different 'stretch your thinking approaches' or creative levers they can pull to shift their thinking. These include:

- **AI-Enhanced Brainstorm:** Participants write a seed idea, input into GenAI, and evaluate what is useful, new or limiting
- **SCAMPER**



### ACTIVITY

#### The Decision-Making Framework

- Deciphering all of the information
- Look for specific themes and specific insights
- What are the top 3 ideas you like
- What's the most feasible, viable, desirable idea to pursue and prototype:
  - A desirable solution: one that your customer really needs
  - A feasible solution: building on the strengths of your current operational capabilities
  - A viable solution: with a sustainable business model
  - A socially responsible solution

## SESSION 7 PROTOTYPING TO LEARN, REFINE AND EVOLVE

- Rapid Prototyping and Testing: Ideas Do Not Live In A PowerPoint
- Introduction to prototyping:
  - A prototype is worth a thousand meetings
  - It creates something meaningful and tangible that engages all the senses
- Case studies of companies using rapid prototyping
- Introduction to fail fast and rapid experimentation
- Examples of prototypes and Minimum Viable Products
- How to create a prototype



### ACTIVITY

1. Teams will create **Rapid Prototypes** to test
2. Introduction to **Visual Storytelling**

## SESSION 8 TEST EARLY, TEST OFTEN

- Introduction to user testing
- How to ask open ended questions that drive conversations
- Understanding the importance of a storyteller and observer when testing ideas
- How to interview and test with users
- How to avoid paralysis by analysis
- The importance of testing early and often with stakeholders
- How to embrace a more agile, rapid experiment way of working



### ACTIVITY

Teams will go through 3-4 rounds of **rapid testing activities**.

# DAY THREE | MAKE IT STICK

STORYTELLING, TEAM HABITS AND LEADING INNOVATION



## SESSION 9 MAKING INNOVATION A TEAM HABIT

- Why innovation fails to stick: events vs. habits
- Small habits that build a creative culture
- Weekly curiosity prompts
- Monthly retrospectives
- Quarterly small experiments



### ACTIVITY

1. **Audit your current team culture:** What's rewarded, ignored, punished
2. Design your team's **Innovation Cadence:** Simple weekly, monthly and quarterly rituals

## SESSION 10 STORYTELLING & PITCHING IDEAS THAT STICK

- **Storytelling** is the heart of leading innovation and growing ideas
- Understand how to **grab your audience's attention**
- Develop a simple structure for all presentations
- Understand how to have gravitas, presence and energy when presenting
- Understand the importance of storytelling and where and how to use it
- Never again kill your audience with death by PowerPoint



### ACTIVITY

1. **Craft a 2-minute Story and Pitch it**
2. Present this to a panel of peers acting as investors, team members, executives:
  - Panel will give feedback that enables the idea to grow

## SESSION 11 LEADING FOR INNOVATION

- What innovative teams say about their leaders
- How to create psychological safety in practice
- **Coaching questions that spark new thinking**
- Leading through ambiguity and experimentation



### ACTIVITY

1. **Leadership Reflection:** Am I a bottleneck or a booster?
  - Safety Language Practice: Leaders rehearse language that invites participation, responds to risk with curiosity and keeps options open
2. **Friction Mapping:** Teams identify where their idea will hit blockers inside the business, then brainstorm how to reduce resistance or work around them

## SESSION 12 BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

- Each team member creates a personal innovation action plan to take what they have learnt forward
- What did we learn?
- What are we curious about?
- What surprised us?
- Where can we use this approach in our organisations?



### ACTIVITY

1. **Team-Centric Transformation Planner:** Identify a real or imagined team and design the support systems, rituals, feedback loops and leadership behaviours needed to keep innovation moving.
2. Key Learnings & How can you use this approach in your organisation



## MEET YOUR INNOVATION BOOSTER

# Simon Banks

Simon Banks is a creativity, innovation, and design specialist; international keynote speaker; author; podcaster and recovering professional artist.

He's delivered over 1400+ events on four continents for industry-leading companies including: Google; EY; The Australian Federal Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, BAE Systems, Synechron and Volkswagen, to name a few.

Simon describes his geek out spot as the intersection of creativity and design, learning, people and passion. He uses his artist's curiosity combined with his 20-year corporate career to help build a more creative, innovative world. The aim is to help business thrive in the modern age through cutting-edge reimagination, co-creation and radical collaboration to ignite results and keep innovation rolling.

Drawing on the practical world of creativity and design, Simon's big point of difference is an active, hands-on approach for everyone present to ensure learning is by doing, not just a lecture.

His Big Why? To build a more creative world where innovation and curiosity combine so business thrives and people live well. Creativity is at the heart of everything Simon does. He has exhibited his art across the globe, lectured at the National Gallery of England and developed and delivered programs for institutions such as The

Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, Vivid Festival (Sydney) and the Sydney Fringe Festival, and continues to have a foot firmly planted in both the creative and corporate worlds. (It's his secret special sauce for empowering people to think differently.)

He has written for Corporate Wellness Magazine, Kizzi Magazine, and MiX Asia and has been featured in both newspapers and radio in Australia. His Podcast The Occupational Philosophers (A not-so-serious business Podcast) is a top 10% global podcast and his book, A Thousand Little Lightbulbs: How to kickstart a culture of Innovation is in offices and on bookshelves all over the world.



**A Thousand Little Lightbulbs:**  
How to kickstart a culture of  
Innovation in your Organisation.  
(Michael Hanrahan Publishing, 2017)

## PARTIAL CLIENT LIST

### AUTOMOTIVE

Toyota  
Volkswagen

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BAE Systems  
PTC Consultants  
Thales

### EDUCATION

The University of Newcastle  
University of Technology Sydney  
Western Sydney University  
Macquarie University  
Curtin University

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Feroscare  
IDRS  
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25 – 27 November 2025

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